

MUSEUM OF LONDON



Archaeology Matters

No 10, April 2000

All Hallows by the Tower

A short distance from the Tower of London stands a small building of equal or greater antiquity and also with impressive royal connections. Endowed by Richard I and other kings, the church of All Hallows betrays its 11th century origins in the form of an arch made from salvaged Roman tiles and by two fragmentary stone crosses decorated in Saxon style. These discoveries were made when the church was damaged by bombing during the Second World War, but it is now possible to set them within a wider archaeological context.

The construction of a new entrance and visitor centre to the south and east of the church was preceded by an excavation in what turned out to be the church cemetery. The earliest graves can be dated to the 10th or 11th century on the basis of associated pottery and the discovery of a Saxon pillow grave – a form of burial in which stone pads were placed under the head of the deceased (see picture). From this period

until its closure in the 1850s, the cemetery remained in constant use. Evidence was found for 18th and 19th century family burial plots, and a number of lead coffins were unearthed.

Beneath the graveyard deposits, the dig revealed Roman floors and wall remains. Complementing the much earlier discovery of a tessellated floor – which can be seen in the crypt museum – this confirms the presence of a substantial building on the site up to a thousand years before the first church. Human activity in the area goes back still further however. About 20 worked flints of mid to late Bronze Age date were found.

The All Hallows museum is open to the public daily between 10.00am and 4.00pm, and an audio guide is available.

Diccon Hart
AOC Archaeology Group



Photograph: AOC Archaeology Group

Bronze Age barrows

Imagine the landscape of West London long before the construction of the airport and suburban Hounslow, an open landscape cut across by a ceremonial earthwork avenue several miles long. In some places, people and animals are breaking the soil with the first ploughs, while in the foreground a bowl-shaped mound is nearing completion.

The evidence for this vision of 'London before Londinium' comes from a series of recent digs, the latest of which covers a 15-hectare site at Sipson Lane, Harmondsworth. Here, two circular enclosures have been found adjacent to each other, comprising a small cremation cemetery that was set within a field system but was apparently isolated from any contemporary settlement.

One of the enclosures was approximately 17 metres in diameter. It was defined by two concentric ditches, the outer one having been

dug as a series of intercutting, elongated pits. The soil would have been piled up in the enclosure to form a mound (barrow), but no trace of this survived. The monument probably originated in the late Neolithic (3000–2400BC), but the five cremation burials that were found within are more likely to be of Bronze Age date (2400–700BC). The second enclosure, just 12 metres across, was ringed by a single ditch with an opening to the east. Both it and the two cremations inside have been dated to the mid to late Bronze Age.

The two barrows remained local landmarks for thousands of years – long enough for them to have been incorporated by medieval surveyors into the boundary between the parishes of Harmondsworth and Harlington.

Jonathan Nowell
Wessex Archaeology

Photograph: Wessex Archaeology





Collector's corner

Few people today have the opportunity to collect artefacts from Roman London. Before the war, however, the situation was very different with workmen earning extra beer money by selling objects found on building sites. They knew that 'Stony Jack', an antiquities dealer by the name of G F Lawrence, would give them a reasonable price.

When Tony Rawlins, now a spry 89, started collecting archaeological objects, little did he realise that it was to lead to a life-long love of archaeology. In the 1930s he would visit Lawrence's shop in Wandsworth to buy or be given evidence of everyday Roman life; tools, pottery, even fragments of a leather shoe and wooden writing tablet. Last year, Tony decided to give his collection to Gunnersbury Park Museum in Hounslow for use as a travelling collection by a group of nine museums in West London.

The Mary Rawlins Collection (named after his late wife) will provide a marvellous resource

for life-long learning. Up until now, replica Roman objects have been the main teaching tools for these museums but this cannot compare with the real experience of handling something that is 2000 years old. With advice from the Museum of London, the West London Museums Education Group plans to divide the collection into four boxes that can travel independently around the museums in the area. Each box will have a mixture of artefacts that can be used to explore various Roman themes for school children, those with special needs, family groups, students and adults alike.

The museum educators of West London, formerly in the business of conjuring up Roman life from replica material and scant archaeological collections, can now literally get to grips with the Romans!

Jenny Hall
Museum of London
Sue McAlpine
Gunnersbury Park Museum

The Queen's House, Greenwich

In the summer of 1999 the National Maritime Museum undertook alterations to this former royal retreat to improve disabled access. This provided an opportunity to record a wealth of constructional detail in one of the earliest and finest examples of classical architecture in the country. The building was designed by Inigo Jones in 1616 for Anne of Denmark, James I's queen, but only finished some 20 years later.

The recording project concentrated on the vaulted brick cellars, where state-of-the-art digital survey techniques were used to create a three-dimensional 'wire frame' computer model.

The investigations provide new insights into Inigo Jones's original conception of the Queen's House and into later modifications. Originally, there was no planned access to the cellars from the ground floor, highlighting their structural role. They served principally to

raise the ground floor apartments to the level of the public road to the south, and to counteract the natural slope towards the Thames to the north. The walls in the cellars had been prepared for rendering and door hinge pins fitted, but neither rendering nor door hanging took place and their initial function remains obscure. Increasingly the cellars were used for storage, and this led to the introduction of a staircase in the 1660s, linking them with the upper storeys.

The familiar north-facing terrace was added in the 1630s. External excavations here revealed the original semi-circular stairway foundations. These had been cut back to their present 'horseshoe' form in the early 18th century and the entrance to the cellar was remodelled at the same time.

Julian Bowsher
Museum of London Archaeology Service



Somerset House



Photograph: Gifford & Partners Ltd

Somerset House on the Strand takes its name from the Duke of Somerset, Edward Seymour, guardian to King Edward VI, who in 1547 built a magnificent palace here. The present building dates from 1776 and was the first large, purpose-built block of government offices.

Until late last year it had been assumed that nothing of the palace remained. Then an excavation connected with a major refurbishment scheme began to uncover red brick walls and masonry structures, including stairs and windows. The height to which the walls survived was amazing, with first floor remains visible just below the tarmac at the north end of the courtyard. Parts of the guard chamber, presence chamber, kitchen and chapel were exposed. The remains of the chapel were of particular interest, as this 17th century embellishment had been designed by Inigo Jones for Henrietta Maria, one of the many Tudor and Stuart queens who lived here.

When the palace was demolished in 1776, the ground floor rooms were used as retaining 'cells' within the foundations, and were filled with the large amounts of rubble that were required to level the site. Many items of carved and painted architectural stone were found here, along with decorative plaster and stucco remains. The latter include pieces with artichoke and pear motifs, and a gilded mask (see front cover). Together they provide unexpected insights into both the interior and the exterior decoration of a lost Renaissance-style architectural masterpiece. There was, finally, some medieval stonework and glazed tile – a small remnant, perhaps, of the inns and the church that had themselves been demolished on Somerset's instructions in 1547.

Somerset House re-opens to the public in June, and finds from the investigation will be on display.

Ken Whittaker & Marion White
Gifford & Partners Ltd

Thames mudlarking

‘They are commonly known by the name of “mud-larks”, from being compelled, in order to obtain the articles they seek, to wade ... through the mud left on the shore by the retiring tide.’

Finding curios on the Thames foreshore is just as common today as it was when Thomas Mayhew was writing 150 years ago – but now the interest is in antiquities rather than bits fallen off ships and sold by the poor to eke out a meagre living. To search for objects requires a licence from the Port of London Authority. This specifies that all finds must be reported to the Museum of London, where they are identified and recorded, and the information added to a unique archive. (The system is in many ways similar to current Government schemes to promote voluntary recording of antiquity finds throughout England and Wales.)

In 1999 alone the Museum recorded over 700 discoveries by members of the Society of

Thames Mudlarks and the general public. Among the objects now acquired by the Museum are a rare, early 16th century lance tip, an 11th century pewter finger ring, and a silver cufflink. The cufflink dates to the late 17th century and is decorated with a ‘maidenhead’, the arms of the Worshipful Company of Mercers (see picture). It was acquired with the generous support of the Museum’s Friends group, *The Collectorate* (for further information, see back page).

Meanwhile, the archive has grown to over 14,000 records, with artefacts dating from prehistory to the present day. It has huge potential for research, as a recent book, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges* (available from the Museum shop) demonstrates. Current efforts to computerise the records will make them more accessible and, hopefully, encourage still greater use.

Nikola Burdon, Adrian Green, Cheryl Smith
Museum of London



BRIDGING HISTORY

Friday 17 March to Sunday 14 May

This exhibition examines three and a half thousand years of London's bridges and their progress toward the new Millennium Bridge that will link St Paul's with Bankside. Take part in one of our exciting activities to prepare for the celebration of the opening of the new Millennium Bridge.

EVENTS FOR ADULTS

Walk: Crossing Bridges

Wednesday 3 May AB

6.30pm (120mins)

Fee: £7.50 (£5 concessions)

Experience centuries of change all in an evening! View our exhibition Bridging History; examine the Millennium Bridge; enjoy a trip on the Jubilee line, and experience the new dock bridges of the West India Dock. Alex Werner, Museum of London

Walk: London's Bridges

Sunday 7 May AB

10.30am (120mins)

Fee: £7.50 (£5 concessions)

London Bridge was crucial to the development of Roman London and to the city's subsequent development. Explore the archaeology of the north side of the Thames for clues about London's river crossings and its history.

John Shepherd, Museum of London

Walk: 'Earth has not anything to show more fair'

Sunday 21 May

10.30am (120mins)

Fee: £7.50 (£5 concessions)

Wordsworth, Pepys, Marlowe and Shakespeare are just some of the many important writers who will feature in this literary journey from Westminster Bridge to London Bridge in the company of writer S I Martin.

EVENTS FOR FAMILIES

Workshop: Foreshore exploration

Friday 21 April AB 8+

9.30am (120mins)

Fee: £3.50 adults £2.50 children

Wellington boots strongly recommended

Join the mudlarks for a family visit. A Museum of London archaeologist and the Thames Explorer Trust will help you search for clues about London's past. Who knows what you will find?

Workshop: Lantern-making

Sunday 14 May

1.30pm and 3.30pm (60mins)

Prepare to be part of an unforgettable experience. Inspired by the architecture and symbolism of London's many bridges, make your own lantern ready to carry in the procession on Saturday 10 June.

A Millennium project supported by funds from the National Lottery.

Workshop: Lantern-making for youth and community groups

Wednesday 17 May AB

11.00am - 3.00pm

Tuesday 6 and Wednesday 7 June

11.00am - 3.00pm

Make a lantern to represent your youth or community group. Be inspired by the history and mythology of the River Thames, in preparation for the opening procession on Saturday 10 June.

Museum of London

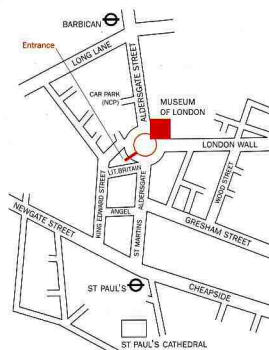
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For more information on the Museum of London Friends and The Collectorate please call 0207 814 5507.

Unless otherwise stated admission to events is free WITH a Museum admission ticket which is valid for one year (£5.00 adult, children free).

AB Advanced booking required
OA Tickets on arrival

For bookings or for a full list of events please phone the Museum's Booking Department on 0207 814 5777