

previous structures, if any, in the area had to be removed to make way for the new military headquarters.⁵

A second aspect of the street is the height to which its metallings accumulated — at least two metres (6ft. 7in.). None show any distinctive need of successive replacement due to wear. It could be that the influence of a tributary of the Walbrook to the north-east required continual raising of levels. However, such accumulation of metallings occur elsewhere, where local conditions do not allow this answer. A more inviting, general explanation might be that of the need to keep pace with rises in the structural sequence flanking it. This can be shown to rise one metre in the first 100 years. If so, it poses interesting questions as to the relationship between civic authorities, presumably organis-

ing the street system, and the private, albeit much-propertied, developer. It would require some considerable co-operation between the two.

A third facet of the street sequence is the length of time for which it exerts an influence. It probably continued as a thoroughfare until at least the 9th century. But even after that, the parish and ward boundaries reproduced its line, implying a continuing influence in the 12th century and beyond, a characteristic of course of many present day streets in the city which have Roman forerunners.

A full structural report on the above sequence has now been completed, though publication must await the corresponding detailed work on the finds from the site.

5. W. F. Grimes, *The Excavation of Roman and Medieval London* (1968), 32 and 35.

Ralph Merrifield retires

RALPH MERRIFIELD has devoted much of his working life, and a good deal of his spare-time as well, to London archaeology. His professional abilities, as a curator and communicator, are demonstrated, if anonymously, by his most recent conceptions, the displays in the Prehistoric and Roman galleries of the Museum of London. To many he is best known through his books and articles. His main passion has of course been *Londinium* and *The Roman City of London* (1965) remains the most authoritative account of London under Roman rule. His more general works include *Roman London* (1969), a description of the hinterland as well as the City, while *The Archaeology of London* (1973) examines the London region from the Palaeolithic to the Saxon periods.

He has long been aware of how inadequate, for purposes of historical synthesis, the information at our disposal has been. In the *Roman City of London* he wrote:

"In many respects the history of archaeology in the City of London recalls the story of the Sibylline Books. Knowledge is offered to each generation at a price — and is destroyed when the price is not paid. The price rises for each generation . . . and the remaining store of information diminishes."

It is not surprising therefore that he has been at the forefront of the fight to obtain adequate resources for archaeological research. In the 1960's—

not without opposition — he helped consistently to keep rescue archaeology alive in the City, providing much support for Peter Marsden's endeavours, and he later participated in the efforts which led to the establishment of the Department of Urban Archaeology at the Guildhall Museum in 1973. But his campaigning has not been confined to the City. He was one of the leading advocates for the employment of a full-time team in Southwark — London's first, set up in 1972 — and he played an important part in the negotiation which led to the creation of L.A.M.A.S.'s Inner London Archaeological Unit in 1974.

Though he would never consider himself a digger he has never been remote from those in the field. He has always been keen to visit sites during their excavation and his scholarly interest and enthusiasm has encouraged many workers, both amateur and professional, in their efforts to obtain greater knowledge of London's past.

It seems quite inconceivable that his retirement from the post of Deputy Director at the Museum will result in much diminution of his involvement with London's archaeology. He is already involved in new programmes of lecturing and writing, and those numerous and time-consuming, but essential, it is good to know that he intends to continue on archaeological committees, which he has served so well in the past.