

Bears (and horses) in Southwark

I read with interest the recent paper on bear-baiting in Southwark (*LA* 15. 11 (2020) 312–9) – in particular Kevin Rielly's contribution on the bones of horses, dogs and bears that had been found. Kevin concluded that the horse skeletons represented 'large quantities of knackered horses, presumably brought to the kennels to feed the dogs'. May I suggest that there was another way horses came to the site?

Early accounts of the 'entertainment' in the arenas in Southwark confirm that the full programme included an act involving a *horse*. An Italian visitor, Alessandro Magno, described it in some detail in 1562:

Let me explain that first they take into the ring – which is fenced around, so that one cannot get out unless the gate is opened – a cheap horse with all his harness and trappings, and a monkey in the saddle. Then they attack the horse with five or six of the youngest dogs. Then they change the dogs for more experienced ones. In this sport it is wonderful to see the horses galloping along, kicking up the ground and champing at the bit, with the monkey holding very tightly to the saddle, and crying out frequently, when he is bitten by the dogs. After they have entertained the audience for a while with this

sport, which often results in the death of the horse, they lead him out and bring in bears.¹

There are several other references – the last may be by John Evelyn, taken by some friends to see the bear-baiting in 1670: '...so all ended with the ape on horseback'. So it looks as if it was a 'sport' that continued for more than a century.

Presumably worn-out horses could be bought cheaply and brought in alive, and given a few turns in the arena. If they were killed in the ring they would be butchered to feed the dogs – if not, they could be slaughtered anyway after a few fights!

And I wonder if this might also explain some of the injuries displayed by the skeletons of the dogs. A flying kick from a panicking horse can be devastating. One witness, a Frenchman named L Grenade, writing in 1578, says the horse was '*ferré à glace*' ('shod for ice' – presumably with some sort of spiked shoes).²

John Clark, London

1. C Barron, C Coleman and C Gobbi (eds and trans) 'The London Journal of Alessandro Magno, 1562' *London Journal* 9.2 (1983) 136–52, at p 144.

2. L Grenade *The Singularities of London, 1578* ed D Keene and I W Archer, London Topog Soc Pub 175 (2014) 213.

Clarification

I was alarmed and disappointed to read in the recent issue of *London Archaeologist* (Mosaic Vol 16 no 1) the incorrect and misleading statement that PCA had furloughed its excavation team during the Covid-19 lockdown. This was categorically not the case, and I wish to refute it strongly, on behalf of the company as a whole, and on behalf of those who have worked unflinchingly both on site, and in order to keep sites going, during the crisis as well as those working off-site at home or within safe office locations.

London of course presented its own problems and difficulties, with the safety of PCA staff being paramount, and the logistics of both getting to the various sites and operating safely within them can be challenging. During this period, PCA has undertaken 29 field work projects across Greater London, ranging in scale from one-person Watching Briefs to complex urban excavations with up to 10 field staff.

That we were able to do so was in no small part due to the tireless efforts of PCA Health and Safety manager, Alistair Douglas who in collaboration with the H&S Director, the project Manager and, as appropriate, with the client's own team, ensured that: the site specific Health and Safety Risk Assessment was very robust and put the health and welfare of staff first; that our site working methods conformed to official professional guidance including that issued and updated by the Construction Leadership Council, ClfA and FAME; that sites are regularly visited and inspected; and, on

an individual basis, site staff were offered the opportunity to discuss any concerns. At one particular site, one of the archaeological team was tasked with ensuring safe working distances were maintained at all times.

I am very proud of the way that PCA's archaeologists conducted themselves during the current situation. They are to be commended for following the set protocols for safe working, by avoiding contact often in demanding circumstances and by still managing effectively to collaborate with colleagues whilst maintaining the required social distance. For a variety of reasons not all staff were able to attend their place of work and where this was the case they were placed on furlough.

As the situation has evolved, sites that were closed by the client have re-opened and many hitherto furloughed PCA staff, heartened by the decline in overall infection rates, have returned to work. However, those staff who remain on furlough are not pressured to return and will only do so when their circumstances allow. At the time of writing (mid-July), the Covid-19 crisis whilst apparently not as prevalent amongst the population at large as previously is still very much with us. PCA therefore continues to remain vigilant and operates only using safe working practices that have served us well so far, and we do not intend letting our guard down until it is safe to do so.

Gary Brown,
Pre-Construct Archaeology

Misunderstanding the Roman Wall at Tower Hill

For 40 years I have been taking people on guided walks to see the surviving Roman Wall at Tower Hill. It is a marvellous stop because the Wall tells its own story by the rich clues in its historic fabric. In addition, there is a 19th-century statue thought to be a combination of Trajan/Augustus, and a copy of the famous funerary inscription of Julius Classicianus, the best-known Procurator of the province of Britannia. However, I believe that in the 1980s some minor restoration work was carried out and completely misinterpreted the structural history of the Wall in one section.

The Covid-19 lockdown has, at last, provided me with the opportunity to point out what I consider is an error in interpretation and restoration that has annoyed me for the last 35 years. In summary, the 1980s restoration added fake Roman tile courses to a non-Roman section of the Wall. The section of the Wall in question, which is next to the Tower Hill Tube station and across the main road from the Tower of London, shows the lower section of the left is clearly Roman with horizontal Roman tile courses and regular rectangular blocks of Kentish Ragstone.

This section can be divided into two – that to the right is the core of the wall, with the facing stones robbed at some point in the past (top). The section to the left shows the original facing stones still *in situ*. This shows how the Wall would have been seen in the Roman period (except there was probably an earth bank covering this interior face). The tile courses go through the entire width of the Roman Wall, and are thought to stabilise and level the rubble core of the wall, and, perhaps to add a decorative element (centre).

Further to the right, the stonework is much less regular, has no tile courses and is made up of re-used Roman building material, tiles and ragstone, and not laid in neat courses. It clearly post-dates the Roman period, and was probably either late Saxon or medieval. This area is similar to the upper face of the wall (on the left) and, as can be seen, the horizontal Roman tile courses do not continue through either, except for the very lowest visible tile course to the right. Close inspection shows that this anomaly must have been caused by a collapse of the inner face of the Wall and must have been rebuilt at some point without the tile courses. The lowest Roman tile course clearly survived the wall collapse.

At the end is an exposed full cross-section through the Wall (centre). Close examination shows that this line is the fault line where the wall collapsed, as discussed above. To the left, is

part of the later rebuild strictly without original Roman tile courses; to the right, the Wall is Roman with its tile courses intact. Before the restoration in the 1980s, this was clear because there were no Roman tile courses to the left – they had been swept away by the wall collapse.

In the 1980s, someone with a bucket of cement and some Roman tile fragments, added spurious tile courses to a non-Roman wall (bottom). I presume it was done by English Heritage who wanted to make the exposed wall section look properly and completely Roman, and did not notice the clear evidence of the wall collapse as an explanation of the fact that the tile courses did not go right through the width of the wall.

This is a minor issue, but it is an error, and it distorts a genuine area of post-Roman Wall and turns it into a pretend piece of Roman Wall. The mistake is also present in the ceramic panel for the London Wall Walk. Both should be put right.

Response

As one of the originators of the London Wall Walk, I have asked Kevin and Jane Sidell from Historic England to meet me on-site, once travelling is easier and when Jane can check the paperwork as to what work was done in the 1980s – Jenny Hall, Joint Ed.



Kevin Flude, London

TOP: Roman Wall and core (arrowed in red) with the later repair without tile courses (in black)

CENTRE: Section through the Wall and its outer face showing the tile courses

BOTTOM: Close-up of section through the Wall showing the real Roman tile courses to the right