

SALON (Society of Antiquaries of London (Issue 401):

Michael Green FSA FRIBA (H J M Green) died on 28 January 2018 aged 86. Professor **Simon Thurley CBE FSA FRIBA** has written this tribute:

‘Michael Green was born in St Ives in what was then Huntingdonshire and, while his brother went into the wine trade, Michael was described by his remarkable mother as being “off with the Romans”. He had a lifelong fascination with Roman archaeology, and in particular Godmanchester, already a well-known Roman site by the time Michael, aged only 20, started excavating there in 1951. He had been mentored by the architect and Huntingdonshire antiquarian Sydney Inskip Ladds, and advised by **Sir Mortimer Wheeler FSA** to find a site he could make his own, and to excavate it thoroughly.

‘Michael recognised that the town not only had remarkably well-preserved remains but that its later documentary record was unusually full. Over some 30 seasons he showed that an apparently insignificant road junction was an important small town with baths, basilica, forum, mansio and three successive temples. He practiced community archaeology, though he would never have called it that, enthraling the local population through the 60s, 70s and 80s and involving scores of volunteers. There were many periodical publications, but a comprehensive report has only just been published, as *Durovigutum: Roman Godmanchester*, edited by **Tim Malim FSA**. Just before he died, Michael had the satisfaction of holding the page proofs in his hands.

‘Archaeology was no way to earn a living and, after National Service in Egypt, Michael, an exceptionally talented draftsman, went into architecture, training at the Regent Street Polytechnic. After a brief stint in private practice he decided to join the Ministry of Works Historic Buildings Section as an Architectural Assistant. It was in this role in 1961 that he became involved with Whitehall Palace. 10 Downing Street was being reconstructed for Harold Macmillan, the then Prime Minister, by Raymond Erith and, as work progressed, it became evident that there were significant archaeological remains on the site.

‘This should have been no surprise, as the Survey of London had identified the possibility 30 years before. The Ancient Monument Inspectors, **Peter Curnow FSA**, **John Charlton FSA** and **John Hurst FSA**, fought for access and Michael, a very junior architect, persuaded them that he should effectively direct the investigations, which were undertaken with largely volunteer labour and support from the London Museum. The excavations revealed Roman, Saxon and Medieval Westminster, and succeeded in reconstructing the layout of the site’s Tudor and later palace. Recording continued for two years in the face of fierce official hostility – on several occasions Michael was ordered off the site.

‘When, a few years later, it was decided to build a large underground car park in Abingdon Street opposite the House of Lords, Michael was asked again to conduct the excavations, revealing the south waterfront of the Medieval palace and leaving it exposed as a setting for the Jewel House, a monument in care. He wrote interim reports on both Whitehall and Westminster, but time or resources were not made available for him to complete them and it was left to others, many years later, to help him bring them to fruition.

‘In a long career as an Investigator and Inspector at the Directorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings, and then English Heritage, Michael had a determination to preserve and

understand buildings, landscapes and archaeological remains. He was a charming colleague with a penchant for a good lunch, but no respecter of management. He was a Senior Investigator during the Heseltine resurvey, a job that used his highly perceptive architectural skills. His most famous moment was in 1977 when he recommended the Jubilee Hall at Covent Garden for listing, putting a kybosh on a vicious plan by the Greater London Council to redevelop the area. Such obstructions of powerful political and financial interests filled him with glee.

'More practical issues fascinated him too, and in the 2000s he started to work seriously on the early history of Clapham. From the windows of his flat could be seen the Common which he proceeded to analyse with archaeological and topographical precision. His book *Historic Clapham*, illustrated with his own maps, diagrams and drawings, was published in 2008, and a revised version was printed the following year.

'Michael was extremely charming, tall, handsome and an elegant dresser with signature pale suits, hats and neckerchiefs: he was never short of female admirers. Some people, at first, found him a bit patrician, but would soon discover the kindness of spirit and a bright twinkle in his eye. He took a great interest in the young and encouraged and supported many people at the start of their careers.

'He was one of the last gentlemen antiquarians – a man with no archaeological or historical training who had an innate understanding of historic buildings, places and ancient peoples. His excavations made a significant contribution to our understanding of Roman Britain and of Westminster. He leaves behind his wife Christine, an eminent Egyptologist, five children from two marriages, a host of friends and admirers and a richer understanding of the world in which we live.'