



Newsome, D.J. (2011) 'Review: Amanda Claridge, *Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010.' *Rosetta* 9: 75-82.

[http://www.rosetta.bham.ac.uk/Issue\\_09/reviews/newsome\\_claridge.pdf](http://www.rosetta.bham.ac.uk/Issue_09/reviews/newsome_claridge.pdf)

---

**Amanda Claridge, *Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. 560. 160 b/w site maps, plans and photographs. £18.99. ISBN 978-0-19-954683-1 (Pbk).**

Reviewed by David J. Newsome  
*University of Birmingham*

### *Context*

Amanda Claridge's *Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide* has been a staple reference on the ancient city for English speaking students and tourists for the last decade. Since the first edition (1998), our knowledge of the archaeology of the city has been rewritten as a result of some of the largest excavations since the 1930s, few of which have found their way into detailed monographs.<sup>1</sup> Only the most fantastical discoveries are reported (usually before being refuted) in the English media, such as the discovery of the Lupercal (November 2007), Nero's rotating dining room on the Palatine (September 2009), or Hadrian's *Athenaeum* beneath Piazza Venezia (October 2009). However, the results of Italian excavations are increasingly accessible thanks to a series of initiatives and revisions. One of the surest ways for Anglophone students to keep apace with developments has been Robert Coates-Stephens' *Notes from Rome* in the *PBSR*, which rounds up findings from the previous year and shortcuts (though it should not supplant) the need to consult Rome's *rassegna stampa*. Shortly after Claridge's second edition was published, John Patterson's important survey article appeared fully revised in the latest *Journal of Roman Studies*.<sup>2</sup> Claridge's and

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2007. Packer's 1997 report on the imperial fora was an excellent summary of recent studies and discoveries for an English readership but had no routine successor. No English language volume on the excavations has yet been published.

<sup>2</sup> Patterson 1992; 2010. At the time of writing (17/1/11), Patterson's revised survey was the most downloaded article from the *JRS* on the Cambridge Journals website.

Patterson's surveys are core texts for courses on the city of Rome, and Coates-Stephens' will be too; students of 2011 rejoice.

The *Oxford Archaeological Guides* series has two functions and readerships. Primarily, they are guidebooks for the traveller. Secondly, they are an introductory survey – in this case to the topography of the ancient city – for the (most likely undergraduate) student. It is probably fair to suggest that the first edition occupied more space on student bookshelves than in suitcases or on site in Rome. Claridge's second edition maintains the standards of the first as a balanced and user-friendly synthesis. While the student is likely to use the book as they might a topographical dictionary, jumping from site to site via the index, the ambition to provide the tourist with a *guide* to the city remains clear. The work is largely structured into itineraries, sections begin with street references to orientate the reader, and longer excursions include details of bus routes and metro stops. That the guide is structured for ease of use in Rome (by 'archaeological tourists' [p.2]) is evident in the order by which sites are discussed, for example: 'the order followed here assumes that you enter the Forum from the Via dei Fori Imperiali' (p.69). Similarly, the guide groups sites by region rather than chronologically or thematically. Because Claridge's is a guide to the accessible sites of the city, those areas which do not have an abundance of publicly accessible remains are excluded.

### *Revisions and additions*

The second edition includes revisions in the light of new evidence and reinterpretation, the addition of more sites, and the updating of itineraries to account for changes to museum opening hours, admission prices, and so on. The result of this is that the second edition is 85 pages longer than the first. Promotional literature indicates that there are 'over 20' new sites.<sup>3</sup> However,

---

<sup>3</sup> These are, in order (new section headings in capitals): Forum of Nerva: S end; Temple-Forum of Peace: W corner; Forum of Nerva: N end; Theatre and Porticus of Pompey; Circus Flaminius; Insula of S. Paola alla Regola; Roman Houses under SS Giovanni e Paolo; LATERAN - PORTA MAGGIORE (Lateran; Lateran Basilica; Castrense

this number is somewhat misleading; there are also additions in the main body of text which fall under another subheading and which are missed from such a count. One example is the multi-period *insula* of the *vicus Caprarius* excavated under the Cinema Trevi between 1999 and 2001, close to the famous fountain (p.222). This is accessible to the public from a quiet side-street at 25 vicolo del Puttarello and deserves to be on any tourist trail. Conversely, not all 'new' entries in the contents are newly written, rather they are the product of changes in the organisation of the text: the entry for the 'Theatre and Porticus of Pompey' (pp.239-41), for example, is now given its own heading rather than being subsumed within the earlier section on 'Piazza Navona-Stadium of Domitian' (1998: pp.209-14, 214).

Rewriting for the second edition is only done where necessary, and the extent of revisions is contingent upon the extent of new data or interpretations in the years since the first edition. Accordingly, the biggest changes can be found in the section on the imperial fora (see below for specific discussions).<sup>4</sup> The most significant changes to the structure of the book come towards the end, where the "Some Other Sites" of the first edition (1998: pp.346-76) is replaced by several clearly defined sections. This format is more satisfying than the earlier assortment and will be welcomed by the tourist reader in particular. It is here that the majority of new entries are located.

Again, the museums section is a boon for the tourist audience, providing enough detail to the main (and some of the more obscure) collections that this could reasonably stand in place of separate guidebooks for each. There was

---

Amphitheatre; *Sessorium* – Imperial Gardens at 'Old Hope'); ACROSS THE TIBER (*Excubitorium* of the Fire Brigade; Sanctuary of the Syrian Gods at the Spring of Furrina); PARKS OF THE VIA APPIA (Almo Valley (Caffarella Park), Temple-tombs and 'Nymphaeum of Egreria'; Hypogeum of Vibia; Villa of the Quintilii); OTHER SITES OUTSIDE THE WALLS (Tomb of the Lucilii; Sanctuary of Anna Perenna at the Spring of the Nymphs; Villa at the Auditorium); and also descriptions of the new museums at Centrale Montemartini and Crypta Balbi.

<sup>4</sup> For an overview see the review of Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2007 in *Rosetta* 6.

a significant overhaul of Rome's cultural heritage offer in anticipation of soaring visitor numbers for the Millennium, and this section reflects these changes. Oddly, however, the Comune's new showpiece - Il Museo dei Fori Imperiali nei Mercati di Traiano (opened in Autumn 2007) - is barely mentioned in the main text and is entirely absent from the museums section (p.103; 195).

*Engaging with wider debates: the imperial fora*

The largest, concerted programme of excavations in Rome since the first edition focused on the imperial fora. It is particularly interesting to review the changes to this section of the guide, not only because Claridge has been involved in some of the most lively recent debates on the topography of this area, but because it allows us to see how new material evidence has changed assumptions or inferences since the mid- to late-1990s. Perhaps the most important addition to the second edition is the amount of information pertaining to the late Antique and early-Medieval developments within the imperial fora. These remains contribute to the 'chaotic multi-period debris' that the visitor might see from via dei Fori Imperiali (p.171).

Recently, Claridge neatly expressed the study of Roman topography as 'a fragile construct [...] loosely bound together in a judicious balance of probabilities'.<sup>5</sup> The evidence from the imperial fora demonstrates how different interpretations of specific details can cause the greatest polarity between alternative reconstructions. A prime example of this is the *templum Pacis* (pp.170-4). As well as allowing the calculation of what had previously been estimated, such as the dimensions of the monumental complex, excavation has added to the debate over how we should interpret the six long lines of interlinked rectangles that appear on the Severan *Forma Urbis Romae*.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Claridge 2007: 55.

<sup>6</sup> The differences in the size of the complex can be compared at: 1998: 153, "literally square in shape (c.100 x 108m)", and 2010: 172, "almost square in shape (the actual dimensions can now be calculated at c.110 x 105 m)".

Claridge describes these as ‘an enigma which the excavation at the W corner was expected to solve, but it has not, or not quite’ (p.172). This assessment is quite different from that published by the excavators, who vindicate their entire programme by stating that only by the excavations were we able to identify the purpose of these lines.<sup>7</sup> In the first edition, Claridge wondered ‘whether they might not have been stalls’ (1998:155). Here, that interpretation is pressed further. Claridge interprets fourth century brickwork upon earlier foundations as evidence of what look like ‘market stalls or workshops’ (pp.172-3), and later refers to these enigmatic features by the rather more specific epithet ‘the Late Roman stalls’ (p.173). She sums up the (Italian) reconstruction of six marble-coated water canals (*euripi*), surrounded by Gallic roses, as ‘pure fantasy’ (p.173). If Claridge’s interpretation is correct, then this raises significant questions about the nature of commercial space in this area in the late first century A.D. and its subsequent development into Late Antiquity within the complex. The *templum Pacis* replaced the area of the *macellum* and is often seen as indicative of a change in the nature and character of this part of the city. If stalls were an integral part of this new complex (architecturally defined rather than moveable tables), this may need revising, and would contribute to our understanding of the ways in which movement through this space was articulated by permanent structures of a commercial nature.<sup>8</sup> There is much more to be said here.

This is not the only discord between Claridge’s interpretation of the excavation data and the reconstructions issued hitherto by the excavators themselves. Another area of differing opinions is the junction between the fora of Augustus and Trajan. In 1998, the first wave of excavations had already indicated that the end of the *Forum Traiani* ‘curved outwards towards the Forum of Augustus’ (1998: 162), and it was expected that a triumphal arch would be found in the centre. This was not the case, and the ‘arch’ depicted on coins

---

<sup>7</sup> Meneghini & Santangeli Valenzani 2007: 63, “soltanto gli scavi ne hanno permesso una corretta identificazione”.

<sup>8</sup> On moving through the *templum Pacis*, see Macaulay-Lewis 2011 in press, in which the space is characterised as a “monumental portico” for leisured walking.

appears to show the inside of this segmented wall, looking from within the forum's *area*, rather than a monumental entrance viewed from the outside. The current Italian reconstruction is of a sunken, covered courtyard or vestibule with marble paving, which joined the two fora. Claridge's own interpretation (p.181) is that this courtyard was attached only to the *Forum Augustum* and did not communicate directly with the *Forum Traiani*. To the south of the building, she speculates that there may have been an as yet undiscovered building which might be the missing piece of an inscription from Ostia, commemorating Trajan's additions to the area. This reviewer is probably not alone in failing to be convinced by overlapping lacunae. In the space between this courtyard and the *Forum Traiani*, Claridge suggests there was a 10m wide marble street ran between the two, effectively dividing the fora and providing a route from the area of the steps at the end of via di Campo Carleo across to the *Forum Iulium* (how it communicated with that forum, and beyond, is not made clear). This is a significant change because it would alter the way in which the fora communicated with one another and with the wider urban environment.<sup>9</sup>

A further point of contention is the *templum divi Traiani*, which may or may not have been located to the north of Trajan's column and which may or may not have communicated with a broad open space called the *platea Traiani*. In recent years this area has been the subject of intense discussion, with alternative reconstructions aplenty. In many ways, the manner in which this site is discussed is revealing of the book's broader approach and the associated pros and cons for different readerships: it simplifies the complex debate for the tourist, stating only that the temple lies 'somewhere under the late C16 Palazzo Bonelli (later Valentini now Provincia)' (p.190; fig. 60). However, this will not satisfy as adequate research for student work; they

---

<sup>9</sup> Newsome 2010: 237-9 reviews this interpretation (stated at length in Claridge 2007) and ultimately favours that put forward by the Italian excavators.

must seek out Claridge's lengthy and more detailed 2007 article in the *Journal of Roman Archaeology*.<sup>10</sup>

### *Summary*

£18.99 is a small price to pay for a synthesis of the most active decade of archaeology in Rome since the 1930s. After two decades of incredible productivity, the replacement of Eugenio la Rocca with Umberto Broccoli in 2008 brought with it a State aversion to new, large-scale excavations, and it is unlikely that we will see such dramatic change over the coming decade as that which has characterised recent years. Still, Rome's enduring appeal is the guarantee of more beneath the surface, from the quotidian to the spectacular. We can look forward to the third edition, while in the meantime being thankful for the second. Tourists can be satisfied with the level of detail provided on the contentious, ongoing debates. Students, however, will have to work harder to uncover the complexity of the narrative which Claridge summarises so well for a less-specialised audience.

---

<sup>10</sup> In the 1998 edition, Claridge stated that the temple was "probably on axis with the Column" (p.167), but a dependency on the principles of architectural axiality was abandoned in her 2007 article, which also provided the ammunition for the new description of the *platea Traiani* (p.190), purportedly the large open space north of the column. Newsome 2010: 215-27 discusses the evidence in the context of movement to and through the forum.

**Bibliography:**

Claridge, A. 2007. 'Hadrian's Lost Temple of Trajan', *JRA* 20, 54-94.

Macaulay-Lewis, E. 2011 in press. 'The city in motion: locating walking for leisure in the city of Rome', in R. Laurence & D.J. Newsome (eds.), *Rome, Ostia, Pompeii: Movement and Space*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Meneghini, R. & Santangeli Valenzani, R. 2007. *I Fori Imperiali: Gli scavi del Comune di Roma (1991-2007)*. Rome: Viviani Editore.

Newsome, D.J. 2010. *The Forum and the City: Rethinking Centrality in Rome and Pompeii (3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. – 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.)*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham.

Packer, J.E. 1997. 'Report from Rome: The Imperial Fora, a Retrospective', *AJA* 101, 307-30.

Patterson, J.R. 1992. 'The City of Rome from Republic to Empire', *JRS* 82, 186-215.

Patterson, J.R. 2010. 'The City of Rome Revisited: From Mid-Republic to Mid-Empire'. *JRS* 100, 210-32.