

# Books

**Bankside: excavations at Benbow House, Southwark, London SE1**, by Anthony Mackinder and Simon Blatherwick. *MoLAS Archaeological Studies Series 3*, 2000. 68pp, 35 figs; many in colour, bib., index, £5.00. Available from Gary Warr, Finance Department, MoLAS; add 20% UK postage, 30% overseas.

THIS REPORT is an account of the investigations undertaken between 1995-9 on a development site to the south of Bankside; the field work was funded by the developer, Chelsfield plc, who also supported the post-excavation work as well as the publication. It focuses principally on the medieval and later development of the area, providing a useful sequence through the changing fortunes of this part of historic Southwark. It charts attempts at the consolidation of the riverside site in the 12th or 13th century, followed by the introduction of some nine or ten buildings during the 13th and 14th centuries. Some of these presumably represent the infamous 'stews', the inns or brothels that seemed to characterise the reputation and status of Southwark in this period. This picture is notably augmented with the discovery of the 16th-17th century Building 12, a large multi-sided structure interpreted as an animal-baiting arena or bear pit. The identification is supported by documentary and cartographic evidence, as well as by the large quantity of dog bones and a possible major kennel (Building 11) found on the site. It seems that the mastiffs were fed on horse meat and even on the occasional carcass of a dead dog.

These colourful chapters are succeeded by evidence for more prosaic industrial activities; a glass-works in operation from 1671-1748, the foundry and metalworks owned by the Bradleys and later by Samuel Benbow.

This report is therefore a significant archaeological study of the social and industrial development of Southwark, and clearly shows how archaeology could be used to complement and extend studies based largely on the surviving documented records, such as Martha Carlin's *Medieval Southwark*.

The regret is that the archaeologists were unable to make full use of the site's obvious potential, as excavations were strictly confined to those areas which were known to be threatened with destruction by the foundations and basements of the proposed redevelopment. This is not a criticism of the developers, or the excavation team, or even of

the publication as it stands, but of what might be seen as a too rigorous application of the preservation-in-situ maxim when it so clearly detracts from the validity of the result. To take an obvious example: the excavation of the animal-baiting arena was arbitrarily terminated at +3.7m OD, and thus the origins and earliest phases of this unique structure were not recorded. Consequently, a most important line of enquiry considering the similarities between the plan form of bear pits and the early theatres (such as the neighbouring *Globe* and *Rose*) although hinted at, could not be developed. With hindsight, it would have been sensible to have at least sampled the full sequence found in Area E2, which would still have left a substantial proportion of the feature preserved below the modern building.

However, even allowing for the shortcomings in the excavation records, there is still much of value in this fascinating insight into Southwark's colourful past. It is heartening to see such projects published so promptly: the MoLAS *Archaeological Studies* series sets a standard that the other London-based units must strive to emulate.

Gustav Milne

**Roman Roads in NW Kent**, by Paul E. Waters. *P E Waters & Associates*, 1999. 28pp, 8 b/w photos, bib. £4.50 including p&p from 105 Highland Road, Bromley, Kent BR1 4AA.

THIS SELF-PUBLISHED pamphlet is the personal narrative of an amateur enthusiast, intent on recording the remaining vestiges of Roman roads in NW Kent through a combination of historical evidence, local knowledge and diligent fieldwork built up over time. Broadly retracing George Payne's putative Roman routeway (map B, Y) from Crayford to Tatsfield, joining Watling Street to the London-Lewes road, Dr Waters identifies many features in the landscape, although their designation as road, prehistoric trackway or Anglo-Saxon estate boundary would be better supported by the inclusion of more detailed maps. As the author notes, it is difficult to photograph the traces of banks, ditches and aggers in a meaningful way. Whilst this publication will be of interest to a limited constituency, the information being difficult to access for those unfamiliar with the footpaths across the London Borough of Bromley, useful conjecture is raised as to the relationship of *Norviomagus*, asserted as located at West Wickham,

to the Roman road network and about the purpose of *Faesten Dic*. The author's obvious enthusiasm for his project may inspire others to view familiar landscapes from a new perspective and generate further discussion on this topic.

Sue Harrington

**Roman Clothing and Fashion**, by A. T. Croom. *Tempus Publishing Ltd.*, 2000. £18.99.

THIS BOOK is a welcome addition to a relatively under-studied area of Roman research. The introduction outlines the sources, as well as some of the problems of interpreting classical images in terms of everyday dress. The author deals with her subject under six main headings: cloths and colour, men's, women's and children's clothing, beauty, and provincial clothing. The first section uses mainly classical references to discuss the types of cloths used, the colours that were available and who wore them, and also the cost of clothing. This latter subject is one that is often forgotten in today's consumer society. In an age when all cloth was hand-spun, hand-dyed and sewn by hand, clothing was often viewed as an expensive commodity to be handed down, as evidenced by its frequent occurrence in wills and settlements. The following chapters outline the range of clothing that was available and the important subject of who wore what. The changes in fashion that occurred through time are discussed and the line drawings of men's and women's hair styles are particularly interesting.

Throughout, the book is well illustrated, including a good mix of photographs (both black-and-white and colour) and drawings showing figures from wall paintings, mosaics and sculpture. There are two minor criticisms. In recent years a number of extensive leather shoe assemblages from archaeological excavations have been published, and it seems a pity that more of this information could not have been included. In addition, some of the coin photographs (used to illustrate changes in hairstyles) have been poorly lit and so are not very clear. These, however, are minor points and do not detract from what is a very enjoyable read -- accessible, informative, and interesting.

Jackie Keily

**Gladiators at the Guildhall**, by Nick Bateman. *Museum of London*, 2000. 92 pp., 249 illus., £5.99 paperback

I FEEL AS IF I have waited over a dozen years for this book to come out -- ever since the news of the discovery of the Roman amphitheatre's discovery

first broke in early 1988. Fittingly -- for such an exciting event, which hit national headlines -- the author has given space to recount how the discovery was actually made, thereby providing an interesting sidelight on urban archaeology and its practice.

This book is aimed squarely at the popular end of the market, though it will certainly provide an informative read for any student of London's history. There is, to my mind, a degree of tension between the flow of the main text and the layout, which may reflect the possibly intended use of the book as an accompaniment to the exhibition of the amphitheatre remains at the Guildhall. It also reflects the difficulty of trying to condense the vast and wide-ranging information from the site into such a relatively slim volume.

But what a narrative! The history of the site is extraordinary -- with all of its Roman, Saxon, medieval or post-medieval sequences being of great archaeological significance and interest. Taken together they provide an unparalleled story of London's development and history, and demonstrate how the physical remains of the amphitheatre had such an enduring influence down the centuries.

Approximately half the book is concerned with the Roman period, half of this dealing with the Romans and amphitheatres in general, half with details of the London amphitheatre. As so often with ancient monuments unearthed in urban contexts -- be they Shakespearean theatres or Roman amphitheatres -- the actual remains can be somewhat unprepossessing, with the result that many of the illustrations rely heavily on reconstructions or stills from films to make an impact. There are, however, some outstanding photographs of the site during excavation -- I particularly liked the one on page 10.

The second half of the book deals with the site's development, following its abandonment between about the 4th and 11th centuries, from the late Saxon period up to the present day. There are many fascinating insights into London's development -- from the origins of the Guildhall and a 12th century Danish-style building, through to Blackwell Hall and the new Guildhall Art Gallery. Clearly most of the discoveries can only be touched upon, but sufficient information is provided to whet the appetite (of the more serious reader) for more.

This book is a welcome addition to the corpus of books on London's history and I am certain that its glossy finish, lively presentation and remarkable subject matter will ensure a wide readership for many years to come.

**Below Southwark**, by Carrie Cowan. *London Borough of Southwark & SLAEC*, 2000. 46 pp., 110 illus., £4.95 paperback.

THIS IS sub-titled 'The archaeological story' and essentially provides a popular history of the area nowadays administered by Southwark Council with reference to archaeological investigations undertaken in the 1980s and 1990s. Part of the purpose of the book is to promote a greater awareness of the archaeological heritage of Southwark and in this I am sure it will succeed.

As one would expect, the greater part of the book is taken up with events in the historic 'borough' with only occasional forays into its southern hinterland. Following a general introduction to archaeology and Southwark, the story is set out in a series of chronologically related themes beginning, as far as Southwark is concerned, with the Mesolithic -- as witnessed at the B&Q store in the Old Kent Road.

Among the 25 themes covered are sections on 'Roman roads and settlement', 'The medieval riverfront', 'The Bankside Playhouses' and 'Transport in the 19th century'. For each section, evidence from particular sites is referred to, which may then be illustrated with finds or photographs of features from the archaeological excavations.

Such a wide-ranging approach means that even such jewels in Southwark's crown as the Roman timber warehouse at the Courage Brewery site, remains of medieval London Bridge at Fennings Wharf and the 16th century Rose Theatre on Bankside get little more coverage than a few paragraphs. While this may be disappointing to some readers -- though these sites have been reported in detail elsewhere -- the book is aimed primarily at Southwark residents. It therefore sets out a well-stocked stall in order to attract the widest potential readership.

The book is copiously illustrated and attractively laid out. My only criticism is that it would be useful to have the location map (p. 4) inserted with the section on 'Where to find out more' at the back, and to have included phone numbers. That aside, the book opens windows of considerable interest onto 10,000 years of Southwark life.

**The Borough at London Bridge --- an Urban Study**, by Kim Wilkie (Kim Wilkie Associates). *English Heritage*, 1999. 48 pp., 129 illus., 3 append., paperback.

THIS SURVEY was commissioned at the behest of English Heritage in response to their concern at

the various development proposals in north Southwark which, they perceived, were 'proceeding with little reference to each other or to the broader urban context of this unique corner of London'.

Those concerned with the archaeological and built heritage, whether in a professional or lay role, will be familiar with this type of report that takes into account an area's history, its existing heritage stock and considers proposals for change. The report encapsulates the potential problems in its opening paragraph, describing the area as 'one of the most historically and archaeologically significant districts of London' which at the same time encompasses some of the 'hottest real estate in the capital'.

The report briefly summarises the history of the area from the prehistoric period upto late 20th century under the heading Memories and Associations. It then goes on to deal with People, Movement, Pivotal Urban Spaces, Urban Character Areas and finally A Way Forward. The illustrations, of which there are many, though small are well chosen and add hugely to the message and texture of the report.

There is however a certain irony in English Heritage's concern. Much of what gives the area its special character has, in part at least, arisen out of the incongruous juxtaposition of structures of wildly differing form, function and date. As the report puts it in a memorable phrase 'The etiquette of urban form has never been a priority'. The report recognises the need to find a balance between over-protective planning considerations and a development free-for-all.

In compiling the report over 60 people/organisations were interviewed ranging from Simon Thurley of the Museum of London to Stuart Lipton of the Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment (perhaps better known for his involvement with Broadgate) to the Chief Executive of Land Securities (Britain's largest property company) to the Chairman of London Planning Advisory Committee.

The report highlights the need for careful planning in relation to transport and pedestrian flow in and around London Bridge Station, as well as detailed briefs for the pivotal urban spaces. The report seems optimistic that there is sufficient common interest between developers and the various planning authorities to keep the historical grain of the area as intact as possible, while allowing renewal to proceed. We await the future with interest!

Simon O'Connor-Thompson

# Letters

## The Roman river crossing at Lambeth

THERE HAS BEEN much discussion about the possibility of a Roman road leading to a crossing of the Thames at Lambeth see *Surrey Archaeol Collect* 43 (1939) 72-83 and 71 (1977) 43-57 and *London Archaeol* 7 no. 14 (1995) 359-70, but there is one piece of information which may relate to it which has not been mentioned before.

Sloane and Thomas came to the conclusion (*London Archaeol* 7 no. 14 (1995) 360-70) that, if such a road existed, it would have met the Thames at Stanegate, just to the south of where Westminster Bridge now lies. In 1327 the Archbishop of Canterbury confirmed to the Bishop of Rochester the right to use a road 'anciently used' from Stangate to the Bishop's house in Lambeth, which easement had been granted by his predecessor in 1193x1215 (CLRO Misc Deeds 16b — this is an 18th-century copy but there is no reason to doubt its authenticity). Could this road be a relic of the Roman road to Lambeth? It would certainly be close to the line suggested by Sloane and Thomas. I have recently argued that the Roman roads running through Southwark disappeared in the early Saxon period, and that all traffic from Kent and Sussex ended up at Lambeth ('Where was Trenet Lane?' *SLAS News* 83 (Sept. 2000) 4-5), which would explain such a survival of the line of the road. However, at some point this disappears, for there is no such road on the earliest maps, though the above deed might suggest that the western end survived into the 14th century to give access to the bishop's house. When Rochester granted the manor of Lambeth to the archbishop of Canterbury in 1196/7, they reserved an enclosure at Lambeth to themselves, and this must be site of the bishop's house (Reg Roffense (1769) 270; Maidstone RODR6/Ar 2 f123-5 et al.). It does not seem unlikely that the bishop had a house there before 1197 within this enclosure; there is a document which says that the bishop did not have a house there before 1200 (Reg Roffense 1169 II), but there must have been some accommodation at Lambeth because Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, stayed at Lambeth in 1096, 1100 and 1101.

Tatton Brown has recently suggested that the attempts by the archbishop to erect a college (or even a cathedral) at Lambeth in the late 12th century also took place in this area of Lambeth just south of Stangate (Lambeth Palace (2000) 9ff), which shows that the focus of activity in Lambeth then was in this area, not further south as it was in the later middle ages. It is also possible that the bishop's house was the site of a royal palace in the late Saxon period, though the existence of such is only based on the entry for 1042 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that King Harthacnut died at Lambeth. I have also suggested that Lambeth might be the site of the middle Saxon Minster (*SLAS News* 85 (March 2001) 5), which would presumably also be in this area. The existence of a Roman road meeting the river here and surviving throughout the Saxon period would explain this focus. Such a road might also be the 'public way' mentioned in a late-7th-century charter (see T Dyson 'London and Southwark in the Seventh Century and later' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 31 (1980) 83-95); Dyson's identification of this with Southwark cannot be sustained since the discovery of the middle Saxon settlement at Aldwych, and Lambeth seems to be the only reasonable candidate.

## Also Received

**Treasure Seekers: the world's greatest fortunes lost and found**, by Jane McIntosh. Carlton Books, 2000. 192 pp., many illus., bib., index. £18.99.

Later, the archbishop built a new palace further south, where Lambeth Palace now is, and, since this was the most important place in Lambeth, it would naturally attract the main road to it, which probably explains the demise of the old line. Even today, the road from the Elephant and Castle to Lambeth makes a sharp turn in front of the Imperial War Museum, which may be approximately where the new line diverged from the old.

This picture seems consistent, but any chance of archaeological confirmation seems remote; most of Rochester House lies under the viaduct from Waterloo, and Roman roads in the area seem very elusive.

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## Merton Priory

STEPHEN P SMITH is right to assert (Letter, *London Archaeol*, Spring 2001) the considerable historical importance of Merton Priory. It is for exactly this reason that we are devoting such careful attention to archaeological issues within our proposed development. Part of our development site falls within the Merton Priory scheduled monument (much of which has already been redeveloped, following archaeological excavation by the Museum of London in the 1980s). Our scheme also falls under the provisions of PPG 16 (Archaeology and Planning).

We have therefore, already embarked on a comprehensive programme of archaeological reconnaissance. The results of this will inform the design of our development, with the aim of ensuring that archaeological remains are either preserved intact or fully investigated in advance of construction.

Our detailed designs and archaeological proposals will be submitted to English Heritage and the London Borough of Merton, with whom responsibility for decisions about the site largely lie. We are very aware that neither of those bodies is likely to countenance development of the remainder of the Merton Priory site unless they are satisfied that the archaeological issues have been very fully addressed.

We are committed not only to meeting all the legal and planning requirements to ensure that the archaeological remains are properly protected but also to making them more available to the public. Working closely with English Heritage, the Museum of London and local groups we intend to open a new Heritage Centre which will present the results of the earlier archaeological discoveries and celebrate the significance of this site to our history.

We therefore believe that our approach follows best current practice. We propose to develop an important brownfield site in accordance with Government policy on urban regeneration and in so doing will respect its cultural heritage and make it accessible to all.

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**Time Team's Timechester**, by Carenza Lewis, Phil Harding and Mick Aston. Channel 4 Books, 2000. 157 pp., many illus., bib., index. £16.99.

**What the Romans did for us**, by Philip Wilkinson. Boxtree, 2000. 160 pp., many illus., bib., index. £18.99.