

The opening chapters of this account of Hadrian's Wall augured well. Written in a journalistic style they held out the promise that this would not be a dry historical piece. However, while the account never dried, it became mired in excessive detail. We concurred that the author should have heeded the 'Less is More' lesson and resisted the temptation to insert every fact that he had uncovered in his research. While the book was interspersed with many interesting pieces of information - for example, on the invading Roman army's use of elephants - these were often lost in the sea of detail that surrounded them.

Our main frustration was that information on the Wall itself tended to become lost in the accounts of the military skirmishes in the years before and after its build. We would also have welcomed more social history of those living in the occupied lands, though accept that the history we know about is generally that which is written down - in this case by the Romans.

There was general agreement that this might more usefully be treated as a good reference book into which to dip before visiting/re-visiting particular sites at the Wall.