

Mosaic

MORVILLE STREET, BOW

EXCAVATIONS continued this summer at Morville Street by S.A.E.C. for the Borough of Tower Hamlets. In the 19th century two Roman burials were found on this site, but the present excavation proves this to have been an isolated group rather than belonging to a cemetery. A third burial pit was found in the previous season of excavation but apart from a number of nails and an almost complete but crushed pot, this was empty. It may have once contained a wooden coffin.

Except for houses (now demolished) which were built in the middle of the last century, no sign of settlement was found and it seems probable that the site was under agricultural usage, at least during the Roman period. Several ditches have been uncovered cut through the natural clay, which probably marked field boundaries. The five Roman ditches all followed an east-west line, whilst those thought to be medieval or later were aligned NW-SE.

Excavations continue at weekends on the same site. Enquiries to Irene Schwab at S.A.E.C. Office (01-407 1989).

ENGLISH HARD-PASTE PORCELAIN SEMINAR

EACH YEAR attendance at the annual seminar, organised by Morley College Ceramic Circle, increases. On the week-end of 17th November, a record number of almost two hundred persons gathered at Morley College to hear lectures from John Cooper, John Cushion, Geoffrey Godden, David Holgate, John Mallet, John Penderill-Church, Rosemary Wrenn and Dr. F. Sevenne Mackenna.

The history of English hard-paste porcelain was traced from William Cookworthy's foundation of the Plymouth factory in 1768, its transfer to Bristol in 1770, its closure in 1780, when Richard Champion, who had bought the factory from Cookworthy in 1774, sold the patent for the use of china-clay and china-stone to Staffordshire potters who founded the New Hall factory.

New Hall wares up to 1870 were discussed, and Mr. Godden threw new light on the hard-paste produced by various factories after the Champion patent expired in 1795.

The location and types of Cornish clays were dealt with most informatively by Mr. Penderill-Church, and Miss Wrenn demonstrated some problems of practical potting, aided by closed-circuit TV, enabling the audience to follow her techniques in detail. This innovation contributed much to a very successful seminar.

LAMBETH ROAD

LARGELY DUE to the interest of the Pharmaceutical Society and their subsequent generous grant towards machining, excavation work was started by S.A.E.C., in conjunction with S.L.A.S., at the beginning of July, on the site designated for the new Pharmaceutical Society building, at 129 Lambeth Road, on the corner with Lambeth High Street.

Original expectations for a post-medieval kiln site — kilns have been found in the vicinity — proved negative. Machining removed the first 1.5m of 19th and 20th century fill. The 18th century horizon thus uncovered revealed a series of drainage systems consisting of wells and cesspits, with attendant gullies and conduits, all running in a southward direction, indicating service to houses on the Lambeth Road.

A group of long, shallow, sandy mortar and rubble-filled trenches, with large postholes beyond the ends, appeared

in the south-west corner of the site, forming the possible foundation for a large wood structure. A high proportion of the associated metal small finds were dressmaking pins and wire twists — perhaps from a commercial enterprise in the 17th century.

The top 2.50m of deposits on the north side of the site consisted of modern build-up of rubble straight on to 13th century pits and floors, which cut into the top of river-washed layers of sandy clay over gravel.

The co-operation offered by the Pharmaceutical Society and Messrs. Ove Arup & Partners, Civil Engineers, at the Lambeth dig, and their recognition of the importance of archaeological rescue work, has been most encouraging. The enlightened attitude of Ove Arup who employ a full-time archaeologist to advise and agree archaeological work, is of mutual benefit to both parties concerned. Congenial relationships such as these may be held up as an example to developers still ignorant of the importance of the next twenty years to urban archaeology. Perhaps we may thus be able to convert the hardened Philistines, without resorting to legislation.

Excavations are continuing under the supervision of Eric Ferretti. Financial assistance has also been provided by the London Borough of Lambeth and the D.O.E.

SWAN STREET, SOUTHWARK

IN JUNE and July this year an excavation was carried out, directed by Bernard Johnson and Irene Schwab, for S.A.E.C., on a site at the junction between Great Dover Street and Swan Street in Southwark. It was greatly assisted by Griffiths Demolition and also the developers, Compass Securities, who provided and paid for the machining.

Work was conducted in the south-east corner under cellars where some archaeological deposits had been left undisturbed. These deposits consisted of 60cm of green soil containing Roman pottery and which probably represented a plough soil.

At the southern end of the excavation area was found a Roman inhumation, dating from the late-2nd or early-3rd century A.D. No grave pit was observed, but there is evidence to suggest that the body was laid on the natural gravel surface and then covered by a mound of earth. Preliminary work on the snail shells found in the area suggests that the ground was marshy in the early Roman period, but had dried out sufficiently by the late-2nd century for the burial to be put in and continued dry thereafter.

More work will be done in these undisturbed layers with the emphasis placed on gaining evidence of the local environment in the Roman period. Trial trenches were also dug along the entire length of the east side of the site but the modern basements and 18th century gravel workings had removed any earlier levels.

TESSERA E

Developers give scholarships — Central and City Holdings Ltd. have decided to give annually two scholarships of £500 each; one is to be for "Central London" and the other for the City and Dockland.

Museum charges in London — included among the national museums which now have to make a charge, is the London Museum. Although the fee is 10p., admission will still be free on Saturdays.