

MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Matters

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Message in a bottle

An early Victorian time capsule, found on a building site in Whitechapel, has sent us a fascinating message from the past. The capsule, a clear glass bottle about 24cm tall, was found by the resident site engineer, Joe Flores of Ove Arup & Partners (see picture), who reported it to the Museum of London. It was later opened under the watchful eye of TV cameras in the Museum's conservation laboratory.

The bottle contained various documents, including a set of 1845 Maundy money, a list of benefactors and a copy of *The Times* dated Tuesday 16 December 1845. The capsule had been buried on that day in a massive stone emplacement as part of a public ceremony marking the start of work on the Whitechapel Public Baths and Wash-houses – a building that

eventually opened in 1847. Chief among the benefactors was 'Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen', who gave the sum of £200.

In the 19th century and later, the Baths were one of the most important public amenities in London's East End. Situated in an area of great deprivation, they would have improved enormously the lives of local people – especially local women. Fittingly, the site is being redeveloped to become The National Library of Women, the new Fawcett Library, at London Guildhall University, and the original 1846 façade will be retained in the new library building.

Francis Grew
Museum of London

Photo: London Guildhall University

Funding the finds

On 18 August the Museum announced that the Heritage Lottery Fund had awarded a grant of £1.1 million towards the completion of the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre. The Centre, which will be based at the Museum's existing outstation in Hackney, will not only house the archives and finds from all past excavations in London but will also provide room for material from future digs. There will be, in addition, plentiful research and teaching facilities, so that all those with an interest in London's archaeology will have the opportunity to benefit from this unique and internationally important resource.

Besides the £1.1 million HLF award, the Museum was able to announce a number of other grants and donations: £50,000 from

English Heritage; over £20,000 raised by way of donations from individuals and archaeological organisations; and £200,000 in the form of a bequest secured through the City of London Archaeological Society. The Museum is seeking to raise a further £25,000 through its fund-raising campaign but is now confident that this can be achieved. It is hoped that building work can commence soon, and that the Centre will be completed in 2001.

The Museum of London is extremely grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund, to English Heritage, and to all those who have shown their support for the project.

Hedley Swain
Museum of London



How did Bankside, the area on the south bank of the Thames between Southwark and London Bridges, turn into the industrial and commercial centre described by Daniel Defoe and others in the 18th century? Some of the answers have been found during archaeological investigations on the north side of Southwark Cathedral's Harvard Chapel, where the Millennium Commission is funding improvements to the Cathedral and the construction of a new library.

When the priory of St Mary Overie was dissolved in October 1539 and became the parish church of St Saviour, Southwark (which would, in turn, evolve into the present-day Cathedral), the priory precinct was greatly reduced in size. The church wall itself became the northern boundary, releasing the ground between it and the river for new building. With easy access to river transport, north Southwark began to develop into an important pottery manufacturing centre.

The excavations revealed at least two tin-glazed ('delftware') pottery kilns (see picture), one of which had been constructed right up against the church wall. They had been continuously repaired and rebuilt over a 150-year period during the 17th and 18th centuries. As well as large quantities of pottery wasters, the arch from a vaulted fire-box and the kiln chamber floor above it were recorded. The kiln had been constructed from red bricks and was coated with green glaze as a result of continuous firings.

The kiln, together with two walls of the medieval priory, will be conserved and displayed within a new exhibition area that forms part of the Cathedral's refurbishment scheme. Meanwhile, work continues at the northern end of the site, where a Roman road and roadside settlement are being excavated.

Peter Moore and David Divers
Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited

Photo: PCA Ltd



From amphitheatre to Guildhall

Twelve years ago archaeologists made the dramatic discovery of a Roman amphitheatre beneath Guildhall in the City of London. Excavation continued intermittently for many years, as the new Guildhall Art Gallery, which opened officially last month, took shape on the east side of the amphitheatre site. But many questions remained unanswered. Was it just coincidence that the medieval Guildhall complex, with its narrow open yard to the south, was founded directly over the underlying amphitheatre? Why do the two buildings share the same orientation? How, in brief, did the Roman ruins influence the development of the most important civic building in the medieval town?

We may have moved some way towards answering these questions as a result of new investigations by the entrance into Guildhall Yard from Gresham Street. The excavations uncovered the gravel and cobbled surfaces of the street that led northwards to Guildhall from the 11th century to after the Great Fire of 1666. They also exposed, for the first time, remains of the great gatehouse that stood there in the heyday of the Guildhall precinct in the 15th century (see picture). The gatehouse appears to have been built as early as the 13th century and, fascinatingly, appears to have been built directly over the southern entrance into the amphitheatre. This raises the possibility that enough of the Roman structure survived to influence the siting not only of the street and the gatehouse but of Guildhall itself and the church of St Lawrence Jewry, whose strange alignment may shadow the elliptical form of the amphitheatre beneath.

Nick Bateman and Ian Blair
Museum of London Archaeology Service



Feltham in prehistory



In the suburbs of west London, archaeologists have been painstakingly piecing together an ancient landscape history that goes back several millennia. Recent work in Feltham, on the site of the former railway marshalling yards, has produced another small but crucial piece in the jigsaw.

The site lay on the banks of the river Crane, a tributary of the Thames that was perhaps navigable in prehistoric times. Numerous pits and post-holes were excavated, but the absence of any recognisable buildings suggests that the area was used on a temporary or seasonal basis. The most important discovery was an assemblage of Early Iron Age pottery, dating occupation to between 800 and 500BC. Rarely have sites of this period been excavated in London, and so this provides new evidence for

land use before the emergence – in the second half of the first millennium BC – of extended open settlements or villages comprising substantial round-houses and other post-built structures.

Evidence was also found for much later settlement. A brickearth-lined, L-shaped corn-drier, possibly of Roman date, contained large amounts of wattle-impressed daub. A large fragment of Roman tile was found redeposited in the flue of a nearby hearth, which may represent Saxon industrial activity.

The results of radiocarbon dating are awaited, and further fieldwork is planned.

Isca Howell
Museum of London Archaeology Service

Roman Greenwich rediscovered

This summer, as part of a pioneering project jointly organised and run by the Museum of London, Birkbeck College and Channel 4's *Time Team*, archaeologists carried out three days' fieldwork in Greenwich Park. Appropriately, the site overlooked the soon-to-be-completed Millennium Dome.

The small mound near the Vanbrugh Gate to the Park has long been known to be of Roman origin. It was first excavated at the turn of the century, and then again in the 1970s. Nevertheless, its exact function and extent remained unclear. This July, under the gaze of the TV cameras, a number of trenches were opened, and a detailed geophysical and contour survey was undertaken. The results were extremely exciting. Although the small mound itself had been seriously disturbed in the past, it still produced a large number of finds, including a fragment of stone bearing a Roman inscription.

Combining the results of this excavation with those from previous work, we can now be almost certain that the mound marks the site of a Romano-British temple. But, the question remains, how was it used and how did it relate to Roman London? In addition to the temple, the excavation revealed a building complex associated with it. Finds from the area include a tile with the stamp of the imperial Procurator. Was the temple built, therefore, by imperial command?

Having identified the huge potential of the site, we hope that fieldwork can continue in future years. The *Time Team* programme will be televised early in the New Year.

Hedley Swain
Museum of London

Photo: Birkbeck College



London Eats Out with SimplyFood.co.uk

Friday 22 October 1999 to Sunday 27 February 2000

This is the first ever exhibition to examine 500 years of eating out in London, and serves up the diet, etiquette, style and social distinctions of London's eating establishments through time.

London Eats Out Lecture: Feeding the court of Henry VIII: the Hampton Court kitchens

Friday 28 January 2000

1.10pm 50mins

An update from the experimental archaeology project at Hampton Court Palace using the Tudor kitchens.

By Marc Meltonville, experimental archaeologist.

The newly discovered Roman sarcophagus and well-preserved skeleton of a young woman, with rare grave goods dating from the 4th century AD will be on display from the 17 December 1999. There is to be a series of events at the Museum to coincide with this exciting discovery.

Lecture: Burying the dead in Roman and medieval London

Wednesday 12 January 2000

1.10pm 50mins

By Jenny Hall and John Clark, Museum of London

Lecture: Roman Spitalfields – the site

Wednesday 19 January 2000

1.10pm 50mins

By Jenny Hall, Museum of London
Chris Thomas, Museum of London Archaeology Service
Bill White, Museum of London Specialist Services

Lecture: Spitalfields' Roman archaeology – an update

Wednesday 26 January 2000

1.10pm 50mins

By John Shepherd, Museum of London
Liz Barham and Alan Pipe, Museum of London Specialist Services

Object handling: Grave objects

Sundays 9 and 23 January 2000

2.00pm & 3.30pm 30mins OA 7+

Learn about Roman grave and burial discoveries from real objects.

Storytelling: Lifting the lid

Sundays 9, 23 and 30 January 2000

1.30pm & 3.00pm 30mins

Stories from the Roman sarcophagus.

Performances: London alive!

Sunday 30 January 2000

1.00pm, 2.30pm & 3.30pm 15mins

Visit our Roman lady in the Roman gallery.

Television broadcast: Meet the Ancestors

Thursday 13 January, BBC 2

A programme presented by Julian Richards looking at the Roman Sarcophagus.

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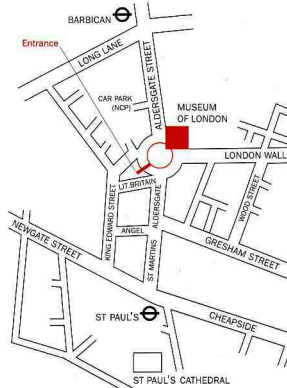
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For bookings or for a full list of events please phone the Museum's Booking Department on 0171 814 5777

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