London, 300-700: decline and revival

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I'm writing a book about London between the fifth century and the late thirteenth. At the beginning of this period London, once one of the more substantial cities of the north-western part of the Roman Empire, more or less disappears from historical and archaeological view. The city re-emerges at the turn of the sixth and seventh century, and from then on we can trace the more or less continuous process by which London developed as a commercial and political force in the formation of a unified kingdom of England, of which by 1300, at a peak of its medieval population size, it had become the capital city in the modern sense of that term. How can we explore and conceptualise the transition over two centuries of the Roman to the early medieval city? With the collapse of the Roman economy in Britain early in the fifth century, coins and other closely dateable artefacts no longer provide a guide. Contemporary textual references hardly exist, and increasingly we realise that one of our prime historical sources, Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History of the English Peoples', written in the early eighth century, provides no more than a distanced and partial view, while earlier British writers on which Bede drew and the Roman and Byzantine histories which refer to Britain in the period are even more problematic. This is a difficult state of affairs with which to begin a book, so as a non-expert in the earlier part of the period I'm looking for critical responses to my initial ideas. To do this in Utrecht may itself be a stimulus, for both London and Utrecht were frontier settlements. Utrecht was literally liminal and, as you will see, London seems to have had a strategic role in relation to the imperial frontier. London, however, was the larger and more influential place. Both Roman settlements failed on account of the wider political, military and economic problems of the empire, Utrecht well before London. As a remote and militarised frontier province, third- and fourth-century Britain was peculiarly liable to internal disorders and the drainage of resources arising from the election of claimants to imperial power, among them Constantine the Great. Subsequently, economic and political collapse, possibly assisted by climate change, led to a severe contraction of population and urban life. In this process Anglo-Saxon immigration (let alone invasion) from the Continent played little part, and then only from about 450: local leaders and warlords during the fifth century are likely to have been predominantly of

British origin. Both Utrecht and London revived in response to new political formations which succeeded the empire and to seventh-century commercial growth. In this, it seems, London preceded Utrecht.

In founding London the Romans established a town which was both commercially and strategically significant for gaining control of Britain and which in more recent centuries has fulfilled a similar central role. Communications were the key, for London quickly became the focal point of the road system, enjoyed good river navigation inland, and had ready access down river to the North Sea, the Channel and, above all, to the mouths of the Rhine and other transcontinental routes of trade. The Thames also linked London effectively to the east and south coasts of Britain. The isle of Thanet and the passage and shelter offered by the Wantsum Channel, which separated that island from Kent, were important for both the trade and the security of London. In administrative and military strategies, the road from London to Canterbury and the Channel ports complemented the Thames, a key route via Boulogne to the Continent and centres of imperial rule.

Roman London, with its important suburb on the south bank of the Thames **(Fig. 1)** seems to have attained a peak in size and intensity of activity in the first half of the second century. Across the empire economic conditions then changed, one element being a decline in commerce and the beginning of shifts of wealth towards rural estate production and of power to imperial rather than civic structures. Imperial administration and a land-owning elite still had need of towns, but in many cases, including that of London, townscapes thinned out, leaving monumental structures relatively more prominent. The building of the wall enclosing the landward side of London, undertaken in the late second and early third centuries, created one of the largest walled circuits north of the Alps and seems to have been associated with a revival and a phase of substantial building, perhaps as much a political as a defensive act. Defensive needs presumably informed the building of the riverside wall later in the third century. Since this wall blocked access to many of the former quays, it can hardly have promoted commerce. The project was accompanied by further monumental building, some of it probably associated with late third-century usurper regimes and undertaken shortly before the arrival, in 296, of the Caesar Constantius Chlorus, who restored London and Britain to the ‘eternal light’ and whose advent to the fortified city was commemorated by the issue of a gold medallion (**Fig. 2**).

Following Diocletian's administrative experiments, London's standing was probably enhanced as the likely seat of the vicar of the new diocese of Britain and by its relative proximity to Trier, one of the four new imperial capitals. London retained this position during the reign of Constantine the Great, under whom Trier became the capital of the prefecture of the Gauls, comprising Britain, Gaul and Iberia. Constantine's reforms are likely to have affected London in other ways. For example, his confiscation of temple treasuries added substantially to the resources of the state and the Christian church, whose standing was enhanced over the fourth century both in terms of monumental building and the responsibilities assigned to its bishops. Britain, however, was 'on the edge of the world' and the little we know suggests that the church there was not the powerful institution that it became elsewhere. Nevertheless, a number of British cities had bishops and we know of one fourth-century bishop of London, Restitutus, and the late third century bishop-martyr Augulus may have belonged to London rather than another one of the cities in the empire with similar names. Constantine, son of Constantius Chlorus and proclaimed emperor in York, had a distinct interest in Britain and perhaps visited London early in his reign, visits likely to have been marked by monumental building, of which, however, no trace has yet been found. In the fourth century the city contained an imperial treasury. Over this period the standing and wealth of London's administrative and landowning elites, especially those with imperial or senatorial connections, is likely to have been enhanced.

Conflicts within the empire and Britain after the death of Constantine in 337 initiated a phase of disturbance and barbarian raiding in Britain, which though periodically brought under control persisted into the fifth century. The surprise visit there of Constantine's son Constans in the winter of 343 perhaps resulted in the strengthening of town fortifications and coastal defences. Two incidents in the 360s illustrate London's strategic significance. In 360, when Britain was troubled by the incursions of Picts and Scots, the Caesar Julian, being unwilling to leave Paris on account of the threat from the Alemanni, ordered a military force to march to Boulogne, sail to Richborough and then proceed to London, where the subsequent campaign was planned. In 367 the emperor Valentinian, on his way from Amiens to Trier, now the base for the Rhine frontier war as well as the seat of offices responsible for Britain, heard of the barbarian ravages on Britain from across the North Sea as well as by Picts and Scots, and sent a strong force under Count Theodosius who took

the same route to London, where he attacked the straggling bands of the enemy, made a triumphant entry to the city and set about restoring order. In writing of these events a couple of decades later, Ammianus Marcellinus noted that that London had become known as Augusta. This was a title also enjoyed by Trier and one which reflected London's special association with imperial rule. It may have been accorded to London on account of its role during the 360s, although it is usually assumed that the title was conferred much earlier, possibly under Constantine. If the gold solidus issued by Magnus Maximus (**Fig 3**), the military commander in Britain who rebelled in the 380s and then set up court at Trier, was minted in London, as seems likely, that would have been another expression of the city's military and fiscal significance. This coin would have been the last issue of the mint of Roman London.

At the end of the fourth century London may have been relatively peaceful and secure, but was in a much-reduced state. Early in the century the second-century forum and basilica, the largest north of the Alps, had been largely razed to the ground, marking the eclipse of civic government. About the same time temples and other monumental public buildings were demolished, earth and timber buildings sometimes being erected on their sites. Many stone residences were abandoned, although settlement may have continued in simpler structures of which no traces have been identified. The stone walls of the amphitheatre were robbed. Some intra mural areas had begun to be used for burial and concentrated settlement **(Fig 4)** appears now to have been limited to the area around the northern end of London Bridge. Yet the entire defensive circuit was restored soon after the visit of Constans, a new ditch being dug outside the wall. About that time bastions were added to the eastern part of the wall and possibly around the entire circuit. Special attention was given to the downstream, south-eastern area within the walls. The riverside wall itself was strengthened at the corner, presumably to control the approach up the Thames. To the north of what is now Tower Hill a large building of basilican plan incorporating reused materials was erected during the second half of the fourth century. This remarkable structure has been claimed as a church, but is much more likely to have functioned as a warehouse. Such a role, in conjunction with the strengthened defences and the discovery of stamped silver ingots **(Fig 5)** of late fourth- or early fifth-century date close to the Tower of London suggests that the city, or this south eastern part of it, now served as a strategic centre of military and governmental resources for the control of Britain, perhaps reinforced after the expeditions of the 360s. London may

have been far from the land frontier but, as in later centuries, it was well-placed for transmitting military resources to the north, while in the fourth century its relatively direct exposure to the North Sea gave it a distinctive frontier position of its own.

We know hardly anything about London in the early fifth century, and sound historical information about Britain is lacking, but the fragmentation of the western empire probably hit the city especially hard on account of its new vulnerability to the interests of those with political and military power. Thus the ambitions and fears of its own elite are likely increasingly to have focused on Gaul and Italy rather than on Britain. The Gothic wars of 402-5 denied troops and other resources to Britain. The absence of coin finds suggests that there cannot have been a formal Roman military presence in Britain for long after then. The mass barbarian crossing of the Rhine in December 406, would have been a cause of special concern in London. Soon afterwards Constantine III, elevated to imperial status by the army in Britain, crossed to Gaul with his troops and he strove to control the continental part of the Gallic prefecture. London presumably continued to have some role within the prefecture, but the removal of its seat from Trier to Arles made the city ever more remote from Roman authority. With the eventual disintegration of Constantine's Gallic 'empire' in 411, London's strategic raison d'etre would have been removed. About this time when, according to the mid fifth-century Gallic Chronicle, Saxon raids devastated Britain, London may have reached its tipping point, the remaining military units being withdrawn and the remnants of its official class deciding to seek better opportunities elsewhere, perhaps in Gaul, thereby depriving the remaining inhabitants of the city of their main source of income. Later stories of a British revolt, leading to an expulsion of Roman magistrates from the island, and even of the 'Honorian rescript' are likely to have been fanciful.

In these circumstances, lower status towns situated further inland, such as Verulamium or Silchester, less reliant on military expenditure and more embedded in local resources and networks of exchange, may have had a greater chance of maintaining some coherence as urban centres, a local administration and people of relative substance. In 429 Bishop Germanus of Auxerre lead an anti-Pelagian mission to southern Britain where they encountered a great crowd of wealthy and well-dressed people, including bishops and a man of 'tribunician power'. The mission confuted their beliefs. The site of this assembly is not identified, but is often assumed to be Verulamium since the account goes on to describe how Germanus visited the burial

place of St Alban and collected some of the martyr's remains. The meeting-place, however, could have been some other town, perhaps even London which in that case presumably still have had some role as a place of authority and settlement. On the other hand, the material evidence suggests that London was more or less deserted by then. Yet, like Britain as a whole, London was in some manner to remain a part of the Roman world.

Evidence for activity in London after the early fifth century is very slight. The city's Roman cemeteries ceased to be used about that time. Important recent discoveries near the church of St Martin in the Fields, 2 km west of the city and now a prominent feature in Trafalgar Square, include a Roman stone sarcophagus, the skeleton within which has a C14 date reported to centre on the first half of the fifth century, and a tile kiln nearby which was last fired in the same period. In the city itself shards of Mediterranean amphorae which indicate trading contacts and may date from the fifth to sixth century have been found in the city, but they could be earlier (or later) in date. A possibly mid fifth-century Anglo-Saxon brooch was found over the collapsed ruins of a Roman stone bath-house near the river, a building which had been still standing 50 years before. These uncertain indications suggest much slighter trading contacts with the Roman world than are apparent in the south-west and north west of England in this period. They testify to a very low level of activity in the city, in apparent contrast to Silchester, which, it has recently been argued, displays throughout the fifth and sixth centuries a continuing re-use of artefacts and the repair and reconstruction of buildings, although within a diminishing resource base. It is in contrast also to the evidence for long-run continuity of shifting settlement apparent on some rural sites. At this point we should admit that the character of late- and post-Roman archaeological deposits in the city of London, which are highly disturbed by later intrusions, coupled with the nature of archaeological recording and reporting there, limits the possibilities for the types of observation and interpretation undertaken at Silchester.

It's been suggested that a so-called ring of early Anglo-Saxon settlements and cemeteries to the south and east of London **(Fig. 6)**, some of them close to the sites of Roman (or former Roman) villas and to Roman roads, reflects the boundary of a territory controlled by an authority in London and had something to do with the defence of that territory by irregular Germanic troops. The military elements in that idea now seem highly unlikely, but I'd be reluctant entirely to abandon the possibility

that some form of authority, if only intermittent, persisted in London. However, there are good arguments against the idea of a defended boundary. Clear association with continuing Romano-British settlements has not been demonstrated. The cemeteries seem not to be datable to earlier than the mid fifth century, by which date there are grounds for believing that London was more or less uninhabited. At the time of their first appearance the numbers of immigrants involved were very small It is interesting, however, that Gildas, a sixth-century writer based in western Britain where Romano-British institutions, principally those of the church, survived more distinctly than in eastern Britain, noted the mid fifth century as the period when the Saxons revolted against native rulers, a possible exaggeration which has been unduly influential on some interpretations of events in the south-east. Finally, to return to the London area, the pattern of immigrant settlement does not in fact to take the form of a zone surrounding the city, but seems rather to have been determined by the movement of immigrants with moving up the Thames and its tributaries in search of suitable sites for settlement within a sparsely settled countryside.

Over subsequent decades the settlements and cemeteries in the London area grew and by the early sixth century there is evidence for an increasing number of settlements across an area to the north and north west of the city. The region appears slowly to have been becoming repopulated and its inhabitants probably included ‘Britons’ who adopted the increasingly dominant immigrant culture and so became ‘Saxons’. The evidence of place-names has sometimes been adduced to suggest the survival in this environment of pockets of unacculturated ‘Britons’. The names Walworth and Wallington in Surrey are cases in point, the wal- element of the name denoting ‘foreigners’, or ‘Welsh’. I can’t speak for the rural names, but observe that the name Walbrook -- a stream bisecting the walled city of London -- which has often been claimed as evidence for a continuing presence of Britons there, is most likely of much later origin. Here, wal- clearly denotes the foreign merchants from the Rhineland, Lotharingia and France who from the eleventh or twelfth century onwards congregated at the confluence of the stream with the Thames.

Moreover, evidence is emerging which points to fifth- and early sixth-century settlement close to the city itself. At Clerkenwell, 700 metres to the north of Newgate, a quantity of pottery said to date from the mid fifth century, or earlier, has been found and similar pottery has been recovered at the site of St Bride’s church in Fleet Street, much closer to the city. These two sites may fall into the pattern of new immigrant

settlement determined by the movement of incomers along the Thames and its tributaries, as may the fifth-century brooch found within the city walls. A pot said to date from around 500 found near St Martin in the Fields may indicate another settlement near London, possibly reusing a still recognisable burial site abandoned a century earlier.

It's not unlikely that after the mission of Germanus there were occasional visitors to London or its region coming from Continental areas in the Roman or sub-Roman sphere. A provision concerning slaves in the Pactus Legis Salicae of about 500 may indicate that Frankish rulers claimed hegemony over at least a part of Britain. Such claims possibly extended to London and beyond. A number of pewter ingots found in the Thames near Battersea (**Fig 6**) may reflect such contacts, as well as trade between western and eastern Britain. They bear a Christian symbol and the name Syagrius, possibly the last *magister militum per Gallias* who ruled a territory between Soissons and the English Channel for some 20 years up to 486-7. Alternatively, Syagrius could have been the name of an official at a time when Britain was under Roman rule. More definite evidence of external contacts is the appreciable number of gold coins, predominantly of Frankish Merovingian origin, which appear in Britain from the second quarter of the sixth century onwards, the earliest from a hoard at Kingston, a few kilometres upstream from London. The earliest from London itself, however, perhaps date from the seventh century. While these coins indicate contact with a continental region wealthier than Britain and where towns had experienced some degree of survival from the Roman period, they were probably used as symbolic gifts and for personal decoration rather than as a medium of exchange.

London does not re-emerge clearly into view until *c.*600 in Bede's account of Pope Gregory the Great's mission to Britain lead by Augustine, an account which Bede, writing about 730, based in part on contemporary documents obtained from Rome. Gregory, who evidently possessed some record of Roman Britain, intended London to be the premier among the twelve bishoprics that were to be established under Augustine's supervision. Political realities, however, meant that the course of the mission was dictated by its initial contact with Ethelbert, the ruler of Kent, who exercised a wider influence in southern Britain, and whose base (or metropolis, as Bede once described it) was the former Roman city of Canterbury. Thus the first, and eventually archiepiscopal, see was established at Canterbury. During the sixth century Frankish culture was influential in north and east Kent and Ethelbert, a pagan,

had married a Christian member of the Frankish royal family. He was in some way a client of the Franks who perhaps for political as well as for religious purposes, assisted Augustine's mission. Contemporary Frankish sources, however, do not indicate that their rulers had a strong interest in Britain. Ethelbert was also overlord of the East Saxons, whose 'metropolis', according to Bede, was London. Thus politics as well as religion probably informed Ethelbert's establishment of the cathedral church of St Paul in the city of London in 604, following missionary activity among the East Saxons undertaken by one of Augustine's companions. Roman Christianity, intended by Pope Gregory to bring to order an island which was both pagan and included pockets of a surviving but deviant British church, thus became a useful tool for local rulers in asserting their superiority. Gregory, Ethelbert and perhaps also the East Saxons acknowledged the standing of London as a Roman city.

In describing London as the 'metropolis of the East Saxons' Bede probably had in mind the conditions of his own time rather than those of a century earlier, on which he had little local information. We can be reasonably sure that the new cathedral was within the city walls, but not necessarily on the site now occupied by St Paul's. Archaeological evidence offers no help. If London was some sort of centre for the East Saxons in 604, it was probably one of several in their territory, for political authority there and elsewhere was weak, localised and tended to fragmentation. Any site or residence associated with East Saxon authority in London is likely to have been close to that where St Paul's was established. Thus there is a possibility, but no more, that by 604 (**Fig 8)** East Saxon rulers had established an enclave within the projecting western end of the city walls, where the later cathedral and royal residence lay, the only area within the walls to contain significant archaeological evidence of activity between the seventh and the ninth century. This focus at the western end of the walled enclosure represented a distinct shift from the area east of Walbrook which had contained the Roman city's sites of authority. It may also be significant that this new site of authority was close to the Fleet River and possible fifth-century settlements beside it.

Well outside the walls, at St Martin in the Fields, there is evidence for renewed activity in the late sixth or early seventh century in the form of a group of elite burials, some of them reusing Roman sarcophagi, presumably from the earlier cemetery on the site (**Fig 9**). Grave goods included a hanging bowl likely to have been obtained from Ireland and distinctive glass cups. There was probably a

connection between this revival of the burial ground and the foundation of St Paul's. One possibility is that the Italian bishop from visible monuments identified the site as a Roman burial ground and so designated it as an appropriate place for the interment of members of a recently converted East Saxon elite, outside the walls of the city in accordance with Roman law. The church of St Martin, not recorded before the twelfth century, perhaps originated at this time. The dedication is certainly appropriate, for both the church of reputed Roman origin outside the walls of Canterbury, where Ethelbert's queen had worshipped before his conversion, and the chapel within the extra-mural monastery at Canterbury where Ethelbert and his queen were buried were dedicated to St Martin. We need to know more about the environs of St Martin in the Fields during this period.

Roman Christianity was not firmly established, for following the deaths of Ethelbert and of Saeberht, ruler of the East Saxons, in 616-17 their peoples reverted to paganism, those of London rejecting their bishop and 'preferring to serve idolatrous priests'. London then appears to have had no bishop until the 660s. Recorded events indicate a shifting pattern in the control of London, as the rulers of emerging polities based elsewhere realised the advantages that it could offer them. Ethelbert's son Eadbald had not been baptised and immediately demonstrated his paganism by marrying his stepmother. However, he soon converted, probably as a result of Frankish influence, and in the 630s bowed to the authority of the king of Northumbria. At that time he was in control of London and issued a gold coinage there with a Christian message **(Fig 10)**, but the status of St Paul's is far from clear. In the 650s, at the request of the king of the East Saxons, the king of Northumbria sent a peripatetic Irish missionary to evangelise in their territory **(Fig. 11)**. This missionary established churches at Tilbury and Bradwell, perhaps local centres of power, but displayed no interest in London, possibly because it was under Kentish control or was coming under that of the Midland kingdom of Mercia (centred in the neighbourhood of Birmingham), which at that time freed itself from Northumbrian overlordship. When the East Saxons again apostatised in 665, the king of Mercia's bishop evangelised among them and at the same time controlled London, for it was from him that Wine, expelled from the West Saxon see, purchased that of London. Wine retained the see until his death (*c*.672), but was ostracised by Theodore, the vigorous new archbishop of Canterbury for whom London was an important site for church business. It seems to have been from after 675 under the next bishop of London,

Erkenwald, probably a member of the Kentish royal house, that St Paul's and the see of London were effectively restored. Before he became bishop Erkenwald had promoted monasteries at Chertsey and Barking, respectively upstream and downstream of London. Chertsey had been founded by the king of Kent between 664 and 673, an act soon afterwards confirmed under the authority of the Mercian king. Thereafter, London and its region seem usually to have been under Mercian rule, at times exercised through sub-kings. The defeat of the Mercians by the Northumbrians in 674 and the death of the Mercian king soon afterwards perhaps interrupted this hegemony, although his successor quickly and violently asserted his power over Kent. Nevertheless, according to laws associated with kings of Kent ruling between 673 and 685, they exercised authority in London, while King Ine of the West Saxons, following the expansion of his power into parts of Surrey and Kent was able to refer to advice received from 'my bishop Erkenwald', at a date between 688 and 693.

Further complexities concerning secular authority in London relate to the continuing interest of the kings of the East Saxons. Bede's account implies that the early diocese of London corresponded to the province of the East Saxons, a territory larger than that of the later medieval diocese. For example, it included the region known as Hemel (**Fig 11 cont**), granted by a king of the East Saxons to the bishop of London early in the eighth century. Thus St Alban's, the Christian cult centre with the strongest claim to continuity from Roman times, would appear to have come under the jurisdiction of the early bishops of London. It's unlikely, however, that this has any implications for our understanding of the territory that surrounded London in the decades following the collapse of Roman rule. My view is that such a territory is less likely to have 'survived' than to have been built up as new structures of rule evolved and that the identities of peoples such as the East Saxons (and later the Middle Saxons) owed much to that same process. On the other hand, this indication of the extent of East Saxon territory demonstrates the relative geographical centrality of London in East Saxon interests in the seventh century and probably therefore to Bede's sense of it as their metropolis. Moreover, the connection between London and East Saxon identity was especially strong at the end of the century for their king Saebbi, a religious man who at the beginning of his reign had welcomed the Mercian evangeliser in his part of the East Saxon territory, was dwelling in the *urbs* of London at the time of his death and was buried at St Paul's.

The increasing attraction of London to seventh-century rulers presumably lay in its role as a commercial centre with links to the growing commerce of north-western Europe. Eadbald's London gold coinage of the 630s had a fairly wide distribution, including at least one find just across the Channel, suggesting that it had some use in trade. It was probably about that time that there first emerged the trading settlement on the north bank of the Thames upstream of the Roman walled city, where it probably centred on a spot 1.5 km from St Paul's (**Fig 12)**. The choice of this site, which came to be known as the *wic* or *vicus* of London, was probably dictated by the difficulty of gaining access from the river across the substantial ruins along the waterfront and other buildings within the city walls, and perhaps by the presence of a royal and ecclesiastical enclave, where the waterfront was reserved for elite use. Royal and other elite demands, along with royal regulation, were important stimuli to trade, but the choice of an extra-mural location may also have been informed by a desire for the degree of freedom necessary for mercantile success. Small settlements to the west of the city may have been nuclei for growth. The new commercial settlement occupied gently rising ground above the steep slope coming up from the river frontage, where ships drew up at jetties or quays. The principal street was probably on the line of The Strand, which itself followed the line of the Roman road to Ludgate and would have provided direct access to the high-status area within the wall. This was the port of London, 'where ships come to land', next to which Chertsey Abbey acquired land confirmed in its possession in the 670s. Barking Abbey likewise probably acquired land there by 674 and further land *supra vicum Lundonie* (perhaps meaning 'above The Strand') by 688.

Our best understanding of the early development of the settlement is derived from the important excavations at Covent Garden, about 250 metres north-west of the Strand (**Fig 13)** and so well away from the river. Here, its earliest phase is represented by a group of graves on differing alignments, probably part of a larger area devoted to a scatter of burials. If a brooch and a glass cup found on the site (**Fig. 14)** were redeposited goods from burials there, then the cemetery would have been contemporary with but distinct from that at St Martin's and a C14 date from one of the burials suggests a similar date. This cemetery presumably served a settlement lying towards the river. It passed out of use and its site was used for dumping rubbish before the settlement expanded over it. The first phase of this expansion (**Fig 15)** may be represented by a scatter, somewhat suburban in character, of buildings and fences

on an almost north-south alignment, while what seems to be the second phase (**Fig 16**) is represented by the laying out of a well-constructed street on a different alignment and at right angles to the Strand. This street was presumably intended to facilitate further expansion and perhaps to connect the Strand with the Roman road on the line of New Oxford Street to the north. The lie of the land suggests that this was a central street within the settlement and part of a notable exercise in town planning. Dead reckoning suggests that these activities had been completed by about 675. Burials some 200 metres further out along the new street, themselves eventually overlaid by the expanding settlement, include one dating from the mid seventh century or later.

Animal bones from the phase up to 675, including those from the rubbish dumps and those associated with the subsequent buildings suggest intensive activity in the processing of livestock for urban consumption and for crafts such as leather making and bone working. This activity, perhaps already using salt transported from the well-known sources in Mercia formerly exploited by the Romans, could have contributed to exports of foodstuffs and leather. In the next phase on the site the houses were rebuilt, but on the earlier alignment. With further rebuilding, however, perhaps accomplished soon after 700, structures aligned on the street appear, indicating the emergence of a dense urban environment where access to passing trade was important. In this phase there is evidence from within the buildings for bone- and iron-working and for weaving, although textiles may not yet have become a London export. Ceramic finds increase in number during this phase and indicate continuing contacts with 'northern France'; new ones with the region of Cologne, indicating an import trade in wine and perhaps other luxuries, for which London could serve as market for distribution inland; and perhaps some trade with the valleys of the Seine and the Meuse. This geographical pattern of contacts had been an important element in London's trade in the Roman period and was to continue throughout the Middle Ages. In this period it was articulated through close connections with comparable trading settlements over overseas, including Quentovic on the river Canche to the south of Boulogne and Dorestadt near the mouth of the Rhine, ports to which soon after 700 the West Saxon missionary Boniface, later the first archbishop of Mainz and well-known in Utrecht, set sail from London.

Other sources indicate London commercial growth during the later seventh century, justifying Bede's description of it as an *emporium* for many nations. From

about 670 onwards a new coinage was introduced in Frankish, English and Frisian territories (i.e. around the mouths of the Rhine). Consisting of silver denarii, this facilitated a greater extent of exchange than gold coins had done. The earliest English series originated in Kent, London and estuarine Essex, indicating the commercial coherence of that region, where local coins mingled in circulation along with smaller numbers of Frisian origin. They also spread to other parts of England and to the Continent. The later seventh-century laws of the kings of Kent throw some light on the regulation of London's commercial settlement, including provision for securing the deals of men Kent in 'London wic', where the king had a hall, perhaps a courthouse in The Strand, and a 'wic reeve' who supervised royal interests and was probably responsible for collecting tolls. Apart from commodities already mentioned, London's exports probably included slaves: Bede mentions a Northumbrian prisoner of war captured by Mercians in 679 and sold to a Frisian in London. Further evidence of the extent to which by the mid eighth century London had developed as a hub of regional and international trade, linking the Midlands to the havens of east Kent, is provided by the exemptions from toll in London of ships belonging to a group of ecclesiastical institutions. Beneficiaries included the episcopal churches of London, Worcester and Rochester, and the abbey at Minster in Thanet. Institutions such as these and other major landlords made an important contribution towards articulating local and long-distance trade though their consumption of imports and the distribution of the produce of their estates, both probably often handled by professional merchants acting on their behalf. As we have seen, such institutions, which eventually probably included at least one religious house overseas, owned extensive property within the *wic*.

The London *wic* eventually grew to cover at least 60 hectares containing a population of several thousands. Its buildings of earth and timber (**Fig 17**), however, were slight and quickly run up, in striking contrast to the solidity of much of Roman London, but not, it's useful to observe, to many of the buildings used by the lesser inhabitants of the Roman city. The wic probably included several local churches, for which St Martin's may have been a mother church. Had it not been for the Scandinavian incursions of the ninth century, which prompted the resettlement of the city within the Roman walls, the Strand area could have become the business centre of modern London. Seventh-century London was set on a course of development, depending primarily on its role as a centre of commercial exchange, which was

significantly different from that of its late Roman predecessor. Nevertheless, there were common features worth noting and the renewed London was imbued with a Roman ideology. St Paul's, presumably a masonry building, was an expression of Roman authority; as in Roman times rulers used the London mint for issuing high value coins or medallions, bearing imperial symbols, to express their standing and to commemorate key events. Ideas concerning the regulation of trade and the writing down of laws were ultimately of Roman origin. Moreover, the physical remains of the Roman city were in the early Middle Ages an enduring reminder of Rome as a model, as an ancestor and as source of ideas concerning the ordering of towns and wider society, ideas periodically revisited in later centuries. Visible Roman remains included the city walls and gates, walls of some domestic buildings which still rose above ground level in the eleventh century, and ruins which survived as topographical features to influence later patterns of building and circulation. In all sorts of ways, Roman London survived, but our attempts to understand what people did there during the fifth, sixth and early seventh centuries are constantly frustrated by the available evidence.