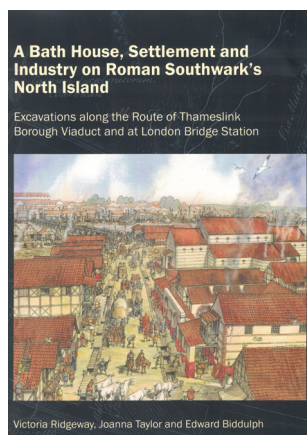


A Bath House, Settlement and Industry on Roman Southwark's North Island: excavations along the route of Thameslink Borough Viaduct and at London Bridge Station



Victoria Ridgeway, Joanna Taylor & Edward Biddulph

OAPCA Thameslink Monograph Series 1

2019

558 pages, hardback

241 figs, two appendices (with five available online), bibliography, index

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Angela Wardle

This new volume presents the results of investigations into the early topography and archaeology on the north island of Roman Southwark, undertaken as part of the major Thameslink rail development project between 2009 and 2013. Early development was concentrated along the line of the main north–south road and a Boudican fire horizon was identified, as elsewhere in Southwark.

The most significant discovery, however, was a substantial masonry building, constructed in the late 1st century, which has been interpreted as a bath house. The building was long-lived with substantial redevelopment in the later 2nd century, and

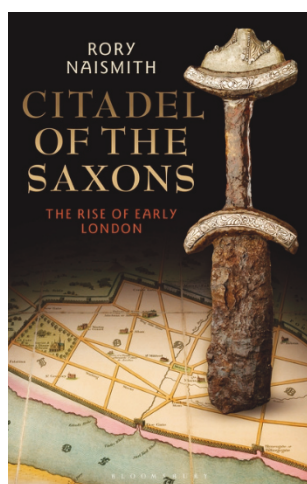
has been recognised as of national importance. As such, the Thameslink project was modified and the remains were largely preserved *in situ*.

This well-illustrated monograph presents the topographical background of this part of Southwark and the entire archaeological sequence with finds information integrated throughout. This is followed by a series of themed discussions by the principal authors and relevant specialists, which focus on aspects of the settlement's development, its chronology, infrastructure, economy, food production and its inhabitants' diet, placing the new discoveries, notably the bath house, in a broader contextual framework. Presentations of the finds and environmental evidence follow, with analysis and discussion by an impressive assemblage of specialists in their respective fields.

The volume concludes with a discussion by Victoria Ridgeway and Berni Sudds, which explores some of the major themes relating to Roman Southwark, including its place within *Londinium* north of the Thames. The bath house, its existence long predicted, is discussed extensively, but important questions about its status, for example, who commissioned it, whether it was private or public (perhaps Southwark's municipal bath house) are as yet inconclusive. Despite the considerable amount of archaeological investigation over the years, Southwark undoubtedly has further secrets to reveal.

The volume is well arranged and copiously illustrated throughout with clear plans, diagrams, site photographs and line drawings. Most of the small finds are illustrated in the specialist chapter, with photographs of the (sometimes encrusted) objects and drawn sections. The archaeological evidence is clearly presented and the discussions help to place earlier and recent investigations into perspective. A welcome addition to the Southwark corpus of published excavations.

Citadel of the Saxons: the rise of early London



Rory Naismith

Bloomsbury Academical / I. B Taurus

2019

268 pages

Five maps, 28 black and white figures, endnotes, index

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£20.00 hardback

Les Capon

Rory Naismith's well-presented volume covers the history of London from the decline of Roman occupation in the 4th century to 1066, with a broad range of sites and themes including ruination, religion, Lundenwic, King Alfred and the return to the City, until the Norman Conquest. It brings together archaeological, artefactual and documentary evidence in a series of well-written chapters whose flowing prose makes it as engaging to read as it must have been to research.

There are more detailed publications, site reports and grey literature in the public domain that can be read for the minutiae of excavations, with copious notes and references supplied for every chapter to enable the reader to target these resources, but the synthesis of a large portion of archaeological sites so far paints a broad picture – perhaps a more holistic view than typifies some academic texts. The text and phased description of the development of Saxon London does not isolate the Saxon and the finds from the rest of the country – there are discussions and links with the rest of Britain and the continent. The city is at the heart of the book, and the arguments draw together the strength of London, its importance, and establishment as a capital that became the capital of the new Norman England in 1066.

This is an intensely readable book, actually an exciting read. Although the first chapter discusses *Londinium*, this does not dominate; instead, it sets the scene of a vibrant city, its decline and abandonment before rising again to the west before being re-occupied. Naismith is proud of London.

There are only two things that would improve this book. One would be colour plates, which would perhaps introduce the reader to the vibrant colours in the examples of Saxon art and jewellery shown in the figures; the other is a better explanation of how and why Saxon London came to grow up downslope from Covent Garden, who these people were, how Saxon they considered themselves, and whether they were local people with Saxon influences, or a new incoming population.