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Southwark Cathedral: towards a third millennium

Victoria Ridgeway previews a report chronicling the transformation of the Borough site from Roman road to Anglican cathedral, by way of priory, pigsty and pottery kiln.

The dawn of a new millennium provided a welcome opportunity to regenerate the area lying between Southwark Cathedral and the Thames. The construction works, which involved conservation and cleaning of the fabric of the Cathedral, landscaping and reorganisation of the churchyard provided an opportunity to review the preceding 2000 years and more of the area's history.

The volume is the result of collaboration between Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA), who undertook excavations at the site, and the Southwark Cathedral Archaeological Research Project (SCARP) set up to record elements of the standing masonry. The City of London Archaeological Trust (CoLAT) generously provided funding to enable the integration of these various elements of work.

The archaeological story of Southwark Cathedral begins in the first years of Roman occupation, with the construction of a road heading southwest from a crossing point of the Thames, close to modern London Bridge. Archaeological work undertaken from the late 1960s onwards including that by Graham Dawson and excavations in the Cathedral crypt by Mike Hammerson, had provided a foretaste of the archaeology. The recent excavations have provided further insights into the diet and lifestyle of the inhabitants. Additionally, questions have been raised concerning the layout of the road system and final destination of this route, not observed extending beyond Southwark Cathedral, and provoked discussion on the nature of the settlement, including tantalizing suggestions of a temple beneath the

Cathedral.

A substantial Saxon pottery assemblage was recovered, testifying to settlement in the area from the mid-10th century onwards; but the Saxon *monasterium* documented in Domesday Book remains elusive. Recording of both the standing fabric of the Cathedral and excavations around its perimeter has enabled reconstructions of the original form of the priory church and conventual buildings and their development from medieval origins to the Reformation, whilst examination of skeletal remains originally excavated by Dawson has provided insight into the wealthy lifestyle and rich diet of the religious communities who occupied the buildings.

The results of excavation and standing building survey, in tandem with contemporary maps and prints, have combined to document the changing fortunes of the building following the turbulence of the Reformation. Although the fabric of the church itself survived remarkably well, it did subsequently suffer periods of neglect, including 16th-century use of the retro-choir as a bakery and pigsty.

By the post-medieval period the area had become increasingly industrialized, buildings encroached on the church, and by the early 17th century a delftware kiln had been constructed in the former Chapter House. The establishment of the

delftware industry marks an important stage in the fortunes of London as an industrial city and this volume includes a detailed report on the form of the kilns, the products of the pot house and methods of manufacture.

The volume concludes with the architects' vision for the future of the Cathedral and also provides a guide to surviving archaeological remains preserved during the construction works. In charting the development and changing fortunes of the Cathedral and its setting it provides an invaluable guide to the student of church architecture, archaeologist and visitor to Southwark Cathedral alike.



© SCARP

TOP: The remains of the 17th-century delftware kiln have been preserved and are on display in a passageway to the north of the Cathedral.

RIGHT: SCARP's work included the recording of over 150 ledger slabs and a further 84 wall monuments, ranging in date from the 13th to the end of the 20th centuries.

A New Millennium at Southwark Cathedral: Investigations into the first two thousand years by David Divers, Chris Mayo, Nathalie Cohen and Chris Jarrett, Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, Monograph No. 8.

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