

## NEW POSTERS FROM THE BRITISH MUSEUM

THE BRITISH MUSEUM has launched the first two designs in a series of posters it has commissioned from leading British artists based on themes from the Museum's permanent collections. The idea for this project sprang originally from the fact that the Museum's permanent exhibitions had been overshadowed by the publicity given to the increasing number of temporary exhibitions. There was felt to be a real need to draw attention, in as stimulating and imaginative a fashion as possible, to the immense range and quality of exhibits which, because they were always on view, were often taken for granted. This led to the idea that the posters might provide an ideal opportunity for commissioning paintings from leading young professional artists.

The first two artists selected were Lawrence Preece and Graham Arnold. Their brief was simply to produce work suitable for use as a poster selecting whatever aspects of the Museum's collections particularly appealed to their imaginations. Their enthusiastic response to the idea has resulted in two strikingly different and original interpretations, one based on the Egyptian Collections and the other on the Oriental Collections.

This is believed to be the first project of its kind undertaken by a museum in this country, and it is hoped that it may create a precedent which will be taken up by other institutions.

## BRIDEWELL PALACE DISCOVERED

IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH the DUA and COLAS carried out rapid clearance and limited excavation work on the site of Henry VIII's brick-built Bridewell Palace in advance of redevelopment. The palace is known to have been built between 1515 and 1523 after the fire that destroyed the old Palace of Westminster in 1512 left Henry without a London residence. Although it remained Henry's principal palace for some years, Wolsey's fall from grace in 1529 gave Henry Hampton Court and Whitehall and from that time onwards Bridewell was used only by the court and ambassadors and finally given to the City as a workhouse by Edward VI in 1553. The palace buildings continued in that sort of function — hospital, house of correction until its demolition in the 1860's.

The earliest accurate plan of the palace buildings is a complete room by room survey made in 1791. By that date much modification had taken place but Howard Colvin in preparing the Tudor section of his "History of the Kings Work" has abstracted what he feels was the Tudor ground plan. It consisted of a main courtyard with an ancillary courtyard to the east fronting onto the Fleet and a long gallery running down to the Thames to the south. The area was made available for examination by the demolition of 9 Bridewell Place by Haslemere Estates, revealing the foundations of both sides of the southern end of the eastern wing of the main courtyard. This established for the first time the precise location of the palace complex, hitherto only guessed at from such sources as Ogilby and Morgan's map of 1678. Most of the walls that Howard Colvin had thought were original were confirmed as such, except for one running about 1m outside the eastern side of the range (with a return projecting from it forming what had become the chapel of 1791). This was found to be a 17th century addition presumably because the Tudor wall it replaced that lay

just inside it had become structurally unsound. This addition also "housed" a polygonal staircase turret (complete with original Reigate Stone dressing) that would originally have been a symmetrical projection from the south-east corner of the main palace range. Opposing this internally the foundation of another staircase turret was found in the south-east angle of the main courtyard. Six of these staircase turrets or *vyces* — typical features of large Tudor houses — are mentioned in an estimate for the building probably dating to 1516, that has survived among the State Papers.

The foundational technique employed for the palace wall was found to be remarkably elaborate, clearly due to the unstable nature of the river silts and reclamation dumping on which the palace was built. A timber-lined shaft was sunk into which chalk blocks were rammed. Off these "piles" brick arches almost 1m (3ft) across were sprung and the foundations built up from these. Above the trench-built foundations the fairface brickwork was well made in English bond becoming English Cross bond in some of the upper courses.

Only one original floor surface had survived later leveling. This was the main courtyard, like the palace made of brick but set on edge. It was found to be sealed by a burnt layer, no doubt the result of one of the major fires, including the Great Fire of 1666, that are known to have engulfed the palace buildings.

One of the most interesting facts to emerge from the excavations concerned the Great Staircase. This projected east from the main range into the ancillary courtyard and in the survey of 1791 is shown with apparently Tudor Gothic mouldings in the doorways. The excavations revealed its foundations albeit badly disturbed and demonstrated that the staircase was indeed original and as such this becomes one of the earliest staircases designed for state occasions in England.

## NEW HISTORY GALLERY AT THE TOWER OF LONDON

FOR SEVERAL YEARS, the Tower of London has suffered from growing "traffic problems" as the numbers of visitors have increased dramatically. Readers may have experienced the frustration of being stuck behind a coachload of German or Japanese tourists, while acknowledging their value as "invisible" exports. One particular problem has been the lack of a central vantage point from which the story of the Tower as a whole could be succinctly explained. To meet this need, the Department of the Environment has built a new History Gallery, which was opened to the public on 22 March. The gallery which has been discreetly landscaped, is situated at the south side of the Inmost Ward, just inside the curtain wall (where the ravens live). It was during work for this gallery that the Roman riverside wall was discovered (see *L.A.*, Vol. 3, No 4, 97-9 and pp 171-6 of this issue). Visitors will now be able to inspect this well-preserved section of the wall for the first time, while learning about the history and architecture of the Tower.

## TESSERA E

**Another move:** the SLAEC has moved to the Port Medical Centre, English Grounds, Morgan's Lane, SE1 2HT (01-407 1989).

**And another:** the South-West London Team has moved to 21 Harbut Road, SW11 (01-223 2478).