

since this cut through 11th century pits, this date can only be a terminus post quem. This is unfortunate, as if it is early, the structure is extremely important as the first extensively recorded Conquest-period stone building in the City.

Study of analogies may help to suggest dates and a purpose for the two stub-walls at the back of the building (see Fig. 11). The street frontage to the West has not moved since the medieval period, and the definite end of the foundations at the NE corner indicates that Robinson's Court, on the N side of the building, retained the original north side. The inferred plan (Fig. 11) admits of two equally attractive reconstructions based on surviving structures. If the building were an 11th or 12th century undercroft, like that below the hall of the hostelry of the Prior of Lewes (demolished for the approach to London Bridge Station c. 1830), it would most probably be vaulted in three rectangular bays. The two stub walls might then be supports for a porch entrance to the first floor above but in the end, not the side as one might expect. If the building is 13th century, it would

probably resemble the surviving undercroft at the Angel, Guildford, and comprise six quadripartite bays with two central piers. The stub walls might then be the walls for a staircase going down to the undercroft (which would be up to two thirds below ground level) from the much more extensive house above. The timber post socket in the wall may be part of a door frame but the surviving fragment of walling next to it would mean a very thin doorway. There was no indication of the vaulting arrangements in the excavated portions, except for a base for one of the wall-piers on the wall which would fit either reconstruction.

Fragmentary remains of the subsequent development of this and the other medieval properties along Milk Street were found, in the form of cess-pits and a foundation for a cellar stair. Number 4, Russia Court, a late 17th century house, was surveyed by the GLC Historic Buildings Division before its demolition in 1976 and thus the final report on the site will provide a history of an important central part of the City over two thousand years.

Frozen Tombs

THIS MAJOR EXHIBITION at the British Museum in the New Wing Special Exhibitions Gallery illustrates the culture and art of the nomads who roamed the central part of the Eurasian steppes in southern Siberia from the 6th century BC to the 3rd century AD.

Most of the exhibits were excavated from the series of burial mounds at Pazyryk. The finds were preserved by a unique combination of circumstances. Burial pits were dug during the brief summer thaw and the deposits covered by stone cairns. The cairns then created a micro-climate, for they shielded the earth below them from the drying effect of the wind and sun, and once the ground had refrozen, insulated the burial areas from subsequent thaws. The contents of the graves were thus permanently refrigerated and boiling water was a necessary aid to their excavation. A remarkable collection of organic remains survived which under normal conditions would have perished soon after burial.

The importance of the horse to the nomads is shown by a magnificent collection of carved wood-

en bridle and saddle fittings, beautifully decorated saddle-cloths and appliques of felt and leather in the forms of swans, cocks, tigers and elks.

There is a wooden table, a pillow and a bronze pot used for burning hemp in a ritual which was described by Herodotus. A child's fur coat, a shirt, cap, stocking and boots are examples of the clothing worn by the nomads. A scalped human head and the skin of an arm, complete with handsome tattoos, represent the bodies which survived.

There are other splendid finds, some excavated as recently as 1971, from the Altai, Tuva, the Minusinsk basin and the basin of the Middle Yenisei, which demonstrate connections not only with the Scythians but also with Persia and the Far East — Archaemenid textiles from Persia and silk fabric from China. Some of the most striking examples of the animal style are the gold belt plaques from the unprovenanced Siberian Collection of Peter the Great found in the 18th century and preserved in museums for 250 years.

BETSEY KENTISH