

WESTMINSTER

Bedford Street WC2 TQ 3028 8072 DGLA (Robert Cowie)

Deposits of probable Saxon date were recorded in a British Telecom trench during a watching brief. Two middle Saxon sherds, burnt daub, animal bones and oyster shells were found.

Leicester Square, LEB Site, WC2 TQ 2985 8068 DGLA (Stuart Hoad)

Four ditches were found, three running N-S and one NW-SE. Only one contained dateable material, consisting of worked flint of the late Mesolithic/early Neolithic period and some fragments of a pot. A group of post-holes was also found.

Leicester Square Public Conveniences, WC2 2984 8073 DGLA (Robert Cowie)

Large undated features cutting natural gravel.

Moss Bros Site, 21-26 Bedford Street WC2 TQ 3020 8079 DGLA (Stuart Hoad)

Examination of the site once basement slab had been lifted, revealed nine pits, of which five could be confidently dated to the Middle

Saxon period. Two ditches were located, but not confidently dated. A patch of burnt clay may have been a hearth.

14 Orange Street WC2 TQ 2982 8058 DGLA (Trevor Cox)

Excavations revealed various industrial dump layers, containing bone pin making handles 17th c. Sealed by these was a clay floor surface and a N-S beam slot, 16th-17th c. All features appeared to be associated with a post-medieval coach-building factory.

26-7 Southampton Street WC2 TQ 3037 8080 DGLA (Robert Cowie)

An excavation and watching brief revealed evidence of middle Saxon occupation, including rubbish pits, dump layers and traces of a post-built structure aligned E-W. The pottery assemblage comprised Ipswich ware, shelly ware, chaff-tempered pottery, and Continental wares.

The Royal Opera House Car Park, Bow Street WC2 TQ 3043 8099 DGLA (Robert Cowie)

A trial trench revealed several middle Saxon rubbish pits containing pottery, burnt daub fragments, a loomweight fragment and antler off-cuts.

Letters

Londinium and Legio II Augusta

NICHOLAS FUENTES has overlooked the fact that Londinium was given the name Augusta between c AD 326, when the signature of the London mint was LON, and 383 when the mint was revived by Magnus Maximus using the signature AVG. In fact the change can be more closely dated if we accept quite literally the words of Ammianus, writing of events in his own lifetime. Of the events of 368 he wrote "... *ad Lundinium, vetus oppidum quod Augustam posteritas appellavit*: to Londinium, an old town that posterity has called Augusta."¹ He could hardly tell us more plainly that it was called "Lundinium" when Theodosius arrived, but had since been called "Augusta". In describing the events of the following year, however, he says that Theodosius "marched from Augusta, which older generations called Londinium" ("*ab Augusta, quam veteres appellavere Lundinium*"²). Ammianus clearly associated the change with the events of 368-9, and within the parameters of date imposed by the mint signatures, there is no other occasion in which the value of London as a strategic centre is more likely to have attracted imperial attention. Perhaps the possibility remains that it was Legio II Augusta that was honoured by the new name rather than the city itself, as we have usually assumed. Count Theodosius found south-eastern Britain overrun by predatory bands, with Londinium itself under siege and "overwhelmed with hardships" ("*mersam difficultatibus*"). This was partly due to a collapse of discipline in the army, from which many had deserted. Yet Londinium had been successfully defended, evidently by soldiers, and if these were men of Legio II, and if the loyalty of that legion had been the base on which Theodosius was able to rebuild the army in Britain, the renaming of the city in its honour might have been considered appropriate.

We need not expect to find a third-century legionary base in Southwark, as yet overlooked by the archaeologists working there. The two soldiers of Legio II Augusta who died in London in that century were almost certainly there because they had been seconded

to the service of the governor of Britannia Superior who was based in its capital. Celsus was certainly on the governor's staff, for he was a *speculator*, an executive in the administration of justice. *Speculatores* might travel in the course of their duties, but as members of the headquarters staff were normally based in the provincial capital.

We should not, however, attach too much significance to the double-barrelled town names given by the Ravenna Cosmographer in the early eighth century. We have no evidence that London was ever called *Londinium Augusta* under the Roman Empire.

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1. Ammianus Marcellinus (ed. J. C. Rolfe) XXVII, viii, 7.

2. *Ibid.*, XXVIII, iii, 1.

London's Roman Theatre?

NICHOLAS FUENTES in his recent article on the deployment of the 2nd Legion Augusta in London (*LA* 6 no. 5 (1989)) repeats a hypothesis he outlined in an earlier article (*LA* 5 no. 6 (1986)), that there may have been a Roman theatre on Ludgate Hill. Excavations in 1987-8 along the north side of Carter Lane – within the site of the postulated theatre failed to reveal any sign of a theatre ('Excavation Round-up' *LA* 6 no. 2 (1989) 47). Examination of the masonry shown as "B" on Fig. 3 of the article has proven that it is of medieval and later date. Therefore it seems that the existence of a Roman theatre in this area is very improbable.

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