

Noviomagus revealed?

THE BROMLEY Archaeological Group and the Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit have recently announced the discovery of a 'lost' Roman town at West Wickham in the London Borough of Bromley (*Kent Archaeol Revno.* 141(2000) 2-4). The site was originally located in 1966 during a large-scale programme of field survey and excavation. Further work in 1976 and 1998 has confirmed the site as extending over at least 15 acres, producing over 2000 pieces of pottery and 30 coins, as well as quernstones and building material.

The site has been equated with the Roman town of *Noviomagus*, on the grounds that the Antonine Itinerary stated that *Noviomagus* was 10 miles from London and that *Vagniacae* (Springhead, near Gravesend), was 28 miles from London. These distances fit if the route from London to Springhead was *via* West Wickham, as the direct distance is only 18 miles. Evidence for a previously unknown Roman road from West Wickham to Springhead has been found at both end in the 1960s and at Fordcroft, by the crossing of the River Cray, in 1988.

A settlement at this location would fit very well with the known pattern of settlements at this distance around London, such as Ewell, Brentford, Crayford and Staines. On the other hand, the description of the site as a 'town' may be optimistic. The quantity of finds is small compared to even one site at, say, Ewell, which is now usually defined as a 'roadside settlement' in contrast to its original description as a 'small town'.

Barking on view

ON THE OTHER side of the Thames, excavations at Barking Abbey featured prominently in the Barking Abbey River Festival in September. Archaeologists from English Heritage have been taking place in the Church and Cloister area, as well as in

the Heath Street area to the south, where there should be outbuildings of the medieval abbey, and possibly even the original Saxon abbey. The aim is to provide the information needed to ensure better management of the site in the future.

Tom Blagg

WE ANNOUNCE with regret the death of Tom Blagg on 11 August. Tom Blagg had come late to Archaeology, having read History at Keble College, Oxford, and trained and briefly practised as a solicitor in Newark. His London PhD was supervised by the late Donald Strong, and was eagerly awaited by scholars long before its eventual submission. His main research interest was in the techniques of Roman monumental sculpture, in which he had an international reputation. His specialist reports extended to sites in Italy, Malta, Bulgaria and Petra, but he never lost a strong interest in London and the Southeast as well. His report on Stonework from the Roman Riverside Wall for the Museum of London appeared in 1980; and the fascicule of the *Corpus Signorum* on the stonemasonry of Southeastern England was well advanced at his death.

Tom will be remembered not only for his impeccably scrupulous scholarship, but as a warm, humane and many-sided personality. He was a pivotal figure in the new Kent degree programme in Classical and Archaeological Studies. He also had an abiding interest in music, especially opera, and in ballet; and he was the only archaeologist known to me to possess a higher degree in choreographical studies. He was a very loyal, civilised and polished colleague; and the uncertainties of his mercifully brief illness did nothing to lower his spirits. He died the day after his fifty-eighth birthday, a distinguished and memorable presence and a delight to all who knew him.

Graham Anderson

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the remarkable range of masonry river walls, stairs and jetties which provided the largest surprise on first reading this report, for here was a major waterfront site with very precisely-dated features which had not previously been published in any detail. Perhaps one of the few criticisms of this particular report is that it did not use the crucial altitudinal data recorded by the excavators on the river walls, foreshores and stairs to plot the evidence for the level of high and low tide in the relevant periods.

As for the design and layout of the developing complex, this is thoughtfully considered, with, for example, a series of diagrams presented showing how the use of rooms altered, reflecting not just the private use of the palace but also changing levels of access afforded by the monarch. The merits of the overall architectural schemes represented by the surviving prints, paintings, plans and archaeological data are carefully weighed and, according to the excavator, found wanting: what-

ever its size and charms may have been, Whitehall apparently failed to match the great Baroque palaces of Europe.

Although the Great Fire which destroyed so much of the City in 1666 was arrested before it reached Whitehall, later 17th-century fires in 1691 and 1698 finally destroyed the palace. As Thurley points out, this forced the court to move to St James', physically separating the crown from the neighbouring offices of state, such as the Treasury, which remained (and remain) where they had been. The balance of power changed as access to the monarch changed, as the internal design of palaces changed. The name *Whitehall* is now associated with the government bureaucracy whose office now cover the site of the eponymous palace, the archaeological, architectural and political development of which has now been most elegantly presented.

All in all, a major waterfront excavation with a rather interesting palace complex attached.

Gustav Milne