

Entertainment then and now

THE EVER-CLOSER relationship between museums and the entertainment industry is exemplified by the British Museum's latest block-buster exhibition *Gladiators and Caesars* about (no surprise) the Roman entertainment industry. Which came first, the film or the exhibition, is an interesting question, especially as the British Museum is the third (and last) venue for this exhibition, which has already been seen in Hamburg and Speyer.

The entrance to the exhibition is flanked with the busts of four emperors closely associated with the arena, and then we are straight into the 'circus', with clips from *Ben-hur* and *Gladiator* showing on the central reservation, and scenes of chariot-racing, taken from sarcophagi, lining the walls. We are reminded that the seating capacity of the *Circus Maximus* was, at 200,000, four times that of the *Colosseum*, reflecting the enormous popularity of the races.

We move on to the 'theatre', scene of both satire (frowned on by the authorities as socially destabilising) and low-brow comedy, and from there to the 'amphitheatre'. The high point, in more ways than one, is a 3-ton marble façade from a tomb at *Pompeii* (on its first visit to the UK), backed up by displays of gladiatorial armour, some with evidence for damage and repair. Some lesser-known and surprisingly modern aspects of the amphitheatre include the use of background music and the large-scale merchandising that went on (lamps, mugs, bowls, but not, as far as we know, T-shirts).

Finally, we are brought back to the present by a display of modern images from films of the 1920s onwards, showing how preconceptions have changed; an interactive 'virtual amphitheatre', and a fascinating account of the discovery of a 'new' amphitheatre, at *Forum Novum* in the Sabine Hills, through the use of ground-penetrating radar.

Did it work for me? I certainly felt on leaving that I knew a lot more about the 'what' of spectacular display in the Roman Empire (like the music and the merchandising), but less satisfied about the 'why' question. Why did an Empire, that prided itself on its civilisation and looked down on its 'barbarian' neighbours, entertain itself through ritualised and highly public murder? Perhaps for the Romans death, not variety, was the spice of life, and perhaps that didn't quite come across.

Clive Orton

New Korea Gallery at the British Museum

THE BRITISH Museum continues to refurbish and expand its permanent displays; latest to open, on 8 November, was the new Korea Gallery. The art and archaeology of Korea, from the palaeolithic to the present day, is on display, including examples of stone sculpture, paintings, printed books, screens and folk art as well as ceramics, lacquer ware, gold and bronze. The new gallery has been supported by the Korea Foundation, an arm of the Korean government, and by donations from the Museum's first Korean patron, Dr Hahn Kwang-ho CBE.

Ford offer grants to the heritage

A NEW environmental grants scheme, the *Ford Motor Company Conservation & Environmental Grants UK Programme*, aimed at encouraging smaller, local conservation projects throughout the country has been launched. It follows the *Henry Ford European Conservation Awards*, with a vision to encourage a wide range of people to initiate or join schemes that help their local environment, heritage and natural resources. Entries will be judged locally, and the winners will go forward to a national competition for a total of £25,000 prize money. Unfortunately,

we heard about this scheme less than four weeks before the deadline of 31 October 2000, but it might be worth noting that one of the four categories is *Projects to conserve man-made aspects of national or European heritage*, and that details are available at <http://www.conservationfoundation.co.uk/ford.htm>, in the hope that the scheme will be repeated next year.

Treasure Act to be reviewed

THE DEPARTMENT for Culture, Media and Sport has announced a review of the 1996 Treasure Act (see *LA* 8, no 6 (1997) 142), to be completed by the end of March 2001. Publication schedules mean that we shall not be able to publish details of the consultation paper (due in mid-December) before this deadline. The Act has been seen as a great success, in that it has coincided with a nine-fold increase in the number of finds of 'treasure' declared by the public from 24 per year before 1997 to 224 in 1999/2000. The review will concentrate on the definition of treasure and the system of administration of finds, including policy on the payment of rewards, arrangements for the acquisition of objects and the valuation of treasure. It will be interesting to see the impact of this review on the pilot scheme for the voluntary recording of archaeological finds.

Croydon Saxon cemetery saga continues

READERS MAY remember the convoluted story of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery in Park Lane, Croydon, re-discovered by MoLAS in 1992 nearly a century after part of it was found in Edridge Road just to the west¹. The extraordinary Public Inquiry that followed in 1995 was reported by Helen O'Sullivan², and the site's partial excavation by Wessex Archaeology in 1999 was summarised in our Fieldwork Round-up³. A detailed critique of the story of this site has just been published in the latest volume of the Proceedings of the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society⁴, and is available as an offprint from CNHSS, 254 Pampisford Road, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 6DD, price £2.95 plus 33p postage and packing. We hope to review this publication in a future issue, but for an intriguing account of this site and its implications for London's archaeology, it is essential reading.

1. R. Nielsen 'Early Anglo-Saxon burials in Croydon' *London Archaeol* 7, no. 1 (1992) 7.
2. H. O'Sullivan '82-90 Park Lane, Croydon: a Planning case study' *London Archaeol* 7, no. 16 (1996) 424-431.
3. C. Maloney and I. Holroyd 'London Fieldwork and Publication Round-up 1999' *London Archaeol* 9, supp. 2 (2000) 44.
4. M. Welch 'The re-discovery of the Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Croydon in 1992 and its partial excavation in 1999: trials and tribulations' *Proc Croydon Nat Hist Sci Soc* 18, no. 6 (2000) 129-142.

Tebbutt Research Fund

THE FUND was established as a tribute to the life and work of the late C. F. Tebbutt, OBE, FSA. Individuals and groups are invited to apply for grants towards research, including associated expenses, into any aspect of the Wealden Iron Industry. It is anticipated that approximately £100 plus will be available from the fund. Any interested person should write a letter of application giving details of themselves together with relevant information about the research envisaged. Applications should be sent not later than 31 March to Shiela Broomfield, 8 Woodview Crescent, Hildenborough, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 9HD.

Congratulations

WE ARE PLEASED to report that Mike Webber of the Thames Foreshore project has been nominated by the Green Party to serve on the Cultural Strategy Group for London, reporting to the Mayor (see p. 187).