

# FINDS ON TWO SITES BY THE WALBROOK, 1940 AND 1946

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THE two sites here recorded are roughly 100 yards south and north respectively of Waterlow's corner in London Wall, in close proximity to the ancient Walbrook and to its culvert through the Roman City wall.

## SITE I

Early in 1940, preparatory to the building of a basement air-raid shelter, six shafts were dug in the basement of the Western Union Telegraph Company's premises, in a line west to east, 25 feet south of the roadway at 22, Great Winchester Street.

The two most westerly shafts (A and B) had water at the bottom at a depth of 19–20 feet below street level, and a squared, black wooden pile was seen. In one of these two shafts a sharp dip in the strata suggested that some cavity below had collapsed.

Shaft C, 16 feet east of this, was dry at 24 feet below street level, although wet black clay had come from it. In this shaft and in a neighbouring one (D), of equal depth, Roman pottery (first to third century) was found at the lowest levels, and a layer of compressed vegetation was seen at the bottom, with a subsoil of grey-blue clay.

Some 40 feet further east was a shaft (E) which yielded a dirty gritty soil, and from an unrecorded depth in this shaft a fragment of an ancient human skull was excavated.

Shaft F, 14 feet to the east again, disclosed red gravel from 12 feet below street level downwards, no "finds" being made here.

The above data and the skull fragment were given to Prof. F. E. Zeuner, whose report appears in the Annual Report for 1946 of the Institute of Archæology of London University. A copy of this may be seen by the showcase containing the Roman finds and a cast of the skull in the entrance hall at 22, Great Winchester Street. The original skull has been presented to the Natural History Museum, South Kensington, and of it Prof. Zeuner says in part: "This fragment is an almost complete and remarkably thick frontal of a male *Homo Sapiens*,

and its state of fossilisation is comparable with that of Pleistocene bones as found in Thames deposits. It does not suggest a Holocene age. The geological position of the find, however, is ambiguous owing to the conditions under which it was retrieved. But since this specimen came from a place only about 1,000 yards north-west of "Lloyds," the site of the London skull (a female), and is possibly derived from the same, Upper Floodplain, terrace, circumstances of the find and a short description may here be placed on record. . . ."

Included in the report is a detailed description of the fragment by Dr. J. S. Weiner of the Department of Human Anatomy, Oxford, who concludes: "The most interesting feature of the specimen is its thickness, which appears somewhat greater at the coronal suture than the usual run of male specimens. It is of interest to note that the thickness at the coronal suture is on the whole slightly greater than that of the Swanscombe parietal at its coronal suture. It may be recalled that the thickness along the coronal suture, as in other situations in the two Swanscombe fragments, was regarded as rather unusual by one of the writers of the report on Swanscombe. This fact, it was suggested, made it not unlikely that, in spite of the essential modernity of the parietal and occipital, the missing frontal might also show unusual thickness, perhaps of a Neanderthaloid character—witness the Steinheim skull. The evidence, so far as it goes, of the present frontal bone, with its thickish coronal border and "normal" supra-orbital region, serves, I think, to indicate that this speculation is not well founded. To that extent, the present frontal serves at least as a comment on a rather important point about Swanscombe."

Of the site of the excavations Professor Zeuner says: "According to the 6-inch map, the site lies in the alluvium of the Walbrook, on the eastern flank which rises to the Upper Floodplain terrace. This appears to be confirmed by the shafts. London Clay seems to have been struck at 24 feet below street level in Shaft D, and the "stone" which may have been a septaria, in Shaft C, only 4 feet from Shaft D, may be taken as confirmatory evidence. At 24 feet below street level Shaft D showed traces of a land surface and much of these 24 feet appears to have been Roman and later material, occupation rubbish mixed with alluvial mud. Shaft E, 40 feet east of the first four, still contained a "gritty dirt" of alluvial appearance. But Shaft F stands already in the gravel of the

Pleistocene terrace, so that the edge of the Walbrook Valley must have run between Shafts E and F. If the fragment is Pleistocene, it may have been derived from the gravel found in Shaft F and re-deposited in alluvial mud."

Apart from the skull, the finds were taken to the Guildhall Museum, where they were identified by the late Mr. Quintin Waddington and Mr. Oswald. The list is as follows:—

*Metal.*—*Aurichalcum* (gold-bronze alloy): A small studded nail and part of a lady's long hair-pin.

*Iron.*—A 5½-inch-long engraved iron stilus and a Saxon dagger-blade.

*Glass.*—Fragment of blue glass.

*Wood.*—Point of oak pile.

*Leather.*—Fragment of shoe.

*Stone.*—A white tessera from a pavement and a piece of sculptured Purbeck marble.

*Plaster.*—Fragments of wall-painting on plaster.

*Brick.*—An almost complete roofing tile bearing track marks of a dog and a cat. (It was a Roman superstition that such marks were good omens.)

*Pottery—Unglazed.*—Assortment of fragments mainly first and second century, including a delicate black rim of Belgic ancestry, graphite burnished ware—mica-dust pottery of the type discovered in a Roman kiln in Great Swan Alley—rims of incense-burners; the finial of a votive lamp and part of an amphora bearing the imprint of a potter's thumb.

*Glazed.*—Fragments of Samian red glazed ware, among which three bases bearing potter's stamp, viz. Virilis, Calvus, both of La Graufesenque, A.D. 70–90; Parentinus, Treves, third century. One fragment of marbled Samian ware.

With the co-operation of the management of the Western Union Telegraph Company the finds were housed in a showcase on a staging in the form of a classical façade and steps, and the exhibit set up at a number of American establishments in London during the war, among others at the American Embassy and at SHAEF. Here it stood for six months outside General Eisenhower's dining-room, and was seen by thousands of the

Allied H.Q. Staffs. Now the exhibit is on permanent view on the original site of the excavations and may be usefully studied in conjunction with the Roman wall which ran nearby. The line of that wall is seen in the mediæval fragment surviving in the churchyard of All Hallows, London Wall, and an excavation in the summer of 1948 revealed the Roman structure to a depth of 16 feet below the pavement and roadway outside Waterlow's shop. In May, 1941, the writer saw Roman masonry and bonding tile brought out of the crater caused by the explosion of a landmine opposite Carpenters' Hall.

## SITE II

In June, 1946, a deep excavation for the construction of a drain outside 2, Liverpool Street, near the corner of Blomfield Street, attracted the writer's attention. Examining the excavated earth, he discovered a small fragment of Samian pottery bearing the moulded form of a hare. A navy obligingly kept his eyes open for further fragments and one of these fitted on to the original scrap. The small collection of Samian ware was submitted to Dr. Felix Oswald. The fragment above, he said, was distinctly rare and came from the pottery of Julius Vibinus at Lesoux, c. A.D. 120. On it are seen two figures, supposed to be Greek soldiers at the siege of Troy, also a Greek tripod altar, a tree, a lion and the leg of a runner. The other moulded Samian fragments, said Dr. Oswald, were possibly from the potteries of Divixtus, Ioenalis and Medetus, Gaulish contemporaries of Julius Vibinus.

A bronze coin of Nero was also found on this site and Mr. Oswald has given the following particulars concerning it. Obverse: Head of Nero. Inscription: IMP NERO CÆSAR AUG MAX TR PPP. Reverse: Figure of Securitas (Safety of the Emperor) seated on throne. Inscription: SECURITAS AUGUSTI S.C.