

# Archaeology in the City: March—April 1976

D.U.A., MUSEUM OF LONDON

## G.P.O. Newgate Street (A. Thompson)

THE NORTHERN area is now finished; a further pit produced 30 flints and pottery which if not prehistoric is very early Roman. An interim plan of the rectangular bipartite mid or late Saxon building (fig. 1) of the northern area shows the kind of building which might be expected between the alleged sites of the royal palace within Cripplegate fort to the north and the folk-moot at St. Paul's to the south. It is the largest domestic Saxon building so far found in the City, measuring at least 9m x 4m. At the southern end of the site 240 skeletons from the graveyard of St. Nicholas in the Shambles (destroyed 1547-52) have now been excavated, and the parsonage, later Butchers' Hall,

located. Roman levels are being reached, and late pits disclose in their sides a promising Roman buildup of 1.5m of destroyed wattle and daub buildings.

A notable find was a solid-cast copper alloy tripod-mount portraying a bust of Bacchus or (more probably) a bacchante (see cover picture) (information from a report by Martin Henig FSA, Institute of Archaeology, Oxford). The figure is identified by the chaplet of ivy around the head, while its function is indicated by an iron pin in the base and the stub of a tenon at the back, which once helped to support the cauldron or crater placed upon the tripod. The eyes are inlaid with silver.

The only other tripod-mount from Britain which portrays a Bacchus-figure was found at Lincoln but is now

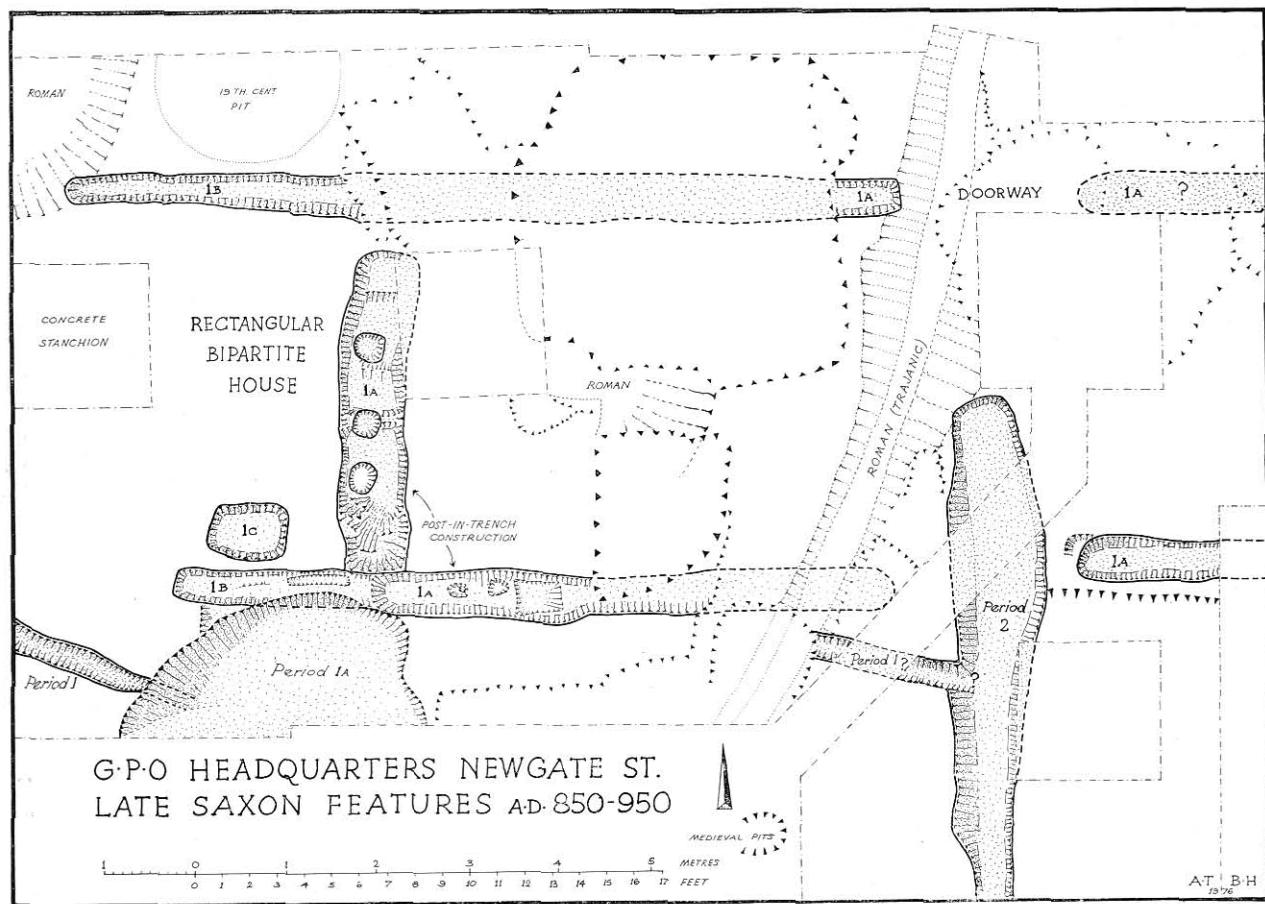


Fig 1.

lost<sup>1</sup>. However, a number of tripod-fittings showing bacchante are known from the continent and elsewhere in the Roman Empire<sup>2</sup>. It is thought that tripods such as this were used as stands for vessels employed in the mixing of wine, in which case the choice of bacchante figures as supports is especially appropriate.

#### Trig Lane (M. Harrison)

BOSSE ALLEY property boundary may have been reached on the western side of the site, marked by a break in the 15th/16th century stone river wall. Under the northern building, levelled with a layer of oysters as at Seal House, 13th century backfills are being excavated and the pre-14th century waterfront itself is exposed. It resembles the waterfront at Custom House rather than at Seal House, having a running flanged baseplate held by piles, at least in the small area of excavation.

#### Forum S.E. (Fenchurch St). (A. Boddington)

A SALVAGE brief led by Andy Boddington elucidated the only remaining piece of relatively intact Forum, at the corner of Fenchurch and Lime Street, before destruction. Four periods of Roman occupation were seen in the scattered remains. A gravel surface and an irregular gulley were followed by mud-brick building, with walls 0.5m thick of unfired bricks, with herring-bone patterning, on foundations of mortared flint c. 1.5m deep. This phase was destroyed by fire, probably Boudiccan, and in one fragment of building 25 kg (55lbs.) of carbonised grain were found. The third period comprised surfaces of gravel and grey earth over the spread fire debris but no definite structures,

1. F. H. Thompson, 'Some Lost Roman Bronzes from Lincoln', *Ant.J.* 51 (1971) 100-103.
2. *ibid.*, 102.

and the fourth comprised mortar, gravel and sand surfaces to the south and fragments of walling with tile courses. The south wall of the medieval church of St. Dionys Backchurch was also discovered, and it seems that Wren used medieval foundations quite often (cf. St. Margaret Lothbury; St. Magnus; St. Mildred, Bread St.).

#### Seal House (J. Schofield)

A SALVAGE brief here recorded the Roman waterfront for c. 20m across the site, pulled out by machine in advance of piling. It was of similar construction to New Fresh Wharf (on which, see the interim report in these pages), with quaywall, scattered piles and tiebacks. New information on Black Raven Alley was recovered, and a fine 17th century pavement was sampled during destruction. Further south six medieval timber waterfronts were seen extending the shore from the southern end of the 1974 trench (late 13th century line) to the pre-Fire line, marked by a stone wall as at Trig Lane.

#### Watching Briefs

AT 3 Lombard Court John Maloney has been watching the excavation of a cellar alongside the Plough Court excavations of 1955-6 which produced Claudian/Neronian buildings. Trial pits gave details of a ragstone foundation, burnt wattle and daub wall with plaster face, a small lump of tesserae and some polychrome wall plaster. Medieval pits had been particularly destructive. At Peninsular House, Monument St., a section disclosing two phases of Roman buildings was drawn, the earlier, timber phase possibly first century. At the church of St. Margaret Lothbury the Wren fabric, on medieval foundations, is sinking into the underlying Walbrook and the unit has acted as archaeological adviser to the engineers. We hope that such co-operation exercises are repeated in the future.

## Excavations

**City**, by Museum of London, Department of Urban Archaeology. A series of long term excavations. Enquiries to Brian Hobley, Chief Urban Archaeologist, DUA, 71 Basinghall Street, E.C.2. (01-606 1933/4/5).

**East London**, by Passmore Edwards Museum. Summer work on the M25 route. Enquiries to Pat Wilkinson, Passmore Edwards Museum, Romford Road, E.15. (01-534 4545).

**Egham**, by Surrey Archaeological Society. Sites in the Egham area. Enquiries to David Bird, Field Officer S.A.S., Castle Arch, Guildford, Surrey. (0483-32454).

**Fulham**, by Fulham Archaeological Rescue Group. A site in the grounds of Fulham Palace producing Neolithic to early medieval material and features. Enquiries to Keith Whitehouse, 56 Tamworth Street, S.W.6. (01-385 6038).

**Inner London Boroughs**, by the Inner London Unit. Several rescue sites in various areas. Enquiries to Irene Schwab (01-242 6620).

**Kingston**, by Kingston-upon-Thames Archaeological Society. Rescue sites in the town centre. Enquiries to Marion Smith, Kingston Museum, Fairfield Road, Kingston. (01-546 5386).

**Putney**, by Wandsworth Historical Society. Two acre site at junction of Felsham Road and High Street lies on Roman and medieval settlements. Alternate weekends. Enquiries to Nicholas Farrant, 7 Coalecroft Road, S.W.15. (01-788 0015).

**Southwark**, by Southwark Archaeological Excavation Committee. Several sites from the Roman period onwards. Enquiries to Harvey Sheldon, S.A.E.C., Montague Chambers, Montague Close, S.E.1. (01-407 1989).

**Staines**, by London and Middlesex Archaeological Society. A Roman site at the Friends' Burial Ground, Thames Street. Enquiries to Kevin Crouch (09-328 62874 eve.)

#### GENERAL EXCAVATIONS

The Council for British Archaeology produces a monthly *Calendar of Excavations from March to September*, with an extra issue in November and a final issue in January summarising the main results of fieldwork. The *Calendar* gives details of extra-mural courses, summer schools, training excavations and sites where volunteers are needed. The annual subscription is £1.75, post-free, which should be made payable to C.B.A., 7 Marylebone Road, N.W.1.