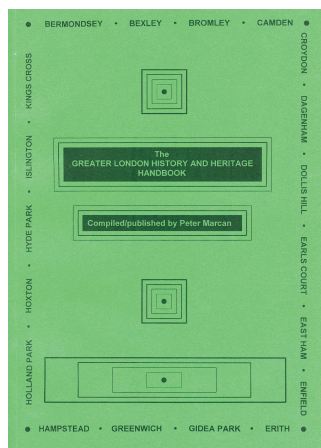


The Greater London History and Heritage Handbook



Peter Marcan (compiler)

2007

Peter Marcan Publications

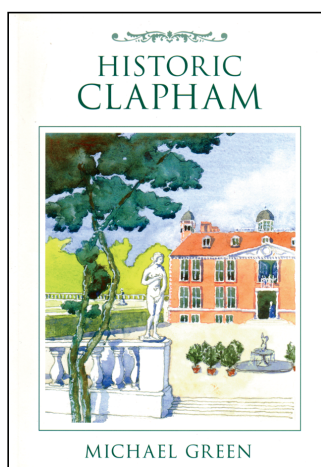
132 pp, bibliography, index

£25 plus £2.50 p&p from Peter Marcan, PO Box 3158, London SE1 4RA. Cheques payable to Peter Marcan

Reviewed by Clive Orton

This is the sort of publication that one might have expected to fade away quietly with the widespread availability of broadband internet. But no – here it is in a new edition, and larger than ever. Organised on a borough-by-borough basis, it starts with services offered to researchers by borough libraries, archives and heritage services, before branching out into museums, local societies and relevant special interest groups. There is also a section on London-wide bodies. As far as I can tell, it is remarkably up-to-date in terms of contact details, phone numbers and websites, though of course it cannot be expected to remain so. The coverage is not quite as good as one might hope – for example, I could find no reference to the Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Excavation Committee (which could be a useful source of funding for independent researchers), or to Benjamin Franklin House in Westminster, which has important historical archives. The main question, however, is whether this sort of publication is still needed in the 21st century, to which my answer would be “yes”. It promotes serendipitous browsing and gives an objective summary of the aims and achievements of many organisations, free of the hype that one may encounter on their websites. Not perfect, then, but nevertheless valuable.

Historic Clapham



Michael Green

2008

Tempus

224 pp, numerous b&w illustrations, 25 colour plates, glossary, bibliography, index

£19.99

Reviewed by Becky Wallower

believes a much longer and more complex past than might be guessed from the scattering of 17th and 18th century buildings that form the earliest visible remains. With other local authors covering existing buildings and aspects of the past 400 years from a family history point of view, Green turned his hand to researching the much more problematic period of Clapham's past from the first human occupation up to the 18th century.

His basic viewpoint is topographical; he reviews the effect of changes to the landscape starting with the geology and natural resources, through prehistoric flora and fauna, through Roman roads and Saxon and medieval agriculture, to Tudor and Stuart manorial boundaries.

Green includes some archaeological evidence, including his own Roman excavations dating back to the 1960s, but little for the historic period. Instead, he has searched national and local archives for, as he says, ‘the slightest scrap of material of earlier periods in Clapham’, and has apparently included all of it, sometimes describing each step of his quest. He also tends to interpret the evidence extensively and to hypothesize how it might be interrelated, making it difficult sometimes to extricate theory from hard evidence.

The minute detail, the topographical approach and limited geography covered here would be challenging for anyone not intimately familiar with Clapham. Green's maps and plans, which appear to have been done with letterpress, are confusing and look terribly outmoded compared with computer generated versions. Other images are not much better: Green mainly uses out-of-copyright images, supplemented with his own hand-drawn copies of illustrations and plans, and conjectural layouts of houses and the medieval village. The grainy photos, mostly by

Living just up the hill from Clapham, I had high hopes for this book, which I expected to provide a serious look at the evidence for Clapham's past. *Historic Clapham* provided that, and more – perhaps too much more.

As with many of the former rural villages that were devoured by the fast expanding Victorian metropolis, the Clapham of today quite useful content is undoubtedly buried in there somewhere.

Development on Roman London’s western hill
Excavations at Paternoster Square, City of London



Sadie Watson with Kieron Heard
2006
MoLAS
132 pp, 115 b&w illustrations, bibliography, index
£13.95
Reviewed by Becky Wallower

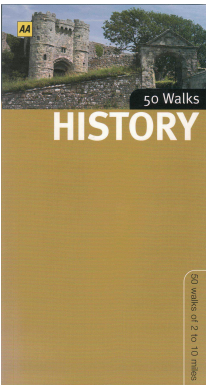
mainly covers evidence from excavations in 2000/2001 prior to redevelopment in the square, but incorporates evidence from 13 other sites and earlier excavations in the area to provide fuller coverage. It only deals with the pre-Roman to late Roman periods, as later development the subject of another monograph.

The analysis determined that the western stream ran southwest towards the Fleet rather than north-south through the site as concluded after 1960s excavations (although other channels were subsequently dug). The main east-west roadway passed through the square, lined first with timber buildings and later with more substantial structures set back from the road. In a roadside ditch along it, two early prone burials were found from the period before the area was enclosed by the wall, one accompanied by a dog skeleton, perhaps indicated that these young men had ‘bad deaths’. Two subsidiary roads were also recorded, into one of which were cut several of five 4th century burials in the area. Two of these were juveniles, evidently indicating a change in the locality’s status in the later period. Imported wares and a ‘dogtag’ from an auxiliary soldier indicate a background military presence among mainly civilian activities.

This volume is typical of the earlier style of monographs from MoLAS (it has been awaiting review space for a while). The format has changed a little since then, with some multi-volume hard-back reports now in the repertoire. The standard is as high as we have come to expect: although the style a bit dry, there is copious information, intelligently presented and nicely illustrated conclusions.

At a pivotal point in the City – just north of St Paul’s, at the western end of Cheapside, at the edge of the early Roman settlement – (if only in monochrome) , with well researched and well argued Paternoster Square is predictably rich in archaeology. This report

50 Walks: History



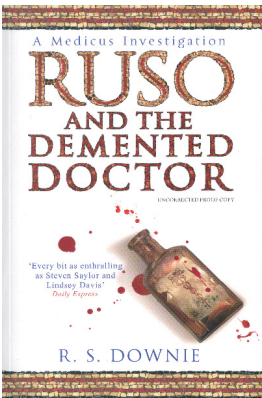
“Local authors and experts”
AA Publishing,
2007
Compact paperback, 160 pages, with hand-drawn OS-based-maps
£9.99
Reviewed by Richard Gilpin

This handy pocket-sized book offers 50 walking tours that promise to explore “Britain’s fascinating history” from Cornwall to the Scottish Highlands. Only two of them however explore the wonders of London.

The first of these, “Corridors of Power”, takes the walker from the Houses of Parliament to Clerkenwell. The second, “The Flaming City”, winds its way from Monument to Farringdon Station effectively tracing the progress of the Great Fire, described as “an event that created a demand for new furniture”.

As the compact format and the street-by street details regrettably prevent the authors from giving more than minimal information about the history and archaeology, a walker would do well to carry out some background research before setting out

Ruso and the Demented Doctor



R.S. Downie
2008
Michael Joseph
Hardback, 386 pp
£17.99
Reviewed by Clive Orton

The latest addition to the growing ranks of Roman period detectives is Gaius Petreius Ruso, a doctor in the Roman army in the Hadrianic period. This, the second volume in the series, is set on Britannia’s northern frontier. Fans of Falco or of Gordianus the Finder will undoubtedly enjoy reading about Ruso’s adventures; students of the Roman army may find some interesting insights into life in it, to discuss over their beer.