THIS REPORT brings together the preliminary results from six excavations conducted by the Museum of London's Department of Greater London Archaeology between 1984 and 1990. They all lie in the vicinity of Park Street and Redcross Way in north Southwark, SE1. They are 28 Park Street 1984 (TQ 3248 8031), three phases of work on the Courage Brewery site 1984, 1987 and 1988 (TQ 3242 8020), 3 Redcross Way 1989 (TQ 3246 8019) and 18 Park Street 1990 (TQ 3250 8027). The sites cover a sizeable area of the north-western part of the Roman settlement of north Southwark. The six sites have been divided into seven areas numbered 1-7 (Fig. 1) for ease of discussion and reference between the text and the plans. It must be stressed that the phasing in the report is preliminary as further post-excavation work is required on the records and finds.

**Topography**

All the sites discussed lie on the north-west edge of the sand and gravel island on the south bank of the Thames on which the Roman settlement of north Southwark was centred. Fig. 1 shows the areas of higher, drier ground on which the settlement was
located and also the lower marginal areas of the Thames foreshore where evidence for both the prehistoric and Roman utilisation of the river has been uncovered. The surface of the natural gravels rose from the foreshore at O.D. up to +1.60m (5ft) in the southern area of excavations. Area 4 and the northern part of Area 7 were both prone to flooding and deposition of river silts.

**Prehistoric**

The earliest sign of activity came from a number of neolithic flint tools and scraps of pottery from the southern end of Area 3. The tools included a concave scraper, a finely worked knife blade and the top portion of a polished stone axe. In Area 4 an earlier Thames gravel foreshore at -0.25m O.D. (-10in) was uncovered. Two small fire pits had been cut into it and the debris from them was of bone, burnt flint and flakes and daub/burnt clay. This activity is likely to represent use of the Thames foreshore for fishing and hunting, and has been tentatively dated to the neolithic from the recovery of part of a leaf-shaped arrowhead in the silts directly above the foreshore. These humic silts were 0.20-0.30m (8-12in) deep and contained numerous flint flakes and fragments of burnt flint.

The silts were sealed by a band of peat between OD and +0.20m (+8in) on which was a scatter of flint flakes and cores. The peats are likely to have been formed during Tilbury IV, a regression of the Thames around 1000 BC, and the flints have been dated to the late bronze age from this association. Of a similar date was an assemblage of over twenty sherds from a small pit in Area 3. The pit lay about 10m (33ft) to the south of an arc of six postholes which might have been part of a roundhouse. The diameter of the completed circle would be about 7-8m (23-26ft) and there were at least four internal postholes. This potential roundhouse had been tentatively assigned to the late iron age but its proximity to the bronze age pottery may suggest an earlier date although there was no stratigraphic relationship.

In Area 1 flint tools, burnt daub and bronze age pottery was recovered from a sandy layer which sealed a small pit containing burnt flint.

Evidence for iron age occupation/exploitation came from postholes and a ditch in the south end of Area 3. The shallow, round-bottomed ditch was traced for 7m (23ft) crossing the site from east to west, and it may have been a field or enclosure boundary. It was cut by three postholes, two containing late iron age pottery, which may indicate the north wall of a structure or a fence line. This activity may relate to similar features and finds from the excavations at 15-23 Southwark Street.

The excavation in Area 2 did not reach the pre-Roman levels.

**Roman**

**Pre-building activity**

The earliest indications of Roman activity came from ditches, dug probably for the initial drainage of the land before settlement. The ditches did not appear to form any overall pattern.

In Area 6 the earliest recorded feature was part of a large ditch aligned ENE-WSW (Fig. 2). Its profile was of the “ankle breaker” variety with upper sides sloping at approximately 45° before dropping vertically to a flat base. It was 3.50m (12ft) wide at the top, 1.25m (4ft) deep and was excavated for a length of 6.50m (22ft). The pottery from the fill of the ditch has been dated to the pre-Flavian period and is the earliest group yet identified in Southwark which may suggest that the ditch itself is of Conquest date.

**First-century buildings and road**

In Areas 2 and 3 a gravel road aligned approximately E-W was recorded (Fig. 3). It was some 2m (6½ft) wide, and ran for at least 45m (140ft) across the two areas. It had been resurfaced at least three times and in places sealed a number of the earlier drainage

---

2. H. L. Sheldon pers. comm.
ditches. It appears to precede all building activity in this part of the settlement.

It has long been postulated that a Roman road ran from Roman London Bridge towards an earlier river crossing at Lambeth and segments of a major road, aligned roughly on such a Lambeth crossing, have been excavated south-west of London Bridge (Fig. 3: 1st/2nd century clay and timber buildings and roads.)
1). The evidence from the Courage's sites does not disprove such a road, although the alignment of road 1 (Fig. 3) and all subsequent building phases in Areas 1-4 suggests that the postulated road must have had a change of alignment and lay further to the south. The narrow dimensions of road 1 indicate that it was not a major thoroughfare and was more likely to have been a side road.

To either side of the road and parallel to it in Area 3 were a series of trench-built timber buildings of mid-late 1st-century date. At least two of them had burnt timber beams in-situ, with traces of earthen floors and domestic refuse.

Fifteen metres (50ft) south of the projected extension of the road in Area 1 were clay and timber structures of a similar date, also on the same alignment as the road. The remains consisted of shallow trenches cut into a 0.30m (1ft) thick slab of brick-earth which had been laid across the area. The trenches were filled with burnt wattle, daub and clay.

In Area 6 a series of late 1st-century timber buildings were constructed on roughly the same alignment as the earlier "ankle breaker" ditch. The NE-SW building alignment may have respected the edge of the higher ground in this part of the settlement rather than a road.

Late 1st-century/early 2nd-century clay and timber buildings
The next phase of building activity was that of clay and/or timber construction which covers Areas 1-6 and appears to be contemporary with the construction of a second road in Area 1 (Fig. 3). The road was aligned approximately north-south, at right angles to road 1, and sealed the earlier building remains. A tiled drain had been inserted into the earliest gravel surface which was covered in places by up to twenty layers of gravel, mortar and small tile fragments. Road 2 was clearly constructed later than road 1 and may reflect a more densely settled and more centrally organised development of this part of the settlement. Most of the buildings in this phase are aligned on the two roads.

The construction methods of the buildings in this phase vary. Fronting the west edge of road 2 in Area 1 was a large timber-framed building (Figs. 3 and 4). The foundation trenches were up to 1m (3ft) deep with postholes recorded in the base of the trenches. A 10m (33ft) length was excavated with four rooms and parallel foundation trenches along the roadside. The latter were 1-2m (3-6ft) apart and may have been foundations for a portico or walkway. The rooms facing the road were only 2-4m (6-13ft) wide and there were at least five brick-earth floor surfaces in the building with usage debris of layers of silt and refuse between them. Two of the rooms had hearths, one of which was tiled. One of the rooms was only 1-2m (3-6ft) wide and may have been the space for a staircase. The suggestion of a two-storeyed building

---

Fig. 5: cleaning painted plaster on clay wall in Area 2.

Fig. 4: looking north down Park Street after redevelopment of the Courage Brewery sites, with the recording of foundation trenches for the timber-framed building in Area 1 in the foreground.
is strengthened by the evidence for deep foundations which could have supported a second floor.

To the south was a smaller building with plaster-faced clay walls, a thin internal partition and a large tiled hearth. This building showed signs of having slumped into an underlying pit and there was evidence of repair to the walls prior to its abandonment.

The clay and timber buildings recorded along the south side of road 1 in Areas 2 and 3 can be projected over 45m (150ft) (Fig. 3). The clay walls were strengthened by internal posts and faced with painted plaster (Fig. 5); the majority of the floors were of brickearth though in Area 3 one was of mortar. In Area 3 one structure was rebuilt three times as it had slumped into an underlying pit: the first two builds had beam foundations and the walls of the third were supported on rammed posts; all three had brickearth floors.

Twenty-five metres (80ft) south of road 1 in Area 2 were fragments of clay and timber buildings on differing alignments (Fig. 3). By the southern limit of excavation was a half-cellared building with walls of clay bricks and a tiled floor.

The function of this whole group of buildings is difficult to ascertain. It was situated on the higher, drier ground and most buildings were aligned on the two roads. They had small rooms and no signs of an industrial or commercial use. This may suggest that they were small-scale residential developments. Their layout does not indicate strip development with only small street frontages as at the G.P.O. site but rather the opposite, with the long axes parallel to the road. This may suggest less pressure on land in this part of the settlement than in the City.

In Area 3 to the north of the road was an industrial area where extensive dumps of charcoal and iron slag were found alongside the remains of timber workshops (Fig. 3). Work on the finds and samples shows iron slag, hammerscale, hearth-lining and moulds, all indicative of blacksmithing and bronze-working. The smiths may have been serving the local population but equally may have been using the river to import their raw materials and export the finished articles.


Fig. 6: cleaning of timber structure in Area 4.
Fig. 7: late 3rd century buildings and later burials.

Fifteen metres (50ft) north of road 1 in Area 2 (Fig. 3) was a succession of insubstantial clay and timber buildings, at right-angles to the road. The ground had been raised by 0.20 to 0.50m (8 to 20in) of dumping up to +0.90m (3ft) OD. Fifteen metres (50ft) to the north of these buildings (in Area 4), and on the same alignment, a large timber structure (Figs. 3 and 6) was uncovered in an exceptional state of preservation. It
measured at least 1.1m (36ft) by 4.75m (15ft) and lay in a construction cut 0.75m (2ft 6in) below a ground surface of +0.75m (2ft 6in) OD. The base of the structure consisted of squared oak sill beams and floor joists at half metre (20in) intervals. Lying on the joists were oak planks mostly 450mm (18in) wide and 20-30mm (about 1in) thick. The walls were of post and plank construction: one of the collapsed posts was 1.60m (5ft) long thus giving a minimum height for the walls. Access into the building was down a wooden ramp in the south-east corner. Two wooden shingles recovered from the floor may indicate a lightweight roof.

The construction of the building has been dated to the late 1st/early 2nd century from pottery and coin evidence. Parts of the floor were sealed by waterlain clays suggesting that the area flooded and the building fell into disuse. Finds from the dumps within the building were dated to the late 2nd/early 3rd century.

This whole structure was cut into the ground, possibly in an attempt to create a damp, cool environment. The plank floor was extremely strong, capable of taking heavy weights and was positioned close to the Thames foreshore. These factors suggest that it may have functioned as a warehouse, possibly for storing imports from the continent, e.g. wine, olives and other foodstuffs contained in amphorae or barrels.

The approximately NE-SW alignment of the clay and timber buildings in Area 6 differs from that in Areas 1-3 (Fig. 3). It is also slightly different from the earlier buildings in Area 6, and construction may have respected an altered edge of the higher ground sweeping south from the Thames.

**Zones of activity**

By the early part of the 2nd century certain zones of activity appear to have been defined in Areas 1-4 with road 1 being a major delineator (Fig. 3). North of the road in Area 3 was an industrial area with blacksmithing and bronze-casting. The northern part of Area 2 contained an insubstantial series of clay and timber buildings possibly associated with waterfront activity on the lower, more marginal ground. This may be linked with the possible warehouse structure revealed in Area 4, which may have been part of dockside facilities on the south bank of the Thames. South of the road in Areas 1-3 and in Areas 5 and 6 the buildings gave no clue as to their function. Both groups were on the higher ground away from the area apparently dedicated to dockside activities, and may have been residential.

By the late 3rd century the type of buildings had changed and the area appears to have been largely redeveloped. The small clay and timber buildings were replaced by larger, more substantial structures, and in Areas 1 and 3 the roads were encroached upon (Fig. 7). Likewise the industrial zone was sealed by the later buildings, and the warehouse had been abandoned and buried by dumps of domestic refuse by this stage. There was no sign of any dockside activity, and the waterfront may well have been further north than was the case when the warehouse was in use. In Areas 1-3 these larger buildings followed the same alignment as those of the earlier clay and timber phase. The later building in Area 5 was on a NE-SW alignment and as stated earlier may have been influenced by the edge of the high ground.

In Area 3 the road was encroached upon by the piled foundations for the south wall of a mortar-floored building (Fig. 7). This formed part of a complex of buildings stretching north from the road for more than 20m (66ft) and directly overlying the industrial buildings and dumps. North of the rooms fronting the road was a cobbled yard area from which stretched a block of three rooms with tile and mortar floors and the remains of internal partitions with plaster facing (Fig. 8). There were suggestions that these rooms may have been the west wing of a courtyard building as small patches of similar flooring survived to the east. The building continued to the north but had been destroyed by post-medieval ditches.

The most substantial building identified lay south of road 1 in Area 2 and was at least 30m by 12m (100ft by 40ft) (Figs. 7 and 9). The foundations had been robbed and only small areas of flooring had survived. The building consisted of at least eight rooms with a corridor to the south. West of this structure in Area completed.
3 were five rubbish pits which appear to have been contemporary with the use of the building.

In Area 1 the road was sealed by the remains of a larger more substantial building (Fig. 7). A foundation trench divided a large cobbled area from a very solid mortar floor to the south. North of the cobbled area were the fragmentary remains of further mortar floors but no walls had survived because of later intrusions.

Although heavily truncated by Victorian basements, Area 5 also revealed the remains of substantial stone foundations to at least one building with a corridor to the north-west (Fig. 7). No contemporary floor surfaces survived.

This later phase of large substantial stone buildings suggests a major redevelopment in this part of the settlement. There is no clue as to the function of the buildings though the size of the one in Area 2 may indicate a public rather than a private use; certainly the emphasis in the area had changed with no suggestion of industrial or dockside activities or of small-scale residential quarters.

**Burials**

The latest identified phase of Roman activity on the site was that of burials in Area 2 (Fig. 7), again indicating a major change in land-use. As the settlement of north Southwark contracted former areas of occupation were abandoned and used as cemeteries as at 15-23 Southwark Street 120m (400ft) to the south-east7. There were seven inhumations in Area 2: three aligned north-south and four east-west. In three of the graves chalk layers covered the bones, and one of the inhumations was accompanied by a coin of the AD 340s. One of the graves was inserted before the wall foundations of the large building were robbed of their stone. The graves were covered by dark earth.

**Conclusion**

Studying these six sites as an area of the prehistoric and Roman north Southwark settlement has given a clearer picture of its development and the changes that took place. In Areas 1-4 the building alignment remained the same from the 1st century to the abandonment of the area for a burial ground probably in the 4th century. The alignments in Areas 5 and 6 did change and this may be a reflection of the altered edge of the higher ground though the potential influence of a major road to the east must be considered.

The discussion of Areas 1-4 together allows study of a cross-section of the Southwark settlement from the marginal land on the river edge in the north, to the higher, drier and safer settlement areas in the south. In the late 1st/early 2nd centuries it appears that marginal riverside land was being used with the building of the warehouse; further south was a zone of industrial activity and south of road 1 was a residential area.

The overall pattern of developments in an area of the north Southwark settlement also becomes more apparent. This is particularly obvious in the change in the late 3rd century from small-scale clay and timber buildings, industrial and dockside activities to large-scale wealthier buildings with stone foundations and mortar floors. This widespread change in the use of an area seems to indicate a strong element of control in settlement planning.

**Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank all the Museum of London staff and volunteers who worked on the sites. The site directors were as follows: 28 Park Street and Courages 1984 (Areas 2, 5, 7) – Robin Densem; Courages 1987 and 1988 (Areas 3 and 4) – John Dillon; 3 Redcross Way 1989 (Area 1) – Sophie Jackson; 18 Park Street 1990 (Area 6) – Helen Jones. Brian Yule, Robin Densem, Harvey Sheldon and Peter Hinton assisted in the production of this article. The plans were drawn by Mike Jones. We would also like to thank the GLC, the London Borough of Southwark, English Heritage and Botes Builders who funded the various phases of work.