A REVIEW OF THE 52nd LAMAS CONFERENCE OF LONDON ARCHAEOLOGISTS HELD AT THE MUSEUM OF LONDON ON 21 MARCH 2015

Compiled by Bruce Watson

AN EARLY NEOLITHIC SITE AT 41–42 KEW BRIDGE ROAD, BRENTFORD

Richard Humphrey (Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd)

The site was sandwiched between the Thames and the line of the London to Silchester Roman road. The drift geology consisted of terrace gravels overlain by a sandy brickearth prehistoric land surface which, despite the truncation caused by Victorian basements, was well preserved. The earliest feature was a Holocene palaeochannel, which had flowed southwards into the Thames. The upper fills of this former tributary and the adjoining features revealed extensive evidence of prolonged human activity (over 1,500 worked flints), connected with exploitation of riverine sources of food and raw materials. The earliest flint work was of Mesolithic date. It included microliths and microburins, all of which appear to be residual finds recovered from Neolithic contexts. Early Neolithic features included pits, postholes and several ditches. During the Early Neolithic there was extensive evidence of knapping of local foreshore flint cobbles to produce tools including serrated blades and scrapers. Other Neolithic finds included multiple pot sherds derived from the same vessels (plain bowls and decorated wares *c.*3600–3300 BC) perhaps representing the deliberate deposition of material, a fragment of sandstone quern and a flake from a greenstone axe derived either from North Wales or the Lake District.

Surprisingly, Roman activity was limited to a few sherds of abraded pottery and a linear ditch parallel with the line of the adjoining road.

PREHISTORIC AND HISTORIC LANDSCAPES AT SIPSON FARM, HARMONDSWORTH: EXCAVATIONS 2010–2014

Bob Cowie (Museum of London Archaeology)

In advance of gravel quarrying north of Heathrow airport, successive seasons of excavation have revealed a multi-period sequence of truncated features. The earliest activity during the Neolithic was represented by a cremation burial, various pits and a ring ditch. Associated finds included blades, scrapers, a flint adze, a fabricator and a residual transverse arrowhead. By the Middle Bronze Age a series of ditched fields had been established, containing waterholes. Evidence of probable farmsteads consisted of wells and clusters of postholes. Associated finds included worked flints and a cylindrical clay loom weight with an impressed decoration. There was evidence of several Bronze Age

Fig 1. The cluster of waterholes at Sipson Farm under excavation, view looking south towards Sipson Road (photo: Bob Cowie, MOLA)

cremation burials and a tiny ring ditch, which contained a considerable quantity of calcined bone – some identifiable as human. Middle Iron Age activity was represented by a huge oval feature nicknamed 'the splodge' by its excavators (Fig 1). It was a series of intercutting waterholes, most of which were undated, but one contained a number of large sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery and another a line of six timber stakes. The waterlogged plant remains recovered from these waterholes should provide a lot of information concerning the contemporary flora. This feature was entered by a gravel ramp along its southern side. Late Iron Age activity consisted of a farmstead which included three penannular eaves-drip gullies, set within a series of ditched fields served by a trackway. Contemporary with this activity were more waterholes and wells. The site was still occupied during the Roman period when a new ditched enclosure was dug. During the medieval period (*c.*11th to 14th century) more ditched fields were established, while the buildings of a farmstead were represented by rectangular wall foundation trenches and scattered postholes. A timber-lined well produced a fragment of a broad-rimmed wooden wheel.

EXCAVATIONS AT ST BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, CITY OF LONDON

Antony Francis (Museum of London Archaeology)

In recent years London's oldest hospital (est 1123) has been undergoing an extensive rebuilding programme, accompanied by a long-term programme of archaeological fieldwork, which will be completed during 2015. Recent excavations within the basements of several standing buildings have focused on part of the Roman 'western' extra-mural cemetery. Discoveries have included eight partial inhumations and a single cremation burial. Grave goods included a broken samian bowl and a brooch. There was also evidence of Roman quarry pits and fragments of several buildings of unknown function. Medieval features included exten-

sive brickearth and gravel quarries, a tile-lined hearth, chalk wall foundations, plus chalk-lined wells and cesspits. A medieval wattle-lined pit contained a segment of a wooden felloe or wheel rim. Early post-medieval discoveries included a brick-lined cellar incorporating reused medieval architectural stonework. There was also evidence of the Great Fire destruction including a carbonised wooden trough.

SAXONS AT THE ADELPHI, STRAND

Dougie Killock (Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd)

The Adelphi building (1936–1938) on the south side of the Strand stands on the line of the deeply buried waterfront of the Middle Saxon (*c.*AD 650–850) settlement and trading centre of *Lundenwic*. One of the few recent opportunities to explore the waterfront was in 1988 at York Buildings, where one phase of revetment was tree-ring dated to *c.*AD 679. So the excavation of a new lift pit in the basement car park of the Adelphi offered a small but very significant new opportunity to examine the Middle Saxon waterfront. Due to a depth limitation of 1.8m, natural deposits were not reached. The earliest deposits reached represented the early 7th-century AD Thames foreshore. The foreshore was initially reclaimed by the construction of a brushwood embankment; it was superseded by a revetment consisting of a line of vertical timber posts around which wattles had been woven. Next a revetment of vertical posts retaining planking was erected. This was subsequently dismantled and sealed by either the dumping or natural accumulation of foreshore deposits, containing a silver gilt sceatta of 'the two emperors type' (dated to AD 655–675) and large amounts of residual Roman ceramic building materials and masonry. The next two phases of reclamation consisted of parallel lines of posts, which originally would have retained planking, but both phases were subsequently dismantled. The final phase of reclamation was an embankment constructed of brushwood and dumped materials including masses of animal bones and other domestic rubbish. Its construction is dated by ceramics to *c.*AD 700–750. Subsequently the area was built over, so it was obviously now protected from the

river by (unexcavated) revetments situated further south. There were traces of timber buildings, one of which had been burnt down, pits, midden material and external surfaces (possibly yards). Associated finds included bun-shaped clay loom weights, an imported coniferous (wine?) barrel head timber, a lead net sinker, a bone pin beater, a bone needle and an ivory bead. There was also evidence of antler working perhaps connected with comb making. The amount of residual Roman building material recovered throughout the sequence confirms that it was being brought here perhaps by boat on a systematic basis by the Saxons.

FILLING IN THE GAPS: WHAT THE PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME CAN TELL US ABOUT THE THAMES

Ben Paits (Portable Antiquities Scheme and Museum of London)

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) on-line database for Greater London is a veritable 'treasure trove'. On 20 March 2015, it listed 8,986 artefacts the vast majority of which are metal objects discovered by detectorists often working on the Thames fore-shore. The breakdown of this assemblage on a period by period basis is Mesolithic 0.9%, Neolithic 2.7%, Bronze Age 0.9%, Iron Age 4.5%, Roman 18.0%, early medieval 1.3%, medieval 21.0% and post-medieval 48.3%. The prehistoric finds are largely clustered along the Thames, though the Iron Age material which includes over 300 coins shows a broader distribution. Mesolithic finds include a flint adze discovered in a Mitcham garden. Significant Bronze Age foreshore finds include a spear from Pimlico and a sword from Brentford. Roman finds also showed a strongly Thames-based distribution, with the notable exception of 149 coins from West Wickham, Bromley, which are believed to indicate the site of an important Roman settlement. One important find from the Lambeth foreshore is the base of an 8th-century Irish-style drinking horn. Some areas such as the Thames foreshore outside the Tower of London have been systematically metal detected for some years; significant finds from this work include a 17th-century curry comb and a Pappenheimer rapier hand guard.

UNLOCKING THE MAGIC OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVE: A CASE STUDY OF ROMAN JET AND AMBER

Glynn Davis (London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre)

The challenge facing the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) is to utilise and research its vast collection of artefacts from some 8,500 excavations. One solution has been for London University MA students to undertake artefact studies for their theses. Examples have included studies of glassware and hair pins. Another avenue of outreach is to put aspects of the collection online. This has involved volunteers recording and digitalising images of certain classes of objects such as Roman hair pins, gaming equipment, needles, intaglios and pipeclay figurines. Two other ongoing projects are the study of Roman amber and jet objects. The former material was brought here from the Baltic so it is quite rare and presumably expensive, while jet was produced locally at Whitby and its usage was widespread during the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. Both materials when discovered as grave goods have a strong association with women and children. The impression is that these two materials were regarded as possessing either magical or supernatural powers, so could have served as part of private religious or ritual activities. Most of the amber Roman objects known from London are beads, but one is a 4th-century AD die from Newgate Street (GPO75 <741>) and another is a tiny gladiator's helmet amulet or pendant from Bucklesbury House (Fig 2). Jet is not easy to differentiate from lignite and both were used to produce a variety of hair pins, finger rings, numerous types of beads and bracelets, lids and even gaming counters. Two Medusa pendants were both found in female graves. One east London Roman inhumation burial, which was probably female, contained a jet gaming die (HOO 88 [1631]).

Cataloguing Roman dice has already produced some interesting results. For example, finds from one pre-Boudican pit that contained a cache of four Roman intaglios also included a bone die, which is not mentioned in the publication of this material (M Henig 'A cache of Roman intaglios from Eastcheap, City of London' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 35 (1984), 11–15).

Fig 2. A miniature amber amulet or pendant in the form of a gladiator's helmet from Bucklesbury House, height 13mm (photo: MOLA)

TO IMPRESS OR EXPRESS? EXPLORING IDENTITY THROUGH ROMAN DRESS ACCESSORIES AND TOILET PRACTICES

Michael Marshall (Museum of London Archaeology)

The concept of expressing your gender, age, ethnicity, profession, religious beliefs or wealth through your appearance is nothing new. Over 1900 years ago the inhabitants of *Londinium* were also dressing to impress their contemporaries. There are numerous finds of jewellery ranging from exquisite gold ear rings to cheap glass beads and finger rings from Roman London. Over 1,500 Roman hair pins are known from London making it the most common female dress accessory. Interestingly, the earlier examples are relatively long suggesting that they were intended to retain elaborate or 'big' hair styles, while later examples (after *c.*AD 200) are generally shorter and were probably intended to retain different hair styles.

The materials used to make hair pins also changed over time. From *c*.AD 50–150 copper-alloy was commonly used. Then between *c*.AD 120 and *c*.AD 200 bone was the most common material used to make hair pins, after which its popularity declined. How can these trends be explained? One possibility is initially during the Roman period long hair pins were used by relatively high-status women, perhaps immigrants who wore their hair in elaborately coiffured Roman-style arrangements. Over time this fashion might have been adopted by some of the indigenous women, hence the mass production of cheap bone hair pins. However, by *c*.AD 200–250 the fashion appears to have changed, perhaps having shorter hair or wearing long hair gathered into buns became more popular.

Among the popular objects in Roman London were copper-alloy 'manicure' or personal hygiene sets which consisted of tweezers, an ear-pick and a nail cleaner all looped together and hung on a ring, so that it could have been suspended from a cord or attached to a belt. Also common as accessories were copper-alloy cosmetic grinders (with tiny pestles and mortars), which also possessed suspension loops indicating they could have been carried around. These two types of portable accessories appear to have been quite common in Roman London, judging by the number of finds, and certainly their individual components were frequently lost. How useful these sets actually were is not certain; perhaps they were mainly worn as female symbols of adulthood or sophistication.

While some Roman dress accessories like finger rings or bracelets could have been worn by either gender, some items such as military or para-military belt sets would have been clearly worn by men as a symbol of authority. One particular style of late Roman metal bracelet might have been worn like a modern medal to signify distinguished military service. In the Roman world the phallus served as a symbol of fertility (associated with the impotent god Priapus, who possessed an immense penis), good luck and defence against evil, hence its use as a symbol on a range of amulets. The usage of the phallus symbol as an amulet appears to have been a new concept introduced by the Romans. Its adoption shows that not only Roman divinities, but aspects of their associated symbolism like the phallus were widely recognised and understood by the population of *Londinium.*

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE WINDSOR SARCOPHAGUS, THE TORSO FROM PETTICOAT LANE AND OTHER ADVENTURES

Francis Grew (Senior Archaeological Curator and Archive Manager, Museum of London)

The publication of a fully illustrated corpus of Roman sculpture from south-eastern England is a very important addition to the literature on this subject (P Coombe, M Henig, F Grew & K Hayward *Roman Sculpture from London and the South-East* (2015)). What is particularly important is that for the first time the geology and provenance of many of these objects has been researched. Two Roman marble sculptures – a sarcophagus from Windsor, originally from Bishopsgate House, Surrey, and the torso of a male youth with dumbbells from Petticoat Lane, Tower Hamlets – are now both reinterpreted as 'Grand Tour' souvenirs. One lost 17th-century discovery from near St Thomas-à-Watering along the Old Kent Road in Southwark consisted of a two-headed herm. It was probably of the type that depicted two males, one old, the other young, and might have served as a civic boundary marker. One significant find is the extremely rare mid-1st-century AD Egyptian basalt cinerary urn discovered at Warwick Square in the City of London in 1881. It is carved from a single block of stone (Fig 3). The urn contained a coin of Claudius minted in AD 41 and the cremated remains of a man in his 30s, presumably a high-status individual perhaps from abroad.

Ever since its discovery in 1949, a marble portrait bust from Lullingstone villa in Kent has tantalised scholars. Now it is provisionally reinterpreted as a likeness of Publius Helvius Pertinax, governor of Britain *c*.AD 185–187. He was a divisive character, who was relieved of his position when rebellious elements of the British garrison mutinied in reaction to his harsh discipline after he suppressed a mutiny. However, soon after

Fig 3. The Warwick Square Egyptian olivine basalt cinerary urn, height of vessel 0.385m, weight 16.106kg and surviving height of lid 0.109m (photo: Francis Grew; reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum)

he was appointed proconsul of Africa, so he was obviously still considered a suitable candidate for high office. Pertinax was proclaimed emperor in December AD 192, following the murder of Commodus, but his reign only lasted three months as he was also murdered. Lullingstone was an impressive villa. Could it have been Pertinax's country residence in Britain? Without doubt the bust was deliberately dismembered and smashed. If it is indeed an image of this one-time emperor, then the hatred of disaffected legionaries in AD 187 or opponents of his power bid in AD 193 could provide motives for this iconoclasm.

THE OTHER CHEAPSIDE HOARD: THE 11th-CENTURY JEWELLERY HOARD DISCOVERED IN 1838

John Clark (Curator Emeritus, Museum of London)

In 1912 the redevelopment of a Cheapside property in the City of London revealed a very well-known hoard of Elizabethan and early Stuart jewellery (H Forsyth *The Cheapside Hoard: London's Lost Jewels* (2013)). However, much less well known is an earlier find of Saxo-Norman jewellery from the same

street. This earlier hoard was discovered in October 1838, when a 4.8m-deep sewer trench was being dug along the centre of the street close to St Mary-le-Bow Church. It was passed to Richard Kelsey, the Surveyor to the Commissioners of Sewers, and presented to the Guildhall Museum. John Clark is now working with Prof Andrew Reynolds of UCL Institute of Archaeology to analyse and publish this hoard; this work includes metallurgical analysis carried out by Chris Witney-Lagen. The hoard comprises 43 objects of lead-tin alloy and of pure tin, including a variety of brooch designs, slush-cast beads and solid and wire finger rings. Similar items recovered from several London sites seem to confirm a late 11th-century date for this material. The provisional impression is that this material, some of which has an unfinished appearance, represents the concealment of the contents of a workshop producing relatively cheap imitation silver jewellery.

GENTEEL RUBBISH: THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF LONDON'S WEST END IN THE 18th CENTURY

Jacqui Pearce (Museum of London Archaeology)

In 2010 the redevelopment of 9–11 Duke Street, Westminster, revealed an infilled ditch containing masses of pottery. Partial excavation of this feature produced 546 sherds representing 320 vessels of mid-18th-century date. During the mid-18th century this area was in the process of being transformed from marshy fields and brick yards to elegant squares lined with grand houses. Therefore, this assemblage offers a snapshot of the area's material culture during its 'gentrification'. About 75% of the sherds consisted of fine wares including expensive English (Bow, Lowestoft, Vauxhall and Worcester) and Chinese porcelain. The range of vessels present included dinner plates, dishes, tea bowls and saucers. Other dinning wares consisted of English delftwares and white salt-glazed stonewares intended to imitate Chinese porcelain. Robust and cheap kitchen wares including bowls, dishes and pipkins were represented by London-area coarse red wares and Surrey-Hampshire border wares. There were

German Westerwald stoneware chamber pots and their local imitations, plus stoneware mugs and tankards. Teapots were present in a variety of fabrics including creamwares, agateware and red stonewares. One unusual vessel was a whistle pot, which made bird sounds; it was either a toy or a hunter's lure. Food remains included green turtle bones, another sign of affluence. The question is why was all this material discarded here? Similar assemblages are normally interpreted as 'clearance groups', created by occasions like house moves when large amounts of unwanted ceramics were dumped en masse. Documentary research has established that about the time that this property was developed in 1764, the St Marylebone parish scavenger or refuse collector had a yard next door where all debris his staff collected would have been sorted and the saleable materials, like scrap metal, salvaged and the remaining valueless materials, like broken ceramics, simply dumped. It appears that this ditch on the neighbouring property was probably infilled as a result of this activity.