

# Books

**London Under Ground the archaeology of a city**, edited by Ian Haynes, Harvey Sheldon and Lesley Hannigan. *Oxbow Books*, 2000. 327 pp., many illus., bib., index. £35.

THIS BOOK is a 'frozen' set of lectures given by a series of specialists in London's archaeology, covering the period from the Neolithic to AD 1800, as well as the history of the study of London's archaeology from 1972 to 1997. With sixteen separate contributions, plus a detailed appendix, it is impossible to review any aspect in depth. All the authors have taken their briefs seriously, both as speakers and then in transforming their talks for publication. As such, they together give an up-to-date assessment of the 'state of play' of London's archaeology, and provide an excellent introduction for anyone wanting to 'get up to speed' on any of the chosen topics. Each chapter has a very useful bibliography, and commendably the whole book has an index.

There are two points that detract from the value of the book. The first is the degree of overlap between the chapters. To some extent this is inevitable, but do we really need two illustrations of the Winchester wall plaster (Figs. 5.2 and 8.4), and I'm sure I read about the 'infamous castration clamp' three times, for example. Tighter editing might have been useful to create more cohesion between

lifting temporary exhibition. MoLSS regularly contributes to National Archaeology Day events staged at the main Museum site and on various archaeological sites. This year MoLSS ceramic and faunal remains specialists gave visitors to the Museum the opportunity to look at and, most importantly, handle assemblages from recent excavations and from the Museum reserve collection. The specialists also provided identifications and information on objects and finds brought in by the visitors, many of which had come from the Thames foreshore and residential gardens. At Spitalfields, specialists and finds staff provided displays of artefacts and human remains as well as details of the complex conservation process undertaken for many of the delicate objects retrieved from the Museum of London Archaeology Service's excavations.

MoLSS is currently engaged in an intensive programme of assessment, publication and research projects. Extensive work on finds and environmental assemblages from the City and Southwark in particular will help elucidate prehistoric activ-

the chapters. Finally, the biggest grumble -- the price. The decision to publish in hardback at £35 will put the book beyond the price range of many potential readers. This is a great pity for what is a very useful, informative and illuminating book.

Clive Orton

**The Holocene Evolution of the London Thames**, by J. Sidell, K. Wilkinson, R. Scaife, and N. Cameron. *MoLAS Monograph 5*, 2000. 144pp., 48 illus., bib., index. £15.

THIS BOOK IS a very fine example of interdisciplinary archaeological and environmental studies within the context of a salvage archaeological project. It neatly weaves together local issues in the archaeology of the London area and landscape evolution on both local and regional scales. This is especially impressive given the necessity of drawing information from numerous disarticulated scattered trenches and ventilation shafts excavated for the construction of the Jubilee Line through central London. The four study areas for this project (Westminster, Southwark, Canada Water, and Canning Town) are dispersed over more than ten kilometres of urban development.

Part I begins with a clear outline and discussion of the methodologies used in the study. Each set of analyses is dedicated to the interpretation of the

ity within these areas, Roman ceramic production, medieval and later leatherworking industries. Work on a number of finds volumes is now coming to fruition. The ever-popular Museum of London medieval finds series are being reprinted, complete with an updated foreword bringing the volumes up to date with newly available information. A collated national bibliography of Roman mortaria is in the final stages of preparation and an important study of post-Roman ceramics and a volume on post-medieval metalwork and leather from Southwark are all nearing completion. Two of these volumes are part of the MoLAS English Heritage-funded publication programme; the mortarium bibliography is also funded by English Heritage. Further volumes on Redwares and Tin Glazed Wares are in progress and the possibility of producing a Roman finds series, to complement the medieval one, are being investigated.

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litho- bio- and chrono- stratigraphies in the framework of a comprehensive geoarchaeological study. The goals for each analytical method are clear and integrated into the general research questions. The paleoenvironmental background is a very handy summary of current research on Late Pleistocene through Holocene landscape and hydrological changes in the London area.

Part II presents a site-by-site description of the results, covering both the archaeological contexts of the excavations and the sedimentological, palynological, diatom, and mollusc data. At the end of each Subsection, consisting of site data descriptions, is an integrated summary and discussion which ties together the disparate analyses into a unified picture of human settlement and landscape changes. This takes the study much further than the more typical site reports which present the data as appendices rather than integrated within the framework of research questions.

Finally, in Part III, the work from the four study sites is pulled together into a larger picture of landscape changes and human occupation in the London area. First, the fluvial history of the Thames is summarised, from the braided stream system of the Late Pleistocene through the meandering river phase of the Mid-Holocene and finally its transformation in the Late Holocene to the tidal river of the present day. This is followed by the vegetation history as seen in the pollen remains, with a discussion of the lime decline in the Bronze Age and its association with increased pollen from cereal cultivation and arable weeds. Part III ends with a summary of the way in which these landscape changes might have influenced human settlements in the central London area, and the impact of these on archaeological remains.

Throughout the book the authors have successfully put their findings into the larger context of Late-Pleistocene to Holocene landscape and human settlement. Because of this, the volume is of broad interest to archaeologists, historians, and geographers who are interested in the London area as well as a larger regional perspective.

Arlene M. Rosen

**Civilizations: ten thousand years of ancient history**, by Jane McIntosh and Clint Twist. *BBC Worldwide*, 2001. 240 pp., many colourful illustrations, glossary, index. £19.99.

HOW CAN anyone hope to travel through ten thousand years in 240 pages? This is the challenge that the authors have elected to confront, and their approach has been to give an inevitably sim-

plified account of the development of civilization. While this broad brush treatment covers matters of general archaeological and historical interest, the book also provides a satisfying level of detail on a number of selected subjects. All of the expected topics are included, following a time line from hunter gatherers through early agriculture to complex civilizations.

This chronological sequence is organised into four distinct phases, entitled *Prehistory, Cities and States, Classical Civilizations* and *Empires of the New World*. Each phase opens with a general overview, which is followed by a number of sections devoted to specific aspects of the development of civilization within that period. Each such section includes one or more Special Features focussing on subjects as diverse as *Stone Tools, Alphabets and Developed Writing, Coinage and Media of Exchange, and Astronomy and Calendars*. A structure of "Topic Links" enables the reader to refer quickly to related topics elsewhere in the book; this allows it to function either as a sequential account, as a reference work or as a collection of separate articles. It remains for the reader to choose his or her route through the information on offer.

The text, which is written clearly in everyday English, is interspersed with many excellent colour photographs and figures. Where archaeological or technical terms are used, they are defined and explained in a Glossary at the back of the book.

Analysis is firmly based on the evidence of material culture contained in the archaeological record, and although interpretations are generally in line with the mainstream of current archaeological thinking, the authors' Western viewpoint perhaps needs modifying for a world subject that is increasingly being viewed from multiple perspectives.

Ten thousand years is a long journey; in this well-presented large-format book the authors have successfully created a flexible and responsive time machine for the non-specialist reader.

Richard Gilpin

**English Churchyard Memorials**, by Hilary Lees, *Tempus*, 2000. 160 pp, 100 pl., £19.99.

THIS BOOK has two purposes. The author wishes to present the results of her survey of all the Grade I and II\* English churchyard monuments listed by English Heritage. Second, by creating an awareness of the importance of memorials in churchyards generally, she hopes to encourage readers to continue her work by studying all the remainder (i.e. the majority) for their architectural and social history aspects. The book deals specifically with

monuments in churchyards, those inside churches being properly the province of publications by the Church Monuments Society and/or the Monumental Brass Society. Graves in municipal cemeteries, unassociated with churches, are excluded.

The opening chapter, *God's Acre* (an old term for churchyard), has a very useful summary and classification of the architectural features found in burial grounds. It discusses all types of grave marker, from the simplest to the most elaborate type of tomb, as well as other forms of graveyard 'furniture' such as churchyard crosses, lych gates and sentry boxes (from the time when a night watchman had to be provided in order to prevent grave-robbing). Next, the development of churchyards and burials is traced from the earliest times. In the middle ages most people were buried shrouded but uncoffined in (probably) un-marked graves. Burial was normally to the south of the church, the author stressing that the northern part of the graveyard was reserved for unbaptised infants, suicides and convicted criminals. By the late 17th century, demands on space led to burials being made anywhere within the churchyard. Also, the burgeoning of the merchant class and yeoman farmer meant that conspicuous evidence of affluence was sought and found in a memorial of greater or lesser elaboration, the burial site being seen as a piece of family property to be visited and maintained in its own right. Thus, there would be family groups of tombs or single vaults wherein successive generations of the family could be interred.

Next follows a detailed historical survey of churchyard monuments, divided by the Reformation. The author shows that pre-Reformation monuments still *in situ* in churchyards are rather rare. She regards the chest tomb as the fullest expression of the sculptor's art but finds that in English churchyards only 40 or so survive from medieval times. By contrast, for the period 1700-1850, which Hilary Lees regards as the period of finest flowering of graveyard architecture, this type of tomb is encountered with great frequency. Alongside them, of course, the simple headstone underwent changes of fashion, this is dealt with in a chapter devoted to sculpture, imagery and symbolism. The latter chapter is almost the only place where the author deals with the role of the sculptor in this vast subject. Some of them signed their work.

The difference between a funerary inscription and an epitaph is explained and examples given. Inscriptions provide such basic data as the name of the deceased with her/his age and the date of death.

Further information such as place names, trade or occupation and the identities of the mourner(s) may be included. An epitaph, however, includes a moral judgement upon the life of the deceased which provides a degree of basic information as above. Many epitaphs are very moving and most are thought-provoking, but some unfortunately tend to border on the sanctimonious, even mawkish. As light relief to the often cloying tone of the genre it is refreshing to come across a rare gem such as the following, from Chilton Foliat, Wilts:

Farewell to all beneath the sun  
I bid the world adieu  
I never found no solid mirth  
Nor happiness in you.

John Taylor (1832)

The final chapter discusses and exemplifies the types of material used in constructing churchyard memorials, which include wood and metals such as brass and cast iron as well as the more familiar stone slabs and monuments. Ideally the latter would be fashioned from locally-quarried stone, producing a pleasing harmony with houses, barns, walls, church and memorials in the community all constructed from the same material. The arrival of canals meant that the materials could be drawn from further afield, a process that has culminated in recourse to the ubiquitous and monotonous imported white marble. Different types of stone have differing properties in their use for the manufacture of monuments. Slate tombstones exhibit extremely fine lettering as an example of the sculptor's skill; granite is far more difficult to carve but is immeasurably more durable for memorial purposes.

An important omission is an account of the value of memorial inscriptions for genealogical research, and how this can vary with the type of stone and comparative weathering rates. However, the author does deplore the late 20th-century practice of re-siting tombstones on the periphery of the churchyard in order to expose a tidier area of grass that can be mown more easily. This has the effect of dispersing information on family groups of burials or the layout and chronological development of the burial ground.

There are appendices of the listed tombs and a subject index as well as the place-name index. The *Select Bibliography* is really a recommendation for further reading but contains many recent works. Do not use the arrival of this book to throw away your CBA booklet *How to Record Graveyards* by Jeremy Jones. The two works complement one another admirably.

Bill White