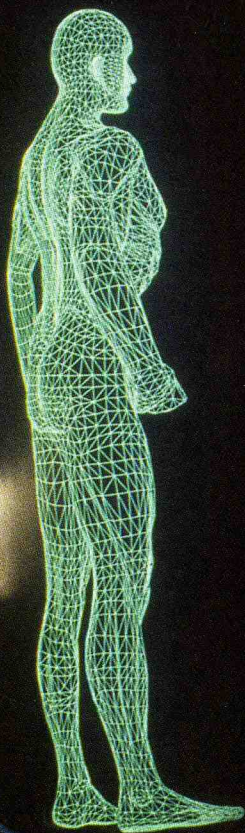


MUSEUM OF LONDON



Archaeology Matters

No 18, July 2002

Guildhall games



Last month, for the first time in around 1700 years, a crowd waited expectantly at the eastern gate to the Roman amphitheatre. As the doors were flung open, eager spectators surged into the passageway, past retaining walls that once supported tiers of seating, towards the curving wall that bounded the arena itself. The roar of a crowd and the ghostly green rendering of distant onlookers added to the drama of the moment. The occasion was the Press Launch of the Amphitheatre, restored by the Corporation of London and now open to the public beneath Guildhall Art Gallery.

Since its discovery in 1988, so much has been written about the amphitheatre – its origins in timber around AD70, its location between Fort and Cheapside Baths, its spatial correspondence with structures of the overlying medieval Guildhall (surely too close to be mere coincidence) – that it has become

a defining landmark of Londinium. Fifteen years ago that was far from the case. Recognition came from slowly piecing together scraps of evidence during the last days of a dig targeted on the medieval Guildhall Chapel. Nick Bateman, the Museum of London project manager, recalls: ‘People had been searching for the amphitheatre for a hundred years – and suddenly I was standing in it. The amazing thing was that no one had realised it before. How can you miss a building this size?’

Excavation, research and conservation have taken over a decade. Now visitors can walk with curiosity, and perhaps a little awe, through part of a building that once could seat as many as the Royal Albert Hall – a building that more than any other symbolises the Roman taste for cultured barbarity. For opening times, and for details of the gladiator shows to be held during August, please see back cover.

Gold angels: cure or commerce?

Seven 'angels' – gold coins from the reign of Henry VIII – are some of the most tantalising finds from excavations by MoLAS at Spitalfields, funded by the Spitalfields Development Group. Discovered together in a pit, within the demolished remains of a house in the grounds of St Mary Spital, they were probably placed there just before the dissolution of the Hospital at the Reformation (1539).

The coins take their name from the design, with the archangel St Michael defeating a reptilian devil. The other side has a ship, with a cross and rose, along with a Latin motto meaning 'Through your cross save us, Christ, Redeemer'. When first issued in 1509, each coin was worth six shillings and eight pence. They were soon revalued, making the hoard worth just under three pounds – a large sum that would have paid for bed and board at a smart inn for a week.

This prestigious coin, with its strong religious overtones, was considered a powerful charm against evil. At a special ceremony Tudor kings and queens gave angels pierced to be worn

around the neck to selected victims of the skin disease, *scrofula* (otherwise known as the King's Evil). To superstitious minds, the powers of the monarch (the Lord's Anointed) combined with the motifs on the coin to present the possibility of relief or cure from a particularly unpleasant illness, against which contemporary medicine was little help.

Can it be a coincidence that of all Tudor coins this issue should be found within an institution that housed the sick? The hoard seems a perfect product of a time when illness was considered divine punishment for sin, and when hospitals emphasised spiritual more than medical care. Be it part of the institution's armoury against disease or an obvious reserve of worldly wealth, how exactly it came to be buried or lost unfortunately remains unknown.

The coins have been reported to the Coroner and will be displayed at the Museum from 20 July.

Geoff Egan
Museum of London Specialist Services



Southwark cemetery

The largest Roman cemetery site ever found in Southwark was excavated last winter. Its location had been suggested by 19th-century antiquarians, who had observed Roman graves during the digging of a pub's foundations in America Street by Southwark Bridge. The recent excavations unearthed a total of 163 burials preserved beneath the cellar of a warehouse. The majority of the burials were adults interred in coffins between the mid-2nd and late 3rd centuries. Later Roman activity consisted of large hand-dug drainage channels, no doubt needed to deal with flooding from the nearby Thames.

Numerous grave goods were found, including complete pottery and glass vessels, hob-nailed boots and a significant amount of personal jewellery. Notable discoveries include a pottery vessel containing chicken remains, an adult male with an iron blade or spear point protruding from his foot, an intaglio ring, and hundreds of beautifully cut black jet beads probably originating in Yorkshire. One man

was found buried with the head of an elderly horse carefully placed beneath his knees.

The analysis of the human bone has only just begun, but already many different pathologies have been observed. Along with the usual assortment of tooth cavities and cases of osteoarthritis, there is a woman whose broken femur was badly set, leaving her left leg at least three inches shorter than her right. Another adult skull displays a healed wound, probably from a knife injury.

But perhaps the most evocative grave to be excavated was of a man who had been buried holding a woman, probably his wife, clutched to his chest with the remains of an infant between them. DNA testing will hopefully unlock the mystery of what seems to be a family burial.

Giles Dawkes, Melissa Melikian
AOC Archaeology Group



Photo: AOC Archaeology Group

Young archaeologists club

A new Central London Young Archaeologists Club (YAC) has been set up to offer 9 to 16-year olds the chance to get involved with hands-on archaeology. The club is based at the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre and is run by volunteers from varied backgrounds, from archaeologists to teachers and firefighters.

The first meeting was held in May and club members were immediately set to work excavating real Roman artefacts in trenches from *The Dig*, last year's highly successful archaeological re-enactment for schools and families. Asked what other activities they would like to be involved with, all members predictably said 'More digging!'. But they were also eager to 'excavate dead people's bones', 'make pots', 'weave on a loom', 'meet real archaeologists', 'do art and cookery', 're-enact the Battle of Hastings' and 'learn about Anglo-Saxon culture'. Faced with this rather daunting list of requirements, the YAC has devised a programme of activities

that will include a visit to *Combat of the Gladiators* on the site of the Roman amphitheatre and, for the winter, fun and feasting in medieval style.

The YAC has been sponsored by City law firm Slaughter & May as part of the Museum's *Linking Lives* programme, which engages young people and local communities in imaginative projects. In pursuit of this objective, the lawyers have invited the young archaeologists to their offices to learn techniques of digging up evidence and to stand cross-examination on mystery objects they have been investigating during club meetings.

If you would like to find out more, or to help in any way, please call 020 7566 9308 or e-mail yac@museumoflondon.org.uk. The club is open to children aged 9 to 16 living in the following London boroughs: Camden; Islington; Hackney; Tower Hamlets; Westminster; the City of London; Lambeth and Southwark.

Photo: Young Archaeologists Club



Doulton in Lambeth



A hundred years ago the skyline of Lambeth, just across the Thames from Parliament, was dominated by the chimneys of Doulton's potteries, erupting smoke far and wide. Despite the owner's protestations that hydrochloric acid gas was harmless, the atmosphere was so appalling that even trees could not survive – as evidence presented to a Royal Commission reveals.

Early this year the opportunity arose to excavate one of the pothouses owned by Doulton and Co Ltd (later Royal Doulton). It operated from around 1890 to 1923. The remains of five kilns were discovered, crammed into an area only 35m square immediately behind a pub and rows of tenements. The kilns were arranged side by side and shared chimneys. Also recorded were a tangle of interconnected flues, misfired vessels, unfired clay, evidence for glaze preparation and hundreds of kiln shelves – some reused in the floor of an external yard. The pothouse catered for the mass market, producing stoneware ginger beer, lemonade and ink bottles, while other Doulton potteries nearby

turned out drainpipes, art wares and architectural ceramics.

But why excavate a building less than a century old? Is this 'real' archaeology? The fact is that no similar stoneware factory remains standing in the UK, none has been excavated, and Doulton's archives have been destroyed. No more is known about the day-to-day working of such pothouses than about those of the 17th century. While studies of Doulton's ceramics tend to dwell on the fancy, expensive and collectable, this site refocuses on the wares once familiar to every consumer. It also reminds us forcefully of that forgotten industrial inferno whose smoke clouded the skyline opposite Westminster.

The excavation at 9 Albert Embankment was financed by Berkeley Homes (City & East London) Ltd. Doulton's headquarters building, with its lavishly decorated façade, stands opposite at 28 Lambeth High Street.

Kieron Tyler
Museum of London Archaeology Service

Roman Carshalton

When the chance came to dig behind West Street, Carshalton, medieval or prehistoric remains were anticipated. A Bronze Age stone cairn, previously discovered nearby in St Philomena's Girls School, is one of the most important archaeological finds from the area. But on this occasion a Roman building was unearthed, the first to have been located in Carshalton.

Several mortar and flint walls were recorded, together with remains of an internal partition. Part of a further flint wall was found near the entrance, on the same alignment. The building is about 5m wide by at least 10m long, with a minimum of two rooms. Its southward extent, into the grounds of the Racehorse public house, is unknown. With a tiled roof and plain mosaic floor (revealed by loose *tesserae* cut from roof tile), it must have been a building of some pretensions. It is difficult to specify its use, but the shape suggests a corridor villa.

The pottery is mostly of late 1st to early 2nd-century date, but this was not the first Roman structure on the site. Several fragments from earlier walls were recorded, along with remains of a clay oven and a rubbish pit under the main flint walls. The most enigmatic find, however, was the disturbed burial of an 18th-month or 2-year-old baby in a deposit overlying the Roman building.

The site lies on a slight ridge above the old flood plain of the Wandle, very close to the western headwaters. One of several Roman buildings carefully positioned on the spring line at the foot of the North Downs, this discovery neatly fills the gap between the settlement at Ewell to the west (near the source of the Hogsmill) and Beddington villa to the east (by the eastern headwaters of the Wandle).

Jeffrey Perry
Sutton Archaeological Service

Photo: Sutton Archaeological Service



THE AMPHITHEATRE

Roman London's amphitheatre

Monday – Saturday, 10am – 5pm (last admission 4.30pm)
 Sunday, 12noon – 4pm (last admission 3.45pm)
 Tel: 020 7332 3700 (recorded information); 020 7332 1462
 Entrance: £2.50 (£1 concessions; free to all after 3.30pm daily and all day Friday)
 Email: guildhall.artgallery@corpoflondon.gov.uk
 Website: www.guildhall-art-gallery.org.uk

The amphitheatre is entered through Guildhall Art Gallery. For security reasons, ceremonial events at Guildhall occasionally require the Gallery to close, and so we advise you to telephone in advance of your visit.

Combat of the Gladiators

Saturday 10 & Sunday 11 August, 12pm & 3pm
 Tickets: £6 (£4 concessions)
 Book now: 020 7814 5777

Join the crowds and cheer on rival teams of gladiators as they battle for supremacy in Guildhall Yard, the site of the Roman Amphitheatre. Skilled fighting men and women will demonstrate various types of combat, using a wide range of weaponry from swords and shields to tridents and nets. After the fight, back at the Museum, you will be able to mingle with Roman Londoners in many guises.

Please book early to be sure of a seat!

Dark deeds in Roman London

Thursday 1 August
 7.30 – 10.00pm
 Tickets: £5 (£4 concessions)

Author Lindsey Davis returns to talk about her latest novel, *The Jupiter Myth*, in which Roman imperial agent and detective, Falco, visits Londinium and experiences the seamier side of life in the city. After the talk and readings, there will be a private view of the Roman Gallery.

For further information, please telephone the Box Office: 020 7814 5777.

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

Medieval Westminster Floor Tiles

By Ian M Betts

Westminster tiles, named after Westminster Abbey where they were first recognised, were being mass produced by London tilemakers by the 1260s. Over 160 designs were made, and this monograph includes an illustrated catalogue giving the provenance of each.

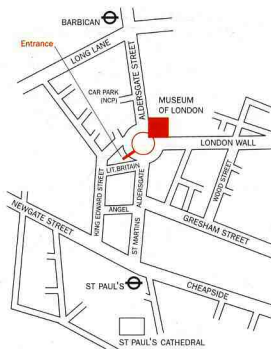
MoLAS Monograph 11, £11.95

Book orders: please phone 020 7814 5600. Payment by credit or debit card. Prices as stated, plus post and packing.



Museum of London

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

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front cover: Roman London's amphitheatre