Britannia 48 (2017), 491–494
doi:10.1017/S0068113X17000241

Review Article

Social Groups and Synthesis in *Londinium*

By LACEY WALLACE

Temples and Suburbs: Excavations at Tabard Square, Southwark. By D. Killock, J. Shepherd, J. Gerrard, K. Hayward, K. Rielly and V. Ridgeway. Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited Monograph 18. Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, London, 2015. Pp. xvi + 348, illus. Price: £27.00. ISBN 9780992667252.

Roman and Medieval Revetments on the Thames Waterfront: Excavations at Riverbank House, City of London, 2006–9. By A. Mackinder. Museum of London Archaeology Studies Series 33. Museum of London Archaeology, London, 2015. Pp. xiv + 137, illus. Price: £15.00. ISBN 9781907586309.

The Upper Walbrook Valley Cemetery of Roman London: Excavations at Finsbury Circus, City of London, 1987–2007. By C. Harward, N. Powers and S. Watson. Museum of London Archaeology Monograph 69. Museum of London Archaeology, London, 2015. Pp. xvi + 210, illus. Price: £25.00. ISBN 9781907586255.

Roman London's First Voices: Writing Tablets from the Bloomberg Excavations, 2010–14. By R.S.O. Tomlin. Museum of London Archaeology Monograph 72. Museum of London Archaeology, London, 2016. Pp. xv + 309, illus. Price: £32.00. ISBN 9781907586408.

INTRODUCTION

London is probably the best excavated and most systematically studied provincial capital in the Roman Empire and publications like these exemplify the high-quality outputs of MOLA and PCA. The first three site reports are the results of meticulous excavation driven by development but, nonetheless, analysed and interpreted within broad research aims. The fourth volume is the much-anticipated publication of wooden writing-tablets from the Bloomberg site.

Harward *et al*. are particularly to be commended as they have, like other recent MOLA reports,[1] brought four older sites to publication along with BDC03 and ENS03. If such a trend continues, we can expect to see published many of the DUA and DGLA sites currently unknown to most researchers. Similarly, Bryan *et al.* (*Roman London's First Voices*, 31–1) have truly raised the bar by providing the structural sequence and phased plans of the site (for the periods in which the tablets were recovered, *c*. A.D. 43–125) only two years after excavation was completed.

Full description of the contents of the phasing structures, specialist appendices and discussion sections of each of the volumes is beyond the remit of a short review article such as this. Notably, however, results from these excavations illustrate the diversity of the population of Roman London and a handful of observations on group identities will attempt to do them justice.

[1] e.g. Hill and Rowsome 2011.

© The Author(s) 2017. Published by The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068113X17000241 Published online by Cambridge University Press

GROUP IDENTITIES IN LONDON

It has long been recognised that *Londinium* had spatial differentiation of urban character and social groups, with division by watercourses particularly notable. Researchers are using such topographic variation to structure interpretations[2] and these volumes add significant detail to our knowledge of this diversity.

On the Southwark mainland, the Tabard Square excavations demonstrate that the divergence in alignments from the main road extended across the northern mainland, *c*. A.D. 50–160 (also present at 223–237 Borough High Street (223BHS81), Silvester Buildings (SB76) and Arcadia Buildings (AB78)), although this is mentioned only in passing in *Temples and Suburbs* (e.g. 248, 259). While Killock argues for the agency of a centralised authority and the military throughout the interpretation of developments at Tabard Square, it is as likely that when people chose to construct buildings, drainage and boundaries to align to anything but a nearby major road, they expressed a different relationship to urban infrastructure, less connection to planning and central authority, and were, perhaps, working together as a group to replicate and expand this divergence.[3] The discovery of a previously unknown road (*Temples and Suburbs*, 20–1) on the same alignment leading towards the waterfront provides an explanation: these people were likely economically and socially orientated towards the river.[4] Some of them may have been indigenous metal-workers[5] in the first century and sea-faring traders from Gaul in the Antonine period (Tomlin in *Temples and Suburbs*, 193). Unlike at the other sites, at Tabard Square this alignment continued into the end of the Roman period and this critical moment — when, elsewhere, people were choosing to orientate themselves towards the main road — is marked by a significant 'votive' or 'special' deposit within a major boundary ditch at Tabard Square that reinforces the significance of this alignment (*Temples and Suburbs*, 30–2, 243–7). That the religious precinct and later Romano-Celtic temples, built after the road was destroyed, retained the older alignment suggests the significance of maintaining continuity common to cult sites across the Empire. From the Tabard Square inscription (Tomlin in *Temples and Suburbs*, 192–3), it may be possible to identify this group as a guild of Gallic traders.[6] This inscription is given remarkably little attention in *Temples and Suburbs*, considering the research it has generated since its original publication,[7] but the implications of possible dependency and co-operation between Britons and Gauls, or between people bound by belief and settlement area, acting in opposition to the settlement structure are intriguing.

At the opposite end of the settlement (*The Upper Walbrook Valley Cemetery*), *c.* 150 burials have been excavated in a separate group from the northern cemetery, to the east, and reached by a minor road. The social group who chose this cemetery were likely connected by belief, rather than occupation area. This group chose a special environment for the interment of their dead — one criss-crossed by the tributaries of the stream and prone to fluvial erosion leading to disarticulation of human remains. While the authors suggest the explanation of a possible paupers' plot (134), undesirable but affordable, the osteological analysis and burial goods were not significantly divergent from *Londinium*'s other cemeteries (apart from a higher proportion of males), where, in any case, there are no groups of particularly high-status burials located in more desirable locations. This cemetery provides an excellent case study in non-normative burial rites, including exposure, disarticulation and deliberate burial in a location known to flood and result in the transportation of human remains downstream. Belief related to the significance of water is known across the Iron Age and Roman periods in north-west Europe and the Walbrook in particular became a focus of religious and cult activity.[8] The authors' caution on this point is certainly valid, but in the context of other forms of deviant burial,[9] this cemetery provides further evidence for the possibility that certain social groups shared non-normative burial practices and made deliberately different choices in their treatment of the dead.

From the Bloomberg tablets and the Tabard Square inscription, we now have epigraphic evidence to support Tacitus' assertion (*Annals* 14.33) and to demonstrate that early *Londinium* was dominated by

2 e.g. Crummy with Pohl 2008.
3 cf. Wallace 2014, 80–1.
4 cf. a similar situation in north-west Southwark (Cowan 2003; Hammer 2003).
5 Rayner 2009, 40–2.
6 Dondin-Payre and Loriot 2008.
7 Tomlin and Hassall 2003; Corcoran *et al*. 2002; Dondin-Payre and Loriot 2008; Grew 2008.
8 e.g. Shepherd 1998; Merrifield and Hall 2008.
9 e.g. Pearce 2013; Crerar 2016.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068113X17000241 Published online by Cambridge University Press

merchants and traders, including citizens, non-citizens, slaves and freedmen. Only nine military figures are named on the tablets, in contrast to *c.* 80 other men (including a man who traded with merchants in *Verulamium*, a beer-seller, a barrel-maker, a brewer, and a possible poultry-keeper-cum-financier), 20 of whom were non-Romans or had names of Celtic origin. The tablets provide evidence to contradict those who imagine an early military presence in London, such as Killock's interpretation of official planning and military labour in the drainage and land-reclamation activities *c.* A.D. 43–80 (*Temples and Suburbs*, 238). The all-too-brief interpretative essay (51–8) offered in *Roman London's First Voices* indicates what lines of inquiry we can hope to see in future investigations into the nature of *Londinium*'s social groups.

THE POSSIBILITIES OF SYNTHESIS

Understanding the results of the nine excavations represented by these volumes in the context of the 1,600+ excavations from the City and Southwark is largely impossible without a great deal of work. Phased synthesis of London is absent north of the Thames after *c.* A.D. 60/61,[10] which presents a great difficulty for anyone interested in the city as a whole. Researchers must visit the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) for actual data, but contextual and spatial information to demonstrate how the deposits relate to the wider settlement has not been compiled.

As regards these volumes, the late Roman waterfront and third-century riverside wall presented in *Roman and Medieval Revetments on the Thames Waterfront* are all but meaningless without at least five other publications to hand[11] and a visit to the archive to see the finds registers. For example, the decision to include in the appendices only the illustrated examples is disappointing, especially when statements such as 'An interesting assemblage of Roman leather was recovered … Shoe assemblages of this date are comparatively rare in London and elsewhere in Britain' (11) lead the reader to look to the specialist appendix with excitement, only to be disappointed by the one shoe illustrated and catalogued (127). Similarly, in Southwark, Killock has not included the topographic detail of Cowan *et al.* 2009, making understanding the surrounding context of the site quite difficult. Happily, incorporating the Tabard Square data into future synthesis of Southwark should not be difficult, given that Killock has used a similar phasing structure.

The LAARC is an archive of international significance, but lack of support for this resource puts future research on London at a disadvantage. Although it would be a significant undertaking, with proper funding it would be possible to create, digitise and make publicly available phased maps of every excavation from London along with relational databases of contextual data and artefacts.

School of History and Heritage, University of Lincoln
lwallace@lincoln.ac.uk

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brigham, T. 1990: 'The late Roman waterfront in London', *Britannia* 21, 99–183

Brigham, T., and Woodger, A. 2001: *Roman and Medieval Townhouses on the London Waterfront: Excavations at Governor's House, City of London*, MoLAS Monograph 9, London

Clark, J., Cotton, J., Hall, J., Sherris, R., and Swain, H. (eds) 2008: *Londinium and Beyond: Essays on Roman London and Its Hinterland for Harvey Sheldon*, York

Corcoran, S., Salway, B., and Salway, P. 2002: 'Moritix Londiniensium: a recent epigraphic find in London', *British Epigraphy Society Newsletter* 8, 10–12

Cowan, C. 2003: *Urban Development in North-West Roman Southwark: Excavations 1974–90*, MoLAS Monograph 16, London

Cowan, C., Seeley, F., Wardle, A., Westman, A., and Wheeler, L. 2009: *Roman Southwark Settlement and Economy: Excavations in Southwark 1973–91*, MoLA Monograph 42, London

[10] See Cowan *et al*. 2009 for Southwark and Wallace 2014 for the pre-Boudican period.
[11] Brigham 1990; Brigham and Woodger 2001; Milne 1985; Swift 2008; Watson *et al*. 2001.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068113X17000241 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Crerar, B. 2016: 'Deviancy in late Romano-British burial', in M. Millett, L. Revell and A. Moore (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Britain*, Oxford, 380–405
Crummy, N., with Pohl, C. 2008: 'Small toilet instruments from London: a review of the evidence', in Clark *et al.* 2008, 212–25
Dondin-Payre, M., and Loriot, X. 2008: 'Tiberinius Celerianus à Londres: Bellovaque et *Moritix*', *L'Antiquité Classique* 77, 127–69
Grew, F. 2008: 'Who was Mars Camulus?', in Clark *et al.* 2008, 142–50
Hammer, F. 2003: *Industry in North-West Southwark: Excavations 1984–8*, MoLAS Monograph 17, London
Hill, J., and Rowsome, P. 2011: *Roman London and the Walbrook Stream Crossing: Excavations at 1 Poultry and Vicinity, City of London*, MoLA Monograph 37, London
Merrifield, R., and Hall, J. 2008: 'In its depths what treasures — the nature of the Walbrook Stream Valley and the Roman metalwork found therein', Clark *et al.* 2008, 121–7
Milne, G. 1985: *The Port of Roman London*, London
Pearce, J. 2013: *Contextual Archaeology of Burial Practice: Case Studies from Roman Britain*, BAR British Series 508, Oxford
Rayner, L. 2009: 'Origins and earliest development of the settlement', in Cowan *et al.* 2009, 39–52
Shepherd, J. 1998: *The Temples of Mithras, London: Excavations by W.F. Grimes and A. Williams at the Walbrook*, London
Swift, D. 2008: *Roman Waterfront Development at 12 Arthur Street, City of London*, MoLAS Archaeology Studies Series 19, London
Tomlin, R.S.O., and Hassall, M.W.C. 2003: 'Roman Britain in 2002. II. Inscriptions', *Britannia* 34, 361–82
Wallace, L. 2014: *The Origin of Roman London*, Cambridge
Watson, B., Brigham, T., and Dyson, T. 2001: *London Bridge: 2000 Years of a River Crossing*, MoLAS Monograph 8, London

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068113X17000241 Published online by Cambridge University Press