



MUSEUM OF LONDON

# Archaeology Matters

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## Celtic Warrior

Groups of children were witness to the dramatic murder and burial of Brennos, a Celtic warrior, as part of the half-term events programme at the Museum of London. With actors and Museum conservators, the children discovered the story of the warrior's life, his burial and rediscovery, and at the same time learned about archaeology and conservation techniques.

A narrator described the appearance of an actor dressed and armed as an Iron Age warrior. He was then 'murdered' and the audience helped 'bury' him with appropriate grave goods. He was finally covered over and hidden from view. The actor made a swift exit via a trapdoor and in his place, the children found a skeleton surrounded by all his possessions as they would be after 2000 years

of burial. The conservators then explained how most organic material disappears altogether, while metals often survive – albeit in a corroded state – and that it is only the bones, ceramics and stone that can survive completely.

The Celtic Warrior performance was developed by the National Museum of Wales and won the 1997 Museums and Galleries Commission Award for Communicating Conservation. It was used to enthral a series of children's groups as part of the events associated with the London Bodies exhibition. The Museum hopes to develop its own 'burial' – possibly of a Roman Londoner – for future presentations.

Hedley Swain  
Museum of London



## Mapping London's defences



Centuries of redevelopment in the capital have meant that a relatively small portion of London's Roman city wall and its Roman and medieval bastions survive above ground level today. One very imposing fragment of the city wall (built c. AD 200) and the adjoining medieval bastion (c. 1250–1350) survive on the site of the new Merrill Lynch European Headquarters at Newgate Street. This fragment of masonry was excavated in 1909 and since then has been preserved within a concrete chamber at basement level, constructed under the west yard of the former King Edward Buildings Royal Mail Sorting Office.

Archaeological work in the west yard will continue during spring and summer 1999, and will include further excavation of the late medieval city ditch (13th–15th century), which was backfilled in c.1553 and then built over. Pedestrians in Giltspur Street will

be able to check on the progress of the excavations via a series of display boards positioned along the street frontage adjoining Newgate Street.

The Museum of London Archaeology Service is also undertaking a series of excavations in advance of the redevelopment of selected portions of the site. This programme of work has included excavating trenches within the Roman and medieval defensive ditches that encircled the city wall, and a detailed photographic and fabric condition survey of the fragment of wall and bastion. The masonry is intended to be displayed within the new Merrill Lynch European Headquarters, along with a permanent display on the important history and archaeology of the site.

Bruce Watson  
Museum of London Archaeology Service

## Southwark's rich heritage

Across the Thames from the City lies Southwark, the first suburb of the Roman city of Londinium, and now a dynamic London borough where regeneration is the key word for the future. The recent unprecedented levels of development, particularly in the north of the Borough, have contributed greatly to our knowledge of the rich and varied archaeological heritage of Southwark.

Excavations along the Jubilee Line in the London Bridge area have revealed Roman archaeology including buildings, some of very high status with tessellated mosaic pavements and floors. It seems that Southwark probably grew from a small settlement around the bridge head of the first Roman London Bridge, where the roads from Canterbury and Chichester, having converged on Borough High Street, crossed into the provincial capital. The Roman suburb grew, supporting industries,

traders and possibly also the military. Recent excavations at Swan Street, probably located on the southern limit of the Roman settlement, produced evidence of domestic settlement and possible field or paddock boundaries. Beyond this area, Roman burials originally located near the ancient road system, have recently been found at Great Dover Street and Union Street. Some of the burials displayed considerable status and wealth, and may have been in richly ornated mausolea.

As new development takes place, it is likely that archaeologists will be given the opportunity of conducting investigations which may help to piece together more of Southwark's past. For further information, please contact Southwark's Archaeology Officer on 0171 525 5000.

Sarah Gibson  
Southwark Council



# Identifying Roman pottery

Detailed study by Roman specialists from the Museum of London has resulted in a national reference collection of Roman pottery fabrics. This important project was initiated, financed and supervised by English Heritage, and the resulting collection is housed in the British Museum. The collection consists of about 650 examples of pottery sherds from 200 different fabric types. It will enable archaeologists working anywhere in England to identify their fragments of Roman pottery.

In the past, archaeologists had to identify pottery by using binocular microscopes to see the constituent parts of the clay fabric. Roman pots were made of clay mixed with different ingredients in order to make the clay easier to model and stronger to use. Inclusions were either organic (shells, straw or grass), grog (broken fragments of other fired pots) or rocks or minerals. For example, types of Highgate Wood pottery, made in kilns in north London, were made of clay deliberately mixed with sand in order to give the fabric good thermal shock resistance. The pots could therefore be heated up and cooled down without cracking, making them ideal vessels for cooking.

With this new reference collection, there is a new more precise way of identifying a fragment of pottery. The collection can be viewed by appointment at the British Museum and an accompanying handbook, including 220 colour photographs, has been published by the Museum of London and English Heritage (details on back cover).

Jenny Hall  
Museum of London



# Somerset House

One of the most distinguished river frontages in Westminster is Somerset House. The riverside south wing was built in the 1780s by William Chambers and is being converted to house the Gilbert Collection of decorative arts. This has made it possible to investigate two important aspects of the site: the river wall and garden of the previous Tudor Somerset Palace, and the riverside range described as 'the King's bargehouse'.

Much of the story of the Tudor waterfront was worked out by MoLAS in 1997 but a number of questions were left unanswered about the bargehouse. The eastern of two spaces where there might have been internal slipways turned out to include an enormous well shaft and a furnace chamber. This is likely to have been a steam pump supplying water to the rest of the Georgian development. The central part of the 'bargehouse' was probably a wet dock, in which sailing barges were berthed, and the

western arm eventually showed the evidence we were looking for, with the cast of a slipway.

Three state barges of the period survive in the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich, and OAU invited Robert Crouch, the present HM Bargemaster, to the site to consider the feasibility of manoeuvring the vessels inside the building. The richly gilded Prince Frederick barge (around 20m length) would have been a tight squeeze but the two Navy Commissioners' barges (around 14m) would have fitted nicely. Since the south wing of Somerset House was used by the Navy Board, this is probably what the slipway was used for. The Gilbert Collection is now looking at ways of making part of their basement into a viewing chamber, so that one of the Commissioners' barges can return to its home berth.

Brian Durham  
Oxford Archaeological Unit





## Seeing beneath the soil

A group of archaeology students struck lucky during a week of their studies last October. Whilst learning techniques in Ground Penetrating Radar, they discovered a secret tunnel beneath a Tudor manor house in north London. The false floor in the kitchen was the clue, and the tunnel is thought to connect with the crypt of the local church – a classic Tudor bolthole.

The students were working towards the new MA in Archaeology offered by Birkbeck College. The Clark Laboratory at the Museum of London Archaeology Service is closely associated with this comprehensive course, and the Laboratory's Manager Dr Bill McCann is responsible for all fieldwork and practical demonstrations, as well as classroom tuition. The course provides a two-day introduction to the background and principles of geophysical methods used in archaeology. A more

substantial module over five days provides the students with a more detailed knowledge of archaeogeophysical prospection supplemented by practical experience. An important archaeological site in north London has been made available by the London Borough of Hillingdon and this will be used for all fieldwork associated with the course in future. Return visits will be scheduled throughout the year in order to measure the effect of different climate conditions on the performance of the various geophysical techniques. The Clark Laboratory is also able to carry out surveys on the site using Electromagnetic Induction, Resistivity, Magnetometry and the new GEM300 Multifrequency instrument.

Bill McCann  
Museum of London Archaeology Service

## The National Roman Fabric Reference Collection

An indispensable work of reference for both Roman pottery specialists and anyone with an interest in the subject, illustrated with 220 colour photographs.

Roberta Tomber and John Dore

A joint publication with English Heritage

£26 ISBN: 1 901992 01 2

## The Medieval Household

Covering the period 1150 – 1450, this publication presents over 1,000 items excavated from medieval London homes.

Geoff Egan

£50 ISBN: 0 11 290490 4

## Pilgrim Souvenirs and secular badges

This is the first major catalogue in English devoted to medieval badges, and illustrates nearly 800 items of medieval jewellery.

Brian Spencer

£50 ISBN: 0 11 290574 9

These publications are available from the Museum of London shop (tel 0171 814 5600) or from MoLAS at Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB (tel 0171 410 2200).

## Conference

The 36th Annual Conference of London Archaeologists organised by the London & Middlesex Archaeology Society

Saturday 20 March, 11am–6pm

The conference will be held in the Museum of London Lecture Theatre. The morning session will deal with recent fieldwork in the London area, followed by an afternoon given over to 'The archaeology of the river'.

Tickets £4 (£3 for LAMAS members)

All general enquiries and ticket applications (including SAE; cheques payable to 'LAMAS') to Jon Cotton, Early Department, Museum of London, London Wall, London EC2Y 5HN.

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For details of all exhibitions and events please call the Press & PR Office on 0171 814 5500.

If you would like to receive *Archaeology Matters* regularly, please call 0171 814 5730.

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Cover: The Celtic Warrior burial at the Museum of London