

Fig. 1: Chapman and Andre's map of 1777 showing most of the present Greater London Council area covered by the Museum.

Archaeology at the Passmore Edwards Museum, Stratford

PAT WILKINSON

THE PASSMORE EDWARDS Museum, which was opened in 1900, was founded to serve as a local museum covering the geographical County of Essex; under an Agreement made between the then West Ham Corporation and the Essex Field Club, the Collections and Library of the latter formed the basis of the present Museum. J. Passmore Edwards, the victorian parliamentarian and philanthropist contributed half the capital cost of £6,000. This fine example of late victorian architecture in Romford Road, Stratford, E.15, in the London Borough of Newham, houses the Museum's display area and the main offices. In 1973 the Extension Services Section moved into 30, Romford Road, Stratford, a late eighteenth

or early nineteenth century weather-boarded listed building, where work with local societies, schools and evening classes is based. In 1974 the Museum acquired a victorian warehouse at 31, Stock Street, Plaistow, E.13, which is now the Processing Centre and main store for the study collections. The Museum is funded through the Education Committee of the London Borough of Newham and has a Board of Governors which consists of members of the Authority, representatives of the Essex Field Club and Museums Association, as well as Newham Teachers Council.

The Museum is concerned, under the terms of the Agreement with the Essex Field Club, with the

heritage of the geographical County of Essex, but especially with that area now administered by the Greater London Boroughs of Newham, Barking, Havering, Redbridge and Waltham Forest and the western part of the Administrative County of Essex; in addition to the archaeology and local history of this area the Museum is extensively involved in the fields of biology and geology which are fully represented in the permanent displays and the study collections. The staff at present numbers eighteen, although the Council has accepted the needs for a higher establishment as economic circumstances permit to cover the work required in the area. Of the present staff three are working in the Archaeology and Local History Section but other members of staff are regularly involved in the Museum's archaeological programme.

The Museum's early participation in archaeological work was based on the activities of the members of the Essex Field Club whose publication, the *Essex Naturalist*, which first appeared in 1880, contained archaeological reports from its inception. Much interest at that time centred on flint artifacts and a large proportion of the early collections in the Museum consists of palaeolithic tools from many locations in southern England. The archaeological work done by or on behalf of the Essex Field Club continued, interest being focused particularly on pre-historic and roman sites and artifacts and in this way the collections slowly expanded. The emphasis on archaeology increased greatly with the appointment in 1956 of the first professional Curator, Kenneth Marshall, and his successor in 1967 the present Curator, Ian Robertson, both having archaeological backgrounds. Kenneth Marshall undertook a varied series of excavations throughout the area and his work brought about the rapid expansion of the archaeological collections. His other major contribution to the archaeology of the area was to actively assist in the founding of the West Essex Archaeological Group in 1958; the group has since then been happily and closely associated with the Museum, which provides facilities for Committee Meetings, finds processing and assistance in publication work, whilst housing the archaeological archive of the Group. Further major expansion was made possible in 1974 when the Museum became the recipient of grants from the Department of the Environment for agreed archaeological work in north east Greater London, which has helped to make possible a full-time programme of excavation and publication. The Museum has tended necessarily to look towards Essex being closely involved in the work of the Essex Archaeological and Historical Congress, of which the present Curator was Honorary Assistant Secretary for some years, the Museum being a regular venue for Congress' most successful annual Archaeological Symposium. The Curator has also acted as a witness

on behalf of Congress at local inquiries into the refusal of applications for listed building consent to demolish. He was Chairman of what came to be called the M11 Archaeological Committee (Essex), the motorway running from the Greater London Council area through Essex, and its Field Officer was based at the Museum where most of the finds processing has been undertaken; the investigation of the M11 has proved to have been a most successful joint project, especially between the Department of the Environment and the Museum. Contacts with those working in the rest of Greater London, however, have been strengthened in recent years with invitations to be represented on the Working Party on London Archaeology and at the Borough Secretaries meetings of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society.

Active fieldwork is concentrated in the north east Greater London area for which the Museum has a Sites and Monuments Record funded in 1973 by the Department of the Environment for their publication *Time on Our Side*. Recently excavation has been undertaken in Barking, Havering and Newham but negotiations are at present taking place with both Redbridge and Waltham Forest on future sites. Threats are varied but include major road construction schemes, in particular the M25 in Havering and the M11 link roads in Redbridge and Barking, large

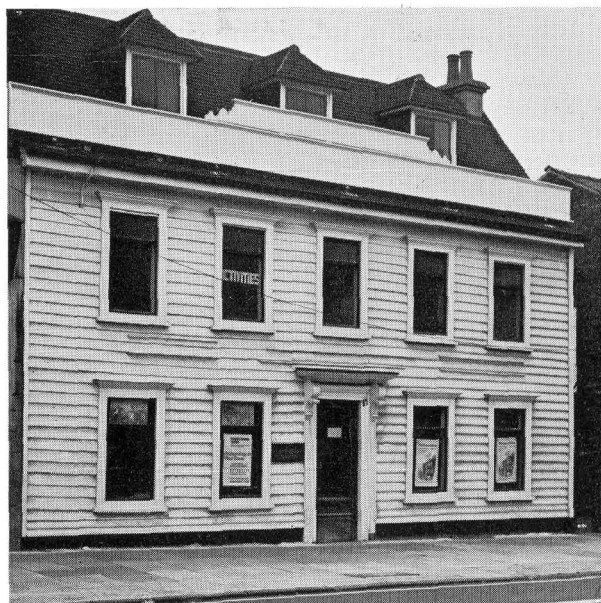


Fig. 2: Passmore Edwards Museum, main building in Romford Road, E.15.

scale gravel extraction in Havering and the Docklands Redevelopment, especially in Newham.

Evidence of prehistoric activity in the five Boroughs is extensive although only a small part of the collections are the result of controlled excavation. Pleistocene bones have been retrieved from the Ilford area in recent years and rescue excavations on the M11 route at Woodford in 1975 by Terry Betts corroborated Worthington Smith's observations that his 'Palaeolithic floor' at Stoke Newington spread across into the Roding Valley; the site, which produced six fine Acheulian hand-axes is thought to date to the Hoxnian Interglacial. The fluviatile deposits of the Thames, Lea and Roding are rich in palaeolithic finds, the majority of which were recovered during large scale works such as the digging of the docks and reservoirs and the extensive housing developments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Waltham Forest has the largest amount of material, sixty-six different find-spots being on record to date. The planned road up the Roding Valley from Barking Creek to Redbridge may well reveal further evidence. For the mesolithic and neolithic periods there is considerably less information, although the Museum has in recent years acquired the finds from Dr. Isabel Smith's excavation of a neolithic site in Rainham in 1963. The Bronze Age is represented by some fifty find-spots, the only potential site having been picked up on an aerial photograph taken by Dr. St. Joseph showing a group of possible round barrows in Aldborough Hatch; a recent planning application for gravel extraction on the site has been refused.

With the Iron Age the number of known sites increases, these apart from the hill fort at Uphall, now largely destroyed, being predominantly areas of belgic occupation usually succeeded by romano-british activity. Excavation in 1977 in Rainham has examined a small part of a triple-ditched enclosure dating from the early belgic phase and continuing in use in some form into the early roman period. The site, which is to be destroyed by gravel extraction was revealed by air photography to be part of an extensive cropmark site including further enclosures and field systems. The triple-ditched enclosure itself can be compared to those at Orsett and Gun Hill in this part of Essex; further work to examine the interior of the enclosure fully, which has not been possible on the other sites, is anticipated next year. Roman evidence for the five Boroughs is extensive with the London-Colchester and London-Dunmow roads both crossing the area; the London-Colchester road has been examined twice in Stratford principally in 1963 just beyond the main Museum building in Romford Road and various sections of the London-Dunmow road in the Claybury area and running into Essex at Chigwell have been



**Fig. 3: Extension Services building,
30 Romford Road, E.15.**

investigated by the West Essex Archaeological Group. There were clearly settlements in the East Ham and Ilford areas, as cemeteries have been found but little trace of occupation sites recorded. A major building is known at Wanstead and it is probable that records of a building at Leyton should be identified as a similar structure; extensive dumping of building debris near Havering-atte-Bower indicate a major building in that area, excavated evidence having also revealed a group of cremations, working surfaces and small-scale industrial activity represented by iron slag in stake-lined gullies. Other finds include a dug-out canoe from the Victoria Dock now in the British Museum. There is also the possibility that the town of Durolitum, not yet positively identified, may be within the area.

Saxon material for the area is at present scanty. The most important saxon site is the Abbey at Barking, traditionally founded by Erkenwald in 666 AD; the actual location of the saxon foundation is uncertain, excavations on the site of the medieval Abbey having indicated only slight traces of saxon activity. Similarly the precise location of the saxon Havering Palace, a retreat of Edward the Confessor, is not established, although building development in its vicinity is anticipated and excavation may be necessary. At Rainham a pagan saxon burial ground forming part of a multi-period site is recorded, the finds including two glass drinking horns now in the British Museum. It may be assumed from place names that a number of known medieval settlements were saxon in origin including East and West Ham

and Dagenham, although excavations in these areas have as yet yielded no evidence of saxon occupation.

In recent years excavation has been concentrated on various aspects of the medieval occupation of the area. There are two monastic sites, the Benedictine house at Barking and the Cistercian monastery of Stratford Langthorne, both of which have required some excavation work. At Barking the area investigated in a short rescue operation in 1971 lies to the north of the conventual buildings; evidence recorded includes an open courtyard with large rubbish pits, an apparently random group of burials and a stretch of perimeter wall. The documented demolition of 1541-2 was clearly evident on the site. In later drainage work the corner of the rere-dorter was located and various wall footings recorded. Work on the Stratford Langthorne Abbey site was concentrated in 1975 on the area of the main gate to the precinct. A detailed investigation of the moat was possible which demonstrated its regular flooding and recutting throughout the medieval period; a series of perimeter walls was also disclosed. Inside the perimeter wall was found a medieval house of knapped flint on chalk footings; this was probably of thirteenth century date and continued in use up to the Dissolution, when its floor was levelled-up with demolition material and a brick extension attached to it. The Curator has recommended that the medieval building should be retained when the site is redeveloped by the Local Authority. The conventual buildings lie beneath the North Woolwich railway line and it is unlikely that work will be required in this area in the immediate future. Two medieval villages have been investigated at West Ham and Dagenham. Near the parish church at West Ham, traces of a timber-framed house were recovered, succeeded in the sixteenth century by a brick house on rubble foundations robbed from Stratford Langthorne Abbey; associated with the dwelling was an industrial site used for extracting cores from cattle horn, the waste cores being left in the clay and wicker-lined pits used for the extraction process. In 1976 a probably fourteenth century timber-framed building and an adjoining group of eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings by Dagenham parish church were demolished; they had been previously recorded and an internal cross-wall, crown post and rafters from the timber-framed building removed to the Museum. Excavation revealed the original layout of this building and evidence for a contemporary wheelwright's workshop beside it; this was succeeded in the sixteenth century by a brick floor again used for some industrial or commercial purpose sloping to a central drain and showing distinct signs of wear in specific areas and clear evidence for regular washing-down. The first of the eighteenth century buildings was later erected over it. In 1972 excavations by members of the Museum's Student

Group took place on part of a post-medieval house at Stubbers now destroyed by gravel extraction and later part of a Tudor fireplace was recovered from a nearby barn before demolition. The Museum has also acquired Treasure Trove material in particular the Brentwood coin hoard of medieval date. Perhaps the key site for the area in national terms is that of the Bow Porcelain factory; an excavation in the area of the waste heaps was undertaken in 1969 from which the Museum received a large collection of waste material. It is a policy now to build up a fully representative collection of finished pieces to be complimented by the wasters. Post-medieval expansion was concentrated on the medieval villages until the development of the railway and road systems from about 1850 and during the next fifty years the pattern of occupation in the five Boroughs changed radically.

The Museum's permanent archaeology display opened in 1970 contains material found throughout the geographical County of Essex. Recent archaeological work has greatly increased the collections and a policy of gradually amplifying the displays with new material is being undertaken. Archaeology displays are regularly included in the temporary exhibitions programme, the next being the M11 Motorway opening on the 10th February 1978. Publication of the Museum's archaeological collection including especially work done by the West Essex Archaeo-

Annual Lecture and General Meeting

THE ANNUAL meeting of the *London Archaeologist* will take place on Friday May 19th at 7 p.m. in the Lecture Room of the Museum of London.

This year the lecture (open to the public) will be "London's Waterfronts" by Mr John Schofield, Field Officer of the Department of Urban Archaeology, Museum of London.

Prior to the lecture, the annual report and accounts will be presented. The proceedings will include the election of officers and also the election to the Publication Committee of the six local society representatives, whose nominations should be made in writing not less than 14 days before the A.G.M. to the Chairman, Montague Chambers, Montague Close, S.E.1.

Local societies are invited to send one representative with voting powers to the A.G.M; individual subscribers to the magazine and their friends will also be welcome to attend.

logical Group, has in recent years appeared principally in the *Essex Journal*. The Museum has now, however, undertaken its own publishing programme to include archaeological monographs, the first publication being *St. Mary's Church, Woodford*, a documentary and archaeological investigation done by members of the West Essex Archaeological Group. This is to be followed by the M11 Motorway publication which is intended to coincide with the exhibition. It is anticipated that the Museum's own excavations will be published in this form.

The work of the Extension Services Section of the Museum is much concerned with archaeology; the building at 30, Romford Road, is used every Thursday evening and alternate Saturdays by the West Essex Archaeological Group for finds processing and on Tuesdays for two evening classes on archaeology run by the Museum staff, one of which is part of the Authority's official Adult Education provision. These evening classes have now been operating for five years, those who have completed the two year set course undertaking projects of their own under the supervision of the staff. Members of this class form the back-bone of the Museum's excavation team together with members of the West Essex Archaeological Group. Facilities are also

provided for students undertaking projects who wish to do research on part of the collections. There is also a long-standing practice with some of the local schools whereby six-formers wishing to do full-time archaeology study are released regularly from school for training in basic processing, recording and illustration. The loans collection maintained by the Extension Services Section has many archaeological items and school parties are able to visit excavations, and occasionally can assist in site work. The Conservation Section is also an essential part of the Museum's archaeological programme, dealing not only with locally excavated material but, as an agent for the Area Museums Service for South Eastern England, treating objects from any part of that area. Some of the material from the Lincoln Road site at Enfield was treated by the Museum's conservator as well as a varied selection of items from the Bexley and John Evelyn Society Museums and further development in this service may be anticipated.

The Museum, therefore, is widely involved in various aspects of archaeology in Greater London and beyond and it is intended that the expansion in this field of recent years may be continued.

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Letters

METRICATION

I TRUST that my subscription just sent will not be my last to the *London Archaeologist*.

It is with regret that increasingly I find my pleasure in the journal impaired by the exclusive use of metric terms: to me these will eventually become totally intolerable.

To those outside Government controlled or sponsored occupations the extent of passive objection and active resistance to metrication is perhaps unknown.

My suggestion would be that the invariable inclusion of Imperial equivalents (or preferably metric equivalents to first-given Imperial data) would be a sensible expedient in your publication.

M. O. A. STANTON

Upper Goddards Farm,
Skirmett,
Henley-on-Thames,
Oxon.

Our policy is to use the terms supplied by authors in their articles, consistent with common sense. For example, one can refer to a 120ft chimney (p. 121) because that is the size to which it was built, but a 27m trench (p. 122)

because that is the size of the trench. The increasing proportion of metric terms in the London Archaeologist therefore merely reflects current archaeological and surveying practice. We could, of course, insert imperial equivalents where necessary. What do other readers think?—Editor.

LAYTON COLLECTION

WITH REGARD to the recent articles on Thomas Layton (*the London Archaeologist*, 3, No. 4), may I draw your readers' attention to the Layton antiquities at Gunnersbury Park Museum? A selection of pre-historic, Roman and later material was passed to the Museum in 1960 and is in fact in its most relevant home—a local history museum in Brentford. Included are a number of fine Bronze Age rapiers and swords and a series of palstaves and socketed axes. The majority of the 47 items are on permanent display; researchers with specific enquiries are always welcome by prior appointment.

BRIDGET GOSHAWK

The Museum,
Gunnersbury Park,
London W.3.