Books

Ordnance Survey Historical Map of Ancient Britain 2005

Ordnance Survey, 2005

£6.25

This is a redesigned and revised edition that plots archaeological and historical sites in Britain from 250,000 BC to AD 1066. The colour-coded sites are superimposed over a small-scale 1:625000 OS road map of the British Isles. The map is double-sided, with some of the sites pictured. A few illustrations have clearer location maps attached to aid visitors. The ages represented are briefly explained and divided into the popular named eras, from the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic through to what is now described as the Early Medieval (Saxon and Viking). Bronze Age barrow monuments are explained in a clear diagram, and there is a reading list for suggested further information. A basic timeline is also included, allowing the comparison of developments in Britain with those in the rest of the world, with the relevant archaeological sites included.

All the sites named are of visible landmarks. More recent discoveries such as Prittlewell (Essex) are omitted, as are the prehistoric trackways along the north Thames estuary banks and the Somerset levels, probably as there is so little to see. The inclusion of the Roman era clutters the map somewhat. Use of the separate OS Roman Britain map (2001) edition is recommended as it has more and better detail.

Since this is a revised addition, the previous (1994) map was looked at to gauge the improvements of the 2005 edition. The introduction and era descriptions were the same, although the early medieval was referred to as 'post-Roman' in the older map. The 2005 edition is more highly coloured, enabling the underlying modern road system to be read more easily, and includes the areas and tribal names of the Iron Age peoples, a detail missing on the 1994 map. Both have a basic glossary of archaeological terms and the suggested list for further reading has been updated. The new map omits the County/Shire Gazetteer of sites, which was useful on the 1994 map for a quick reference that allowed the user to see an area without unfurling the whole sheet, an important consideration in a moving vehicle.

As a touring map it covers the better known sites, and may throw up some pleasant surprises to a casual visitor. However, if you have the 1994 map already, don't bother to buy this one. It will tell you nothing new.

Odette Nelson

The Time Team Guide to the archaeological sites of Britain and Ireland

Tim Taylor

Transworld Publishers, 2005

Hardback, 320 pages, lavishly illustrated throughout in colour £20

The book aims itself as a gazetteer of key British and Irish archaeological sites. It is divided into chapters, taking regional centres as the basis for them, e.g. the South West of England, Greater London, the Scottish Highlands and Islands. It is intended as a 'Time Team-style introduction' to a broad range of archaeological sites, embracing the depth and variety of archaeological sites in Britain and Ireland, taking 50 or so 'classic' sites and 225-plus great sites. All sites are described and illustrated, often with finds as well as the sites and sometimes a reconstruction. Also, directions on how to find the site are included.

The sites, however, are picked generally by Time Team members and are often related to sites they have excavated or worked on, so the slant is highly personalised and generally incorporates information from Time Team projects. Whilst this therefore presents a range of fascinating sites, the overall approach is somewhat skewed, and in places rather under-researched. To give an example, Greater London is characterised by three classic sites; Roman London (*Londinium*), the Rose and Globe Theatres and Merton Abbey Mills. Whilst the latter is undoubtedly an important complex, it is hardly one of the top three archaeological sites in London, but it was the subject of a Time Team programme. The major sites are covered in the rest of the chapter, but it also includes oddities such as HMS Belfast and Spitalfields, where it is acknowledged, there is nothing to see. The same sort of skewed coverage applies to the rest of the book, which really makes it unusable for serious students of archaeology. This is particularly exemplified with the top ten sites, headed by Flag Fen, and not including Stonehenge. However, for fans of the

programme and lay readers, the book provides a broad background to British and Irish archaeological sites and finds.

Jane Sidell

Guardian of the Horizon
Elizabeth Peters
Constable and Robinson, 2005
321 pages, paperback £6.99

The Serpent on the Crown
Elizabeth Peters
Constable and Robinson, 2005
309 pages, hardback £16.99

For readers of *London Archaeologist* unfamiliar with Elizabeth Peters, she is a crime fiction writer whose works include a series of crimes set amidst the backdrop of late-19th- and early-20th-century Egyptology. Key finds and characters such as Howard Carter and Flinders Petrie are present in the fictional world of the Emerson family, who undertake fieldwork in combination with solving murders and other crimes against humanity and archaeology. They provide light-hearted, often hugely entertaining reading, whilst not causing the serious archaeologists to explode with rage at poor research.

In these latest offerings, *The Guardian of the Horizon*, the family return to the Secret Oasis of a previous adventure, *The Last Camel died at Noon,* where the traditions, art and artefacts of ancient Egypt have persisted in daily life. Unfortunately, so have the politics and the tendency for fratricide, so once again the Emersons are called upon to defeat the evil, defend the oppressed and assist good to triumph. As ever, the plot moves rapidly, skillfully narrated by several voices. A rollicking read with an unexpected romantic twist.

The Serpent on the Crown, meanwhile, is set further forward in time, post-World War I. It takes place during a fieldwork season in the Valley of the Kings, but the plot is set about a curse associated with a gold statuette with no known provenance. Professor Emerson is called upon to dispel the curse which has claimed the life of the purchaser. Whilst attempting to locate the cache from which the statuette comes, another corpse arrives on scene, requiring both speed and ingenuity to solve the riddle. As ever, archaeology, heat, dust, romance, murder and mystery are seamlessly blended to create a gripping but light-hearted piece of archaeological fiction blended with egyptological fact.
Jane Sidell

The Archbishops' Town: The Making of Medieval Croydon

Oliver Harris

Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society, Proceedings Vol. 18, Part 9, 2005

58 pages, with monochrome illustrations, £3.80 paperback, including post and packing

When a hard day's digging has been completed and archaeologists sit down to talk about medieval towns, Croydon is not perhaps the first to come to mind, as the author of *The Archbishops' Town* would surely agree. It was not always the suburban metropolis it is today, however, and the objective of this book is to explore the origins and contexts of the town's evolution. In order to do so and recreate early Croydon, the author uses information gathered from many sources, also extrapolating backwards from clues found in later periods.

The prelates referred to in the title were the Archbishops of Canterbury, who in the Middle Saxon period owned a great estate, stretching from the Thames in the north to the Sussex border in the south; Croydon's geographical location made it ideal as an administrative centre and occasional residence for the Archbishops. The book makes brief mention of Croydon's possible existence as a Roman posting station, but the scarcity of archaeological and documentary evidence has clearly been an issue, particularly where the earliest periods are concerned.

The author has therefore concentrated on Croydon's medieval identity, with particular reference to the urban growth that resulted from its increasing economic significance, although it is noted that in the 14th century "ambitious Croydonians" had to look elsewhere to advance themselves. Contemporary plans demonstrate the shrinkage and eventual desertion of the Old Town between the 13th and 16th centuries, a period during which the New Town was increasing in importance. In order to place Croydon in context a description of the Archbishops' other possessions is given, showing how in the 13th century they owned about 90 manors that were spread across the Home Counties and the southeast.

In a short Epilogue, the town's history is brought up to date, and it is noted, perhaps regretfully, that it did not gain recognition as a Borough until 1883, when Queen Victoria granted its Charter. Since then Croydon has grown in economic

terms, and apart from a few vestiges of earlier times, its modern physical transformation has obliterated its urban past.

Notes and references take up almost half of the book, and these are testimony to the thoroughness of the research on which it is based, but it would have made for easier reading if the figures in the main body of the book could have been closer to their in-text references. This however is only a minor quibble. Those with an interest in Croydon's past, and who wish to follow in the steps of the author, will find *The Archbishops' Town* both interesting and informative. In order to purchase a copy, they should send a cheque for £3.80 to the Sales Officer, CNHSS, 68 Woodcote Grove Road, Coulsdon, Surrey, CR5 2AD.

Richard Gilpin

Investigating the maritime history of Rotherhithe. Excavations at Pacific Wharf, 165 Rotherhithe Street, Southwark

Kieron Heard with Damian Goodburn

Museum of London Archaeology Service, 2003

72 pages, with photographs and drawings in black and white, glossary, bibliography and index £7.95 paperback

This, the eleventh in the MoLAS Archaeology Studies Series, describes a combination of excavations and a watching brief that took place in May and June 2000 at the Pacific Wharf site on the Rotherhithe waterfront, much of which consists of land reclaimed by the monks of Bermondsey Abbey in the 13th century.

A brief historical background of Rotherhithe is provided, relating how the area has been linked with shipbuilding and associated trades since the medieval period. The archaeological sequence of the site is then described, starting with the underlying geology, and then moving on to evidence of its earliest use – probably as a timber yard – in the 17th century. The progressive development of the waterfront is described, and evidence is presented for changes in the use of the site between the 18th and 20th centuries, as it changed from a shipyard to a ship-breaker's yard, finally becoming a commercial wharf with warehouses and workshops. Pottery finds, including a large assemblage from the early 18th century, are described, but the site is most significant for its evidence of timber structures.

It is for this reason that a separate chapter is devoted to the woodworking evidence, which includes two 'unusual' items: a drain made up from re-used interlocking sections of a ship's pump, and the timber trestle foundation of what is described as a large Regency-style house.

This detailed and meticulous report provides new and useful information on post-medieval maritime industries and 17th- and 18th-century waterfront carpentry innovations, and is an excellent addition to the MoLAS Archaeology Studies Series.

Richard Gilpin

Prehistoric Landscape to Roman Villa: excavations at Beddington, Surrey 1981–7

Isca Howell (ed.)

Museum of London Archaeology Service, 2005

136 pages, many illustrations, bibliography and index £10.95 paperback

This volume (no. 26 in the MoLAS Monograph series) sees the publication of an important 'pre-PPG 16' excavation undertaken by Roy and Lesley Adkins of the Surrey Archaeological Society's SW London Team, largely with labour provided by the Manpower Services Commission. This useful body, set up to alleviate soaring unemployment, was a vital component to the rescue archaeology of the 1980s. The excavators struggled under difficult circumstances, not the least being persistent vandalism, but succeeded in completing what was for its time a major area excavation.

Bringing the important Beddington site to publication has been a long, hard task – witness the two 'draft' reports by the excavators listed in the bibliography and (presumably) lodged with the site archive. Both these drafts were considered over-long for publication, and the compact result before us has every appearance of being a workmanlike, well-illustrated distillation, over 50% of which comprises specialist contributions. It is the very essence of what used to be called 'level four', but only a diligent comparison with the archive could allow its quality to be confirmed. In the meantime, its style and internal consistency give every confidence that authors and editor have done a first-class job. Publication has been supported by English Heritage.

The site on the Taplow Gravels covered the long time range from the Late Bronze Age to the late Roman period. If it does not demonstrate ineluctably that there was continuous occupation, it does show the continuing attractiveness of the location over approximately a millennium. The aspect which most interests the present reviewer, however, is the big question mark at the end.

The prehistoric and, to a large extent, the Romano-British occupation of the upper Wandle valley is straightforward, even predictable. But what happened in the 5th century remains the vital, largely unanswered, question: if 'continuity' from Romano-British times into the Migration Period is going to be demonstrable anywhere, the upper Wandle valley is just the kind of place where it must be looked for. The report under review tells us that the villa building was extensively and systematically robbed of its usable building materials, probably before the end of the Roman period, but a Saxon date fro the robbing is not completely ruled out. No features dating to the Saxon period were found on site, but an S-shaped late-5th to mid-6th century brooch was found, while the well-known 5th- to 6th-century cemetery is 350m to the south. Other evidence for Saxon occupation in the immediate vicinity is scant, but Beddington is an *-ington* place-name. There was a scatter of medieval pottery and other objects over the excavated site.

The report understandably stated that the land formed part of the manor of Beddington, but John Phillips and Derek Bradford of the (then) BCWAS demonstrated at a recent meeting of the Surrey Archaeological Society's Village Studies Group that the villa site lay surrounded by a separate medieval estate known as Huscarles Manor, which also incorporated the pagan Saxon cemetery. It is tempting, but as yet completely unprovable, to see Huscarles as representing the successor estate to that of the villa.

The whole territory from Waddon in the east to the other side of Carshalton in the west, and from the dip slope of the Downs to the south to the other side of Mitcham northwards, represents abd area that should be treated like a suburban Whittlewood. The area was clearly one of the key points in the 5th century, but its rich interest stretches both backwards and forwards from the problems of the Migration Period. The archaeology has been heavily ravaged by housing, gravel extraction and industry, but there are some areas of landscape surviving – such as Beddington Park which seems to be crawling with crop marks. The parishes involved have the benefit of better than average documentation, and there is a major interdisciplinary project crying out to be done. The Beddington villa site should be just the beginning.

Dennis Turner

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was also stable and that the manor of Huscarls occupied the same area as the Roman villa estate.

John Blair suggested that large early estates were often composed of older and smaller land units which were stable over a long period and went on to form the basis of the post-conquest manors.[8] Huscarls could be an example of such a unit. It certainly seems an exception to the local pattern of the medieval landscape as it was located on the gravel outwash at the mouth of the Croydon valley and does not seem to have had any land in the open strip fields on the Down slope to the south.

Huscarls probably ceased to be farmed as a distinct agricultural unit in the 14th century when the Carews incorporated it into Beddington Park although the land worked by Park Farm in 1859 included the greater part of it.

Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to Dennis Turner for causing me to write this, to Derek Bradford for many interesting conversations about the landscape of Carshalton and Beddington and to Val Murphy for proof reading.

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1. K. Pryer *The Beddington Portion...* Beddington, Carshalton and Wallington Archaeological Society Occasional Paper 2 (1974).
2. The National Archives E178/6974.
3. Particulars with plans of the Beddington Park Estate for sale by auction … Wednesday the 22nd, Thursday the 23rd and Friday 24th June 1859.
4. I. Howell *Prehistoric landscape to Roman villa*. Museum of London Archaeology Service (2005).
5. J. Perry 'The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Beddington' in C. Orton (ed.) *The past our future*. Beddington, Carshalton and Wallington Archaeological Society Paper no 4 (1980) 23–28.
6. J. Addy 'Account of the Roman villa lately discovered at Beddington, Surrey' *Surrey Archaeol Collect* **6** (1874) 118–121 esp 119.
7. J.W. Flower 'Notices of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Beddington, Surrey' *Surrey Archaeol Collect* **6** (1874) 125–126.
8. J. Blair *Early Medieval Surrey* (1991) 24–30.