

## THE ORIGIN OF ROMAN LONDON

In this book Dr Wallace makes a fundamental contribution to the study of urbanism in the Roman provinces. She attempts for the first time to present a detailed archaeological account of the first decade of one of the best-excavated cities in the Roman Empire. Delving into the artefact and structural reports from all excavations of pre-Boudican levels in London, she brings together vast quantities of data which are discussed and illustrated according to a novel methodology that address both the difficulties and complexity of 'grey literature' and urban excavation.

LACEY M. WALLACE is currently a postdoctoral research associate in Roman Archaeology in the Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge; a postdoctoral research associate at Queens' College, Cambridge; a tutor at the Institute of Continuing Education, Cambridge; and the principal investigator of the Canterbury Hinterland Project.

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*of*  
ROMAN LONDON

LACEY M. WALLACE



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*For*  
FRED MARTIN  
*and*  
DOROTHEE FALZONE,  
*in memoriam*

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## FOREWORD

### ARCHAEOLOGY IN LONDON

The dataset to undertake this study of the earliest settlement in Londinium is rich because London has been subject to extensive archaeological excavation. The archaeology of London got a rather weak start in the post-war period and was only formalised by the creation of full-time archaeological organisations beginning in the 1970s (Sheldon and Haynes 2000: 3–8). There is a vast amount of data that has been collected, much of it archived, some of it published.

Although any deep excavation would have located Roman remains that were undoubtedly known to the inhabitants of medieval and early modern London, it was Sir Christopher Wren who first brought these to the attention of the academic community during his excavations to rebuild St Mary-le-Bow after the Great Fire, in 1671–3 (Wren 1750). Descriptions and sketches of remains found during construction projects witnessed by local antiquarians were regularly published through the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries in journals such as *Archaeologia* (e.g. Combe and Jackson 1786; Kempe 1832; and Lambert 1921), the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* (e.g. Cuming 1857), and *The Anthropological Review* (e.g. Lane Fox 1867) and were also presented in papers for the Society of Antiquaries of London, the British Museum, and elsewhere. Archaeologists, such as Lieutenant General Augustus Lane Fox (Pitt-Rivers), members of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society (LAMAS), and Charles Roach Smith (1859), made important observations during destructive construction work, and collections of objects were amassed by antiquarian collectors such as Roach Smith, the British Museum, and the Guildhall Museum.

During the Second World War London suffered significant destruction as a result of the Blitz of 1940–1.

Post-war rebuilding efforts spurred archaeologists to seize the opportunity to record features exposed by clearing the collapsed buildings and uncovering the sediment beneath their foundations. The Roman and Medieval London Excavation Committee, led by W. F. Grimes (1968) of the London Museum, was created to organise volunteers and record sites in the City, while Kathleen Kenyon (1959) led the effort to record and excavate archaeological remains in Southwark. In the face of great need for archaeological intervention, the Guildhall Museum and the London Museum appointed archaeological staff (see Sheppard 1991) and the Southwark Archaeological Excavation Committee (SAEC) also employed a full-time field officer. Volunteers and avocational archaeologists joined local societies to record the trenches in their neighbourhoods, but time and resources were minimal. As development quickened in the economic upswing of the 1950s and 1960s, the need for professional firms and governing legislation to record and preserve sites became clear. Significant and exciting finds, such as the discovery of the London Mithraeum in 1954 (Shepherd 1998), spurred public interest and outcry for the resources to record, collect, and preserve archaeological finds.

Meanwhile, the Guildhall Museum and the London Museum combined forces to form the Museum of London, which organised the first full-time professional archaeological organisation (working only in the City), the Department of Urban Archaeology (DUA), in 1973. Smaller organisations operating in areas other than the City (including the SAEC, which had expanded to conduct archaeological work also in Lambeth and became the Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Excavation Committee, or SLAEC) combined in 1983 to form another department of the Museum of London, the Department of Greater London Archaeology (DGLA).

Ultimately, Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG-16) was issued by the government in 1990 (but replaced

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by Planning Policy Statement 5 in 2010), making archaeology part of the planning process for new construction, after which time archaeological investigation became a fixed part of the process of construction. New archaeology firms were established to evaluate and excavate sites in the City and Southwark. A significant reorganisation and rebranding of the DUA and DGLA in 1992 created the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MOLAS) and the Museum of London Specialist Services (MOLSS). As a result of another rebranding in 2008, MOLAS and MOLSS combined to become Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA). The London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC), also a department of the Museum of London, opened in February 2002 to aid researchers, hold field and post-excavation paper, digital, and artefact archives, and encourage the study of the archaeology of London. The archive is implementing best practice and working to create more accessible digital records, but many difficulties remain.

London is probably the most extensively excavated provincial capital in the Roman Empire, but general awareness of the work there has been hindered by limitations in funding for post-excavation research and publication. As of June 2012, 1,599 sites where Roman artefacts and structures have been identified during evaluations, watching briefs, or excavations have been recorded on the LAARC online database ([www.museumoflondon.org.uk/laarc/catalogue/](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/laarc/catalogue/)) – 730 in the City, 273 in Southwark, and 596 in other (or unrecorded) boroughs (see also Perring and Brigham 2000: maps 7 and 8). While excavation of Roman sites in London has been driven by construction and spurred on by

passionate groups and by legislation, it has been hindered by downturns in the economic climate and by conflict; especially significant dates include the war years from 1939 to 1945, by the creation of the first professional full-time archaeological organisation (the DUA) in 1973, and by the establishment of PPG-16 in 1990 (Table 1). Most sites have been recorded by MOLA and its predecessors (Table 2), although other well-known organisations have also been active, especially since 1990 (Table 3).

The LAARC stores materials from more than 7,500 archaeological sites in Greater London. It is a resource of international significance and allows researchers direct access to primary information. The archive holds the existing paper and digital copies of the stratigraphic reports, materials catalogues and quantification, drawings, phasing indices, and specialist reports that are necessary for context-level analysis. Many older sites'

**Table 1.** *Number of sites with Roman material recorded that are included in the LAARC online database during significant periods*

Year range	Number of sites with Roman material recorded
Pre-dating 1940	86
1940 through 1945	0
1946 through 1949	19
1950 through 1959	72
1960 through 1972 (before the DUA)	106
1973 (DUA) through 1989 (before PPG-16)	477
1990 (PPG-16) through 2010	839
Total	1,599

**Table 2.** *Number of sites with Roman material recorded that are included in the LAARC online database investigated by the organisations that combined over the years to form MOLA*

Organisation	Years active	Number of sites with Roman material recorded
Guildhall Museum	until 1973	195
SAEC and SLAEC	1966 to 1982	82
DUA	1973 to 1992	286
DGLA	1983 to 1992	152
MOLAS/MOLA	1992 to present	455
Total		1,170

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**Table 3.** *Number of sites with Roman material recorded that are included in the LAARC online database investigated by organisations other than MOLA and its predecessors*

Organisation	Number of sites with Roman material recorded
Oxford Archaeology	24
PCA	107
PCA and MOLAS together	5
Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Ltd.	10
Wessex Archaeology	28
Other	255
Total	429

archive records are incomplete because post-excavation analysis was limited by time and financial considerations, while materials from more recent sites have often not yet been deposited. Consultation with the personnel at MOLAS/MOLA made a good portion of such data available for this project.

Site reports are not referenced in the text (Chapters 2–6) except in relation to specific interpretations. See Appendix: Gazetteer of Sites for the relevant publications for each site. Where no publication is listed, the only available information derived from the LAARC.

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Naturally, I remain responsible for any and all errors in this text, including those that are a result of using unpublished and archived drafts of site reports.