

Letters

THE ROMAN LONDON BRIDGE

A LOT has been written on the Roman London Bridge and everybody has started with the premise that the alignment of the Roman London Bridge ran parallel to the medieval and existing bridges. One can assume that this has arisen purely due to taking the present line of the Thames Banks as being the same in Roman times. At this present time no firm answer can be given and perhaps it never will be, due to the scouring action that has been going on before the banks were stabilised by the embankments. It would be of interest if somebody with the knowledge, could state the effect of possible wharfs, walls, and embankments, etc., on the course of the river, let alone the effect of the bridges acting as sluices, and speaking from a practical engineering point of view, if you had to rebuild a bridge, you would move upstream, and this we can see has happened at least with the later bridges.

Taking the possibility of an angular alignment, can we deduce enough evidence to support it? I believe we can.

The first thing to look at is the road alignments where known or conjectured. South of the river we are on firm ground (no pun intended) due to the work done by H. Sheldon and his team. Here we have a definite road alignment running approximately N.N.E. which if extended, brings us to the modern Botolph Lane, (this is assuming that the road didn't re-align to cross the river). This is significant because extending the Street from Bishopsgate past the Forum brings us to this point, coincidence?

This brings us to the other assumption that is used to support the theory that London Bridge is approximately on the line of the medieval bridge and that is the Street line projected from the middle of the south side of the Forum, to the medieval bridge line. One must question whether a major route would stop like that or carry straight on, (this route must have been a very early one certainly pre-dating the Forum). This prompted the Writer to examine other town plans, taking into account that they would develop on very similar lines. Fourteen towns were looked at, eleven of these had the Forum inside the grid system, two of these were unknown, (Dorchester and Chichester) and finally Gloucester, there the Forum cuts the line of the N.E.-S.W. Street. Certainly a result to encourage one in the possibility of the suggested alignment.

The Writer hopes that Readers will give it some serious thought, and some discussion, some of the area concerned is due for re-development so there is a good chance of it being proved on the ground.

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SKELETAL REMAINS

I SHOULD be most grateful if you could spare me space in order to bring to the notice of excavators and others that I am engaged in keeping a record of any evidence of disease, abnormality and other anthropological data from recovered skeletal remains from all periods.

It would be of great help, and much appreciated, if those who come into contact with such remains in cemeteries and other burial sites could let me know where I may apply for any details or reports which might be forthcoming from the examination of the bony material.

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KENNINGTON PALACE

MR. CLARK'S review of my book on Kennington Palace raises, obliquely, a number of important points about the publication of archaeological reports which I would like to comment on.

To begin with, Mr. Clark does not seem to like offset-litho or even, perhaps, *British Archaeological Reports* (which seems to be the implication of the last sentence of his first paragraph). Mr Clark is wrong when he says that one cannot differentiate between headings, etc. in offset-litho by use of different type faces (for example *Surrey Research Volume*, which is offset-litho, has four or five different typefaces). I always imagined that finds, lists, etc. were set in smaller type for economy and I cannot see how it makes it easier to understand. Since footnotes are now invariably placed anywhere but at the foot of the page, it can only be conservatism, or economy which causes them still to be set in a different type. Nor is Mr. Clark right in saying that with conventional printing it would have occupied only 100 pages; it would, for example, have occupied about 250 pages of *LAMAS Transactions*. I would have thought that *B.A.R.*, with 32 titles in its list, is as established as most publishing outlets, even if it is very young. It also has the advantage that it is self-financing and is therefore, unlike most reports published in national or local journals, no drain on public funds. I hope Mr. Clark's words will not prejudice your readers against *British Archaeological Reports*, which I feel are worthy of their support.

To venture on to more delicate ground, Mr Clark uses the word verbosity. It is possible that by the use of this pejorative word he merely means that I have used two words where one will do, but I suspect that behind it lies a difference in approach. It is difficult to be sure because we do not have any examples of Mr. Clark's own *modus operandi*. There are, it seems to me, two methods of procedure in archaeological report writing, which could be described as "affirmation" and "argument." To proceed by affirmation one merely affirms what one believes to be true. If one takes Mr. Clark's example of jettons as currency, one would merely say they were probably used as currency. The alternative is to adduce reasons for this statement as I did. The first method is certainly the shorter and more concise and it replaces two paragraphs ("the long discussion") with one line. But it really makes no contribution to the study; it makes it impossible to evaluate the reasonableness or otherwise of the idea and it can lead to the sort of sequence which Mr Turner has discussed (*L.A.* 2, No. 11, p. 290 *last para*). If archaeology is to advance and not go round in circles, we must have more such verbosity even if it does give critics something to criticise.

I was not sure whether Mr. Clark objects to the report dealing with every possible aspect of the subject or to it being done single handedly (which the half-page of acknowledgements shows it was not). But I feel that one of the most important developments in archaeology in the last 10 years has been the broader view which is now taken of the subject seen particularly in the contribution which the natural sciences and geography have made to archaeology. There is a great danger here, though, made worse by the rapid growth of narrow specialisation which seems to come so naturally to archaeologists, and archaeological reports are in grave danger of becoming a series of, often quite small, specialist/expert reports with precious little interaction between each part and certainly with no overall view taken of the subject of the report. I tried to avoid the pitfall; I may have failed (Mr. Clark does not say) but at least I tried; I wished more archaeologists would.

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