

scientific and archaeological problems), but there is no doubt that this book will be essential for many classes of reader – students, field archaeologists, dating specialists – and an fascinating read for those with just a general interest in the subject.

Clive Orton

Catus: a child in Roman Britain AD 80, by T. Woodbridge. *Tempus Reparatum Archaeological and Historical Associates Ltd.*, 1989. 28pp, illus., £5.95.

THIS BOOK is the second in a series written for children of primary school age, in which fiction and archaeological findings are interestingly blended together. It introduces the reader to Britain not long after the conquest by the Romans in AD 43. Catus, a young British boy, becomes a slave in the household of one of the first Roman clients, King Cogidubnus. Through his eyes we see the impact of the Roman higher standard of living and way of life on the less sophisticated British.

The Roman story begins in what we now call Fishbourne Palace. The illustrations draw very strongly on the archaeological excavations undertaken

by Professor Cunliffe in the 1960s – including the gardens, mosaics, plan of the palace and even a little ring found during the digging. When the action moves to Bath, it is no surprise to find that the beautiful head of Sulis Minerva is also featured. The Romans are portrayed as kind and tolerant and the British (through Catus' eyes) as amazed, entranced and overwhelmed. This must prejudice the reader in the academic debate of how the Romans were perceived by the British: whether as invaders and exploiters or as settlers and partners. However, this picture might be refined further by later books in the series.

All the eight-to-ten year old children that read the book enjoyed it, and when told that such a "palace" existed, were eager to visit it and see it for themselves. The illustrations were good and enhanced the story, though the print was small and would prove a difficulty for poorer readers. Such considerations are important if the editors wish the series to be widely used in schools. Otherwise it is a splendid book that fills a gap for archaeological books in schools.

Dodie Brooks

Letter

Lighthouses

NICHOLAS FUENTES' article 'A lighthouse for Roman London?' (*LA* 6 no. 8) contains a number of very misleading statements about the Bell and Lanthorn Towers at the Tower of London which cannot go unchallenged.

The Bell Tower is a formidable structure whose construction is reasonably well documented to the beginning of the reign of Richard I, when the Pipe Roll of 1190 records the expenditure of no less than £2881 1s 10d on works at the Tower. It has long been suggested that the position of the tower corresponds to that of a Roman riverside bastion; more recently I have indicated that there is a build-up of material immediately to the north, which apparently pre-dates the extant structure and which may, therefore, account for the abnormally high level at which the ground floor chamber is found. Before rushing to compare the situation with Roman lighthouses at Leptis Magna and Alexandria, however, more attention should be paid to the extant fabric. The putlog holes which run through the walling of the ground floor chamber are clearly integral with the medieval masonry, and it is difficult to see how the external offsets at this level could be Roman. As for the fact that the lower part of the tower is polygonal, while the upper is circular, I suggest this has more to do with the introduction of cylindrical forms into military architecture during the late 12th century, rather than the silly idea that the medieval builders were trying to imitate the design of a Roman lighthouse.

In an effort to wring a *pharos* out of the unsuspecting 13th-century Lanthorn Tower, Mr Fuentes makes much of the fact that it boasted a polygonal stair turret, which he calls a 'vice' (the vice, in fact, is the newel staircase within the turret). Gleaning information from a single plan of the Tower dated 1682, a totally spurious argument

is concocted whereby the turret is treated as a structurally separate element with suggested Roman lighthouse ancestry.

Mr Fuentes describes the turret as having enormous dimensions – 'some 23ft (7m) across' – whereas a plan and profile prepared in 1715 (*PRO WORKS* 31/69) shows that it was in fact 9ft 6in wide and contained a vice some 6ft in diameter. Moreover, detailed Ordnance plans dating from the 18th century, in particular a survey by the eminent draughtsman Clement Lemprière dated December 1731 (*PRO WORKS* 31/182 & 183), demonstrate that the turret itself was only to be found above the roof level of the contemporary, and adjoining, medieval chamber block on the west side of the tower. Thus there exists no evidence for an octagonal feature, Roman or medieval, at ground level on the site from the early 13th century onwards.

Finally, the height of the Lanthorn Tower was greatly over-emphasised, solely on the basis of Wyngaerde's mid 16th-century panorama. Although Wyngaerde's view is unquestionably a valuable historical document, the accuracy of its scale and proportions needs to be treated with caution (note the turrets of St Thomas' Tower are depicted as larger than the twin towers of the Byward Gate, whereas in reality they are only about a third of the size). The Lanthorn Tower was indeed tall, 63ft to the battlements, but to claim that it 'strongly' challenged the height of the White Tower is plainly absurd.

In short, Mr Fuentes has not provided a molecule of evidence that either the Bell or Lanthorn Towers originated as Roman *pharoi*, and he would do well to remember that hypotheses, like lighthouses, need foundations if they are to stand.

Geoffrey Parnell

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