rope. With such a small sample no definitive statements can be made but the new find does add a little more information to what we already knew.

Design differences seen on the Swan Stairs spectacle frames compared to the other actual and visually represented spectacles, imply an attempt by the craftsmen to counteract the difficulty a user would find in wearing riveted spectacles. The disturbance of vision was one of these difficulties but the primary problem would have been their inclination to fall off. The slitted projection on one side of each arm of the frames may provide the means for securing padding to hold the spectacles in place.

If the Swan Stairs spectacles are taken, not as evidence of an individual commission, but rather as a form generally available to those able to buy such small luxuries, they provide a fourth type of known riveted spectacle design. The four spectacle types may represent temporal differences, workshop variability, changes in fashion, or deliberate choice for the consumer. As the range of types may be broadly contemporary, the provision of choice, and workshop variability, may be the most likely factors in this instance: allowing the consumer to select their frame design for comfort as well as, to some degree, the strength of the lens for optical purposes.

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Archaeology on the Thames foreshore in London

The foreshore of the British coast and the tidal estuaries of its rivers contains material of great archaeological significance, as a series of pioneering projects have shown. Neolithic land surfaces and scatters of prehistoric material have been found on the East Anglian coast and the Severn Estuary, the remains of Bronze Age boats were recorded on the Humber foreshore: evidence for the manufacture of sea salt in the Iron Age and Roman period comes from the Red Hills of Essex, fish weirs have been identified in many estuaries and coastal sites, while the hulks of boats and barges abandoned in creeks have been recorded in many parts of the country, not least on the Medway.

The need for a Thames Foreshore Survey
The inter-tidal zone of the Thames is just as productive; recent studies show that a remarkable range of features are routinely exposed between the tides, and are consequently subject to erosion. The surprise is that nobody has attempted to map such features systematically, even though museums have many artefacts in their collections with the provenance 'from the Thames': no attempt has usually been made to determine whether such material was actually lying on an ancient land surface. Since the level of the highest tides is higher today than it was in prehistoric periods, it follows that a low tide today might well expose a prehistoric surface or deposit which was laid at what was then dry land, i.e. above what was then the level of the high tide. There is also evidence of activity in other periods, with a scatter of Roman, Saxon and later medieval artefacts. Post-medieval remains are very well represented, with significant traces of boat and ship-yards, hulks and extensive scatters of industrial waste from e.g. pottery and glass-working sites.

A Pilot Survey: April to October 1995
Since very little material has been systematically surveyed, the foreshore is under-represented on the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record. A pilot study has been launched to make good this serious omission. From April to October 1995, the Museum of London and the London Archaeological Research Facility are promoting an inter-tidal zone survey of the London Thames, with funding from English Heritage. Mike Webber has been appointed as the Thames Survey Officer to supervise the project, which will involve the co-ordination of survey teams from local societies and UCL Institute of Archaeology.

Aims of the project
The aims are to conduct a series of intensive and extensive surveys of Pilot Study areas, collecting data on the nature, extent, significance and survival of archaeological material on the foreshore, and also on the nature of threats to it. This work will generate initial SMR records for the Pilot Study areas. The project will also try to open a dialogue with such organisations as have an interest in the foreshore, with the aim of exploring a cultural resource management framework for the foreshore.

Methods to be employed
The survey is conducted at three levels. To begin with, there is a reconnaissance survey, in which all four of the areas selected for the Pilot Studies would be surveyed to establish the position and condition of access points, general extent and nature of the foreshore itself, location of any major sewers or other obstacles. Next, the areas would be extensively surveyed: the whole survey zone would be systematically walked, and the presence and absence of archaeological features and material noted. Relevant data would be initially recorded on uniquely-numbered Thames Survey Proforma sheets, and the associated numbers plotted onto the 1:250 Field Map. After a basic field validation exercise, the data are made available to the Greater London SMR, so that broad areas of archaeological interest are identified. At least two areas of interest would subsequently be examined through intensive surveys, in which detailed recording, planning, levelling and photography take place.

Further information
If you would like further information on this project, please write to Dr Nick Merriman or Mike Webber, Thames Foreshore Survey, Dept. of Early History, Museum of London, London Wall, London EC2Y 5HN, or Gustav Milne, London Archaeological Research Facility, UCL Institute of Archaeology, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1H OPY.