involved in the Orkney Archaeological Trust (OAT). She served on its committee and was its chairman from 1996 to 2002. While in Scotland, she wrote many specialist reports on human bones from Scottish excavations. She received an MBE for services to archaeology. Our condolences to sons Andrew and Vincent and all the family – she is greatly missed.
Don Cooper


Letters

Paulinus and Boudica

David Bird may well be right in arguing that Boudica’s last battle was fought as the Roman commander Paulinus retreated from London in the face of a numerically superior enemy. I have the impression that the ‘defile’ where he chose to make his stand is generally seen as a valley, but I find it hard to believe that this would give a heavily out-numbered army enough protection from flank attack, especially on the fairly flat land between London and Silchester.

Paulinus would have had the option of retiring towards Chichester, where Boudica’s army would no doubt have found a gratifying amount of loot. The London to Chichester Road has at least one narrow defile that would have made a formidable defensive position. As the road runs south-west from Ewell it crosses a couple of fairly shallow dry valleys at right angles. It then comes to the top of Mickleham Down. Here the modern path kinks and then runs down the spur of White Hill into the Mole Valley. The Roman road probably did the same thing, as the topography offers few other options. The top of White Hill is now wooded although the first edition one inch Ordnance Survey map shows that in it was open downland in the early 19th century. It may well have been wooded in the Roman period, as Nower Wood to the east is probably ancient. Here is a place for a cautious general to make a stand. The western flank is protected by the steep steep to the Mole Valley. If there was woodland on White Hill this would cover the south and east flank and the deep dry valley between White Hill and Box Hill would have provided additional protection.

I don’t know if Roman finds have been made in this area but two millennia of soil movement could have moved much of the battle detritus into down-slope hill-wash deposits.

I do not suggest that this argument is conclusive but the site is perhaps worth investigation.

John Phillips

Bililter Street

I read with great interest the article on 5 Bililter Street, especially the large group of pottery from pit 121, because we excavated a similar very large group at the south end of London Bridge. During the excavations I thought this too might derive from the clear-up after the Boudican revolt, but later study of the pottery led me to date it to c. AD 70–80.

Like pit 121, it had very large quantities of pottery, many of which were substantially complete; it did, however, include two Dr 37 sherds (plus three possible ones), so it might be a little later than pit 121. It also included vast quantities of oysters (well over 9000 shells) and large quantities of animal bones, especially ox long bones which had been butchered in a distinctive way. There was some evidence for burning too but not a great deal. There is clear evidence that this deposit is a single event, as was the case with pit 121, not the result of gradual accumulation, and I have suggested that it was connected to a rearrangement of the local townscape.

Another deposit with similarities to pit 121 is from a pit at Walbrook recovered by Ivor Nöel Hume, which contained a large group of fairly complete pots of exactly the same date (although Nöel Hume dated it to AD 60). There also seems to be a large dump of oyster shells (‘thousands’) in the roadside ditch on the north-west side of the road at Montague Close of a similar date, though there is no mention there of large quantities of pottery, and there may be another large dump of the same date at Winchester Palace, including large quantities of burnt material.

Thus it seems likely that these ‘clearances’ are not a local phenomenon, but spread throughout Londinium. We seem therefore to have the Boudican revolt in AD 60, the subsequent clear-up, a very rapid reconstruction of the town, and then only ten years or so later another destruction (that this involved the destruction of buildings is
shown by the amount of building material in at least some of the deposits). Followed by a second clear-up. Was this second destruction ‘peaceful’, as I argued in the London Bridge report, or was there another revolt c. AD 70, which was certainly an unsettled time? Alternatively, is the pottery dating wrong and do these clear-ups really relate to the Boudican revolt?; it is only a matter of ten years and it would make a lot of sense.

Changing the subject, in the article on 285–91 Tooley Street, the two Iron Age ditches define a trackway which must be pretty close to the path which ran across Horselydown in the medieval and early modern periods; there is some reference to a 14th-century ditch which sounds as though it is parallel to these two ditches; I did wonder whether it is possible that they are all medieval and that the early pottery is residual (apparently the 14th-century ditch did contain residual Iron Age material).

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5. Bruce Watson, pers. comm.

Books

Tatberht’s Lundenwic Archaeological Excavations in Middle Saxon London

Jim Leary, with Gary Brown, James Rackham, Chris Pickard and Richard Hughes, and a Foreword by Ian Riddler
Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, 2004
178 pages, with photographs and drawings in colour and black and white, bibliography and index. £14.95 paperback.

It is now twenty years since the discovery of Lundenwic, and this monograph describes the investigations and excavations that have taken place at four sites within the currently accepted boundaries of the Middle Saxon settlement. Located at James Street (1999–2002), the Lyceum (1995), Maiden Lane (1996–7), and the National Portrait Gallery (1996–8) – an almost rural area in the Saxon period – they provide a useful sample of different parts of Lundenwic.

The report starts with a summary which makes it clear that the sites were directed by different people, the individual reports were written up separately by different teams, and accepts that there is no overarching theory drawing all of the evidence together. The authors do not pretend that this is a true synthesis, but by presenting the reports as a compilation they have ensured that information about four more pieces of the Lundenwic jigsaw are available to a wider public.

In view of the diversity of the individual reports, the reference to Tatberht in the title is perhaps a little misleading, since it only relates to the National Portrait Gallery site. During the course of the excavation here a single sheep’s bone containing two runic inscriptions was recovered. One has been read as ‘dric’, which may be a name; the other – cut by a different hand – has been read as the name ‘Tatberht’. The authors, concluding that he must have lived in Lundenwic in the 8th or 9th century, have made him into the human face of their monograph.

In each of the four reports, the archaeological sequence of the site is provided, and any special features or finds are described. An example of this is James Street, where the charred remains of honeybees were found, making it the oldest known bee colony from any archaeological site in Britain. This has prompted the authors to include an explanatory account of Anglo Saxon beekeeping within the body of the report. A shorter contribution describes the working of the warp-weighted loom, from which the many loom weights recovered from the site would have come; a photograph of a reconstructed vertical loom is also provided.

A dated archaeological sequence is provided for three of the sites, but although there is some pottery evidence from the National Portrait Gallery site, the sequence here is described in

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