

An aerial photograph of an archaeological excavation site. Two workers in high-visibility yellow jackets and blue hard hats are working on a large mosaic floor. One worker is kneeling on the left, writing on a clipboard. The other is kneeling on the right, using a measuring tape. The mosaic features a central panel with a geometric pattern and a cross-like design. The surrounding area is dark earth and stone walls.

MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Matters

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Roman Gold



One of the most spectacular London finds ever was made on the Plantation Place site last autumn: a hoard of 43 Roman gold coins dating to the late 2nd century AD. This is the first gold coin hoard from *Londinium*, and one of only a very few of this date to have been found archaeologically anywhere in Britain.

The coins – which the Romans would have known as *aurei* – span a period of 109 years. The earliest were issued under the emperor Nero in AD 65-6, while the latest, an *aureus* of Marcus Aurelius, is closely dated to AD 174. Most are in a very fine condition, although the two coins of Nero in particular show some signs of wear; it is known that 1st-century coins often stayed in circulation well into the 2nd century. By considering the date of the latest issue and the composition of the group as a whole, we can conclude that the hoard was probably deposited in about AD 175–80 and that it was a random selection of the coins available at the time.

Gold coins were never in everyday circulation but were used principally as bullion by bankers, tax officials or rich merchants. To judge from faint traces in the soil, these particular coins may have been placed within a small leather bag, inside a small wooden box. The hoard was discovered in a masonry-lined feature – possibly a type of purpose-made safety deposit box – beneath a large building that had been constructed after the Hadrianic Fire (after c AD 130).

So what was just one of these coins worth? An *aureus* represented the salary of a legionary soldier for one month, and would have bought two overcoats, 400 litres of cheap wine or nearly three acres of woodland in Kent.

The coins have been donated to the Museum by The British Land Company plc and are on display.

Jenny Hall
Museum of London

Floral Street Brooch

The finest early Saxon brooch ever to have been found in central London came to light last autumn during a dig by AOC Archaeology near the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. It is 70mm in diameter and, from the front, seemingly of solid gold. Analysis has shown, however, that it was made from a pair of copper discs sandwiched together with a beeswax-based filler. The face was then embellished with gold strip and wire, and with five domed garnets in bosses and a mosaic of tiny garnet slabs elsewhere.

Brooches such as this became fashionable among aristocratic women in Kent in the early 7th century AD, and were worn singly on the breast. The fashion later spread to neighbouring Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, but most of the 18 examples that have been found – including some in solid gold or silver-gilt – come from Kent. It is a measure of their value that the garnets were traded from India. This brooch may not quite match the finest Kentish jewellery

but still we can be sure that it belonged to a lady of noble or royal birth. It was found in a grave, and should probably be dated between 650 and 700.

The findspot is in the heart of mid-Saxon Lundenwic, but the burial preceded the main phase of urban development. The brooch lay near the chest of the deceased, alongside three glass beads and some rings of silver wire. The 7th century saw the gradual acceptance of the Christian faith, and so this burial may have been one of the last to have followed the earlier, pagan, tradition of burying the dead in their finest clothes and jewellery.

The brooch will be on display in the Museum of London for at least six months in the first instance.

Information from
John Maloney (AOC Archaeology Group)
and John Clark (Museum of London)



Just 200m from the Museum, archaeologists have unearthed one of the best-preserved Roman mosaics to turn up in London for over a century (see front cover). The polychrome panel was originally about 1.5m square and formed the centrepiece of an otherwise plain, red tessellated floor measuring nearly 4m square overall. One corner has been cut away by a later pit, but the intricate pattern is so regular that it can be reconstructed in full on computer (see picture above). Simple lozenges and triangles made from white, black and grey stone cubes ('tesserae') are combined with more complex twisted chains ('guilloche') and ivy leaves in grey, white, red and yellow.

The floor was laid around AD100–120. Few mosaics of this date have been discovered in Britain, but the grey and white boxes create false perspectives and optical illusions of a type found on the floors of the Roman palace at Fishbourne (Sussex), built in about AD 75. The reds and yellows, and the guilloche,

however, look forward to styles favoured later, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

The house containing the mosaic was timber-framed and unpretentious but had colourful painted plaster on the walls. It occupied a long, narrow plot extending back from the north-south street that connected the fort to the north, with the main road through *Londinium* to the south. The mosaic adorned a living-room well to the rear, as far as possible from the bustle of the street frontage. On one side was a kitchen, on another a courtyard. The building had a short life, and its demise was violently dramatic. Flagons and bowls crashed onto the kitchen floor as flames took a hold, destroying the entire structure within minutes.

The dig, in Gresham Street, is by the Museum of London Archaeology Service, with funding from Standard Life Investments Ltd. The mosaic has been lifted for preservation and eventual display.



Medieval St Paul's

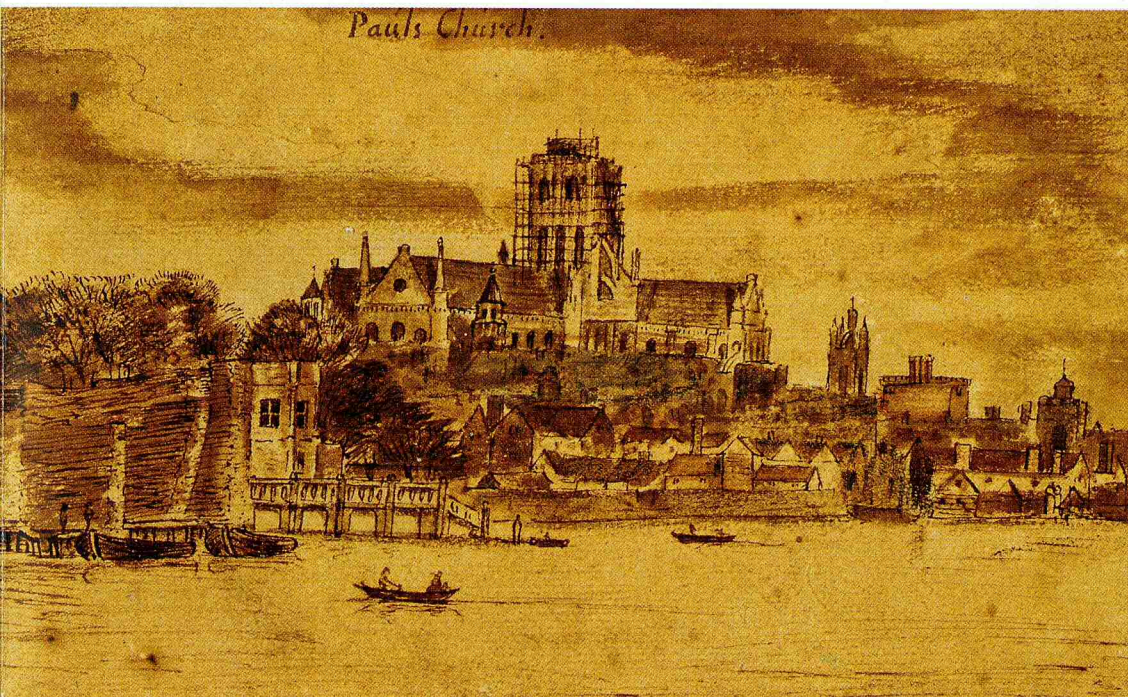
Medieval St Paul's Cathedral is one of Britain's forgotten masterpieces. It hardly ever features in the histories of architecture, yet it was of European significance. The medieval cathedral is now the subject of a major project that combines fieldwork beneath the present cathedral with research and synthesis of all earlier archaeological observations (some of which go back to the time of Wren himself). Steadily we are accumulating the material with which to write a new history of the cathedral, from its foundation in 604 through to its destruction in the Great Fire of 1666.

An important discovery has been made recently in the stores of the Museum of London. This is a sepia drawing of the cathedral from the south-west, by a Dutch artist, M van Overbeek (his forename is not accurately known). It was given to the Museum in 1928, but its significance has not previously been recognised. The drawing is not intrinsically dated, but clearly it is a depiction of the cathedral as it

looked after restoration by Inigo Jones in 1633–41. The west end gable has a circular window in it, and a large volute on the west side of the south transept terminal wall can be seen. Also identifiable is the tower of St Gregory's parish church (attached to the west end of the cathedral), in the form left by Jones. The tower of St Paul's is scaffolded.

Some other buildings feature in the drawing and can be identified. In the foreground, for example, is the riverward end of the gallery of Arundel House in the Strand – very much as it appears in a view along the Thames painted by Claude de Jongh in 1627 (now in Kenwood House). This confirms that the drawing dates to the period 1641–66, and perhaps to the Cromwellian era.

John Schofield
Museum of London



Pot Luck



Photograph: Pre-Construct Archaeology

Picture Narrow Street, Limehouse, early in the 17th century – a long street parallel to the Thames. On the south side, wharves and ships, on the north, a row of newly built houses. Nearly everyone earns their living from the water; some of them less legally than others. For this is the home of notorious privateers and pirates: Christopher Newport, William Bushell, the suggestively-named Captain Paramour.

Several months ago a team from Pre-Construct Archaeology seized the opportunity to excavate here. They immediately hit the jackpot. Cellars, pits and wells were crammed with dozens of wine bottles and with hundreds of complete or broken pots. These had come from all corners of the globe: from Germany, Portugal, Turkey, Persia and the Far East. Significantly, many of them had originated in Spain or north Italy, countries with which England was at war. They had been made not for export but for use within Spain or her colonies. Were they brought back to London as booty from the Spanish Main?

Forward to 1745. Porcelain is all the rage among London's bourgeoisie. On the south side of Narrow Street the kilns are being fired for the first time in a pothouse built specifically for the manufacture of this elegant ware.

Excavated by the Museum of London a decade ago, this pothouse is now the subject of a lavishly illustrated report (see back cover)—the definitive account of a short-lived enterprise, the poor relation of the well-known factories at Chelsea and Bow. The reasons for its failure are ominously apparent from the site finds themselves. Thick-walled and non-translucent in fabric, arguably less well painted than Chinese imports, Limehouse porcelain had little chance of success in a fiercely competitive marketplace. Within four years the works had closed for good.

Information from
Gary Brown (PCA) and Kieron Tyler (MoLAS)

The Ralph Merrifield Award

The London and Middlesex Archaeological Society's annual Ralph Merrifield award 'for services to London's archaeology' has been made this year to Gillian Clegg. Gillian was the Society's Production Editor from 1992 to 2000. By modernising the Society's journal, *Transactions*, and by producing eleven volumes in just eight years, she turned an out-of-date publication into a vital source of information about London's history.

Gillian has worked as a librarian, magazine editor and writer. She is the author of two local history titles, *Chiswick Past* and *Clapham Past*, and of two children's history books, *Landmarks from the Past* and *Clues from Names*. She has also written *The Archaeology of Hounslow* and, with two colleagues, *The Archaeology of West Middlesex*. Her interest in archaeology began in the early 1970s when, as an enthusiastic amateur, she joined the West London Archaeological Field Group and dug on many sites in West London. Here she explains how she got involved with *Transactions*, and makes some comments about archaeology generally:

"I am delighted to receive this award since I really enjoyed acting as Production Editor for *Transactions* – particularly as it enabled me to maintain some involvement with archaeology. Archaeology had been my main hobby for many years but, sadly, I and many other amateurs had been increasingly excluded by the changes in practice caused by the introduction of PPG16. Weekend volunteers were no longer required on excavations and the new archaeological contracting firms seemed to bypass the local archaeological groups when digging in their area. This, I think, was their loss. Groups like ours could have provided comprehensive background information as well as free practical help.

I also hoped that by bringing *Transactions* out regularly, I might see more of those excavations I had been involved with published. This didn't really happen though, and far too many sites dug in the 1970s and 1980s remain unpublished."



Conference

The 38th Annual Conference of London Archaeologists

Organised by the London & Middlesex Archaeological Society;
Saturday 31 March

Hear about the latest discoveries in the London area from the excavators themselves. The Roman gold coin hoard, the magnificent Saxon brooch and the exotic pottery from Limehouse – these will all feature strongly in the programme.

For tickets and further information, please contact:
Jon Cotton, Early London History Department, Museum of London
(Tel: 020 7814 5736)

Exhibition

Creative Quarters: the art world in London, 1700–2000

Friday 30 March – Sunday 15 July

For over three centuries, London has included a succession of distinct artists' quarters. From Covent Garden in the 18th century, Chelsea in the 19th, to the East End today, artists have established special enclaves for a variety of social and economic reasons. *Creative Quarters*, a ground-breaking art exhibition, charts the work and whereabouts of these communities. It is accompanied by a full programme of events and by a book written by Kay Wedd and the curators.

Publications

NEW BOOKS

Gladiators at the Guildhall

By Nick Bateman

A readable yet highly informative account of the discovery of a unique place – one that resounds with the clash of Roman gladiators, with the clamour of Vikings bartering with merchants from Byzantium, and with the chanting of medieval priests. Illustrated in colour throughout.

MoLAS, £5.99

The Limehouse porcelain manufactory

By Kieron Tyler and Roy Stephenson

A detailed description of the excavated kiln and its products – both waste fragments (see picture right) and complete vessels of the same type in private collections. Over 120 illustrations, nearly all in full colour.

MoLAS, £16.50

The books mentioned in this leaflet are available from the Museum shop. Telephone orders by credit or debit card: 020 7814 5600. Prices as stated, plus post and packing.

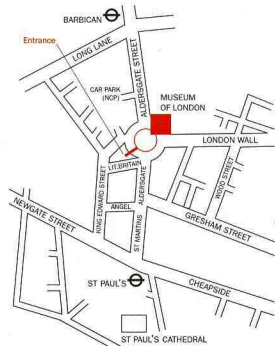
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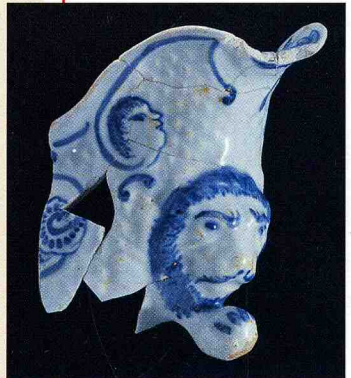
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If you would like to receive *Archaeology Matters* regularly, please call 020 7814 5730.



Cover: Recording the Gresham Street mosaic