

Citisights Heritage Walks

SUSAN MIMMACK

AT 2.30 WE SET OFF from the forecourt of the Museum of London, our £2 being collected by a guide happy to see the small group already making contact with amazing good humour considering the bitter cold and the fact that the museum was closed (it was Monday). A vigorous sprint along the walkway of the Barbican, a pause to consider the north wall of the medieval city on its Roman foundations – we were off! For two hours round the streets of the City our guide shared his enthusiasm for *Saxon, Viking and Norman London: Farming in the City*, and submerged in his detailed descriptions we stood and stared. (Passers-by seemed to enjoy the spectacle of the group, pleased that we were enjoying our visit).

We studied the layout of the Roman fort, the site of the western gate at Cripplegate – so called not for the cripples who may, or may not, have begged there but for the military ‘cover’ offered by the external tower; saw the cross roads at the centre (convincingly Roman in their precision); compared them to the streets whose layout reflects the farming practices of the Saxons; advanced down the Roman ways of Watling Street and Cheapside, noting the position of *Bow Bells* church and realising the link between the ‘bows’ and the Romanesque arch; passed by St. Paul’s into the maze of alleys towards the river examining the site of ‘Baynard’s Castle’ and finally, experiencing the hills of the City we walked to St. Bride’s church in Fleet Street, seeing the ‘wedding cake’ spire and in the warmth of the crypt, the exposed remains of Roman mausolea and the exhibition which through photographs brings history and archaeology up to date. By this time the group, including two Australians and a Canadian, were on chatty terms, exchanging reminiscences of other visits of archaeological interest. I think we all left the church with regret in concluding a pleasant afternoon, considering chance meetings on further *Citisights Heritage Walks*.

I did walk another Citisights tour. On a warmer day, in a larger crowd, *Pepys, the Plague and the Great Fire*. We heard the guide read from the *Diary* how Pepys, having failed to grope one maiden in the church outside which we stood, tried with another, only to give up when she made it clear that she had a hat-pin ready in reply. We listened as the enthusiasm of the description transformed the Lloyds Bank in Pudding Lane into the bakehouse in which the Great Fire had its origin. We sat in St. Olave’s church remembering plague victims, Dickens and naval traditions.

I shall complete the cycle of five walks currently offered, enjoying them not only for the anecdotal curiosities but also for the evidence of thorough knowledge and understanding shown by the guides as their brains are picked by foreigners who seem to come prepared with a vast knowledge of London’s history; for the pleasure of shared experience of archaeology throughout the world as offered by the other members of the group. I shall also try the *Heritage Days Out*, with the promise of food cooked to Roman and medieval recipes, and displays of recent discoveries to accompany the tours conducted by professional archaeologists.

In offering these tours, Citisights is increasing our opportunity to enjoy London’s past as well as to keep up-to-date with the archaeological present. As one guide said, “If it was discovered this morning – you’ll hear about it this afternoon”. Contact with enthusiastic specialists can be – and in this case is – exciting. My only regret is that there is not more variety (may I suggest the origins of the financial institutions of the City) and that modern history is not explored (the war and post-war development). My only warning is for parents – on both walks I participated in, the children quickly dropped out. Stamina and imagination are prerequisites.

(continued from p. 67)

70m, 230ft, sq) which it is now believed represents a deer pound, constructed within the North Park in the medieval period. In the field just to the S, greensand foundations of a building, constructed perhaps in the early 14th c, had a brick-built soakaway attached, suggesting their continued use into the 16th c. The character of the demolition debris (including fragments of leaded windows, brick and stone mouldings and floor tiles) together with the existence of a piped water supply (in earthen-

ware pipes) suggests a building of considerable status. Historically, there seems only one possibility for such a building within the Deer Park, the de Clare Manor House known to have been in existence from the 13th c. A principal building within Bletchingley would probably have existed from the Saxon period, and this throws into prominence the recovery of Saxo-Norman and Saxon pottery from the site.