

probably lost most of its official legal and administrative meaning but may still have been a status symbol. *Vicus* was known to the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlers.

Where was the field Wickham? Peckham by the Old Kent Road stretches from Trafalgar Avenue to Pomeroy Street (Fig. 1), but the central part of this area in the 16th and 17th centuries was taken up by the common field, Peckham North Field, and would not have been Wickham. A map of 1830, made at the time the North Field was enclosed, gives the boundaries of the North Field⁸. The north-west boundary was the Grand Surrey Canal, which reached the Old Kent Road a little to the west of Peckham Park Road⁹. At the end of Frensham Street, a short cul-de-sac off Peckham Park Road, was the Western Wharf on the banks of the Canal. The eastern boundary was a ditch near Asylum Road at the point where it meets the Old Kent Road, although the map is rather smudged at this point. Thus Wickham lay either between Trafalgar Avenue and a point a little to the west of Peckham Park Road, or between Asylum Road and Pomeroy Street.

The Museum of London has found Roman material in two areas south of the Old Kent Road in Peckham since 1976. One area is around Asylum Road, the other is to the west of Peckham Park Road at Bowles Road. Bowles Road no longer

exists, and on its site is a Macdonalds and an extension of Olmar Road.

In 1976 the Museum of London found two ditches containing Romano-British pottery at 119-121 Asylum Road¹⁰. This site was probably too far south in Asylum Road to have lain in Wickham. However, in February 1993 they found stonework suggestive of the foundation of a Roman building at 4-10 Asylum Road¹¹. Asylum Road at this point was thought to be on the line of the London to Lewes Roman road¹²; this building would lie near the junction with the Old Kent Road.

At Bowles Road in the spring and summer of 1990, the Museum of London found Roman pottery of the 1st to 4th century AD, coins of the same period, many Roman tiles in one trench, iron objects and an attractive Roman intaglio made of jasper¹³. At a nearby site at Canal Bridge, they found many Roman samian pottery sherds and tiles¹⁴. In their reports on these sites the archaeologists suggest there is evidence of settlement nearby¹⁵.

Were either of these areas situated in the field *Wicham*? Bowles Road was just to the west of Peckham North Field, and so could have been in *Wicham*. The site at 4-10 Asylum Road might have been on the eastern border of the North Field. In 1610 Mr Campion Brewer has to "cleanse and scour his dyke..." (see above), so do we know of dykes near the possible sites for *Wicham*?

8. Enclosure map of Peckham North Field 1830. Southwark Archives Library.
9. *Retracing canals to Croydon and Camberwell* Living History Publications (1986).
10. *London Archaeol* 3 no 2 (1977) 36.
11. S Blatherwick 'A Roman building and gravel surface at 4-10 Asylum Road, Southwark, London' *SEIS London Archaeol* 7

- no 4 (1993) 73-6.
12. I Margary *Roman Ways in the Weald* (1968) 126.
13. W Rogers 'Mesolithic and neolithic flint tool-manufacturing areas buried beneath Roman Watling Street in Southwark' *London Archaeol* 6 no 9 (1990) 227-31.
14. *Ibid* 231; *London Archaeol* 6 no 11 (1991) 306.
15. *Op cit* fn 13, 231.

Letter

Gromaticus (*LA* 7, no 6, 1994) is right to stress the need to publish London's huge backlog of developer-funded site investigations. In many cases the *LA Round-up* summaries will remain for years the only published source.

There is a further unpublished group that the Museum of London has recently abandoned, I hope only temporarily. They are the sites in the City that were investigated in the 1960s by myself and Ivor Noel Hume as permanent members of the staff of the Guildhall Museum, then a department of the Corporation of London. They were carried out with Corporation funding and mostly on Corporation sites — and include the City defences on the Museum of London site, Roman fort defences and a medieval church on the Corporation's offices at Guildhall, the late medieval and Tudor palace of Baynard's Castle, and the Roman bath and dwelling at Billingsgate. They were part of a permanent archaeological commitment by the

museum and the Corporation, and not of a unit like the DUA or MOLAS with separate funding.

But with my enforced 'early retirement' last year, no provision was made for these sites. The Director of the Museum of London, successor to the Guildhall Museum, accepts that provision should be made, but as time passes I feel increasingly sad that my work may join that of Dunning, Cottrill and Grimes, to be itself 'rescued' and written up after my death by someone else who never knew the sites. I am keenly aware of the difficulties in interpreting other people's records, and of the consequent loss of information.

A solution exists, in that having 'retired', it is now possible for me to undertake the publication at half the cost, since there would be none of MOLAS' overhead charges. Perhaps the way forward generally is for several people to tackle London's backlog on a grant-aided consultancy basis, leaving MOLAS to handle current and future sites. At a stroke the cost would be reduced by 50%.

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