Mosaic

Community Archaeology project in Haringey
The trend for community archaeology projects in London has expanded into the Borough of Haringey this summer with an excavation at Bruce Castle. It was run with the support of the London Archaeological Archive and Resource Centre (LAARC), and has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Haringey Council, and Tottenham Grammar School Foundation. The focus of the work was the Tudor tower, which sits in the grounds of Bruce Castle Museum, and a Victorian refuse tip uncovered in the park. The opening of National Archaeology Week was marked by a visit by David Lammy MP, Minister for Culture, on 14 July.

The excavation revealed that the foundations of the tower extended to several metres below the present ground level, and that they were pierced at that depth by cruciform windows, apparently leading to a vaulted chamber. Current thinking is that this enigmatic building may have originally been used for storing water.

History Matters
This new public awareness campaign, supported by heritage organisations including the CBA, was launched recently. History Matters – pass it on is all about raising awareness of the importance of history in our everyday lives and encouraging involvement in heritage in England and Wales. The goal is to build public support and interest in looking after our history and heritage – today and in the future. See www.historymatters.org.uk.

Journey to the New World
May 2007 marks the 400th anniversary of the first permanent English settlement in America at Jamestown, Virginia. Journey to the New World, which opens at the Museum in Docklands on 23 November, illustrates and celebrates the importance of London and Londoners to this epic event. It is the key UK-based exhibition that ties in with 18 months of celebrations in Virginia to put Jamestown firmly on the map.

Funded by the Virginia Company of London, with the backing of James I, the three ships Susan Constant, Godspeed and Discovery set sail in 1606 from the London docks (almost at the site of the present-day Museum in Docklands). Five months later this flotilla landed some hundred men and boys on Virginian shores, who set about their plans to ‘make habitation, plantation and to deduce a colony of sundry of our people.’ The exhibition investigates the purpose of the settlement, while examining the lives and experiences of Londoners at the heart of this first English colony.

Their story, hidden for centuries, is only now beginning to unfold, taking its shape from archaeological evidence unearthed since the discovery of the original settlement and fort in 1994. The work of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia’s Antiquities and other archaeologists is overturning received opinion on the Jamestown settlers. Journey to the New World brings together an important body of 17th century finds, many of which made the crossing from London to the New World, with artefacts from Museum in Docklands’ permanent collection.

Tudor terracottas found in Southwark
When the 18th-century church of St George the Martyr, Southwark (near Borough tube station) needed underpinning, it was clear that the work would have serious archaeological implications. An earlier, medieval, church and its burials were known to exist on the site, and there was a possibility of a Saxon predecessor. Local sites, and the presence of the Roman road nearby, suggested that the presence of early Roman buildings under the church was likely.

In the event, the budget for the archaeological work on the site seems not to have allowed for total excavation of the medieval and Roman deposits, but only for their sampling, a problem compounded by the unexpectedly large number of post-medieval burials uncovered.

A more welcome unexpected discovery was that of some 190 fragments of Tudor architectural terracottas, re-used in the foundations of a 17th-century rebuild of the church. They are probably derived from Brandon Place, built soon after 1518 by Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. The site of Brandon Place (which lies on the other side of Borough High Street) was redeveloped in the 1980s, with little archaeological input. However, there are earlier finds of terracottas from Brandon Place on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum.