

# Mosaic

## DIG UNDER SOUTHWARK CATHEDRAL

A RESCUE excavation has recently been carried out in the crypt of Southwark Cathedral by the Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Excavation Committee with the co-operation of the Provost and Chapter of Southwark Cathedral. Traces of 1st century buildings and a substantial medieval chalk wall have been examined, and a square timber-lined well of probable late Roman date. The well contained an important group of Roman funerary sculptures, perhaps the furnishings of a mausoleum associated with the large Roman building known from 19th century observations to have stood on part of the Cathedral site. The sculptures had been dumped into the well with a large quantity of building rubble, and much of the material showed signs of burning and damage. The sculptures have yet to be studied in detail, and any suggestion of date can only be tentative, but it is likely that they are mostly of 2nd century date.

The major sculpture is a freestanding limestone group of an eastern deity, either Atys (who is frequently found in funerary contexts) or Mithras, flanked by a seated hound and a small hoofed beast, perhaps a stag. The god has a sword at his belt, a bow in his left hand, and a quiver at his back, and wears the Phrygian cap characteristic of both deities. The group had been broken in half, perhaps to get it into the well.

The other sculptures are on a smaller scale. A draped "Genius" is shown sacrificing from a dish on to an altar; he carries a cornucopia in his left hand. The lid of a stone casket for ashes has the figure of a woman reclining on a couch; similar figures are familiar from stone coffins found on the Continent. Several fragments of a fine slate tombstone name a woman, Matrona, who apparently erected it in memory of someone who died in their 30's; and a small votive altar names one Cassianus as its dedicator. These stones are all of British origin; there is in addition part of a group in Greek marble, of which a dolphin and the leg of a figure (perhaps a sea-deity such as Neptune) survive.

The sculptures form one of the most important finds of Roman art from London. Considerable conservation work will be necessary before they can be displayed, but it is hoped to have the finds on show to the public towards the end of the year.

## NEW DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM OF LONDON

ON 1 July, Mr. Tom Hume, C.B.E., retired from his position as Director of the Museum of London and his place was taken by the former Deputy Director, Mr. Max Hebditch. We are sure our readers will join us in wishing Tom Hume a happy retirement.

Max Hebditch should be no stranger to readers of *the London Archaeologist*. He was featured in our pages (Vol 1 (1971)258) on his appointment as Director of the Guildhall Museum, and has been Deputy Director of the Museum of London since 1974. He is also currently President of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society.

## THE ROMAN FORUM

A TUNNEL recently dug through the Roman forum in London has revealed important new features of this the largest building of its kind in Roman Britain. Only four feet high and three feet wide, this tunnel has been dug at a

depth of about 15 feet under the whole length of Gracechurch Street in the City of London. Throughout much of its 1,200 feet length traces of Roman buildings have been found, but the main features have been the Forum or market place, and the Basilica or Roman town hall.

When the tunnel was started in February 1977 it revealed Roman buildings in the *insula* immediately south of the Forum, and since then it disclosed the major east-west Roman roads under Eastcheap and Lombard Street. The tunnel then was dug through the presumed Forum entrance, cutting heavy ragstone and concrete foundations; and then northward into the Forum courtyard area. The courtyard floor was very patchy, being made of mortar in some places, in gravel in others, and even in loose trampled tiles elsewhere. In the centre of the courtyard, however, was a surprise, for traces of a walled structure were found that seemed to have been a decorative pool.

The longstanding puzzle of the Basilica having no south aisle may now have been solved, for a previously unidentified south wall was found that had been robbed out south of the great 500ft long hall. The floors of the Basilica were found, the main hall floor being about 20in thick white concrete.

The researches are a vital aspect of the comprehensive report about the Roman forum which is being prepared by Peter Marsden of the DUA, as the tunnel cuts across many features that have been recorded by various people during the last 100 years, and thereby allows their records to be checked and amplified.

## ROMAN SITE AT SHADWELL

EXCAVATIONS at Shadwell under the auspices of the Inner London Archaeological Unit resumed early this year on a site adjacent to one excavated in 1974 and interpreted then as a Roman signal tower of the early 4th century.

At the time of writing (July), traces of two Roman buildings have been discovered, represented by beam slot foundations though it has not been possible to obtain a complete plan of either. These buildings succeeded a complex of more than 150 stakeholes which had an apparently random distribution. A ditch over a metre deep and two metres wide crosses the site diagonally and the fill of this contained a great deal of Roman pottery, and an unusual enamelled disc brooch. All of the Roman pottery found on the site appears to be late 3rd or early 4th century date and includes East Gaulish Samian, colour-coated hunt cups and indented beakers and jars. Over 200 Roman coins have also been discovered.

The site is to be extended to the south where it is expected to find the waterlogged conditions encountered in 1974.

## TESSERA E

**Beware:** a JCB digger on hire to SLAEC recently was destroyed one night by vandals. Fortunately, SLAEC was insured. Local societies are advised to check that their insurance covers any heavy machinery or valuable equipment that they may be using.

**Where are you?** we are proud to announce the sale of the 5,000th copy of our reprint, *Hints for New Diggers*. Where, though, are the 5,000 new diggers?