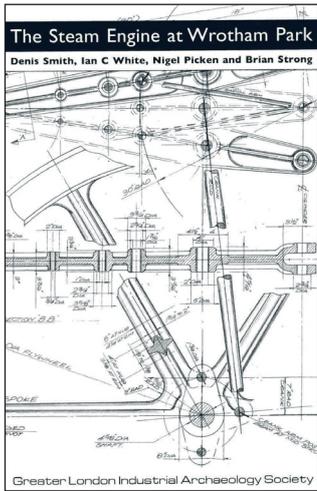


The Steam Engine at Wrotham Park



Denis Smith, Ian C White, Nigel Picken and Brian Strong

2005
Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society
38 pp
colour illustrations,
monochrome drawings

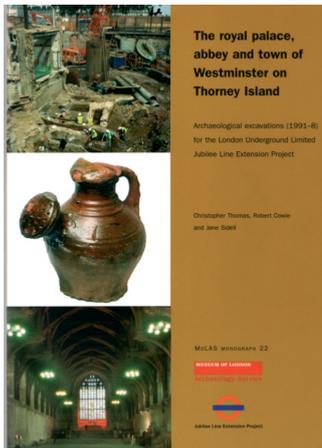
Reviewed by Richard Gilpin

There are many disciplines that offer archaeologists an opportunity to specialise, and while (or perhaps because) they often seem to be treading on each other’s toes in pre-industrial periods, the less crowded field of industrial heritage appears to be increasing in popularity.

This slim volume is the report on an investigation into a small steam-powered beam engine dating to 1856, which survives in a complex of buildings at the former Home Farm in Wrotham Park, Hertfordshire. The authors introduce their subject by giving a brief history of the Park, the Farm, and the “Grasshopper” model of beam engine, together with information about the engine’s Southwark manufacturer. The main part of the report focuses on the Wrotham Park “Grasshopper” itself. The design, manufacture and functions of the engine are described in great detail, with documentary evidence of its (somewhat intermittent) maintenance. While the authors are able to confirm such details, they evidence the humility of the true archaeologist when they conclude that “much remains uncertain”.

This account, with its plans and drawings, will appeal not only to engineering historians, but also to anyone with a specialist interest in small beam engines and their place in our Industrial Heritage.

The royal palace, abbey and town of Westminster on Thorney Island: Archaeological excavations (1991-8) for the London Underground Limited Jubilee Line Extension Project



Christopher Thomas, Robert Cowie and Jane Sidell

MoLAS monograph 22, MoLAS
2006
224 pp
114 figs, 56 tables, bibliography,
index
£29.95

Reviewed by Becky Wallower

archaeological priority. Nevertheless, the archaeological evidence for its development is frustratingly incomplete, so any new information is valuable.

The subtitle of this MoLAS monograph is misleading – in fact this is much more than just a study of the Jubilee Line Extension Project (JLEP) excavations. Throughout the report, the authors have integrated environmental studies, reviews of earlier published and unpublished excavations in this area, antiquarian reports, documentary details and finds data with excavation evidence from both JLEP and Parliamentary Works Board (PWB) projects in the 1990s. In addition, some significant surveying has located newly defined buildings and previously excavated structures more accurately. Using all this material has enabled the authors to create a cogent and constructive synthesis of current knowledge.

Although the geological, topographical and environmental background has been published previously, its summarised inclusion here provides an essential framework for interpreting the totality of the evidence. The nature, size and shape of the island is now well understood (despite a hiatus in the foreshore data between the Iron age and the 12th century due to a major erosional event), enabling earlier data and theories to be reconsidered. Where once the major prehistoric presence on Thorney Island was thought to be late bronze age / early iron age, for example, reinterpretation now puts the main occupation back to the Neolithic / early bronze age. The progressive reclamation of land from both the Tyburn and the Thames can now be clearly defined, and related to development of the area.

Almost any archaeological intervention on Thorney Island is bound to unearth important evidence – viz the discovery of the royal table in the recent Westminster Hall excavations. The JLEP and PWB projects, mostly around the north of the area, afforded keyhole glimpses of some 25 buildings, 22 structures and numerous other features, all of which have now been placed in

Thorney Island may have begun like any of the eyots dotting the post glacial landscape along the Thames, but over its 7000 years of occupation it became the most significant of all. Accommodating the royal palace and pre-eminent monastic foundations from at least the 10th century, the island’s history is inextricably tied to the nation’s. It has been a World Heritage Site since the first round of designations and is a national

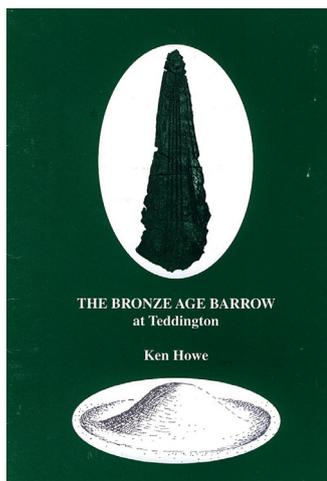
the overall context of the occupation of the island. Interpretation of some features may be open to debate, but there is undoubtedly much new information here. Gatehouse structures at the northern entrance to the palace precincts have been identified, as have buildings within the courtyards and precinct walls for both palace and abbey. One structure, posited as a bridge over a sizeable boundary ditch, provides potential evidence of the earliest yet known pre Saxo-Norman royal enclosure, perhaps established in the reign of Cnut. A timber building in the misericord of the Abbey previously dated to St Dunstan's 10th-century foundation has been reinterpreted as a temporary building related to Edward the Confessor's works. Understanding of the development of the town of Westminster and its eventual merging with an expanding London is enhanced through the buildings around Canon Row to the north of the palace.

The structure follows the MoLAS monograph formula: the chronological examination of the study area is detailed through 11 periods, from the Mesolithic through 1834. In this case

however, the chronology is then followed by a review section which summarises and evaluates what is known about the town, the Abbey and the Palace of Westminster, considering information from numerous sources in light of new findings. The landscape data are again given considerable weight in the review analysis. Detailed support data are mostly contained in a separate chapter.

Even at £30, this has to be good value for money. Production standards are high, the mostly colour graphics, photographs and illustrations are excellent, the writing is approachable and the bibliography is invaluable. As the authors point out, the information we have on Thorney Island to date is "tantalisingly enigmatic" and many key questions remain to be answered, particularly on the origins of the occupation and on developments in the south of the island. By its very nature, this is not a site for which definitive answers are ever likely to be available, but this monograph provides about as comprehensive an interim report as we could wish for.

The Bronze Age Barrow at Teddington



Ken Howe

2005

Borough of Twickenham Local
History Society

28 pp

20 figs, bibliography

£3.00

Reviewed by Fay Stevens

A fascination for the excavators of Bronze Age barrows has been the topic of recent interest in archaeology, highlighted in particular by Barry Marsden's 'The Early Barrow Diggers' (1999). The antiquarians were apparently inspired by motives other than just treasure seeking, and accounts have often focused on their social standing and notoriety, often directly associated with the intentions and success, or not, of their endeavours. In many respects the biography of these antiquarians is seen to be as important as the biography of the barrow itself. Ken Howe's concise account of the Bronze Age Barrow at Teddington tells the story of the mound and of the many people associated with it. He is a part of this association, as the barrow has some significance for him: as a child how he would clamber over a hillock not

knowing that it was the remains of a Bronze Age barrow.

The publication aims to tell a '*a modern tale of mystery, vested interests and bungling inefficiency*'. His consideration of folklore associated with the barrow presents contrasting and mysterious perceptions of it, including the burial of a warrior and a mass grave for victims of the Great Plague. Vested interests are considered in Howe's brief history of the barrow which relates excavations taking place from 1854 – although there is evidence of previous interference. Later explorations include those of John Yonge Akerman, a respected member of the antiquarian society who had concerns that many of the barrows of Britain had 'been dug into *under the hands of pseudo-antiquaries*' (Marsden 1999, 72) in contrast to Charles Bridger, who according to Howe was '*at best a Victorian Arthur Daley, at worst, a confidence trickster*'.

There is a considerable amount of confusion as to the nature and whereabouts of the barrow finds with vague references to a 'rather undistinguished flint', 'ashes in a box' and a range of finds typical of an early Bronze Age burial assemblage. Notably, Howe effectively gathers as much information as possible on the finds and any cataloguing and correspondence associated with them.

It is a readable account that earnestly aims to present the biography of the barrow within a historical and social frame of reference, charting landscape change to the final loss of the barrow – now the site of a small electricity sub-station. It is not however, as stated, the only prehistoric burial mound in the London area and consideration of what is known of the barrow on Hampstead Heath would offer an interesting comparison.

A main strength of the publication is the effective use of maps (eg Rocque's 1746 map to contemporary Ordnance Survey maps) drawing upon a number of sources that chart the topography of the setting of the barrow. Moreover, Howe also effectively draws upon descriptive landscape narrative (eg Montagu Sharpe's 'Antiquities of Middlesex' [1808]) which along with informative footnotes and references offer an opportunity for the reader to pursue the investigation into this particular barrow further and furthermore offer a methodology for archaeological societies to research their barrow datasets.