



Fig. 1: processing finds in the newly built finds and environmental processing unit

## Museum of London Specialist Services

THE MUSEUM of London Specialist Services (MoLSS) was established in April 1998, principally employing the conservation, finds and environmental specialists and processing staff from the Museum of London. Our aim is to promote and enhance knowledge and understanding of the past through specialist study. Our staff have a wide range of expertise in the fields of finds and environmental analysis, conservation, and ancient timberwork.

MoLSS currently employs 35 members of staff who cover all aspects of finds and environmental processing, specialist analyses and research and conservation. MoLSS offers a 'site to archive' service encompassing on-site sampling advice and

processing through to assessment and eventual publication. In addition our experienced finds and environmental managers can prepare materials to Museum of London Archive standards and facilitate deposition into the London Archaeological Archive. MoLSS staff cover prehistoric to post-medieval artefacts and we offer a range of environmental services including faunal, botanical and osteological materials. Our experienced staff have acted as expert witnesses in forensic cases. Extensive deeply stratified assemblages are MoLSS' particular area of expertise but our staff also have experience of small, rural assemblages. With an ever widening client base, MoLSS staff are actively engaged in post-excavation analyses, research and educational programmes.

Pippa Bradley

Exciting redevelopment work undertaken at Eagle Wharf Road over the last eighteen months has just been completed. As part of the Heritage Lottery-funded redevelopment work at Eagle Wharf Road a new finds and environmental processing facility has been built for the London Archaeological Archive and Resource Centre (LAARC). This will be used by MoLSS but is also available as an educational resource for the Museum of London as a whole. It is envisaged that a range of groups will use the facilities, including school children, local interest groups and societies. The facilities have been specifically designed with the aim of streamlining finds and environmental processing. The area consists of storage space for unprocessed materials from site, a power-hosing room for the washing of robust finds such as ceramic building materials, specially designed finds and environmental processing and bagging-up rooms, and a large drying room with dehumidifier (Figs. 1-2). Space for specialist study of materi-



Fig. 2: specialist examination of newly cleaned finds



Fig. 3: marking pottery in the new finds and environmental office

als has also been provided together with a large office where residues from processed environmental samples are sorted and where the finds and environmental inventories are compiled (Fig. 3).

Fully processed and boxed finds and environmental materials from the Greater London area enter the Archaeological Archive to be temporarily housed prior to specialist assessment, publication and finally deposition. In addition to the new processing facilities, MoLSS staff are able to use a newly built X-ray room which forms part of the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC). These new facilities complement the existing MoLSS offices at Eagle Wharf Road and enable our range of activities to be much enhanced.

MoLSS actively contributes to the Museum of London's exhibition and educational programme. Recently conservation, finds and ancient timber specialists have worked on the Blossom's Inn water

# Books

**London Under Ground the archaeology of a city**, edited by Ian Haynes, Harvey Sheldon and Lesley Hannigan. *Oxbow Books*, 2000. 327 pp., many illus., bib., index. £35.

THIS BOOK is a 'frozen' set of lectures given by a series of specialists in London's archaeology, covering the period from the Neolithic to AD 1800, as well as the history of the study of London's archaeology from 1972 to 1997. With sixteen separate contributions, plus a detailed appendix, it is impossible to review any aspect in depth. All the authors have taken their briefs seriously, both as speakers and then in transforming their talks for publication. As such, they together give an up-to-date assessment of the 'state of play' of London's archaeology, and provide an excellent introduction for anyone wanting to 'get up to speed' on any of the chosen topics. Each chapter has a very useful bibliography, and commendably the whole book has an index.

There are two points that detract from the value of the book. The first is the degree of overlap between the chapters. To some extent this is inevitable, but do we really need two illustrations of the Winchester wall plaster (Figs. 5.2 and 8.4), and I'm sure I read about the 'infamous castration clamp' three times, for example. Tighter editing might have been useful to create more cohesion between

lifting temporary exhibition. MoLSS regularly contributes to National Archaeology Day events staged at the main Museum site and on various archaeological sites. This year MoLSS ceramic and faunal remains specialists gave visitors to the Museum the opportunity to look at and, most importantly, handle assemblages from recent excavations and from the Museum reserve collection. The specialists also provided identifications and information on objects and finds brought in by the visitors, many of which had come from the Thames foreshore and residential gardens. At Spitalfields, specialists and finds staff provided displays of artefacts and human remains as well as details of the complex conservation process undertaken for many of the delicate objects retrieved from the Museum of London Archaeology Service's excavations.

MoLSS is currently engaged in an intensive programme of assessment, publication and research projects. Extensive work on finds and environmental assemblages from the City and Southwark in particular will help elucidate prehistoric activ-

the chapters. Finally, the biggest grumble -- the price. The decision to publish in hardback at £35 will put the book beyond the price range of many potential readers. This is a great pity for what is a very useful, informative and illuminating book.

Clive Orton

**The Holocene Evolution of the London Thames**, by J. Sidell, K. Wilkinson, R. Scaife, and N. Cameron. *MoLAS Monograph 5*, 2000. 144pp., 48 illus., bib., index. £15.

THIS BOOK IS a very fine example of interdisciplinary archaeological and environmental studies within the context of a salvage archaeological project. It neatly weaves together local issues in the archaeology of the London area and landscape evolution on both local and regional scales. This is especially impressive given the necessity of drawing information from numerous disarticulated scattered trenches and ventilation shafts excavated for the construction of the Jubilee Line through central London. The four study areas for this project (Westminster, Southwark, Canada Water, and Canning Town) are dispersed over more than ten kilometres of urban development.

Part I begins with a clear outline and discussion of the methodologies used in the study. Each set of analyses is dedicated to the interpretation of the

ity within these areas, Roman ceramic production, medieval and later leatherworking industries. Work on a number of finds volumes is now coming to fruition. The ever-popular Museum of London medieval finds series are being reprinted, complete with an updated foreword bringing the volumes up to date with newly available information. A collated national bibliography of Roman mortaria is in the final stages of preparation and an important study of post-Roman ceramics and a volume on post-medieval metalwork and leather from Southwark are all nearing completion. Two of these volumes are part of the MoLAS English Heritage-funded publication programme; the mortarium bibliography is also funded by English Heritage. Further volumes on Redwares and Tin Glazed Wares are in progress and the possibility of producing a Roman finds series, to complement the medieval one, are being investigated.

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