

Letters

Roman lighthouses

IN DRAWING attention (*LA* 6 no 9, 251) to the fact that the putlog holes in the ground floor chamber (c 16ft/5m above ground level) of the Bell Tower are “clearly integral with the medieval masonry”, Dr Parnell is of course correct, but stratigraphically such evidence can only date what lies above it, which leaves much below.

Additionally, there is the peculiarity of the Tower's build: the entrance lobby is “irregular in shape like every part of the interior”, the chamber itself is “an irregular pentagon in plan” and the four embrasures are “each slightly different”. Such irregularity hardly suggests a construction planned *de novo*.

If, as so many commentators have suggested, there was formerly a Roman bastion (or whatever) on the site of the Bell Tower, then the 1190 reference to works on it *may* relate to its reconstruction using the core, and even the foundation shape, of the original structure.

Turning now to the Lanthorn Tower, Dr Parnell is right to correct me for my mis-use of the word ‘vice’, but on other matters I would make two points:

1. My “enormous dimensions” for the stair turret were arrived at by using the scale on the 1681/2 plan, which would now appear to be inaccurate.
2. If the stair turret only existed above the roof level of the adjoining medieval chamber block, and therefore did not begin at ground level (as appeared to be the case on the 1681/2 map and on a 1770's plan ², as well as the existing 19th century reconstruction), then the case for the *pharos* possibly surviving at the Lanthorn Tower site must indeed evaporate.

However, the site of the ‘lofty tower’ of 1066 remains to be located. If my hypothesis of the graffiti being a local *pharos* and equating with the ‘lofty tower’ is correct, then the most likely area for its location must be the riverside at, or near to, the easternmost extent of the Roman city wall, that is, within the precinct of the Tower of London. Here, the two most promising sites must continue to be those of the Bell and Lanthorn Towers – even if the remains of the postulated structure were removed or subsumed in the 13th century. If nothing else, the possible relationship between the structure on the graffiti and the reference to the ‘lofty tower’ has been aired, as have some of the potential locations.

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1. R Allen Brown and P E Curnow *Tower of London* (1984) 45.
2. G Parnell ‘The Roman and Medieval Defences and their later development, of the Inmost Ward, Tower of London: Excavations 1957-77’ *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 36 (1985) Pl. 14.

Whither the Museum of London?

I READ WITH interest the editorial of *Gromaticus* in the Winter issue of the *London Archaeologist*. As one who was privileged to assist in the creation of the Museum, I also have been concerned about recent developments there. I have long had a great admiration for the Director, which I believe is shared by many other London

archaeologists. We have particularly admired his creation of successful archaeological services for the City and for Greater London, both based on the Museum. They have made outstanding contributions to our knowledge and must be regarded as the greatest achievement of his successive directorships, of Guildhall Museum and the Museum of London. We have also admired his determined resistance during the last year to English Heritage's onslaught. It therefore came as a great shock when he recommended to a Committee of the Board of Governors that the Museum should abandon both services. It is hard to understand this readiness to destroy his own creation unless the pressure to do so had been extreme. Has it been political as well as financial?

Decision on the fate of the archaeological services was delayed as a result of an opposing paper signed by nearly all the curators, urging that both services should be continued ‘in house’, while accepting the need for severe contraction in present adverse circumstances. We await the final outcome with great anxiety.

The recent reorganisation of the curatorial staff is equally worrying, and difficult to reconcile with the prime purpose of a Museum of London History. I believe that creative and effective curatorship can only grow out of knowledge of a subject and familiarity with collections relating to it. The old Period Departments made this possible by dividing the complex history of London and the Museum's extraordinarily rich collections into manageable portions that could be encompassed by an individual curator. The two vast new Period Departments, extending respectively from Prehistory to the end of the Middle Ages, and from then to the present day, are meaningless in terms of London history and beyond the range of individual specialisation. All that has been achieved is the demotion of existing Keepers and Acting-Keepers, who no longer have a share in management, together with a predictable bitterness among senior staff who have deserved well of the Museum and now see all hope of promotion removed. There is also the curious innovation of a new class of Curators of Collections, apparently following the unloved footsteps of the V. & A. Since Period specialisations must continue to have access to the relevant collections, this can only result in a blurring of individual responsibility. The lines of command may be clear on the Director's diagram of management; those of accountability are not. There seem to be no obvious economies in the reorganisation, but instead the addition of a new class of sub-chief (the two Super-Keepers) to the trio of chiefs (Director, Deputy-Director and Assistant-Director) ruling a depleted and depressed band of Indians.

Max Hebditch is an old friend and I have found this difficult to write. I hope he will forgive me for the public expression of a concern that I know is shared by many. He is setting a new course for the Museum and should explain its destination and purpose. The Museum of London means so much to so many people that the fullest possible public discussion of its future, together with that of London archaeology, is now necessary.

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Mosaic

A Ring from the Rose

A REPLICA of the gold ring discovered during the excavation of the Rose Theatre site is now on sale at the Museum of London shop. The gold band with upturned edges is decorated with a heart pierced by two arrows and inscribed around the outside with the letters ‘DV PENCES POVR MOYE’ (‘Think of me’) in archaic

French. The ring is available in silver gilt (price £9.95, postage and packing £1 and state ring size) or 9 ct gold (price £55, available only at the shop). The original ring is one of several posy rings on display in the Museum's exhibition *Treasures and Trinkets – Jewellery in London from pre-Roman times* (see Diary).