

Mosaic

LONDON'S ANSWER TO JORVIK?

THIS IS inevitably how a new tourist attraction, due to open near the Tower of London in 1990, will be seen. The Tower Hill Vaults will be converted into a major leisure/tourist complex by the Culverin Consortium, who have been granted a long lease by the Tower Hill Improvement Trust.

The scheme has been designed by the Terry Farrell Partnership, and will be housed in the three levels of former wine vaults, which survived when the seven-storey Mazawattee Warehouse was bombed in World War II. The lowest floor will accommodate the dramatic *Tower Hill Pageant*, which will narrate the development of the City and Port of London over the last 2000 years, using the latest audio-visual display techniques. The Pageant, which has been designed by Event Communications, will be supported by a major exhibition of material from the Museum of London, and with speciality shops and restaurants on the upper two levels. All the necessary planning consents have been obtained and work is to start on the £8m scheme this autumn.

The Pageant catalogues the history of the City and its Port through a series of imaginative displays and reconstructions, including much information from recent excavations. Visitors will embark on their voyage into the past in specially designed computer-controlled vehicles, which take them through scenes in London life stretching back over 2000 years. The story begins with the Thames Valley before the Roman port was founded in AD 50, and depicts the rise and fall of the Roman harbour. The town was reborn in the 7th century outside the old Roman walls, only to be destroyed again, this time by Viking raiders. The harbour was re-established in the 10th century by Alfred the Great, and the City expanded after the Norman Conquest to include the great castles of the Tower, Baynard and Mountfitchet.

The archaeological discoveries from the Museum of London will evoke an authentic reproduction of medieval London, including its sounds, smells and the old London Bridge, which was a crucial part of London's history for over 600 years until it was demolished in 1831. The pageantry of Tudor London and its gory catalogue of executions a matter of feet away from the Tower Hill vaults will be graphically depicted. The expansion of the City up to 1666 and the Great Fire which destroyed it will also be shown. The Pageant then illustrates the re-building of the City and the elegance of 17th and 18th century London before the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of the harbour into the largest port in the world. The visitor will pass through this era of dramatic change, including the construction of Tower Bridge and Victorian London, and into the 20th century with a graphic depiction of the Blitz in the 1940s followed by the dramatic and sudden collapse of London as a port within the last 20 years.

At the end of his journey the visitor will pass through the central level, where a permanent exhibition provided by the Museum of London will display some of the finds and structures recovered by the archaeological teams during recent waterfront excavations. Many of the items have never been seen in public before, and will provide a rare opportunity to see some of the evidence on which the Pageant's story is based.

BEDDINGTON LIVES ON

THANKS TO an imaginative venture by Sutton Leisure (a department of Sutton Borough Council), the Beddington Roman villa, already familiar to our readers, is likely to become one of the best-known villas in the country. Under the title *Holding History in your Hands*, Sutton Leisure are selling small fragments of tile from the villa, both individually and set in acrylic to form paperweights, egg-timers, pen-holders, etc. Before anyone becomes alarmed, it should be pointed out that the fragments are all marked, have all been properly identified and catalogued, and that each is accompanied by a leaflet giving a brief history of the site and suggestions for further reading. So far over £2000 has

been raised towards the cost of future excavations, and with seven tons of fragments in store the potential is almost endless!

CITISIGHTS RAISE THEIR SIGHTS

IN ALMOST every issue, we seem to be reporting some new venture of Citsights, the enterprising group of archaeologists who work to bring London's past alive today. This time we have two. Firstly, they have saved the Old Operating Theatre Museum (see *LA* vol. 3, no. 16 (Autumn 1980) p. 448 for a description) from closure. In their hands, the unique early 19th century Operating Theatre of St Thomas' Hospital will be kept open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 12.30 – 4 p.m. It is situated in the loft of The Chapter House, St Thomas Street, Southwark, SE1, and admission costs £1, or 40p for students, OAPs, UB40s and booked groups of 12 or more. It can also be visited as part of the regular Friday morning walk, *Victorian London – the City of Dickens and Florence Nightingale*.

The second venture is the production of *London Underground* tee-shirts, based on an archaeological cartoon by Chris Unwin. They come in four colours (black, red, grey and light blue) and four sizes (XL/L/M/S), all at a price of £4.95 plus 75p postage. Details and a picture of the cartoon from Citsights, 145 Goldsmiths Row, London E2 8QR, tel. 739 2372.

A MOVING SITE

THE MANOR Court, Harmondsworth, which is mainly known for its 15th timber-framed Tithe Barn (see, for example, Eric Robinson 'Gravel-stone in Middlesex churches: what's in a name' *LA* vol. 5, no. 14, 367–71, Fig. 4), also comprises other historic farm buildings, including a 19th century stable block and granary. The complex was acquired two years ago by the John E Wiltshire Group of builders, for conversion to their new head office.

The farmhouse was the first building to be restored, and now forms the Group's head office. To make more of the buildings, it was decided to move the timber-framed granary from its position behind the farmhouse to a more prominent location where it could be enjoyed by visitors. Since site restrictions prevented the building being slid, it had to be lifted, and a mobile crane moved the granary using a cradle specially assembled by Wiltshire's steel department. The lift went without a hitch, and without the loss of a single clay tile from the roof of the granary. It will stand of a set of replacement stone "mushrooms" from Somerset, as those on which the structure stood had deteriorated.

The Tithe Barn is being surveyed in advance of restoration, and underpinning work has started on the stable block, which will be restored and extended to provide more office space. Excavations by the Museum of London's Department of Greater London Archaeology revealed evidence of an earlier manor house and timber-framed buildings dating back to early Saxon times (see *Excavations Round-up*, part 2, vol. 5, no. 15, 412).

ALL CHANGE

THE WATFORD and South West Herts Archaeological has recently changed both its name – to the South West Herts Archaeological Society – and its Secretary, now Mr Stephen Moore, Central Library, Hempstead Road, Watford WD1 3EU. One of its last acts under its old name was to publish a leaflet on its recent excavations at the Vicarage of St. Mary's, Watford. Copies are available from Trevor Reynolds, Caer Las, 16 Gibsons Green, Heelands, Milton Keynes, MK13 7NH (please send a stamped self-addressed envelope).

REMINDER

LOCAL Societies and individual researchers alike are reminded that the closing date for applications for awards from the Lloyds Bank Fund for Independent Archaeologists is 31 December. Application forms can be obtained from The Assistant Secretary, R.A.I., Miss Winifred Phillips, c/o Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 0HS.