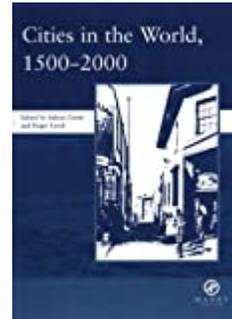




**Adrian Green, Roger Leech, eds.** *Cities in the World, 1500-2000: Papers Given at the Conference of the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology, April 2002.* London: Maney Publishing, 2006. 333 pp. \$135.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-904350-02-6.



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## Archaeologies of Modern Cities

This book comprises a selection of papers given at the Conference for the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology in April 2002 at the University of Southampton. While the collection as a whole still has impact through its numerous (and detailed) case studies, this has been blunted by the passage of time. Back in 2002 the rhetorical pieces calling for a higher archaeological profile for the archaeology of the modern city (particularly the introduction by Adrian Green and the contributions to “Future Directions” by Susan Lawrence and Roger Leech) would have had a great deal more impact than they do now. The argument that cities (particularly the remains of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in cities) have real historical potential that we ignore at our peril, is now more widely accepted and is enshrined in changed preservation legislation in many countries.

But this book is about more than flag-waving about the potential of archaeology to inform us about urban lives. It is also about urban places and landscapes, and it is these papers that present a focus and contain a message that is broader and deeper than the now familiar

construals of urban archaeology in New York, Sydney, San Francisco, Melbourne, and Boston.

It is a commonplace that conference volumes generally provide a mixed bag in terms of quality and authority, but the papers in *Cities in the World* are of a uniformly high standard. They also make some sense as a group, although it’s pretty clear that if one were to commission papers to advance the idea of the archaeology of the modern city the breadth of coverage would be narrower and somewhat deeper. Thus the papers in the first two sections—“Urban Places in Africa” and “Urban Places in the Atlantic World”—while being interesting discussions of urban and town life in those places, sit oddly with later sections. Mind you the same can be said of the papers comprising the fourth section—“War, Memory and Death in the Urban Landscape”—where once again we have some fascinating insights into cemeteries and landscapes of conflict. Nonetheless, while there is a sense that a number of the contributions to *Cities in the World* are peripheral to the major thrust of the volume, from another perspective they stand as interesting interventions

in a broader conversation about urban places.

Returning to a narrower reading of the archaeology of the modern city readers will find much of substance in the papers comprising sections 3 and 5—“Urban Space and Society in Britain” and “Archaeology and Urban Lives.” The papers in section 3 focus primarily on industrial landscapes, particularly in London, Sheffield, and Manchester. These are excellent evocations of really important research that has been going on in major English centers for some time now and they provide a richness of information and insight that really begins to do justice to such iconic places that had such a massive influence on the creation of the modern world. One can only hope that detailed historical archaeologies of other major centers such as Liverpool, Newcastle and Glasgow are in the offing, and that the work reported here will serve as a basis for further investigations.

The papers in section 5, “Archaeology and Urban Lives,” cover more familiar territory (at least for this reviewer). Here we are given examples drawn from the United Kingdom, North America, and Australia of the

power of historical archaeology to significantly enhance our understanding of the lives of people who have not figured so largely in contemporary historical documents. The archaeology of the urban poor (working class, migrant, frequently multi-ethnic communities) has taken on a real richness and texture through the work of Rebecca Yamin in New York and Grace Karskens in Sydney. Importantly the message of potential has been successfully broadcast all over the former settler world to the point now that significant advances on the work that we see published here have been made in places as diverse as San Francisco, Cape Town, and Melbourne. It has yet to really make its mark in the United Kingdom, but this cannot be long off as new work in places such as Hungegate (in York) strongly references this research from the peripheries of the former empire.

*Cities in the World* will help spread the message further. Notwithstanding its somewhat eclectic nature it is filled with strong and positive statements about the possibilities of a global approach to the archaeology of cities in the modern world.

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