

BOOK REVIEW

The Origins of Roman London. By LACEY M. WALLACE. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. xvi + 192. Hardcover, \$120.00. ISBN 978-1-107-04757-0.

No better words than those of the author to open Chapter 6 of *The Origins of Roman London* best summarizes the scope of this project on pre-Boudican London: “The information drawn together here comprises the most detailed dataset yet created of the foundation levels of any urban centre in the Roman Empire. Although still more could have been added with time, and the post excavation analysis of the sites is unequal, this body of data has no rival” (150).

The level of included detail is, for the lay reader, at times overwhelming. For the more archaeologically oriented, it should be more than satisfactory. Lacey M. Wallace examines data and records from 118 sites (105) of the pre- and contemporary Boudican fiery destruction of what is now London. The extensive Gazetteer of Sites (157–174) and the carefully documented references (175–186) of the appendices plus the detailed footnotes throughout lend credence to Wallace’s statements and conclusions. She recognizes this is but the initial compilation of such post-excavation material in any one place; yet it is still the first. It will be to others or to a future time to re-examine past excavation materials for further detailing or identification hinted at in these 192 information packed pages.

With over 1,599 London sites of Roman artefacts and structures recorded on the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) online database (xiv), Wallace herein chooses to examine sites limited to the pre- and immediate Boudican fire of AD 60/61 in the area. Additionally, the selected sites are concentrated, for the most part, in three areas: Ludgate Hill, Cornhill, and Southwark (Chapters 2–5). It appears that early origins of Londinium had a “more civilian foundation” (152) of “indigenous British and rural people from Gaul or Germany” (154) than an “imperial administration or... military ... responsible for the foundation and construction of the new town” (154). The importance of knowing the non-military origins of London comes to the fore

when Wallace compares the development of this area with Roman military-founded colonies in nearby Britain and in Gaul during the same pre-Boudican time period (59).

A very workable index covers pages 187–192 of the text, although there are not separate listings for Ludgate Hill, Cornhill, and Southwark roads. Perhaps this is intentional since such listings would have been challenging to separate into their multitudinous topic potentials. The opening pages list 76 figures (viii–x) and 25 tables (xi) to be found throughout the text. While the book's page location of each table is given along with the table's title in the listing, the page locations of the figures are summarily covered by an end-of-list general statement of "Colour plates are located between pp. 48 and 49, and between pp. 144 and 145" (x). It is frustrating to see mention of Figure 1 on page 3 of the text and then be required to flip all the way to opposite page 48 to see said figure. On the other hand, Table 1, mentioned on page xiv, appears on the same page.

What draws me, a lay person with a general interest in the early origins of British and Roman Londinium, is a desire to walk the areas of origin via London's modern streets. Using the information contained in this book, I should be able to do so—whether or not the excavation sites are visible and/or still accessible today. Wallace has provided ample details for such an undertaking.

Her conclusion that Roman military personnel most likely were not the founders of Londinium is strong. The amount of pre-Boudican excavation data assembled in this sourcebook leads one to attribute the founding of the city to those peoples who should have the credit: those who established themselves so long ago in the Ludgate Hill, Cornhill, and Southwark areas. The result is not the establishment of one organized, planned town, but rather an amalgamation of three contemporaneously developing communities.

The lay reader benefits most (as I did) from the book's Introduction (Chapter 1), the "Introduction" and "The Overall Picture" paragraphs of the main text chapter pages (Chapters 2-5), and the entire last chapter "Characterising Early Londinium" (Chapter 6). Various sections of Chapter 5, where "thousands" (Footnote 2, 104) of artefacts from daily life are discussed, prove also to be interesting. Likewise, even the casual tourist is able to appreciate the map of the project's study area (Figure 3) and the map of modern London showing the 118 sites under consideration (Figure 4).

For the archaeologist and other field-related specialists, the level of detail herein provides copious amounts of information drawn from the pre-Boudican London excavation records. Dr. Wallace gives credit and attention throughout to

both previously published and forthcoming sources. By including the latter, the author provides the reader with the most up-to-date scholarship on pre-Boudican Londinium.

Overall this book is a welcome addition to current works based on the origins and peoples of early Britain (Roman or otherwise) and as part of the Cambridge Classical Studies series. The only negative is the book's cost. This no doubt is a result of the abundance of tables and colored plates printed on such high-quality coated paper. While possibly acceptable for public or institutional library purchase, the cost may be prohibitive for a general reader or student.

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