

Mosaic

London's earliest timber structure

A team from Archaeology South-East (part of UCL Institute of Archaeology) have unearthed what appears to be the earliest timber structures yet discovered in London during an archaeological excavation on land at HMP Belmarsh West, London Borough of Greenwich. The work was undertaken in advance of the redevelopment of the site and comprised the excavation of two trenches, measuring 30 by 5 m and 35 by 5 m respectively, in order to investigate the prehistoric peat sequence and an associated palaeochannel identified during a borehole survey of the site. The work was undertaken on behalf of the Ministry of Justice, was managed by Jacobs Engineering UK Ltd and facilitated by Interserve Projects.

The timber structures were found towards the base of the peat sequence at around -2.20 m OD and included a possible north-south aligned trackway or platform some 1.50 m wide. The structure was built of tangentially-split alder or hazel logs laid parallel to one another and possibly held in place with smaller driven posts. Further north-south aligned alder logs were encountered at a slightly higher level (c. -2.10 m OD). These formed a more dispersed arrangement, c. 18 m in length, and are considered to represent sleepers for a superstructure of brushwood or similar material that has

not survived. Whether this structure comprised a platform or an additional east-west aligned trackway remains undetermined.

Radiocarbon determinations from timber samples from both structures indicate an Early Neolithic date range within the first quarter of the 4th millennium BC (3950–3700 cal BC), making these the earliest structures so far encountered within the London Basin. These structures were sealed by a sequence of peat deposits measuring up to 1.70 m in depth, cut by a major palaeochannel. Initial assessments of column samples recovered from the complex sequence of deposits within this channel suggest that they hold the potential to provide information about the development of the local environment and provide a unique opportunity to examine the operation of a river channel within a floodplain environment.

Post-excavation analysis on this interesting and important site will continue over the course of the next twelve to eighteen months, and we hope to publish a more detailed article in a future issue.

Diccon Hart

Grants from the City of London Archaeological Trust

As in previous years, the City of London Archaeological Trust (CoLAT) is inviting applications for its grants for

archaeological work in the City and its environs (up to the M25) during 2010. The grants will be awarded at a meeting in early December 2009, and be available for one year only from April 2010. The Trust favours research, publication, educational and outreach work, and does not normally fund excavation, survey or filling a gap left by a developer. The deadline for applications this year is Friday 16 October 2009, and applicants must also organise a referee for the application. For further details see the guidelines and forms on the Trust's website, www.colat.org.uk. This year, as before, *London Archaeologist* is also sponsoring research and publication work through grants that will be administered by CoLAT.

Conservation Areas at risk

England has some 9,300 Conservation Areas: historic parts of cities, towns, suburbs and villages designated by local authorities to protect their special character. English Heritage has launched a survey to discover what condition they are in. Are they cherished through a close partnership of council and residents? Or are they at risk from neglect, decay and inappropriate development? For progress on the survey, see www.englishheritage.org.uk/Conservationareas.

Letter to the Editor

The Pineapple Project

As a lover of London's bomb-damaged churches, I was pleased to read Richard Gilpin's article on the Pineapple Project (Vol 12, no 3), and to see Christ Church Greyfriars receive the attention and interest it deserves. However his article omits a crucial episode in the story of the church which offers a tantalising view of what might have been. In 1943 *The Architectural Review* ran a campaign for some of London's bombed churches, including Christ Church Greyfriars, to be preserved in their ruined form as war memorials. The campaign gained the support of the

Dean of St Paul's, together with notable Londoners including Kenneth Clarke, T.S. Eliot and Julian Huxley. Plans were produced for transforming several churches into so-called "Garden Ruins", and published in a remarkable booklet entitled *Bombed Churches as War Memorials*. The plans for Christ Church Greyfriars, which the booklet refers to as Christ Church Newgate Street, included the demolition of its south wall and the planting of a line of trees, with the potential to re-erect the wall further south as a screen between the church and the busy road. There is also a highly detailed and potentially

stunning planting plan by the landscape architect Brenda Colvin, who envisioned the church as a year-round sanctuary in the midst of the City. The ambition and optimism of these plans stands in stark contrast to the post-war neglect and maltreatment of the site described in Gilpin's article. The London Blitz is sparsely and poorly commemorated: I applaud the intention of the Pineapple Project to preserve the memorial aspect of the church, and wish them every success.

Gabriel Moshenska
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London, WC1E 6AP

Diary

August

2 (8 p.m.) Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society. 'Walk around historic Kingston, by Ian West. Mayo Hall, United Reformed Church, Union Street/Eden Street, Kingston.

5 (8 p.m.) Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeology Society. Members' evening: short talks by society members. St Mary's Church Hall, London Road, Ewell.

21 (7 p.m.) City of London Archaeological Society. 'Algeria before Islam' by Ian Jones. St Katharine Cree Church Hall, Leadenhall Street, EC3.

September

2 (8 p.m.) Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeology Society. 'The Classic Post Office: the GPO from 1900-1969' by Paul Wood. St Mary's Church Hall, London Road, Ewell.

11 (8 p.m.) Richmond Archaeological Society. 'The buildings of Fulham Palace' by Keith Whitehouse. Vestry Hall, Paradise Road, Richmond.

14 (7.45 p.m.) Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society. 'Six hundred years beside the Wey – the Royal Manor and Palace of Woking' by Richard Savage. Small Hall, United Reformed Church, Addiscombe Grove, East Croydon.

14 (7.45 p.m.) West Essex Archaeological Group. 'Education in Londinium' by Mark Hassall. Sixth Form Block, Woodford County High School, High Road, Woodford Green.

October

9 (8 p.m.) Richmond Archaeological Society. 'Neanderthals in Sussex' by Matthew Pope. Vestry Hall, Paradise Road, Richmond.

12 (7.45 p.m.) West Essex Archaeological Group. 'Tudor Playhouses in London' by Julian Bowsher. Sixth Form Block, Woodford County High School, High Road, Woodford Green.

Conferences

Lost Cities in the Mediterranean, Council for Kentish Archaeology, Saturday 24 October at the Powell Lecture Theatre, Canterbury Christ Church University, North Holmes Road, Canterbury. Tickets price £4 from

CKA, 7 Sandy Ridge, Borough Green, Kent TN15 8HP (sae please). Website www.the-cka.fsnet.co.uk.

Courses

Explore life in the Celtic and Roman periods, at Butser Ancient Farm. Weekend and short courses on various topics until October. Details from Butser Ancient Farm, Chalton Lane, Chalton, Waterlooville, Hampshire PO8 0BG, Tel. 02392 598 838. Website www.butserancientfarm.co.uk.

Kent Archaeological Field School, weekend and week-long courses until October. Fees £70 for two-day courses. Archaeological Training Week 7-11 September. Details from Kent Archaeological Field School, School Farm Oast, Graveney Road, Faversham, Kent ME13 8UP. Tel: 01795 532 548. Website: www.kafs.co.uk.

Copped Hall Trust/West Essex

Archaeological Group. Places still available on Field School (not for beginners) 17-21 August, at Copped Hall near Epping. Full details from Mrs Pauline Dalton, Roseleigh, Epping Road, Epping, Essex CM16 5HW (tel. 01992 813 725, email pmd2@ukonline.co.uk).

Events

Festival of British Archaeology, 18 July to 2 August, will encompass a huge variety of activities for all across London. See p. 127 or full list at www.archaeologyfestival.org.uk.

Exhibitions

Mary Rose Hidden Treasures, at the Whitgift Conference Centre, Whitgift School, Nottingham Road, South Croydon, CR2 6YT, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily until 7 August. Over 250 items, most of which have never been seen by the public before. Admission £8 (adults), £5 (concessions), £18 (families). For more details see www.MaryRoseHiddenTreasures.org or phone (020) 8633 9939.

The Big Dig, at the Museum of London Docklands until 6 September. The exhibit will include 12 replica trenches where participants will be able to excavate various

objects including part of a Roman mosaic. They will be able to sketch their finds and have briefing sessions from the archaeologists on what they have uncovered.

Membership

Individual membership of the Council for British Archaeology, which includes six issues a year of *British Archaeology*, costs £28 p.a.; full price/renewal price £34 p.a.; joint membership with *London Archaeologist* costs £36 (new CBA members only). See <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/cba/membership/pricelist> for details. Payment should be sent to C.B.A., St Mary's House, Bootham, York, YO30 7BZ (01904 671 417).

Open Days

Crofton Roman Villa, Orpington (next to Orpington station) open Wednesdays, Fridays and Bank Holiday Mondays 10 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. and Sundays 2 to 4.30 p.m. until the end of October. Special event *Life of a Roman Soldier* on Sunday 26 July (10 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.). For more information see <http://cka.moon-demon.co.uk/villa.htm>.

Practical archaeology

AOC Archaeology Group. Contact Melissa Melikian, Post-Excavation Manager (020 8843 7380).

London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre. Contact Archive Manager, Roy Stephenson (020 7566 9317).

Croydon & District. Contact Jim Davison, 8 Brentwood Road, South Croydon, CR2 0ND.

Borough of Greenwich. Contact Greenwich Heritage Centre, Building 41, Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, SE18 6SP (020 8854 2452).

Hammersmith & Fulham. Contact Keith Whitehouse, 85 Rannoch Road, W6 9SX (020 7385 3723).

Kingston. Enquiries to 020 8546 5386.

Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. Contact Finds Manager, Mairi Gaimster (020 7639 9091).

Surrey. Enquiries to Rob Poulton, Archaeological Unit Manager, Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking GU21 1ND (01483 594 634).