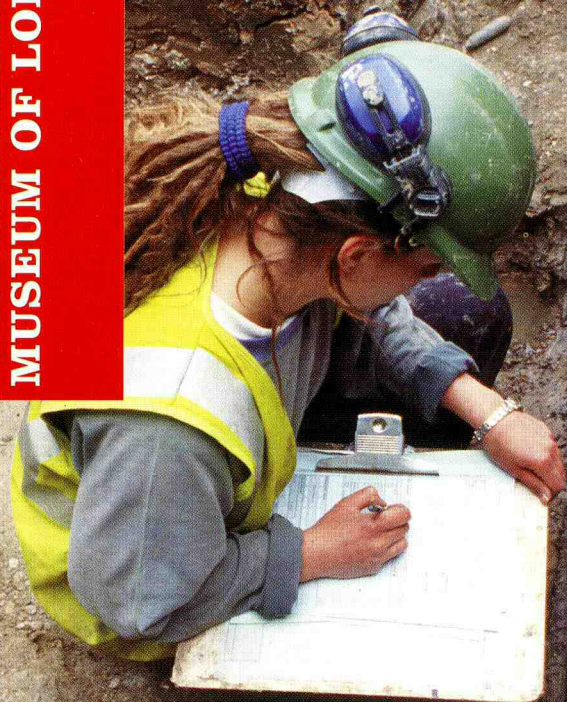


MUSEUM OF LONDON



Archaeology Matters

No 7, October 1999

Prehistoric Southwark



With the election of a Mayor for London now less than 12 months away, archaeologists have been taking a last look at the site on the south bank of the Thames – opposite the Tower of London – where the Mayor’s offices are to be built. We now know that the Romans, visiting the site nearly 2000 years ago, would have found a marshy landscape, with small sandy islands encircled by the waters of a river that was very much wider than it is today. Yet, even by that date, people had been living on the islands intermittently over a period going back perhaps a further 2000 years into prehistory.

On one side of the excavation site lay the north-west corner of the island known as the Horsleydown Eyot. Here were found large quantities of flint scrapers, burnt flints and animal bones from cooking, together with prehistoric pottery from the Neolithic onwards. The other side of the site coincided with the eastern edge of a second island that extends

under the present Hays Galleria. To protect it from erosion by constant river action, the Romans had consolidated the island’s foreshores with stout wooden fences, and a 30m length of these was excavated. It consisted of large, driven, oak posts which had had horizontal sawn oak boards placed behind them in a first phase and nailed onto the front of them in a second (see picture). Further from the river was an area of gravel hardstanding upon which Roman pottery and tile had been dropped. Two parallel drainage ditches suggest that the land had been divided up into regular fields or gardens.

The islands appear to have been occupied throughout the Roman period. Subsequently, river levels rose, the area was flooded, and the site was buried under a deep layer of clay.

*Richard Bluer and David Saxby
Museum of London Archaeology Service*

Goddess of Wisdom

Roman London, like modern London, was a city of many religions. New evidence for one of these has recently been found in King Edward Street in the City, on the site which is to become the Merrill Lynch Regional Headquarters. Excavation of a barrel-lined well, that went out of use during the early 2nd century AD, revealed a pipeclay figurine of the Roman goddess Minerva (see picture). The head of the figurine is missing, snapped off in what may have been a ritualistic act, carried out when the well was no longer needed. This might have been done both to liberate the spirit of the figurine and to disperse any residue of evil that the water deities of the well may have invoked.

The most common types of figurines produced were those of Venus and a seated Mother Goddess. Such figurines were often bought as gifts to the deities in order to petition them for favours. They were mass-produced in moulds on the Continent, especially in the Allier region of France. This is the first example of a figurine of Minerva from Roman London.

Minerva was one of the great Roman divinities. Worshipped as the goddess of wisdom and the patron of arts and trades, she also provided courage and stamina in time of war, and so is often portrayed with a helmet, shield, body armour and spear. She was depicted in similar guise in a sculpture that once formed part of a religious precinct thought to have stood not too distant from the present site.

Jenny Hall
Museum of London
Bruce Watson
Museum of London Archaeology Service





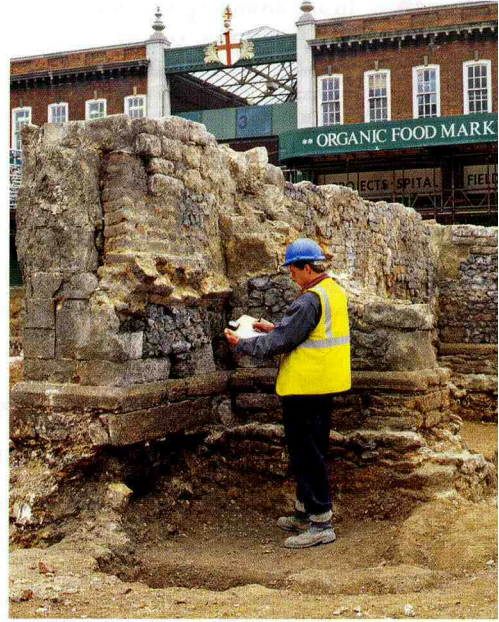
Medieval Spitalfields

The present excavations lie mainly within the cemetery that belonged to the priory and hospital of St Mary Spital. Several hundred burials have been recorded so far, some of them in mass graves that may have been dug for the disposal of the victims of epidemics, and a chapel has also been discovered (see picture opposite). This chapel, which has a charnel house beneath, was built between 1389 and 1391, and was dedicated to St Edmund and St Mary Magdalene.

The vaulted charnel house, which was used for storing bones disturbed when new graves were dug, was built partially below ground and measured over 13.6 metres by 7 metres. It was supported by three buttresses (see picture) on its north and south sides and by two at its eastern and western ends. The south wall was built in a chequerboard pattern of flint and stone, and survived to well over 2.5 metres above construction level. It seems that the charnel house was cleared after the priory was closed, because few bones remained within it.

In front of this chapel the remains of a gallery have been found. It was built in the late 15th century for the Lord Mayor of London and the Aldermen to listen to sermons preached at the nearby Pulpit Cross. The Spital Sermon is still given to this day, though it now takes place in the church of St Lawrence Jewry, in the heart of the City, close to Guildhall.

To the south of the cemetery was an area of land which was probably used for keeping animals and growing food during the 13th and 14th centuries. It contained a number of timber buildings, both circular and rectangular, perhaps for the storage of hay, crops and animals.



সেইট ম্যারী স্পিটাল হসপাতালের সঙ্গে যুক্ত কবরস্থানে প্রধান খননের কাজ চলছে। বেশ কয়েকশত কবরের সংবাদ রেকর্ড করা হয়েছে এবং একটি গির্জার অবশিষ্ট আবিষ্কার করা হয়েছে।

গির্জার সেলারটি (মাটির নিচের ঘর), যা ১৩৮৯ ও ১৩৯১ সালের মধ্যে তৈরী করা হয়েছিল, নতুন কবর খোঁড়ার সময়ে পাওয়া হাড়গুলি রাখার কাজে ব্যবহৃত হত, কিন্তু হসপাতাল বন্ধ হওয়ার পরে খুব সম্ভবতঃ এগুলি সরিয়ে ফেলা হয়েছিল।

সেলারের একটি দেওয়ালের উচ্চতা ছিল ২.৫ মিটার। গির্জার সামনে একটি বড় ক্রুশ এবং একটি বড় দালান ছিল যেখানে লণ্ডনের লর্ড মেয়র ধর্ম সংক্রান্ত প্রচারণা শুনতেন। কবরস্থানের দক্ষিণ দিকের জায়গাটি পশুপালন ও খাদ্য উৎপাদনের কাজে ব্যবহার করা হত।



Charter Quay, Kingston

The site at Charter Quay, Kingston, which is being redeveloped by St George West London Ltd, covers a large area to the north of the Hogsmill river, between the market place and the Thames. This central location provided the opportunity to investigate the origins of one of Surrey's most historic towns.

The extent of the gravel island on which Kingston is built was fully recorded, but no evidence of any late Saxon occupation was found. It now seems probable that the late Saxon settlement lay further north, between the site of St Mary's Chapel and Kingston Bridge, and that the market place was a later, medieval planned development. Several medieval properties were identified. Remains of buildings were found, as well as hearths, ovens and pits of 12th to 15th century date. The most exciting discovery, however, was a former channel of the Hogsmill river which was approximately 20m wide and ran north-west to south-east across the site. This channel had an important effect on the layout of streets and properties in the area, and appears to have been progressively infilled between the 13th and 15th centuries.

Several river walls ('revetments') were recorded within the channel, the earliest including a complete, reused wall timber, 7.5m long, as well as numerous other building timbers. Two other revetments were constructed out of interlaced rods and twigs. Later revetments, probably of 15th/16th century date and comprising reused boat timbers, were constructed alongside the edge of the Thames some 50m to the west of the infilled channel. There followed, from the 17th century onwards, a period of extensive dumping of domestic refuse. Substantial remains of later, post-medieval buildings survived, including a virtually intact 16th/17th century cellar belonging to the Castle Inn.

Jonathan Nowell
Wessex Archaeology

The Tate, Millbank



In the 19th century, Millbank was the site of the largest prison in Europe. The Millbank Penitentiary was originally planned by the prison reformer Jeremy Bentham, whose design was for a building which would be a model of its type. However, it was abandoned unfinished in 1810. The prison was eventually completed after two major redesigns, but even during construction came to epitomise squalor, misery and decay. It comprised three main parts: a central chapel surrounded by a courtyard, a hexagonal administrative building enclosing the courtyard, and six pentagonal structures radiating from the outside faces of the hexagon.

Extensive remains of the hexagonal building have been excavated in connection with the Centenary Development of the Tate Gallery. These include brick walls and culverts set in trenches cut into the surface of concrete foundation slabs, together with partition walls and brick floors. One room had a wooden floor and a window with a hearth set directly

beneath it. It appears that heating caused serious problems with condensation, particularly on the window glass. A trough was therefore chiselled into the window sill to collect condensed water and channel it out of the building through gutters and culverts, in the manner of a primitive air-conditioning system.

The massed concrete foundation rafts were notable for their great size: up to 19m wide and 4m thick. These were the only solution to building on what was a marshy and unstable site. They can be associated with the architect Robert Smirke, who was engaged to oversee the project in 1817 (following a series of structural failures) through to completion in 1822. Smirke, who also worked on the British Museum, was renowned for rescuing collapsing structures and was a pioneer in concrete construction.

Karl Hulker
AOC Archaeology

Alfred the Great 849-899: London's forgotten king

Wednesday 8 September 1999 to Sunday 9 January 2000

The Museum of London marks the 11th centenary of King Alfred's death on 26 October 899 with a major exhibition which paints a vivid picture of the man as a national ruler and lawgiver. The exhibition shows how recent archaeological excavations and historical research have dramatically changed our understanding of the significance of the events of 886, and how vital Alfred's concept of a new London was. The exhibition is supported by Clifford Chance, the City of London Archaeological Trust and the Corporation of London.

LATE NIGHT OPENING

Tour: Alfred the Great: London's forgotten king

Wednesday 6 October

7.00pm

Visit the Museum galleries during the evening. This is the first of the Museum's late night openings when visitors can enjoy the Museum out of normal opening hours. To launch the first evening there will be an opportunity to have a tour of the Alfred the Great exhibition with curator John Clark.

Lecture: Excavating King Alfred's London

Friday 1 October

1.10pm 50 mins

Recent excavations have demonstrated the reality of King Alfred's re-foundation of London in 886 and the new city's development in later Saxon times.

By Julian Ayre, Museum of London Archaeology Service

Lecture: Alfred – Then and Now

Friday 8 October

1.10pm 50 mins

An assessment of Alfred's modern reputation in the light of recent archaeological and historical evidence.

By Professor Janet Nelson, University College London

Study Day: Alfred the Great: London's forgotten king

Saturday 16 October

10.30am–5.00pm Fee: £16; £10 concessions AB

Who was Alfred the Great? This study day offers the opportunity to hear the latest thinking on some of the major issues surrounding Alfred. Experts will discuss recent archaeological evidence for a radical new view of Alfred's London and the nature of pre-existing settlement.

CBA Conference to be held at the Museum of London: **Post-medieval London – Recent Archaeological Work and Research**, a CBA Mid-Anglia Conference in association with CBA South-East & SCOLA
Saturday 27 November 1999 9.00am–6.15pm Fee: £25
This one-day conference includes tea/coffee and a free copy of the published conference papers.

Advanced Booking, please send your name and address, how many tickets you require, SAE and a cheque (payable to CBA Mid-Anglia 1999) to: DEREK HILLS, CBA MID-ANGLIA, 34 KINGFISHER CLOSE, WHEATHAMSTEAD, HERTS, AL4 8JJ

Museum of London

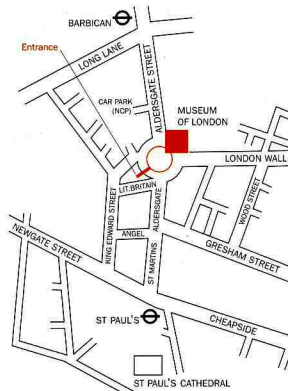
London Wall

London EC2Y 5HN

Tel: 0171 600 3699

Web: www.museumoflondon.org.uk

Email: info@museumoflondon.org.uk



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

For further information about archaeology at the Museum of London:

Hedley Swain (curatorial)
0171 814 5731

Taryn Nixon (Museum of London
Archaeology Service)
0171 410 2200

Dr Ellen McAdam (Museum of
London Specialist Services)
0171 490 8447

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