

REPORT ON RECENT EXCAVATIONS IN SOUTHWARK AND BERMONDSEY : PART 1.

By PETER R. V. MARSDEN
Guildhall Museum

This report contains accounts of "rescue-excavations" carried out on various building sites in Southwark and Bermondsey. Except where otherwise stated the excavations were carried out by the writer.

Thanks are due to Mr. Norman Cook, B.A., F.S.A., Keeper of the Guildhall Museum, who very kindly dated the pottery and gave permission for two notes in the Museum records to be published. Thanks are also due to Mr. R. Merrifield, B.A., F.S.A., Assistant Keeper of the Guildhall Museum, who kindly read the original draft of this report and made useful comments.

96-104 BOROUGH HIGH STREET

(Fig. 1)

The site lies at the south corner of the Borough High Street and Union Street, and the contractor's excavations were carried out early in 1960. The natural sand, where not disturbed, lay at a depth of approximately 9 feet 10 in. below the Borough High Street pavement surface, or at about 3 feet above O.D.

A drainage ditch, about 2 feet in depth, under the Borough High Street frontage, was found running N.W.-S.E., and was dug from the lowest stratum above the natural sand. No dating evidence was found in the yellow clayey silt filling of the ditch, but an occupation layer above the ditch filling contained a number of sherds of the late 1st century (Fig 4c). Running westwards from the High Street frontage the ditch gradually grew shallower until it was no longer recognisable.

At the western end of the site was found a square timber-lined well, where, in the mixed clayey filling, were discovered a few sherds of about 100 A.D. (Fig. 4a). The well, like the ditch, had been dug from the lowest stratum above the natural sand.

It was noticed that the Roman strata under the High Street frontage were more numerous than at the western end of the site. This was probably due to the eastern end being nearer to the Roman ribbon development along Stane Street. The lowest dated stratum at the eastern end of the site contained a few sherds of the end of the 1st century

A.D. (Fig. 4c), and the lowest at the south-western corner of the site was a greenish flinty stratum containing a few Flavian sherds (Fig. 4b).

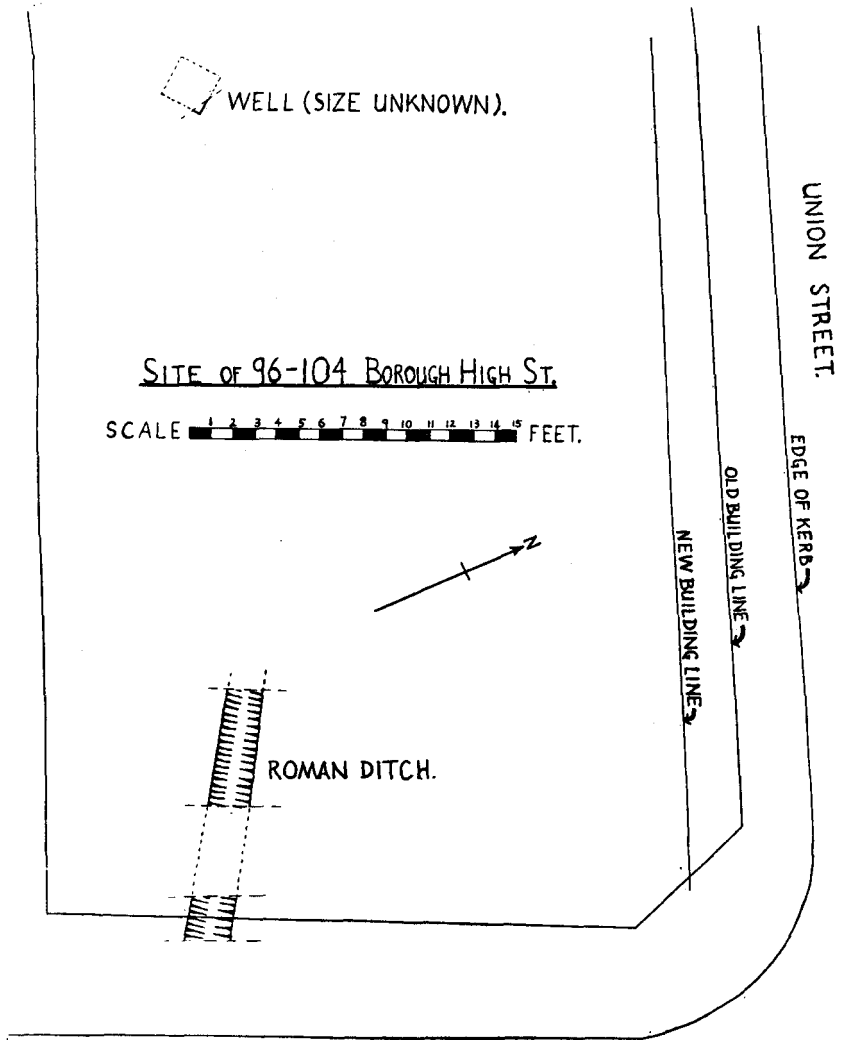


Fig. 1

140-147 BOROUGH HIGH STREET

A visit was made to this site in 1958 when the contractor's excavations were in an advanced stage. Only the west end of the site had not been concreted over, and at that end several clay-filled pits dug into the natural sand were examined. Each pit contained large loose lumps of ragstone only, and in view of the depth and filling of the pits, it seems possible that they were Roman. The workmen had collected a large quantity of pottery fragments, some of which were Roman but most of which were post-medieval in date. One Samian Ware fragment (Drag. form 18/31) was stamped ANNIO₂ F (Annius of Lezoux: Period:—Trajan-Hadrian).

SOUTHWARK CATHEDRAL

A note in the Guildhall Museum records for 1947 states that:—"Excavations for an unexploded bomb at the east end of Southwark Cathedral, in the Churchyard, were watched. Burials extended to a depth of 15-18 feet and the ballast level was found with no water at 16-18 feet. Unstratified finds included a collection of Lambeth delft, in biscuit condition before glazing, and with only the pattern laid on, with no overglaze. Kiln tools and ? saggars were also found." An accompanying section shows an eleven-inch-thick Roman burnt layer below 12 feet 2 in. of disturbed burials, and overlaying Roman make-up.

OTIS ELEVATOR CO LTD. SITE, FALMOUTH ROAD

The site lies at the north-east corner of Falmouth Road and Great Dover Street, and during excavations in December, 1938, two human skeletons were found by workmen in a single hole measuring 12 feet x 8 feet x 12 feet at the north end of the site. The skeletons are said to have been found at a depth of about 6 feet. Also found in the hole, and presumably with the skeletons, were two small jugs and a bowl. One of the jugs (Plate 4) is of a red coarse ware and is of 4th century date. A Roman mortarium fragment was also found about 20 yards north-west of the burials.

(This information was kindly supplied to the Cuming Museum by Mr. G. Clasby of the Otis Elevator Co. Ltd. The red coarse ware jug is in the possession of Mr. Clasby, and the mortarium he has given to the Museum. Mr. F. Boone, the Curator, kindly passed the information on for publication.)



Photo : John Ruskin Camera Club

Plate 4 4th CENTURY JUG FROM FALMOUTH ROAD, SOUTHWARK

E LEPHANT & CASTLE.

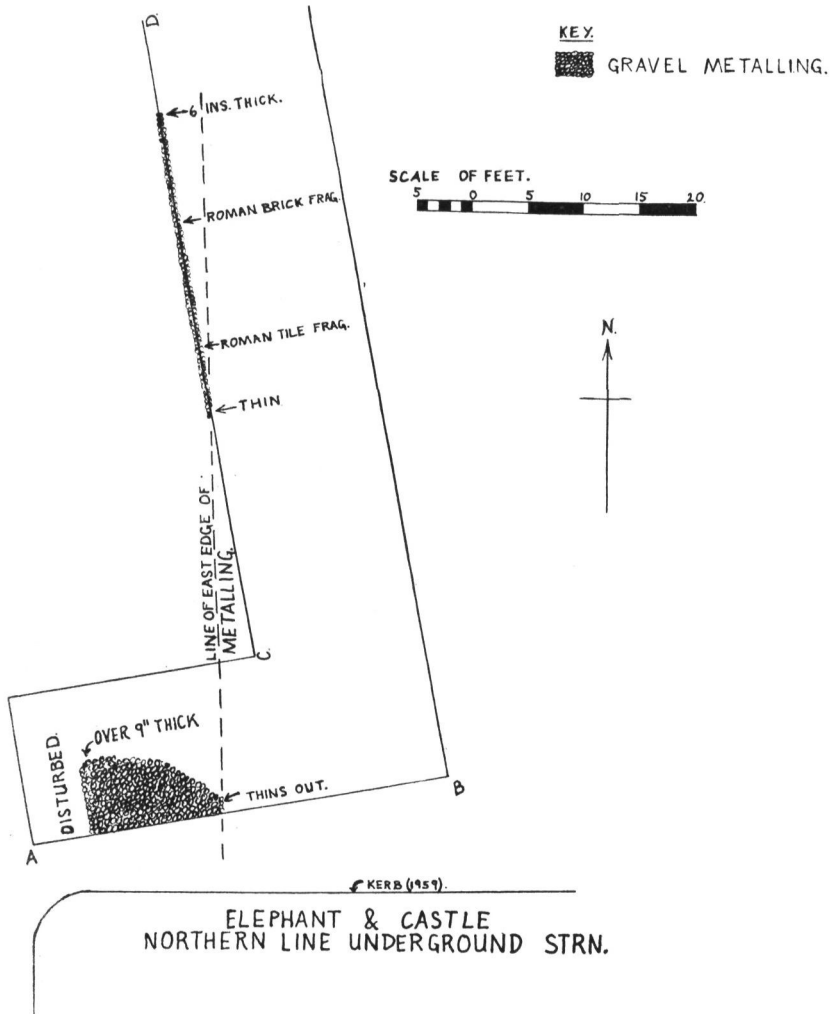


Fig. 2

160-166 BOROUGH HIGH STREET

In 1959 contractor's excavations exposed part of a black silt-filled depression, possibly a pond, several feet deep on the south side of the site. In the silt were found a few Roman sherds.

In the north-eastern quarter of the site was exposed an area of thick burnt material in which lay burnt timber planks and beams, and the stumps of vertical timber posts. These burnt timbers lay in no apparent order, and no dating evidence was found in the burnt level, which lay only a few inches above the natural sand. Below the burnt level was found a nearly complete Samian Ware dish of Drag. form 18 stamped OPASSIIV (Passenus of La Graufesenque: Period:—Nero-Vespasian). From its depth the burnt level appears to represent the remains of a Roman timber structure destroyed by fire.

A plan of this site, together with the pottery, will be published in the next part of this *Report*.

WORLD STORES, 28-30 TRINITY STREET

A note in the Guildhall Museum records notes the discovery, in January, 1956, by workmen, of a cremation burial in a late 1st-early 2nd century flagon, behind the building of the World Stores.

ELEPHANT AND CASTLE

(Fig. 2)

Excavations immediately north of the Elephant and Castle Northern Line Station took place in April, 1960.

In the south face (line A-B on Fig. 2) of an east-west trench was seen a layer of rammed dirty gravel metalling at a depth of 5 feet below the present road surface, and this metalling was disturbed for a distance of 5 feet from the west end of the trench. At the east end of the disturbance the metalling was a little over 9 in. thick, and over a distance of 12 feet east of that point it gradually thinned down to nothing. The only find in the metalling was a crushed bone.

A north-south trench ran northwards from the east end of the east-west trench. In the west face of the north-south trench (line C-D on Fig. 2) the metalling was again exposed at a distance of 36 feet 6 in. north of section A-B. The gravel metalling was thin at first, and northwards over a distance of 27 feet it thickened to 6 in. Beyond that point it was disturbed by modern drains. In the metalling in section C-D were found a fragment of a Roman roofing-tile flange and a fragment of Roman brick.

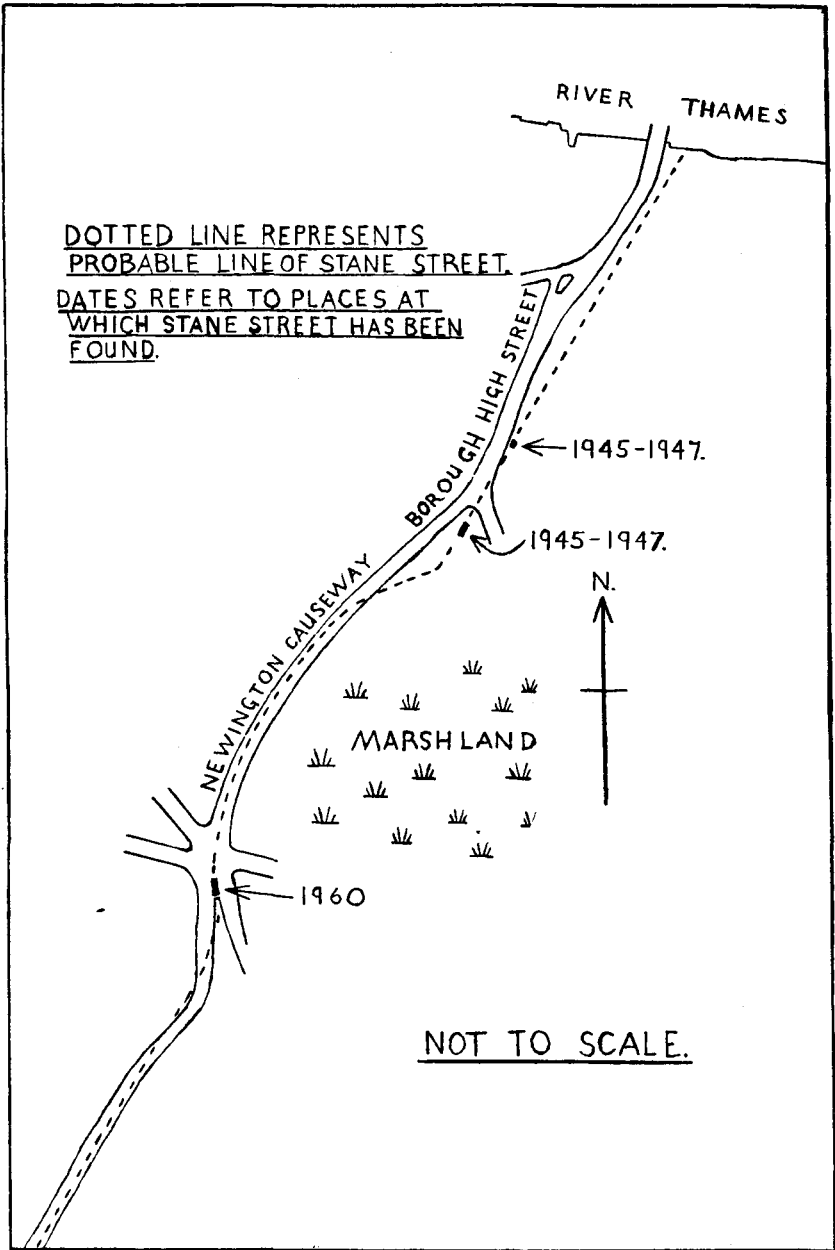


Fig. 3 Sketch-plan to show the probable line of Stane Street.

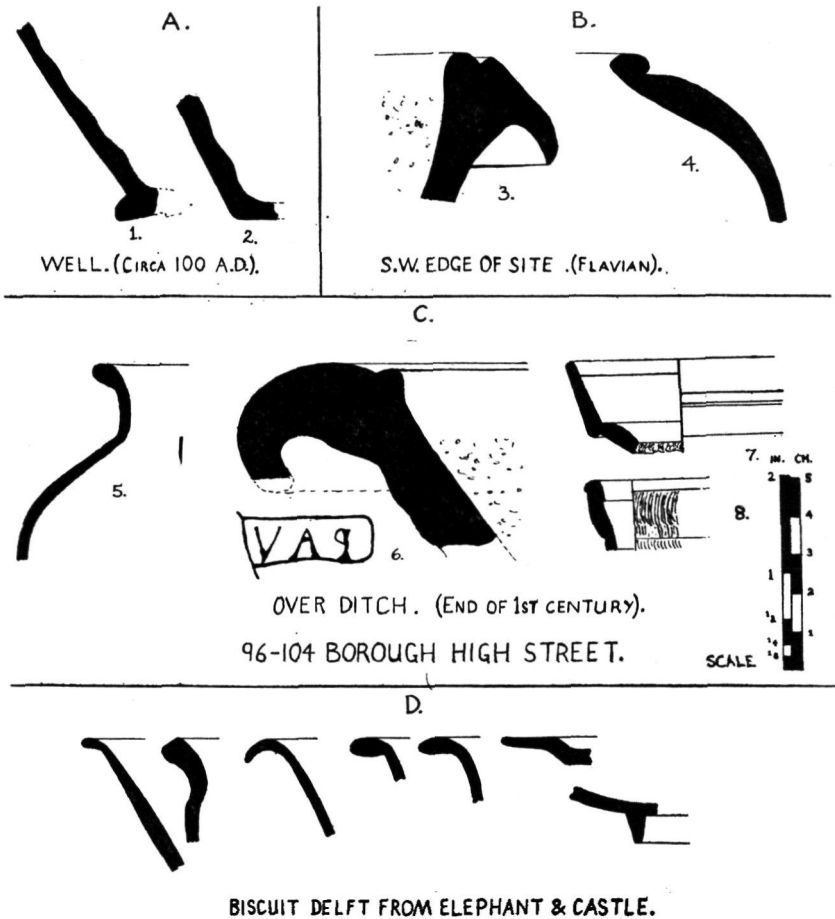


Fig. 4

The metalling overlay the natural sand and gravel, and at the junction of the metalling and the natural gravel were small pockets of black mud. The gravel metalling probably formed the edge of a Roman road which apparently headed towards the centre of Newington Causeway.

It is worth noting that in a cutting excavated across Newington Causeway about 300 yards north of the Elephant and Castle, a cambered layer of hard rammed gravel, 1 foot thick and 15-16 feet wide, was observed in 1952 (*L.C.C. Survey of London*, Vol. XXV, pp.1-2). This was regarded as being part of Stane Street. If these attributions are correct and the metalling in both cases was part of the Roman Stane Street then the road must have left its straight course and curved round an area of marshy ground to the east. Its descendant, Newington Causeway, follows a similar curve (Fig. 3). The pockets of black mud below the metalling possibly indicate the extreme western edge of the marshy area.

Directly below the present road surface, about 50 feet north of the Elephant and Castle Northern Line Station entrance, was found a spread of broken late 17th-early 18th century delft ware in a biscuit condition (Fig. 4d), together with a waster fragment of a brown glazed stoneware vessel. This kiln waste had evidently been used as a hard core foundation for a road surface.

THE POTTERY

(Fig. 4)

- A.1 Base of red coarse ware with a white slip.
- 2 Base of a grey coarse ware cooking pot.
- B.3 Mortarium rim of pink ware (burnt) and a buff slip.
- 4 Rim of a jar of a gritty ware with a light grey core.
- C.5 Rim of a grey ware jar.
- 6 Mortarium rim, of a buff coarse ware with a cream slip. Stamp, PAV[, retrograde, along rim.
- 7 Rim fragment of a Samian Ware, Drag. form 15/17.
- 8 Rim fragment of a Samian Ware, Drag. form 29.
- D Fragments of biscuit delft ware.