

*Temples and Suburbs. Excavations at Tabard Square, Southwark.* By Douglas Killock, with John Shepherd, James Gerrard, Kevin Hayward, Kevin Rielly and Victoria Ridgeway. Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited Monograph No.18, 2015. Pp.xvi + 348, 170 figs., 54 tables. ISBN 978 0 9926672 5 2. Price: £27.00 hb.

At over 1ha in extent the Tabard Square excavations comprised one of the largest single areas ever excavated under modern conditions in Southwark. The Roman-period deposits had been seriously compromised by later, largely modern, intrusions which left the stratigraphy badly fragmented and made the comprehension of plan and sequence difficult. The excavators and the various authors, led at all stages by Douglas Killock are to be congratulated for salvaging as much as they have. Congratulations are also due to Pre-Construct Archaeology for making possible a volume with such high production values in the clarity of the layout and the consistent use of colour for plans and photographs. This publication has been awarded The London Archaeological Prize for 2016 by *London Archaeologist*.

The site lay north-east of the junction of Watling Street with Stane Street and on the south side of the Neckinger Channel at its eastern end, more or less opposite the junction with the north-south-Guy's Channel, both tidal. It was thus well-placed for both riverine and terrestrial routes. The area of the site included a south-east to north-west palaeochannel debouching into the Neckinger Channel, but by the start of the Roman period filled with peat. The earliest Roman activity took the form of quantities of timber posts and stakes driven into the southern edge of the palaeochannel at its north-western end. This activity was succeeded at the turn of the 1st and 2nd centuries by the dumping of material to level up the site, providing a dry platform. Onto this was laid out a ditch, succeeded by a metalled road running north-eastwards to the shore of the tidal channel with timber buildings to either side, but more particularly to the north-west. The second half of the 2nd century saw all this swept away, the road in due course suppressed, and the area taken over as the precinct for two sanctuaries of 'Romano-Celtic' form within a ditched precinct. In the third century the area at the north-west end of the site was embellished with three substantial rectangular foundations, very possibly for statues or other monuments standing between the sanctuaries, possibly with a fountain. The precinct was then divided longitudinally in two, separating the areas of the sanctuaries. On this line was later constructed a substantial masonry foundation, whose plan recalls that of some of the monuments adorning the temple precinct at Bath. In the 4th century the southern sanctuary passed out of use and in the northern precinct was constructed a masonry structure in the form of a 'winged corridor', perhaps again a substantial architectural and/or sculptural composition. The disuse of the southern temple need not be read as 'decline', even less some sort of retraction of 'paganism', but rather as change, with the embellished northern sanctuary becoming dominant. The complex seems to have passed out of use in the first half of the 5th century.

Two finds from the site are already deservedly well-known. One, from the ditch defining the religious precinct and deposited in the later 2nd century, is the tin-alloy canister containing the remains of a cosmetic based on animal fat with tin oxide, a pale foundation preparation. From the same ditch in the third century came another similar but empty canister. The other

major find was an inscription on marble set up by Tiberinus Celerianus, a *moritix*, a sefarer, from Beauvais in Gallia Belgica.

The general discussions seek to link the fortunes of Tabard Square to those of Roman London more generally, and are in general judicious and thought-provoking, adding considerably to the value of the publication. Perhaps more could have been made of the immediate setting of the temple complex. The reconstruction offered in fig.4.8 does make the point that the northern sanctuary stood close to and visible from the Neckinger Creek, the major water route. Was it the sanctuary of a fluvial or marine deity, which might explain why a Gaulish *moritix* chose to set up his inscription in its vicinity? What of the relationship to Watling Street, only 100m or so to the north-west. Were one to turn the possible statues or monuments at the north-western end of the site through 180° then rather than looking into the precinct they would face worshippers arriving from the major land route. Was there some sort of formal approach or processional way linking highway and religious precinct? The discussions also make the important point that for all the hundreds of excavations in and around the walled Roman city over the last nearly half-century, there is remarkably little evidence for religious structures either north or south of the river; the Tabard Square complex is in fact a key site. Finally, functions changed and buildings came and went on this peripheral site. The temple complex was an entirely Roman-period creation, responding to the needs of that period and with no pre-Roman origins. The clearance of the site and its imposition into the landscape of Southwark suggest the exercise of a significant measure of authority. At the end of the Roman period the needs that created and sustained this sort of religious manifestation ceased, so therefore did the complex.

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