

# Excavation Round-up 1983,

## Part 2

BETH RICHARDSON

THE FOLLOWING reports, all from the Department of Urban Archaeology, were accidentally omitted from the Round-up in the Spring issue. Our apologies to all concerned.

**Billingsgate Lorry Park, Lower Thames Street TQ 3304 8065 (S. Roskams: summary by C. Midgeley).**

Excavation of the Roman levels at Billingsgate was completed in January 1983. Preliminary analysis of the structural sequence and the pottery has now been completed for Roman, Saxon and early medieval levels of the site.

Pottery from the infill behind the Roman quay indicates that it was constructed in the early 3rd c. Massive timbers were placed horizontally one on top of the other to form a vertical face to the quay, held in place by anchor-beams and tie-backs. Three rows of quay front timbers survived in the W, the uppermost evidently a replacement during a reconstruction of the upper part of the waterfront. The top of the quay had subsequently been robbed out.

Following the partial demolition of the quay, the infill behind it was eroded by the Thames, which then deposited silt over the eroded surface. This silt contained pottery of not later than the mid 3rd c, suggesting that the quay went out of use during the Roman period. The silt curved N from the west limit of the excavation towards the centre, possibly indicating the presence of an inlet. The demise of the quay may have been related to the construction of the Roman riverside wall to the N, the inlet suggesting the possible position of a gate through the wall.

The next phase of construction was dated to the late 10th c or later. Dumps of rubble were laid down over the remains of the quay and a very substantial stave-built revetment was constructed in front, held in place by tie-backs inserted into the rubble. A clay and timber bank was then laid down to consolidate the ground surface behind the revetment. In the central part of the site there was a gap in the bank, where the waterfront curved N to form a stave-lined inlet about 3m (10ft) wide.

The Saxon revetment seems to have remained in use for about a century, being consolidated by the addition of a small clay and wattle bank on its S side in the late 11th c. Soon after this, however, the staves collapsed and were sealed by a second substantial clay and timber bank fronted by a more flimsy timber revetment. This was initially front-braced, and lined a narrowed inlet; later, in the mid 12th c, it was back-braced and the inlet was blocked.

In 1180 or later the waterfront was advanced c 3m (10ft) S by the insertion of a new front-braced revetment. Timber buildings were constructed behind this in the NE part of the site. Subsequently the revetment was completely robbed out, and a front-braced revetment was inserted (1205 or later), with dumps behind it creating a new working surface at c +2m (6ft 7in) O.D. Later (1220+) a sequence of timber buildings with associated hearths was constructed immediately behind the revetment.

In 1250+ the waterfront advanced c 6m (20ft) further S with the insertion of a new front-braced revetment. This was in turn sealed by further dumps (1250-1270), presumably behind a new revetment which lay to the S of the limit of excavation. Over these dumps the gravel metallings of St. Botolph's Lane were laid down.

For the upper sequence, see the summary for 1982 (*London Archaeol* 4 no. 10, 274).

**1-6 Ludgate Circus Buildings TQ 3155 8121 (M. Nally)**

A N-S chalk, flint and greensand stone vaulted culvert was recorded in the watching brief. The culvert extended 7m (23ft) from the northern limit of excavation to an E-W return wall or foundation. The N end of a N-S chalk, flint and ragstone wall or foundation was recorded 5m (16½ft) to the S in section at the E edge of excavation. A fragment of N-S chalk wall or foundation was recorded 7m (23ft) to the W. There was no dating evidence or associated occupation surfaces.

**18 Birch Lane TQ 3288 8104 (L. Miller)**

A watching brief funded by Speyhawk and Scottish Equitable at this site immediately W of the forum showed that a number of early stakeholes were overlain by dumped deposits of green sandy silts up to 1m (3ft) thick dated to A.D. 50-70. A succession of four brickearth slabs of building make-up overlay the dumped deposits. These were probably make-ups for internal floors but only one thin *opus signinum* floor was found and only one internal wall with a brickearth foundation. There was no dating evidence from this building, nor from the redeposited burnt debris which overlay the final Roman make-up. The stratigraphy was truncated at this level by modern disturbance but there were a number of Saxon, medieval and post-medieval pits.

**9-10 Philpot Lane TQ 3303 8085 (S. Rivière and A. Westman)**

A watching brief during redevelopment by Wates Development Ltd., who grant-aided recording work, was conducted from October 1982 to January 1983. Above natural gravel and brickearth, and redeposited natural brickearth, three successive sequences of internal surfaces were recorded, including floors of mortar and *opus signinum*, and tile. The sequences were interrupted by widespread mixed dumps, the whole dated by small quantities of pottery from the late 1st to the end of the 2nd c. Gravel metalling, which latterly extended over the E half of site, was interpreted as external, but not as a road.

No more definite evidence of structures was recovered than some traces of timber posts, fragmentary brickearth sills and one substantial cut feature. The last was either a Roman robber trench or the construction trench for a wall which in the event was not built. No fire horizons were recorded.

Intensive medieval pitting was followed by or was partly contemporary with cellaring. The cellars were constructed mainly N of an implied property boundary which bisected the site. They showed considerable continuity with post-medieval and post-Great Fire cellars and with a standing post-Great Fire building to the immediate NW, in Brabant Court.

**7-9 Pilgrim Street and 12-13 Ludgate Broadway TQ 3177 8113 (P. Rowsome).**

During January-February 1983 a small excavation was carried out to provide evidence of the City's defensive ditch S of Ludgate and the effect, if any, of the establishment of Blackfriars. Six periods of activity were recorded overlying natural deposits of sand and gravel to a height of +10.0m (33ft) O.D. Natural was cut by a sequence of ditches, the earliest being badly truncated but surviving in the east to a depth of 3.6m (12ft). This, perhaps the

late Roman defensive ditch, was cut by a wide, deep and steep-sided medieval ditch cut to +5.0m (16ft 5in) O.D. and over 14m (46ft) wide. Both major ditches ran N-S. The medieval ditch appeared to have been neglected from the mid 13th c and after initial silting was partially backfilled by large gravelly dumps, yielding a small quantity of 12th/13th c pottery, along with iron and copper objects, a small number of hone stones, some bead-making waste, an iron arrowhead and a bone comb.

There followed a horizon of Roman mortar and building debris, probably a by-product of the documented dismantling of the nearby City wall c 1278 to make way for the Blackfriars. Further dumps completed the backfilling of the medieval ditch by the late 13th c, a date corresponding to the establishment of the Blackfriars precinct across the area.

The medieval ditch backfill was overlain by a shallow ditch running N-S and E-W, which may have served as an inside perimeter or 'marking-out' ditch for either the Blackfriars precinct or specifically its cemetery, to which a single burial recorded nearby c 1900 may have belonged.

The sequence was completed by intercutting post-medieval pitting and phases of brick building probably associated with post-Great Fire buildings, the latter being sealed by Victorian foundations.

**Bank of Argentina, 11 Ironmonger Lane** TQ 3253 8126 (P. Allen)

In December 1983 a small trench was excavated through stratigraphy sealed below the mosaic recorded by Adrian Oswald in 1949 (D. Dawe and A. Oswald, *11 Ironmonger Lane* (1952) 111-9), and subsequently preserved *in situ*, when it was lifted for relaying on a new base. Above the natural river gravels were a series of rough gravelled external surfaces dated by pottery to the late 1st and early 2nd c. Burnt material towards the bottom of the sequence, interpreted by Oswald as Boudiccan fire debris, was in fact dumped rubbish dated to at least the late 1st c. A thick mantle of humic silt accumulated above the latest surface, possibly suggesting a period of disuse before the laying of the mosaic, identified by Oswald as belonging to the town house constructed in the 3rd c.

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# Excavations & post- excavation work

**Bedfont Gunpowder Mills**, by Gunnersbury Park Museum with West London Archaeological Field Group and Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society. Possible excavation in the Autumn. Contact Phil Philo, Gunnersbury Park Museum, Gunnersbury Park, W3 8LQ (01-992 1612).

**City**, by Museum of London, Department of Urban Archaeology. A series of long term excavations. Enquiries to DUA, Museum of London, London Wall, E.C.2 (01-600 3699).

**Croydon & District**. Processing and cataloguing of excavated and museum collection every Tuesday throughout the year. Archaeological reference collection of fabric types, domestic animal bones, clay tobacco pipes and glass ware also available for comparative work. Hon. Curator, Croydon Natural History & Scientific Society Ltd., Museum Building, Croydon Biology Centre, Chipstead Valley Road, Coulsdon, Surrey. (01-660 3841 or 22 43727).

**Hammersmith & Fulham**, by Fulham Archaeological Rescue Group. Processing of material from Sandford Manor and Fulham High Street. Tuesdays, 7.45 p.m.-10 p.m. at Fulham Palace, Bishop's Avenue, Fulham Palace Road, S.W.6. Contact Keith Whitehouse, 86 Clancarty Road, S.W.6. (01-731 0338).

**Inner and North London Boroughs**, by the Museum of London, Department of Greater London Archaeology (Inner/North London). Several rescue sites in various areas. (01-242 6620).

**Kingston**, by Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society. Rescue sites in the town centre. Enquiries to Marion Hinton, Kingston Heritage Centre, Fairfield Road, Kingston. (01-546 5386).

**North-East London Boroughs**, by Passmore Edwards Museum.

Enquiries to Pat Wilkinson, Passmore Edwards Museum, Romford Road, E.15. (01-534 4545).

**South-West London Boroughs**, by Museum of London, Department of Greater London Archaeology (South-West London). Excavations and processing. Enquiries to Scott McCracken, St. Luke's House, Sandycombe Road, Kew. (01-940 5989).

**Southwark and Lambeth**, by Museum of London, Department of Greater London Archaeology (Southwark and Lambeth). Several sites from the Roman period onwards. Enquiries to Derek Seeley, Port Medical Centre, English Grounds, Morgan's Lane, SE1 2HT. (01-407 1989).

**Surrey**, by Surrey Archaeological Unit. Enquiries to David Bird, County Archaeological Officer, Planning Department, County Hall, Kingston, Surrey. (01-546 1050 x3665).

**Vauxhall Pottery**, by Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Society. Processing of excavated material continues three nights a week. Enquiries to S.L.A.S., c/o Cuming Museum, 155 Walworth Road, S.E.17 (01-703 3324).

**West London Boroughs**, by West London Archaeological Field Group. Enquiries to 273A Brentford High Street, Brentford, Middlesex. (01-560 3880).

*The Council for British Archaeology produces a monthly Calendar of Excavations from March to September, with an extra issue in November and a final issue in January summarising the main results of field work. The Calendar gives details of extra-mural courses, summer schools, training excavations and sites where volunteers are needed. The annual subscription is £5.50 post-free, which should be made payable to C.B.A., 112 Kennington Road, S.E. 11. (01-582 0494).*