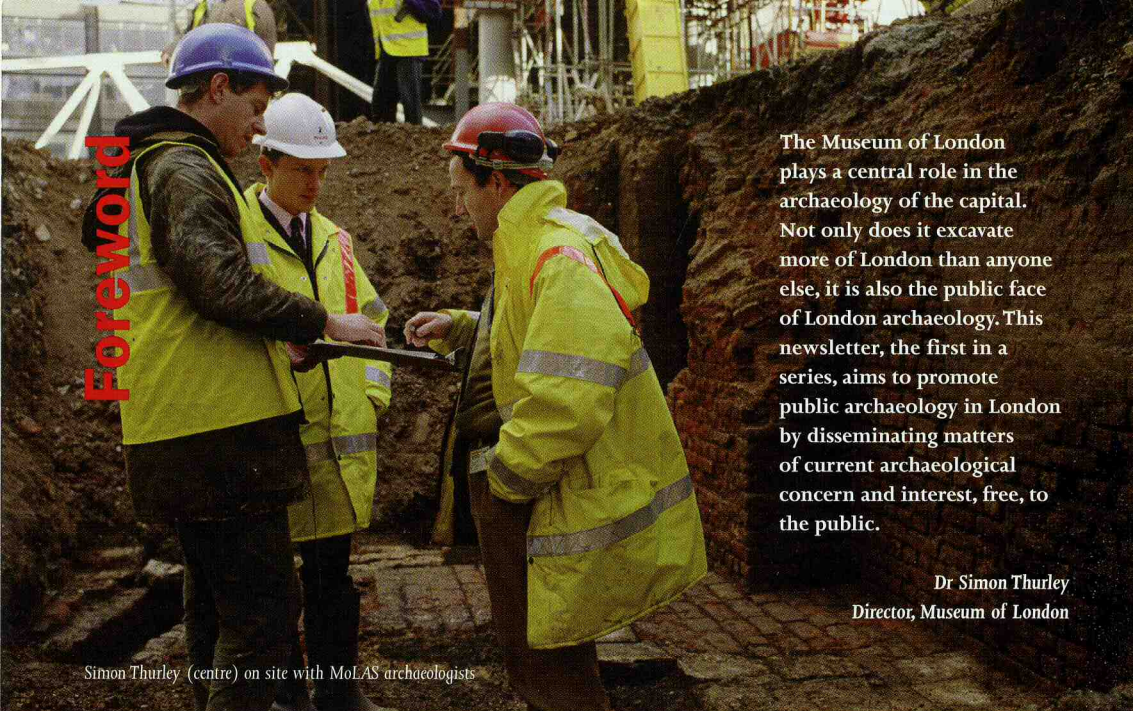




MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Matters

Autumn 1998



Simon Thurley (centre) on site with MoLAS archaeologists

The Museum of London plays a central role in the archaeology of the capital. Not only does it excavate more of London than anyone else, it is also the public face of London archaeology. This newsletter, the first in a series, aims to promote public archaeology in London by disseminating matters of current archaeological concern and interest, free, to the public.

Dr Simon Thurley
Director, Museum of London

English Heritage: Archaeology in London

The Greater London Archaeology Service (GLAAS) provides the county archaeology service for London. Based within the London Region of English Heritage, it provides strategic and detailed advice on archaeological matters through the planning process and via other major initiatives.

Last year more than 2,000 potential archaeological sites were flagged up through the planning process alone. Of these, through negotiation and persuasion, 616 went on to have further desk-based and other research which enabled re-design or preservation in situ. In the end over the whole of London, 242 pieces of archaeological fieldwork were undertaken.

All this work is monitored by GLAAS and the other London curators, resulting in information being made available to the public. The Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR), which performs the dual function of providing the source of planning advice and an index for researchers, holds over 70,000 items of data on the heritage of London. Quarterly reports on additions to the GLSMR are circulated to interested parties, keeping people up to date. To make an appointment to come and use the GLSMR at English Heritage's offices at 23 Savile Row, London, just call 0171 973 3779.

Jez Reeve
English Heritage

Spectacular finds at Monument House

Excavation this summer at Monument House, Botolph Lane in the historic heart of the City has uncovered a truly remarkable structure. Archaeologists from the Museum of London uncovered a Roman tile feature at the site. On closer examination it was revealed to be a surviving length of Roman drain or culvert, measuring in excess of 20m and incorporating a 3.30m deep, square manhole shaft at its upper end. Amazingly enough, it was possible to climb down the manhole and actually walk along the culvert. Water still runs along the bottom and the walls were expertly constructed of Kentish ragstone with alternate tile string courses. The roof was constructed of tiles fanned out on edge to form a curved vault to the structure, and visible along its entire length were impressions of the planks and the iron nails of the original timber form work, which had been left to decay *in situ*. The floor included a narrow tile drain with a partial plank base and three timber silt-traps set at intervals along its length.

It was an uncanny experience for the archaeologists – the first people to walk along this sub-terranean covered space for almost 2,000 years – knowing that it has remained hidden whilst the City of London changed and grew all around.

The unusually large size and capacity of the culvert suggests that the buildings it was associated with lay outside the site, on the high ground to the north. These were most likely to be either a bathhouse or, given its close alignment to the east side of the second-century forum and basilica, possibly the lower end of an extensive and well-executed drainage system which took waste water from the forum buildings.

The Roman levels were sealed beneath an extensive and well-preserved range of medieval and post-medieval cellars which were

destroyed in the Great Fire of London. It is likely that some of these formed part of Lumbardes (Lombards') Place, an imposing merchant's house which is thought to have occupied part of the site in the fifteenth century.

Finds collected include a large section of a rare late-sixteenth-century chimney breast carved with fine decorative foliage work, imported floor and wall tiles from Spain and Holland and large numbers of iron fixtures and fittings – door locks, padlocks, keys, hinges, fire grates and, possibly, a sword.

The excavation at Monument House was generously funded by Berkeley Homes (Essex) Limited. After work had been completed, the Roman culvert was filled and covered with sand. It will be preserved and protected *in situ* beneath the new residential building, perhaps to await rediscovery by a new generation of archaeologists in another 2,000 years.

Ian Blair
Museum of London Archaeology Service



Highgate Wood: an ancient site surveyed



Most archaeologists need a good dusting off after leaving work on the usual central London building sites. So it comes as a pleasant change to be able to work in one of London's green spaces. Such opportunities also allow for the use of field survey techniques unsuited to urban spaces, and earlier this year a survey was undertaken by Museum of London archaeologists at Highgate Wood.

The Wood is part of the ancient Middlesex Forest which originally covered most of southern England. The area has never been cleared of trees and in this sense, it is probably the only prehistoric 'monument' left in central London. Its archaeological interest also extends to later periods: a Roman pottery workshop was discovered in 1962 and subsequently excavated.

Recently the London division of English Heritage asked MoLAS to use their 'geomatics'

skills to carry out an accurate survey of some interesting looking ditches and banks in the area. The fact that they were covered by dense trees and shrubs posed a few problems for the surveyors. But by digitally surveying the land in three dimensions, archaeologists were able to produce comprehensible plans of the earthworks by using computer enhancement techniques. One of the features turned out to consist of a double bank and triple ditch and is almost certainly medieval in date and perhaps even older.

MoLAS work in the Wood has also involved helping the Corporation of London (which owns and manages the Wood) create a new public information hut which includes a display on archaeology.

Nick Holder
Museum of London Archaeology Service

The Big Dig

Dr Simon Thurley, Director of the Museum of London, and Denis Tunnicliffe, Chief Executive of London Transport were joint hosts on 16 July for the launch of *The Big Dig* – a publication describing some of the remarkable finds uncovered during the Jubilee Line Extension Project. Glenda Jackson, CBE, MP, Minister for Transport in London, was also present to celebrate the rich results of the six-year project.

Between 1992 and 1998, the £2.76 billion Jubilee Line Extension Project was the largest civil engineering project in Europe. London Underground was quick to realise the archaeological potential of the Extension and commissioned archaeological investigations wherever groundworks were to take place along the route. Traversing some of the most archaeologically sensitive areas in London, the excavations involved three units working together: the Museum of London Archaeology Service dealt with the stretch of the Extension between Westminster and north Greenwich, and managed the Newham Museum Service and Oxford Archaeological Unit on the remaining part to Stratford.

Some of the most interesting and important finds from the excavations were on display at the launch of *The Big Dig* book and the archaeologists involved were on hand to answer questions.

The Jubilee Line Publication Series, the largest archaeological academic publication programme on a single project, is currently in production. Comprising eight volumes, it will be published over the next two years.

Magdalen Roberts
Museum of London

Copies of *The Big Dig* are available from the Museum of London shop priced £4.99.



Simon Thurley, Denis Tunnicliffe and Glenda Jackson at the launch of *The Big Dig*.



London Bodies

London Bodies is the Museum of London's major new exhibition for autumn and winter exploring the changing shapes of Londoners from prehistory to the present day. Based on archaeological and historical evidence, the exhibition examines how fashion, the environment and human migration and invasion have all played a part in changing the appearance of the average Londoner.

Key to the exhibition is the large number of human skeletons cared for within the Museum's archaeological archive. Over the last thirty years, major excavations have taken place on Roman, medieval and post-medieval cemeteries, and specialists have had the opportunity to study the remains of over six thousand Londoners. It is only with large assemblages of skeletons that meaningful conclusions can be made about such things as average height, age at death, diseases and diet. We are now not only in a position to make

comparisons between Londoners from different periods but also between different sections of contemporary populations. For example, skeletal analysis has shown that medieval monks had far richer diets than the hospital patients in their care.

The exhibition will include skeletons from different periods as well as other artefacts and images that tell us about how our ancestors looked. A time chart will trace the story back in time by generations and visitors will be able to use wall panels to see how they measure up to Londoners of the past.

London Bodies opens to the public on 27 October 1998 and runs until 21 February 1999. A book and a series of related events will complement the exhibition.

Hedley Swain

Early London History Department, Museum of London



Birkbeck Training Dig



One of the more regrettable results of the commercialisation of field archaeology in England is that there are fewer and fewer opportunities for the non-professional archaeologist to become involved. Whereas it was very easy fifteen years ago for those with an interest to volunteer on excavations, it is now almost impossible. One solution is the organisation of training excavations. Many of these are now run during the summer months, often linked to universities, but there is only one established within Greater London.

For the fourth consecutive year Birkbeck College Centre for Extra-Mural Studies (CEMS) ran a five-week urban training excavation in Southwark during June and July, in conjunction with the Museum of London. The course was open to everyone and provided training in surveying, excavation and recording

techniques, initial finds processing and other aspects of archaeological investigation.

Birkbeck's evaluation on the site in 1997 revealed a number of Roman ditches, probably field boundaries, together with pottery and building materials. The excavation this year endeavoured to establish more fully the nature of early land usage on the site.

The excavation is closely linked to Birkbeck's programme of archaeology evening classes, some of which are run by the Museum of London. The *Post-excavation analysis* evening class (at the Museum of London from September) will result in the production of a post-excavation report of the summer's excavation.

Anna Colloms
Birkbeck College

Excavations at the Priory and Hospital of St Mary Spital

C Thomas, B Sloane & C Phillpotts
ISBN 1 901992 00 4
£32

MoLAS 98: Annual Review

Museum of London Archaeology Service
£9.95

The Big Dig: Archaeology and the Jubilee Line Extension

J Drummond-Murray, C Thomas & J Sidell
ISBN 1 901992 05 5
£4.99

Preserving archaeological remains in situ

Proceedings of the 1996 conference
ed M Corfield, P Hinton, T Nixon & M Pollard
ISBN 1 901992 02 0
£19.95

These publications are all available from the Museum of London shop (tel 0171 600 3699) or direct from MoLAS at Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB (tel 0171 410 2200)

Study Day at the Museum of London

New light on London's prehistory

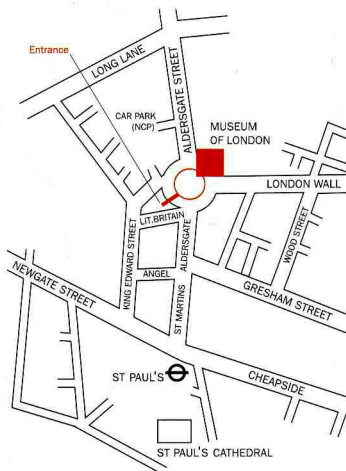
Saturday 7 November 1998, 10.30am - 5pm

Learn first-hand the latest news of excavations and studies of the earliest history of the London region. This study day will feature projects from all parts of London, from the Thames foreshore, its flood plain and tributary valleys, to the higher gravel terraces and chalk hills of the hinterland beyond.

Full details from Museum of London
Interpretation Unit: 0171 600 3699 x200

Museum of London

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For details of all exhibitions and events please call the Press & PR Office on 0171 600 3699.

If you would like to receive Archaeology Matters regularly, please call the Press & PR Office on 0171 600 3699.

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Cover: Surviving length of Roman drain or culvert, Monument House