

# Mosaic

## SAXONS IN COVENT GARDEN

SITWATCHING AT THE Jubilee Hall site, Covent Garden (TQ 3040 8085), carried out by the Department of Greater London Archaeology in May 1985, revealed evidence for occupation in this area during the Middle Saxon period.

The southern side of the site was deeply basemented and no archaeological levels survived. The western half had deep vaulting but the bottoms of isolated pits did survive beneath it. The eastern side of the site, from its northern boundary, was only semi-basemented and archaeological deposits survived up to 2m (6ft) in depth, including up to 0.75m (2ft 6in) of 'dark earth'.

The Saxon features showed evidence for buildings: beam slots and associated postholes, and an extensive clay floor with possible furnace. Industrial use of the site was suggested by various burnt areas, and circular pits of unknown function, the backfills of which contained slags and horncores amongst other finds. Other features included a square pit, irregular-sided pits, especially deep pits and at least one well. An adult human burial, lying prone with the hands possibly tied together and pushed to the right side of the body, was found sealed by the earliest Saxon occupation levels.

The most conspicuous finds were animal bones mixed with oyster shells, found in great numbers in all layers. Pottery, which was relatively sparse, included Ipswich Ware, probable German and North French imports as well as locally made pottery. Fragments of circular 'doughnut'-shaped loomweights were common and fragments of quernstones, probably imported from Germany, were also found. Small finds included a *sceatta* dated c AD 720, which was associated with Ipswich Ware pottery, a late Roman coin, a bronze pin and possible strap end, a bone pin and fragments of comb, two fragments of curved iron (possibly from frying pans) and fragments of whetstones.

The significance of the site is that it fills a gap in the mid Saxon period (mid 7th to mid 9th century) from which few signs of occupation within the walls of the City of London are known. Chance finds are however known from the area of the Strand and Covent Garden, and these excavated features seem to support the suggestion<sup>1</sup> that the mid-Saxon settlement was established on the bank of the Thames along and above the Strand foreshore.

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1. See: M. Biddle 'London on the Strand' *Popular Archaeol* July 1984, 23-7; A. Vince, 'The Aldwych: mid-Saxon London rediscovered' *Current Archaeol*, no. 93, August 1984, 310-2.

## NEW GALLERIES AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM

ROMANISTS AND MEDIEVALISTS alike will have plenty of new displays to see when they next visit the British Museum. Seven galleries displaying the bulk of the Museum's collections of Greek and Roman sculpture were opened in April, and the new Early Medieval Room in May.

The Wolfson Galleries - endowed with a grant from the Wolfson Foundation - have been converted from the basements of the Duveen Galleries. They contain around 1500 exhibits including sculptures from two of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus and the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus. Other important exhibits include seated figures which once lined the Sacred Way to the oracular Sanctuary of Apollo at Didyma in south-west Asia Minor (Room 80). Lively and attractive figures from the ceiling coffers of the Temple of Athena at Priene in western Asia Minor adorn the Room of Later Greek Sculpture (Room 81). The inscription recording the dedication of this still unfinished temple by Alexander the Great may be seen in Room 78. Rooms 79-81 also contain large numbers of funerary monuments, while Rooms 82-85 (opened in January 1984) contain almost all the sculptures collected in Rome in the

later 18th century by Charles Townley, as well as Roman sarcophagi, antiquities from Cyrenaica and head from statues of deities, heroes and members of the imperial family. Room 82 shows panoramic views of the excavations of the Temple of Ephesian Artemis, rediscovered in 1869 by John Turtle Wood.

The Early Medieval Room presents three main themes. First the traditions of classical antiquity which continue into the late antique and early Byzantine world are reflected in the display of gold jewellery, silver treasures, ivories, textiles and glassware. These include famous masterpieces such as the Lycurgus Cup and the Esquiline Treasure from Rome. Secondly the cultural history of the Germanic, Slav and nomadic tribes who overran the empire in the west is recalled in material ranging from 3rd-4th century Gothic gold jewellery from the Crimea to a dragon's head from a ship's prow of the Germanic Migration period (5th-6th century). The third section is devoted to the Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and Viking cultures of Britain and Ireland from the 5th to 11th centuries. The Sutton Hoo treasures are newly displayed in an entire wing.

## A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

THE LONDON AND MIDDLESEX Archaeological Society will be holding a regional conference for the London area at the Museum of London on 25/26 October 1986. This will take the form of a period by period evaluation of current archaeological research and fieldwork for London in its regional context, from the early prehistoric period through to c 1500. It is intended to publish the conference papers to complement the other recent county period conference proceedings for Kent, Essex and Surrey. A detailed programme for the weekend will be available in January 1986 but please make a note of the date for your next year's diary!

## A MODEL OF NONSUCH PALACE

FOLLOWING A SUGGESTION from a local resident that a scale model of Nonsuch Palace be commissioned and placed on public display, the Libraries and Arts Services of the London Borough of Sutton has initiated a public appeal to raise the necessary funds, which are in the region of £3500.

Nonsuch was Henry VIII's attempt to create a palace so magnificent that it would establish him as the leading Renaissance monarch and cultural leader of Europe. Built in 1538-47 and designed to outshine Fontainebleau, it had an important influence on Tudor architecture and on the establishment of the Renaissance style in England. Its most original feature was the vast exterior decorations of the Inner Court, which consisted of panels of moulded and carved stucco reliefs framed with carved and gilded slate. These covered some 2500 square yards with about seven or eight hundred panels, forming a scheme of decoration over 900 feet long.

In 1959 the foundations of the Palace were excavated under the direction of Martin Biddle. Over 1400 fragments of the stucco panels and more than 600 pieces of the slate were found. Close examination and drawing of the fragments is leading to the reconstruction of whole panels and is revealing the style, contents and methods of production. With the support of HBMC, Professor Biddle and his team have advanced the reconstruction and interpretation of the fragments of stucco decoration from the façade of the Palace to the point where a model is feasible.

On its completion, it is hoped to exhibit the model as a permanent feature in Whitehall, the 16th century timber-framed house owned and maintained by the Borough in Cheam. Donations to the Fund should be sent to Sutton Central Library, St Nicholas Way, Sutton, Surrey. Cheques should be made payable to the London Borough of Sutton and marked "Nonsuch Palace Model".