

# London's Archaeological Societies — 6

## SOUTHWARK AND LAMBETH ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

PRIOR TO 1945 only isolated finds from building sites had been recovered in Southwark. The war-time bombing enabled excavations to be carried out by Kathleen Kenyon for the Southwark Excavation Committee from 1945 to 1947. Following these excavations Peter Marsden of the Guildhall Museum undertook considerable fieldwork in north Southwark including the excavation of a Roman boat in 1958. In 1962 the new Southwark Archaeological Excavation Committee was formed, mainly through the initiative of M. Maitland-Muller, keeper of the Cuming Museum. By 1965 a considerable burden was carried by S.A.E.C. due to the problems of storage and of processing material recovered from excavations and fieldwork. There also existed a regular corps of diggers who had worked as a team with Dr. Francis Celoria, the former field officer of the London Museum. As a result the Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Society was formed which now organises jointly with S.A.E.C. archaeological work in the two boroughs.

Over a period of 25 years scientific excavators have gradually built up a picture of the extent of Roman and medieval Southwark and work in recent years is enabling a reassessment of the past conclusions to be made. With the formation of the Society the above work was extended to Lambeth and a Roman road research group was set up. The Society has been in the forefront of the development of post-medieval archaeology in London and documentary research has established the wealth of potteries which existed in Southwark and Lambeth from the 16th to the 20th century. The waste material from an important early-17th century delfware kiln discovered in Great Britain was excavated on a boundary site in Lambeth in under three days. A second kiln in Montague Close, Southwark, was uncovered in 1969.

The formation of S.L.A.S. coincided with the start of the Kennington Palace excavations in Lambeth, the most extensive excavations the Society has undertaken to date, with the site being open for nearly two years. The recovery of a substantial part of the ground plan of the Black Prince's Palace sheds important light on

the life of a medieval royal household. Individuals within the society have continued to work on their own research projects; coins, clay tobacco pipes, London potters and mineral water bottles are a few. It is hoped that many of these projects will be published in a more permanent format in the future.

The Society has pioneered the use of disused premises as a meeting place for the post-excavation work on finds and as a centre of discussion, the social aspect of archaeology being turned to good use. Initially the members met in the dank archways beneath Blackfriars Goods Station working on the excavated material with the aid of paraffin lamps and warmed by coke fires. Very soon better and more extensive premises were obtained at Upper Ground near Blackfriars Bridge and here the work of the Society flourished. This archaeological centre has been used as a model for many other societies who now have or are negotiating to obtain their own premises. During 1968 the Society moved again, this time into more permanent headquarters, a disused library in the Old Kent Road provided by the London Borough of Southwark, the Upper Ground centre closing finally in 1969. The scope of the Society's work, supported also by the London Borough of Lambeth continues to expand and tribute must be paid to the members and officers for their enthusiastic work in establishing an efficient organisation for active archaeological work in Southwark and Lambeth.

The vigorous nature of the Society is shown by the fact that over 200 meetings were held in 1969 for either lectures, fieldwork or processing of excavated material. Newcomers to archaeology are especially welcome to join, the only condition being that members should play some part in one of the Society's activities. Large scale excavations are taking place this summer in advance of the proposed developments around London Bridge. (Further details of the Society may be obtained from The Hon. Secretary, 94 Hubert Grove, Stockwell, S.W.9).

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### Archaeological Centre for St. Albans

THE BUILDING provided by the enlightened City Council to St. Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society to serve as work centre and headquarters was formerly auction storerooms and stabling. The Council re-roofed the building and provided internal strengthening ties, making it available in its simplest form consistent with safety. The Society for its part provided internal cladding and services while members of the local business community kindly gave surplus materials necessary for converting and equipping the centre.

At ground level a large room with ample space for drying trays has been set aside for pot-washing; there is also room for storing excavation equipment and processed material. The upstairs floor is given over completely to processing.