

Books

Aspects of Archaeology & History on Surrey: towards a research framework for the county

Edited by Jonathan Cotton, Glenys Crocker and Audrey Graham

Surrey Archaeological Society, 2004

260 pages, 120 photographs and drawings in colour and in black and white, bibliographies and index £24.70 paperback including p&p.

This book consists mainly, but not entirely, of papers given at the conference *Archaeology in Surrey 2001: Towards a Research Agenda for the 21st century*. Eighteen chapters deal with aspects of Surrey's past from the Palaeolithic to WWII, and bring the reader up to date on the latest discoveries and ideas. Since the arrival of PPG 16, archaeological interventions in Surrey have multiplied and many new sites, particularly prehistoric ones, have come to light. At the same time, this increasing knowledge focuses attention on what we still don't know, and on where further work is needed. London readers may be particularly interested in John Schofield's 'What did London do for us?', which examines the impact of London on its hinterland from 1450 to 1700, drawing on sources that may not be familiar to most archaeologists. Also welcome in such a volume are three chapters on industrial archaeology (showing the remarkable range of industries in Surrey) and one on WWII remains. Good value and a useful resource.
Clive Orton

Roman burials, medieval tenements and suburban growth: 201 Bishopsgate City of London

Dan Swift

MoLAS Archaeology Studies Series 10

88 pages, 69 illustrations, 23 tables, index, £9.95

This volume, forming a further addition to a series of monographs on specific London excavations, outlines work carried out by MoLAS to the north of Liverpool Street Station in 1998–9. Excavation of a strip of land abutting the railway tracks revealed evidence for three major occupation phases. A small number of inhumations and structures interpreted as burial enclosures are likely to represent part of Londinium's northern cemetery adjacent to Ermine Street. Whilst the

course of the latter could not be positively identified, ditches, maintained throughout the Roman period, provide strong evidence for its probable location. Extensive alluviation suggest that the site was not attractive to habitation in the post-Roman period, though gradual encroachment, first in the 11th century under the auspices of the priory and hospital of St Mary without Bishopsgate (later St Mary Spital) and then in the 16th century by suburban expansion, foreshadow the eventual absorption of the area by the conurbation of post-Fire London.

The material is well described throughout and the author's balanced and workmanlike account does well to illuminate a relatively unremarkable sequence. In keeping with other titles in the series, the work is excellently illustrated, well organised and supported by concise specialist appendices, mercifully expressed without recourse to abstract terminology. In these aspects the book represents a fine work of compression of substantial value to our understanding of the extra-mural settlement of Roman, medieval and post-medieval London. However, in the more limited conclusions it draws, it calls for a more extended reappraisal of suburban development drawing together evidence from the now substantial number of similar small excavations ringing the City.
Stuart Brookes

Urban development in north-west Roman Southwark: Excavations 1974–1990

Carrie Cowan, with contributors

MoLAS monograph series 16, MoLAS & EH 2003

209 pp, 125 figs, 65 tables, bib., index, £15.95

This report is another in the successful MoLAS monograph series, and as such produces the usual high standards of presentation associated with MoLAS publications. For the full benefit of the work to be appreciated however, it should be noted that this volume is one of a series, investigating Roman development of Southwark. A companion volume deals with evidence for industry discovered at the same sites (Hammer 2003, see below), while another monograph will report on the excavations at Winchester Palace. All three volumes combine with the already

of the medieval features from the site; the result of the sustained flooding that characterises the area during this period. Finally, although it is true that the medieval ditch on the site ran parallel to

the earlier ditches, this is likely to be because they all follow the same natural topography rather than imply any sort of contemporaneity.

Jim Leary, Pre-Construct Archaeology

published monographs on Southwark (MoLAS monographs 12–14) to fill in some significant holes in the backlog of sites excavated by the SLAEC and DGLA.

Since the volume is the result of synthesis of excavations undertaken in advance of redevelopment, the programme lacked specific research objectives. The excavations were centred on the site of the old Courage Brewery, and the author concedes that limitations of funding and other factors meant that not as much was excavated as originally hoped for. Original site codes are done away with in the text, in order to allow consideration of all the excavations as one site. Thus sites were numbered A, B, C etc. and a table of concordance is provided. While this works reasonably well for the main text, it does make it slightly more laborious to identify the origin of accessioned finds, should one wish to investigate the archived material.

Prehistoric and post-Roman features are summarised, but the main body of the text describes the development of the study area during the Roman period, from the mid-2nd quarter of the 1st century. This includes the reclamation of land and closing-off of some of the Southwark channels, the appearance of more affluent properties during the 2nd and 3rd centuries, and the subsequent contraction and abandonment during the 4th and 5th centuries. The report focuses on built structures (buildings, rooms) and infrastructure (roads, revetments etc.), with some discussion of significant non-built features such as burials. The format for each feature is a paragraph of (fairly dry) technical description, followed by evidence for dating and then an interpretive discussion. The features are then discussed collectively in 'phase' groups relating to already fairly well accepted periods of Roman occupation and the development of the local topography. For example, the construction of substantial masonry buildings during the 2nd half of the 3rd century mirrors the resurgent development interpreted elsewhere in Southwark.

A section on aspects of north-west Roman Southwark follows the 'site' report, which attempts to place the recovered information into current research frameworks. They include a useful discussion of topography, the question of a military origin for Southwark, and a good discussion of the different types of building techniques used in the study area. The whole section is much more readable and accessible to the average reader.

About a third of the volume is devoted to specialist appendices, including a very useful analysis of the 4th- and 5th-century 'dark earth' deposits, showing it to be composed of natural sands and weathered building materials. Comparison to the phenomenon in a national context indicates differences between 'urban' and 'rural' deposits.

Other specialist appendices include an in-depth report on the building materials (although the fabric descriptions could be more detailed), a catalogue of the Roman pottery (with a useful discussion on methodologies of quantification), and a good discussion of the Roman wall plaster. Unfortunately the illustrations for the wall plaster are all black and white drawings – colour images would have improved the presentation of the report and allowed easier comparison with material discussed in the earlier monograph (no 12, *Settlement in Roman Southwark*). Additionally a fairly substantial section on accessioned (small) finds, and environmental reports on animal bone, plant remains and human remains add to the overall picture generated by the main text.

This very useful reference text is timely given the recent focus of excavations in Southwark. It is competently written, especially given the disparate nature of the numerous sites, but not immediately accessible to the lay reader. As a technical report, however, it is difficult to fault.
John Brown

Industry in north-west Roman Southwark: Excavations 1984–8

Friederike Hammer, with contributors
MoLAS monograph series 17, MoLAS & EH 2003
186pp, 112 figs, 90 tables, bib., index, £13.95

This report is one of a series investigating Roman development of Southwark. A companion volume deals with evidence for settlement discovered at the same sites (Cowan 2003, see above); this volume focuses on evidence for the Roman metalworking industry and other craft production.

The excavations, undertaken as rescue excavations in the mid-late 1980s, centred on the site of the old Courage Brewery. Individual sites were correlated using the same system adopted in the companion volume, numbered A, B, C etc. and a table of concordance is provided, allowing easy comparison between the two volumes.

The archaeological sequence is divided into four main periods, representing around three centuries of 'almost uninterrupted metalworking'. This is remarkable evidence for continuity of industry in one relatively small geographical

location. The format for each feature follows that of the companion volume, with initial description of features, evidence for dating and then an interpretive discussion. As with most technical reports, the archaeological sequence contains some text that can be dry and difficult to read, but the site synthesis and summary in the final section of the report is much better and contains most of the salient points.

Probably the most successful aspects of this report are the initial discussion on smiths and their social standing in Roman society, and a discussion of hearth design, both of which are very readable and informative. A comparison between the archaeological identification of metalworking hearths as opposed to bread ovens was also useful. By contrast the specialist reports on the ferrous and non-ferrous metalworking in the appendices, seem a little disappointing, with good descriptive analysis, but possibly an over-reliance of tabulated information that is difficult to digest while maintaining the flow of the discussion. Metal specialists will probably appreciate these elements more than the layman.

This volume succeeds in profiling a particular industry of Roman London, and its discussion of the social position of smiths in Roman society provides a good template from which investigations into other industries could benefit. John Brown

Life and death in London's East End. 2000 years at Spitalfields

Chris Thomas

Museum of London Archaeology Service, 2004
100 pages, with colour and monochrome photographs and glossary. £9.99 paperback.

The Spitalfields site became available for development in 1991, following the 1987 decision to move the fruit and vegetable market out of central London. Although the ensuing excavation is central to the book, it is not an excavation report. It is more of an interpretative account based on archaeological evidence, augmented by information from maps, literary sources and documentary texts. This combination of sources has enabled the author to offer a narrative from the Roman period through the next 1800 years.

The earliest evidence relates to the use of the site in the 3rd and 4th centuries, and includes the discovery of a stone sarcophagus containing a decorated lead coffin, with the skeleton of a young woman inside (described in the media at the time as the 'Spitalfields Roman Princess'), whose origin may have been in the Basque

region of Spain. Although it was her burial that caught the attention of the public, other high-status graves were also identified, together with an underground burial chamber.

When London's centre moved to *Lundenwic*, the site fell out of use, only being occupied again after the establishment of *Lundenburh* within the old walls in the late 9th century. Population growth in the 11th and 12th centuries created a need for hospitals, and prompted the founding of St Mary Spital in the year 1123. The author draws on a wealth of archaeological evidence as he describes what life in a medieval hospital would have been like, with features on the church at the centre of the complex, the infirmaries (where the care was mainly spiritual rather than curative), food production and the water supply. Three cemeteries from this period contained the remains of 10,500 people, many of whom died within a short time. Analysis has dated their burials to a period around the end of the 13th century, which means that the Black Death – fifty years later – could not have been the cause. Why and how they died is a matter for conjecture.

The Priory and Hospital of St Mary Spital were closed by Henry VIII, who in a gesture of generosity allowed the sick to stay in the wards – until they either recovered or died. The site was then split up, with the southern part becoming an artillery ground, and an unexpected discovery provided evidence that in the 17th century there had been a classic star-shaped English Civil War fort on the site. The northern part was used for high-status housing that accommodated minor members of the aristocracy, until the area then changed into the first port of call for refugees moving to London. By 1700 Spitalfields had become a suburb of immigrants, including Huguenot *refugiés* skilled in weaving and trading, followed in turn by Jewish and Irish settlers. By 1729 the Hawksmoor church of Christ Church had been built just east of the old precincts of St Mary Spital, and by 1893 the market had established supremacy over the site.

As well as the main text, there are separate but linked information panels giving greater detail on subjects such as DNA and Isotope Analysis, Radiocarbon Dating, Recording the Burials, and one disproving the theory that Columbus had been responsible for bringing syphilis to Europe.

This is a highly readable and excellently illustrated account, to be strongly recommended to specialists and general readers alike.

Richard Gilpin