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ISSN number
0024-5984

SUBSCRIPTIONS
£16 post free UK or Europe, £25 rest of world, for four issues per year

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Subscribe or renew your subscription online at the CBA Online Shop:
www.britarch.ac.uk/shop

London Archaeologist
is published quarterly by the London Archaeologist Association
44 Tantallon Road
London
SW12 8DG

Registered charity number 262851

Design Adviser
Tracy Wellman

Printed by
Charlesworth Group
Wakefield

Website
www.londonarchaeologist.org.uk

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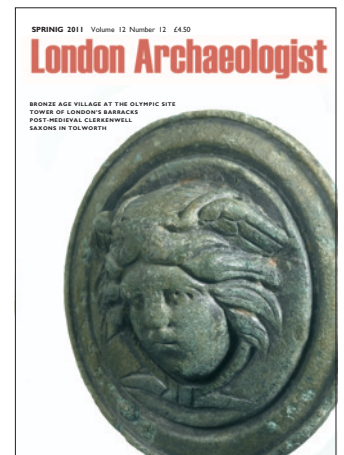
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Front cover

Excavation of the Roman settlement at Syon Park by Museum of London Archaeology (see *Mosaic*, p 312 of the last issue) has produced both exceptional evidence of an agricultural village and high quality finds.

Fresh from the lab, this rare 40mm diameter copper-alloy mount was completely encrusted when excavated. X-radiography and conservation skills have revealed the head of the gorgon Medusa, cast in high relief. The mythological figure, whose glance turned onlookers to stone, is characterised by wings sprouting from her head, and writhing snakes, with diagonal grooves representing their scales, appear like a scarf under her chin.

Found in a 4th-century ditch fill, the mount is likely to be of 2nd-century origins. A few other examples are known from Roman Britain, but such portrayals of Medusa are far more common in other parts of the Empire. Medusa's petrifying image was a powerful protective symbol. Most often seen on personal objects, jewellery and grave goods as a device to paralyse evil forces, the motif also appears on everyday items, such as vessels and furniture.

Traces of solder and iron on the hollow back are all that is left of a pin, with which the mount was clearly attached to a wooden object. An object of such small size is most likely to have been fitted to a small chest or casket, to protect the precious contents.

*Details from Angela Wardle, MOLA
Photo: Andy Chopping/Museum of London*