

Journey to the New World: London 1606 to Virginia 1607

Steven Catchpole

In our imagination, it is November 1606 and we are on a recklessly tiny ship called the *Discovery* outward bound from London intent on founding the first permanent English settlement in the New World at James Towne. This scenario and the subsequent ups and downs of the settlement are successfully captured by this new exhibition.

The exhibition is personal and poignant. It tells the story of the colony from both the English and the Native American sides. The modern day Indians of Virginia have made an important contribution to the exhibition, because Chief Anne of the Rapahanock wrote the section on the culture clash between the first settlers and the Native Americans. Initially the settlers traded beads with the native Algonquian tribes for food – the first interaction between Native American culture and our own. Indeed, Jamestown provided the springboard for the development of the English colonies in America and is central to early American and British colonial history.

The exhibition takes up a gallery in this wonderful Georgian former sugar warehouse. There are set-piece displays of personal items such as clothing, furniture, coffers and chests along with some fascinating old maps of London and America, paintings and water colours. There are also displays with, amongst other things, a body of recently excavated 17th-century artefacts from Jamestown itself, which throw new light on the settlement. More will be revealed in an forthcoming *Time Team* programme.

Finally, you can see a full-size replica of the tiny *Discovery* moored in the West India Quay just outside the Museum. Wait for your jaw to drop! All in all, a fascinating exhibition and well worth a visit. It runs until 13 May 2007 at the Museum in Docklands. Admission to the exhibition is free; admission to the Museum is £5 for adults, £3 concessions, with free re-entry for a year. Open daily 10.00 to 18.00 (last admission at 17.30). See www.museumindocklands.org.uk

London: a Life in Maps

Clive Orton

This exhibition is for those who would like to see the ‘big picture’ of London’s development and growth from a medieval walled city to the present metropolis. From maps showing the full extent of London at various dates, down to detailed plans of individual estates and buildings – it’s all there. There are even drawings of key buildings, useful snippets of information, and some wonderful panoramas.

All the old favourites are here: Hollar, Ogilby & Morgan, Rocque and many others. There are also maps of Londons that might have been – plans for redevelopments that never materialised (especially after the Great Fire of 1666). But the display is not just topography; there is much social comment and social mapping, for example to elucidate the causes of the cholera epidemics of the 19th century. These make the point that each

map was made for a purpose – they didn’t just ‘happen’ – and that by understanding the purpose we can understand why they look the way they do, and what light they shed on the social structure of a growing London.

In all senses, this is a big exhibition. It is spaciouly set out, and many of the maps will surprise by their sheer size. A word in praise of the captions (so often the Achilles heel of an exhibition) – they are clear, to the point, and can be read without this visitor having to produce his reading glasses. If there is a drawback, it is the lack of a seat for a weary visitor.

The exhibition *London: A Life in Maps* is at the British Library until 4 march 2007, 9.30 to 18.00 Monday to Friday (until 20.00 on Tuesdays), 9.30 to 17.00 Saturdays, 11.00 to 17.00 Sundays. Admission is free.