

MUSEUM OF LONDON



Archaeology Matters

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St Martin-in-the-Fields

Finds made during the building of St Martin's in the 1720s are much less well known than Wren's discoveries beneath St Paul's – though arguably more important historically. They included a 'Roman brick arch ... laid in a strong cement of unusual composition' and 'a glass vase ... found among ashes in a stone coffin'. It was this 'vase' – a glass palm cup currently on display in our Medieval Gallery – that prompted Martin Biddle in 1985 to speculate that mid-Saxon Lundenwic might lie between here and Aldwych. Dozens of excavations have since proved him right.

About Lundenwic's cemeteries, however, we know very little. This makes the recent excavation of at least one richly furnished Saxon burial, beneath and alongside the church, especially significant. By the deceased's left hand lay a silver ring; over his feet another blue glass cup and a hanging bowl with enamelled escutcheons, containing hazelnuts. Elsewhere, a cluster of amethyst and glass beads, and a gold pendant with a blue glass setting (see cover) seemed to mark the position of another, empty, grave.

Dating to the mid-600s, about a century before Lundenwic reached its peak, the burials must be of people who witnessed – perhaps even influenced – the genesis of the new town.

But what of the supposed Roman remains? Amidst the Saxon burials was found a limestone coffin containing a middle-aged man. His bones gave a radiocarbon date centering on AD 410. Nearby was a tile kiln, almost certainly the 'brick arch' of early reports. It produced an archaeomagnetic date of AD 400–450. If the kiln relates to a special building project in the closing years of Roman Britain – perhaps a villa overlooking the bend of the river, 2km from Londinium – the grave could be the last trace of the owner's mausoleum. Recognising the site's significance, Saxons two centuries later may have made it part of their own domain and graveyard.

Fieldwork was conducted by MoLAS, as part of the St Martin's Renewal Programme (financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund and many other donors). Information from Alison Telfer and Gordon Malcolm.



Bermondsey antiques



Photo: Pre-Construct Archaeology

During 2006 the antiques market site at Bermondsey Square became the focus of the final stage in a long archaeological programme involving Southwark Council, English Heritage and Igloo Regeneration Partnership. Besides safeguarding the remains of Bermondsey Abbey (a Scheduled Ancient Monument), several major discoveries contributed to unravelling the complex history of one of London's most important sites.

A Roman presence in the area has long been surmised, but the excavations also revealed Iron Age ditches, showing a longer continuity of occupation, and the first Roman structural remains: a timber-lined well and remains of a clay-and-timber building, suggesting the presence of a farm. The name Bermondsey, 'Bearnmund's Island', denotes a Saxon origin – possibly the site of a minster – and for the first time the remains a small pre-monastic 11th-century church were found, directly underneath the nave of the later abbey church.

The medieval foundations survive in spectacular and unexpected style, sometimes less than

20cm below modern streets. On the west side of the site, along the Bermondsey Street boundary, remains of the precinct wall were discovered. Foundations adjacent to it were probably part of buildings for important guests. The church itself underlies Abbey Street, and a 35m length of its south wall (see picture, looking west), along with part of the cloister and associated buildings, was exposed. Three phases of construction are visible, and were subsequently found right across the excavations. Particularly exciting is the survival of a tower at the western end of the church with several steps of a staircase still extant. Information about its above-ground appearance will come from numerous carved stones. These were found incorporated into the walls and staircases of the mansion built here after the Dissolution by Henry VIII's courtier, Sir Thomas Pope. Just within the north-eastern corner of the site is part of the monastic graveyard.

Peter Moore
Pre-Construct Archaeology

Lundenwic's earliest cemetery?

Further exciting information about the origins of Lundenwic came to light in the summer of 2005, when excavations below the 'Covered Way', next to London's Transport Museum in Covent Garden, revealed nine cremation and two inhumation burials. Preliminary dating of the cremation vessels places them between AD 550 and 650. This makes them not only the first cremation burials to be found in Lundenwic but also the only burials in Lundenwic definitely dating to the Early Saxon period.

Although most of the cremation vessels had been damaged by later activity, two were recovered completely intact. Most of the vessels were made in chaff-tempered wares and were rounded, with slight variations in profile. As well as molten glass and copper alloy fragments, which were probably remains of goods burned on the funeral pyre, one vessel contained an ornate metal object, either a pair of tweezers or a small girdle holder with intricate decoration.

One of the two inhumation burials was aligned east-west and had been truncated at both ends by later deposits. A silver disc brooch set with four cut garnets backed by gridded foil was discovered in the well that truncated the head end (west) of this burial and was probably originally interred with it. Several other grave goods were retrieved from the burial itself, including a necklace comprising approximately 19 amber beads, a glass bead typical of the mid to late 6th century, and a complete shield-on-tongue buckle. The second inhumation burial was aligned north-south and did not contain grave goods.

The burials are of great significance. Previous evidence from the area had suggested that activity in Lundenwic might have first occurred in the 6th century. This discovery not only supports that theory, but also gives new clues to the extent and status of the settlement in its formative phases.

Andy Leonard
AOC Archaeology



Greenwich: Tudor Chapel Royal



The Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich lies over remains of royal residences dating back to the 15th century. The most important is the great riverside palace built by Henry VII in about 1500. There is a great deal of documentary evidence concerning life in the palace and a few contemporary views. The palace was largely demolished in the 1660s though the Chapel Royal survived until the 1690s, when it was lost under Wren's baroque masterpiece, and outbuildings including the vestry were used as offices until the 1730s.

Although excavations in the grand square in 1971 had revealed the core of the palace and earlier remains, recent work funded by the Greenwich Foundation has now located the eastern end of the palace complex. The eastern end of the chapel has been uncovered beyond Wren's Queen Anne Building. Its width is 8.5m and it is floored with glazed tiles (see picture, looking south). A doorway in its south-east corner preserves finely carved stone jambs, and there is an integral drain passing below the

chapel towards the Thames. Fragments of Caen stone window decoration were recovered from demolition layers. The surviving part of the chapel was undoubtedly where the altar stood, and the floor here may therefore have been raised above the level of the nave.

The vestry complex revealed added partitions and fireplaces, which were almost certainly inserted when it was used by John Evelyn, first Treasurer of Wren's new Greenwich Hospital.

The remains have now been covered and preserved. Analysis and research on the excavation have just begun. The chapel remains might even tell us something about the changes in the liturgy associated with Henry VIII's reformation. But, at all events, its location will undoubtedly enhance greatly our understanding of the layout of the whole palace complex.

Julian Bowsher
Museum of London Archaeology Service

The King's Table

Between March and June 2006 the Museum of London Archaeology Service had the chance to investigate Westminster Hall, the oldest building of the Palace of Westminster, dating back to the 1090s. The floor at one end had been sinking and cracking for a number of years, and the work was part of a scheme to remedy these structural problems. The most exciting finds were parts of the royal stone table known as the King's Table.

A few fragments of the Table had been discovered during the 1960s but the 12 newly-found fragments now provide the opportunity to study its form, style and dating. It was made of Purbeck marble and was built as a series of vertical 'trestles' or uprights, which supported a stone top. The trestles were delicately carved with a gothic arch and a round column. This grand table would have stood on a dais at the southern end of the hall for use in state banquets. The excavations have

shown that it was broken up by 17th-century masons and incorporated in the foundation of a wall which ran across the width of the hall.

The earliest known reference to the King's Table is during the reign of Edward I (1272–1307). A new slab of Purbeck marble was bought for its top in 1307 for the coronation of his son, Edward II. Describing the coronation of Henry VIII and Katharine of Aragon in 1509, the chronicler Edward Hall refers to a nine-piece table, perhaps suggesting that it had nine top sections and ten uprights. There are fragments from about five of these uprights and work will soon start on a computer reconstruction. Was the Table – a recognised symbol of royal power – broken up by Oliver Cromwell's men during the Commonwealth of the 1650s?

Nick Holder

Museum of London Archaeology Service



Bruce Castle



Culture minister and Tottenham MP, David Lammy, was one of over a thousand local residents and schoolchildren to take part in a community dig at Bruce Castle during July. Originally built by one of Henry VIII's courtiers, this attractive brick house, now a museum for the borough of Haringey, still holds many historical secrets. Did it have a medieval precursor? What was the purpose of the free-standing tower at the front?

A trench behind the museum revealed a complex system of brick drains. These converged into a large cistern before continuing downhill towards a pond on the estate boundary. Then, on almost the last day of the dig, came the discovery of a chalk foundation: the first, long-sought trace of a medieval manor house? On the front lawn, meanwhile, the diggers were following the tower foundations downwards for several metres. A tier of brick arcading with cross-shaped vents showed it had been built from a much lower level than the rest of the house. In the mid-19th century there was a well here,

served by a pump in the tower's basement. About 100m to the west flowed the Moselle stream, en route from Muswell Hill to the River Lea. Was the tower a water distribution point, similar to the one shown on plans of the waterworks of London's medieval Charterhouse?

Vast quantities of rubbish filled the deep hollow around the tower. To their amazement, children began finding things left by their Victorian counterparts – slates, pencils, ink pots, a toothbrush with its owner's name – legacy of a time when this was a boarding school. The owner, Sir Rowland Hill, inventor of paid postage, had a teaching system that was unusual for its day, relying on rewards rather than punishments. Dozens of the tokens that he gave out for good work turned up during the dig – no less fitting a reward for the pupils of today.

Supervised by Ian Blair (MoLAS), Roy Stephenson and Faye Simpson (MoL), and Deborah Hedgecock (Bruce Castle Museum, Haringey Council), aided by staff and volunteers from both institutions. Financed by Heritage Lottery Fund and Tottenham Grammar School Foundation.

JOURNEY TO THE NEW WORLD: LONDON 1606 TO VIRGINIA 1607

Until 13 May, at Museum in Docklands

Marking the 400th anniversary of the first permanent English settlement in America, at Jamestown, Virginia, this important exhibition brings together for the first time archaeological evidence recently unearthed on the original settlement site with items from the Museum in Docklands' own collection. Free with Museum in Docklands admission ticket (adult £5, concs £3)

Written in bone: archaeological evidence for the first European settlers

Monday 5 March, 1.10pm, at Museum in Docklands

Doug Owsley, a leading physical anthropologist, investigates the physical remains of the earliest settlers at Jamestown.

Free. No booking required.

Finds from Jamestown – London connections

Thursday 29 March, 1.10pm, at Museum in Docklands

Dr Geoff Egan considers the range of London objects – some commonplace, some unexpected – recently unearthed at Jamestown.

Free. No booking required.

Study day at Museum in Docklands

Saturday 31 March, 10.30am – 5pm

Investigating the ordinary men and women, both English and Native American, whose extraordinary efforts helped shape an emerging nation.

Advance booking required (adult £20, concs £15); please call 0870 444 3855.

CONFERENCE: THE VALUE OF HUMAN REMAINS IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

3–4 March, at Museum in Docklands

Human remains are no longer regarded simply as display items – sources of archaeological or medical information – but as complex, often contested, cultural property. In this symposium, international speakers will debate the future role of museums in curating and interpreting these unique collections.

Advance booking required. Please go to the Museum of London website or email: hswain@museumoflondon.org.uk.

From Ice Age to Essex: a history of the people and landscape of East London

Pamela Greenwood, Dominic Perring and Peter Rowsome

East London has been the focus of intensive archaeological effort, yielding some spectacular discoveries: from prehistoric ritual sites and flint arrowheads to a Roman stone coffin and Saxon glass drinking horns.

MoLAS 2006, £7.95

The medieval postern gate by the Tower of London

David Whipp

This gate in the City Wall, immediately north of the Tower, was discovered in 1979 and can be seen preserved at the south end of the Tower Hill subway.

MoLAS Monograph Series 29, 2006, £7.95

Roman and later development east of the forum and Cornhill

Richard Bluer and Trevor Bringham, with Robin Nielsen

An important later Roman sequence, featuring houses with heated rooms and painted wall plaster, along with timber outbuildings.

MoLAS Monograph Series 30, 2006, £20.95

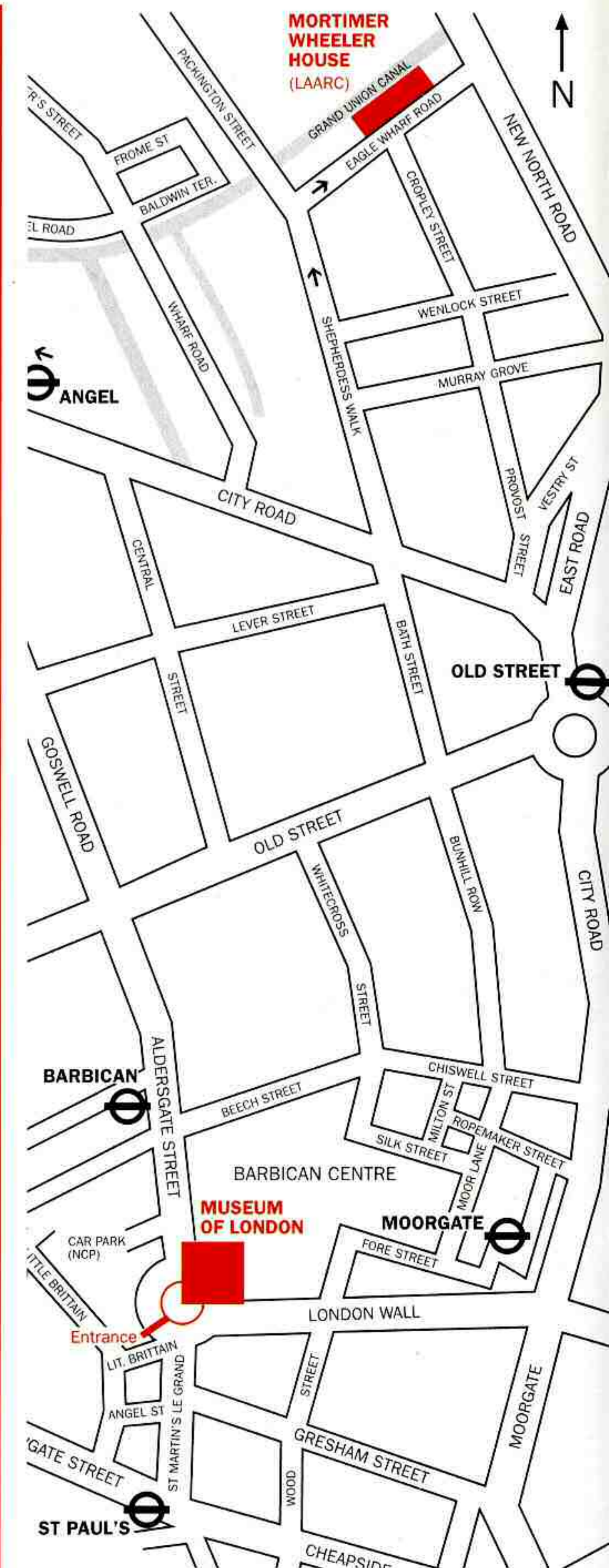
The last Hendon farm

Edited by Jacqui Pearce

Over the past four years members of the Hendon and District Archaeological Society have been writing up their 1960s dig at Church End Farm. This well illustrated and attractive book makes an important contribution to the study of rural Middlesex from the mid-17th century.

HADAS 2005, £11.99

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



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Front cover: Gold pendant with blue glass setting from St Martin-in-the-Fields