

Conclusion

Casius Dio must be admired for his clear concise account of the opening phases of the Roman invasion under the leadership of Aulus Plautius. His flattery of the Emperor may be abhorrent but understandable, and must be counter-balanced in the analysis of the passage regarding the presence of Claudius.

Any sound theory must fit the facts of the subject, and the prominent facts are the extant roads in the

immediate environs of Mayfair, which apparently disclose the location of the metropolis before the transfer to the present site.

There seems little chance of further archaeological or historical evidence emerging to sway opinion; reassessment of current knowledge could authenticate the hypothesis that the burgeoning metropolis of *Britannia* was located in Mayfair for several years before its establishment in *Londinium*.

Editorial comment

I FEEL THAT some explanation of the circumstances surrounding the publication of this article is needed. I would have preferred to publish an article concentrating on the archaeological evidence, with as little of the historical background as possible, subject to the need to set the archaeology in context. However, I have failed to reach agreement with the author on this, and am therefore publishing the article in its original form, as modified by the author to take account of editorial comments. I believe it to be worth publishing because it contains one of the most original ideas on Roman London for a generation. Much of the recent work on Roman London has tried to answer specific questions of detail — important detail, to be sure — such as “was there a riverside wall?” “where exactly was the Thames crossing?” “and the amphitheatre?” and so on. Here we see a radically new idea on the origins of Roman London, which resolves problems that have increasingly baffled archaeologists for the last 40 years.

From the 1950s onwards, it became gradually accepted that the earliest Roman road system in the area by-passed *Londinium* and crossed the Thames at Westminster¹. Bill Sole's contribution, obvious with the benefit of hindsight, is to realise that this pattern must have been influenced by the location of settlements, both military and civilian. A road pattern must be based on a settlement pattern. Working backwards from the road pattern, he infers a primary settlement in the Mayfair area. One of the main arguments against this is the main north-south route through the London area (Stane Street to the south and Ermine Street to the north),

once thought to be primary. However, the northern stretch of Stane Street is aligned on London Bridge, and is therefore unlikely to be earlier than c AD 50². Merrifield has argued that Ermine Street was not laid out until after the initial planning of *Londinium*³.

The second strand of the argument is based on the likely strategy of the Roman invasion force. Most current thinking places the base camp south of the Thames, for example in the Elephant and Castle area⁴. The author's reasons for locating this camp north of the Thames are logical, and apparently consistent with Dio. However, we must remember that the military mind is not *always* logical, and not rely too much on *a priori* arguments.

The ultimate test of this hypothesis must lie in the ground. A settlement of this size, even if only of a few years' duration, must have left traces which can be detected archaeologically. Unfortunately, there has been very little archaeological activity in this area in recent years. In 1961 Francis Celoria recorded a stretch of an apparently Roman road (but not belonging to the primary routes) near Marble Arch⁵. He also mentions that the Thames Basin Archaeological Observers Group “kept an eye on exposures in Park Lane and its vicinity between 1958 and 1965... but nothing more ancient than 18th-century elm water pipes could be observed.” Without knowledge of the exact locations of these exposures, it is difficult to assess their relevance to the present hypothesis. What is clear is that this area merits close archaeological attention in the future.

Clive Orton

1. See I. D. Margary *Roman Roads in Britain* (1955) 47; H. L. Sheldon ‘The 1972-74 excavations: their contribution to Southwark's history’ in *Excavations in Southwark 1972-74* (1978) 25; P. Marsden *Roman London* (1980) 13-14.

2. R. Merrifield *London City of the Romans* (1983) 120.

3. *Ibid.*, 122.

4. N. Fuentes ‘Of castles and elephants’ *London Archaeol* 5 no 4 (1985) 90-4, 106-8.

5. F. Celoria ‘Traces of a possible east-west road surface near London's Marble Arch (TQ 2771 8093 to 2782 8094)’ *London Studies* 1 (1974) 93-7.