dius. These remains were interpreted as the residues from large-scale cooking operations. The excavator suggests that a 'burnt mound' may have covered the pit, but that this had subsequently been ploughed out.

Mounds of burnt stone and charred remains, often associated with large pits, and generally dating from the Bronze Age into the Iron Age, are a well known archaeological phenomenon, and have been recognised since the 19th century. Such sites have been found throughout Britain, though with apparent concentrations in southern England, the Midlands, Wales and northern Scotland[52]. Traditionally it was thought that hot stones were added to water in large pits in order to boil food, though more recently other interpretations have been suggested, such as that food was baked or steamed[53]. An argument has also been made in favour of use of such sites as saunas, especially when located near a water source and where few or no charred animal remains have been found[54]. Various other explanations for the use of burnt stone in archaeological contexts have been offered, including boat-building, butter production, brine evaporation, brewing, leather-working, metallurgy and deliberate burning of flint for use as temper in pottery[55].

The quantities of burnt flint recovered from West Courtyard may suggest similar activity to that at Phoenix Wharf was taking place close by. However, interpretation of the West Courtyard evidence is somewhat problematical; in the first phase of activity there was no evidence for burning of the flint *in situ*, in the form of areas of scorched ground or charred remains, although surface burning does not necessarily leave evidence in the form of soil discoloration[56]. Whilst it is possible that the flints were alluvially displaced from elsewhere, examination of the material showed little abrasion indicating minor movement after burning[57], indeed the deposits themselves are unlikely to have originated as a result of overbank flooding[58]. The early deposit did however seem to have been subject to some post-depositional erosion and possible deflation, and thus traces of burning or charcoal may have been washed away. The use of burnt flint for the construction of causeways or road surfaces in wetland environments has been recorded from Bronze Age sites on the north bank of the Thames[59], and it may be that the material recovered had been redeposited deliberately to consolidate the surface of the island. The quantities of burnt flint from the second phase of activity were recovered in conjunction with charcoal and may indicate reworking.

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52. T. Darvill 1987, *Prehistoric Britain.*

53. J. Hedges 1974 'Excavation of Two Orcadian burnt mounds at Liddle and Beaquoy' *Proc Soc Antiq Scotland* **106**, 38-97.

54. L. Barfield and M. Hodder 1987 'Burnt Mounds as Saunas, and the Prehistory of Bathing' *Antiquity* 61, 370-9.

55. *Ibid.*, F. Meddens, *op. cit.* fn. 7.

56. M. Canti, *pers. comm.*

57. D. Divers 1997, *Burnt Flint: Valueless Find or Interpretational Tool when applied to an archaeological site in Southwark.* Unpublished undergraduate dissertation.

58. *Op. cit.* fn. 20.

59. F. Meddens *op. cit.* fn. 7.

Letter

An earlier Cripplegate fort?

IN JON BUTLER'S article on City defences (*LA* **9**, no. 9, 237) is a reference to a U-shaped ditch in the south-east corner of the Pre-Construct Archaeology site, approximately adjacent to the south-west corner of the known Cripplegate fort. This ditch respected and was extraneous to the south-west corner of the fort, but its purpose could not be ascertained. No datable finds were retrieved, but the ditch preceded the building of *Londinium* city wall, *circa* AD 200.

Just to the east of Cripplegate fort, was built an amphitheatre of earth and timber, and this was replaced or refurbished at later date with stone construction. Roman cohorts that built Cripplegate fort with stone, would be capable of building the amphitheatre with stone. Roman cohorts that built the amphitheatre with with earth and timber could have built Cripplegate fort with an earth rampart and timber palisade. An earth rampart has a broader base than a stone wall, the outer ditch would be further from the middle, and the ditch noted by Butler would be related to an earlier earthen rampart and wooden palisade.

Either or both forts would offer a safer haven in times of trouble for the Roman Procurator and his retinue, possibly the first was built just after the Iceni uprising, simply as a panic measure. We can conclude that the stone-built Cripplegate fort was preceded by a fort with earth rampart and timber palisade.

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