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This volume reports the part of MOLA’s Crossrail excavations which took place at Farringdon eastern
ticket hall and Charterhouse Square, London and revealed part of the West Smithfield cemetery.
Known previously from documentary records alone, this cemetery was the slightly earlier of two
emergency burial grounds opened in response to the Black Death in 1348-9 (the other was the better-
known and previously-excavated East Smithfield). The volume presents detailed investigation of the
25 14th- and 15th-century skeletons recovered and a suite of scientific analyses including the positive
identification of Yersinia pestis, the pathogen responsible for plague. A second key finding was the
large ditch marking the southern boundary of the cemetery, the remains of Faggeswell Brook which
ran westward towards the Fleet. The fill of the brook produced a significant assemblage of 16th-
century material culture, including fragments of silk cloth of Italian or Spanish origin and a wonderful
selection of leather shoes, some of which belonged to children. The latter phases: encroachment of the
nearby Spitalfield meat market; construction of the Metropolitan tube line and 1930s cellars bring the
report to a close, and the present.

This volume is expertly produced and very well presented. It reflects MOLAs aims to bring
their commercial work to a wide audience through their publication programme and has effectively
tackled the challenge of being accessible to the non-expert and conveying the academic quality at the
core of their work. Footnotes, for example, provide both extra technical detail for the researcher and
explanations for the layperson where necessary. Section drawings are presented with photos of key
finds placed in their stratigraphic context. I also particularly enjoyed the vignettes of contextual detail,
for example forays into medieval medical theory and Tudor costume, but the brevity of wider
contextualization of the evidence was a slight disappointment for me, as a researcher.

This is an archaeological site report for the digital age – a visually engaging, concise and
accessible volume tied in to a web-based digital project report archive where the finer detail and raw
data can be found. It provides a taster of every aspect of the project, and an effective route through
which MOLA’s work can reach its very broad audience.