Discovering the Bucklersbury mosaic: archaeology and identity in 19th-century London

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Introduction

Archaeology is never only about the past. The material remains that we unearth have active afterlives in the modern world: they are interpreted, discussed, imbued with significance (be it historical, political, or personal), disseminated, owned, displayed in museums, and visited by archaeologists and members of the public alike. By facilitating these interactions with the past, archaeological discoveries have the potential to inform or to re-frame ideas about life and identity in contemporary society. In this way, archaeology is also very much about the present.

In a magazine devoted specifically to London's archaeology, a discussion about the modern impact of the material past seems especially timely. In 2024, (if all goes to plan) the new Museum of London will open and (re)present the capital's past in a post-Brexit city. In these uncertain times, ideas about London and Londoners will be questioned, deconstructed, and reshaped. But what part can and will London's archaeological discoveries play in these identity negotiations?

This is a question that can only be answered with the privilege of hindsight. Instead, let's turn back the clock 150 years to investigate this potential role for archaeology. By exploring responses to one Victorian discovery, I hope to show how London's archaeology has been used historically to rethink and define modern identities on both a civic and a personal scale.

The Bucklersbury mosaic

The pace of archaeological discovery in London dramatically increased during the 19th century. This was a direct (but unintended) consequence of the vast civic construction projects that first destroyed and then re-shaped the capital.[1] As workers dug ever deeper, for sewers and later for the new underground railway tunnels, their pickaxes met with the remains of London's medieval and Roman pasts. One of these accidental archaeological discoveries was the so-called "Bucklersbury mosaic", unearthed from Roman *Londinium* (Figs 1& 2).[2]

Discovered in 1869, this large and ornate tessellated pavement was visited *in situ* by thousands of Victorians, eager to catch a glimpse of their capital's

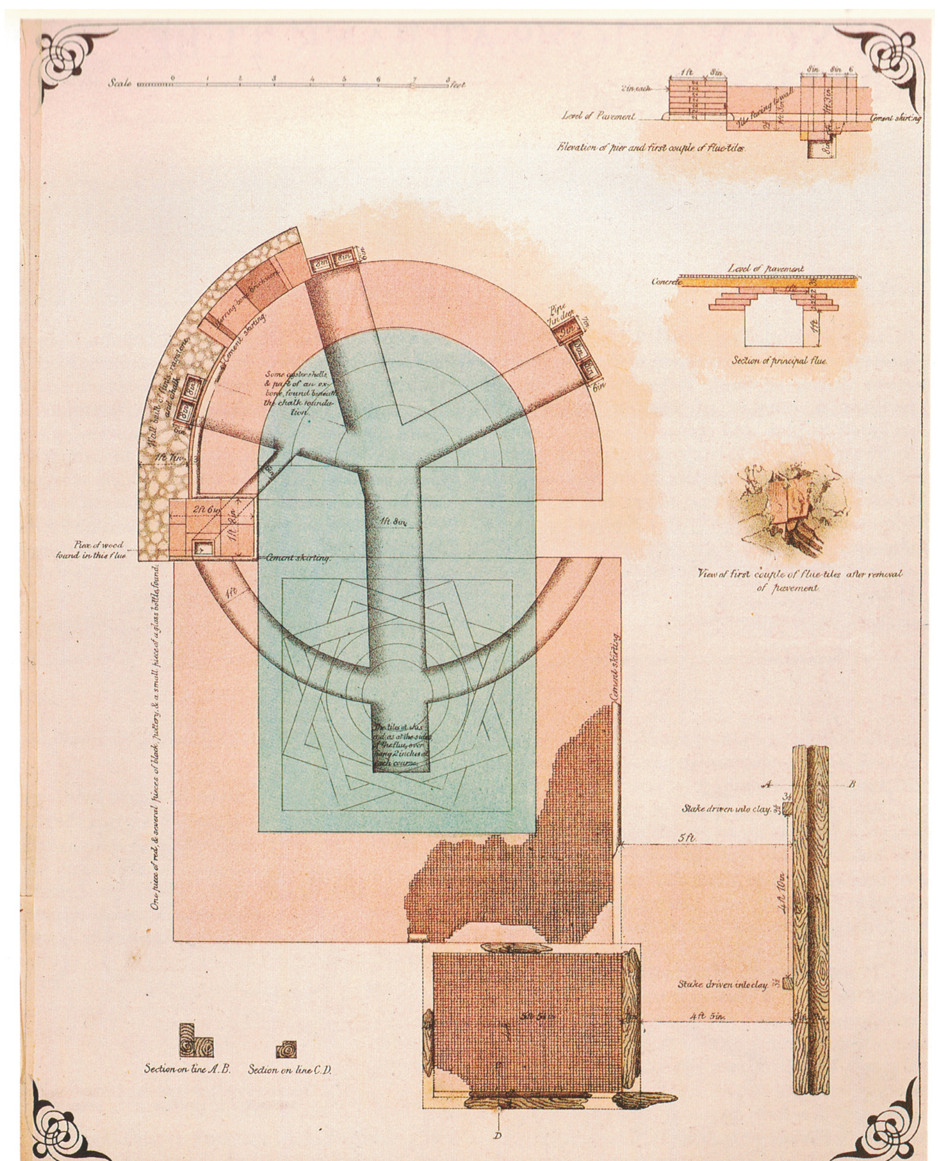

Fig 1: plan of the hypocaust beneath the Bucklersbury mosaic and other archaeological remains found on the site, watercolour by J P Emslie, 1869 (Museum of London)

Roman origins.[3] Reports of the find circulated far and wide, appearing in local newspapers from Leicester to Orkney.[4] The fame of this discovery, and the variety of surviving responses to it, make the mosaic a particularly revealing subject for this investigation. It also seems fitting to think through the potential impact of London's archaeology today with a Victorian discovery that remains such an integral part of the Museum of London's Roman display.[5]

Using contemporary newspaper articles, archaeological publications, and material from local archives, I'll reveal some unexpected responses to one of London's best-known discoveries. The stories behind these responses will take us from the heart of the thriving metropolis to a sleepy seaside resort in Dorset. Along the way, such evidence hopes to shed light on the important part that London's material past can play in reframing and defining modern identities.

In the spring of 1869, construction work was underway on Queen Victoria Street, a broad new thoroughfare running between the Mansion House and Blackfriars Bridge. Roman remains had been unearthed on a nearby site at Mansion House Street in 1867, piquing antiquarian interest in the new street.[6] In particular, members of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society had gained permission from the Metropolitan Board of Works to keep watch over the site. On 10 May, the Society received a promising letter from the clerk of the Board of Works: 'some Roman pavement had been observed near the corner of the Poultry'.[7] The antiquaries J E Price and Thomas Milbourn were hurriedly dispatched to investigate.[8] Upon arrival, they discovered what was easily one of the most spectacular London finds of the century.

The mosaic was unearthed between the streets of Poultry in the north and Bucklersbury in the south. Discovered 19 feet (5.79m) beneath street level, it was laid in a bipartite apsidal room (3.89m by 6m) in a building on the western bank of the Walbrook (see Fig 1).[9] '[L]ittle more than the foundation of the [surrounding] walls remained',[10] but the mosaic itself shone brightly – its 'pristine colours' undimmed by the passage of time.[11]

Fig 2: the Bucklersbury mosaic, chromolithograph by R Canton, included as the frontispiece in Price's book, 1870 (Museum of London)

Measuring 2.44m by 4.50m, the mosaic has an intricate design, incorporating interlaced guilloche strands, floral motifs, and a fluted scallop shell.[12] A channeled hypocaust heating system, with evidence of soot still visible, was also excavated beneath the mosaic.[13]

At the time, the pavement was dated tentatively to the period after Hadrian and the Antonines.[14] Subsequent stylistic analysis and more recent excavations of comparable local buildings suggest a similar early 3rd-century date.[15] Victorian London's urban infrastructure projects had destroyed many of the city's Roman mosaics.[16] However, with the exception of small patches of damage, the Bucklersbury mosaic was found in a remarkable state of preservation.[17] Discovered amidst the dirt and chaos of a construction site, this colourful, large, and largely complete Roman mosaic thoroughly captured Victorian imaginations.

Visiting the mosaic

In the days following its discovery, the Bucklersbury mosaic was viewed

Fig 3: engraving of the *in situ* display of the Bucklersbury mosaic, *Illustrated London News*, 1869 (Museum of London)

in situ by a number of significant London figures, including the Lord Mayor and 'many other scientific and literary persons'. Dr William Sedgwick Saunders, chairman of the committee responsible for the Corporation of London's library and museum, a direct ancestor of the modern Museum of London, was one such visitor. He quickly arranged permission from the Board of Works to remove the mosaic for display in the Guildhall Museum[18] – but not before opening the mosaic up for a general public viewing (Fig 3).[19]

Circulated in the press, this invitation produced an unprecedented response: in an uncanny foreshadowing of the events following the discovery of the London Mithraeum in 1954, around 50,000 people queued to see the Bucklersbury mosaic during just three days of access.[20] As visitors peered over the edge of the deep excavation trench, they came face to face with their city's Roman past. But what did they see there? And how did this archaeological encounter make Victorian Londoners rethink their city and themselves?

Encounters with Londinium

For many, the sudden re-emergence of London's Roman origins demanded comparisons between the ancient and modern cities. So how did Victorian London compare? The discovery of such a fine (and presumably expensive) example of Roman art in the heart of the modern metropolis could easily imply a sense of pre-ordained success. What did this serendipitous discovery show if not that London had always been, and would always be, a great and civilised city? Upon its discovery, this evocative apsidal mosaic had been associated with such sophisticated Roman activities as dining and bathing.[21] Contemporary archaeological enquiry also seemed to support this image of a civilised and wealthy ancestor for Victorian London.

For his major publication on the discovery, J E Price (the 'leading authority on City antiquities in the 1860s and 1870s')[22] consulted Professor James Tennant (1808–81) on the origins of the stone used in the pavement.[23] A professor of geology and lecturer on mineralogy at King's College London, Tennant was also something of a celebrity academic – in his role as mineralogist to the Queen, he had supervised the re-cutting of the famous Koh-i-Noor diamond in 1852.[24] After discussion, it was concluded that some of the stone was 'of foreign origin'.[25]

Based on this somewhat limited (but celebrity-endorsed) evidence, Price surmised that 'it is very likely that immense quantities [of stone] were brought over to the port of London for use in the public and private buildings of the then, as now, chief seat of British trade'.[26] The implied continuity between Roman and Victorian London in Price's comparison represents just one way in which the (selective) analysis of archaeological discoveries was used to frame ideas about the identity of the modern city.

Constructing comparisons

In his discussion of the mosaic, Price identified an aspect of comforting continuity with the Roman past that both framed and supported ideas about the modern capital's economic success. For some Victorian Londoners, however, the comparisons with *Londinium* prompted by the mosaic were much more ambivalent. Was it not worrying to see similarities between London and a fallen, ruined city? And what if comparisons with the Roman past actually exposed modern London as a shadow of its ancient self?

Two contemporary newspaper articles capture these complicated and qualified responses to London's material past. Although they present very different reactions to the Bucklersbury mosaic, both vividly expose the potential of archaeological discoveries to bring questions or fears about modern society (and its future) into sharp focus. Each article used London's past to address concerns about the city's increasingly modern and industrial identity.

The first article dates to the period after the mosaic's removal from site. Published in *The Standard* on 25 September 1869, it described Queen Victoria Street in all its functional grandeur. Its writer, revelling in the details of the 'extremely ingenious' service subways and sewers beneath the paving slabs, established the new street as the epitome of modern (Victorian) ingenuity. And yet, he concluded by noting a connection with the Roman past: the contractors Mowlem, Freeman & Burt had built 'a useful memorial' of the Bucklersbury mosaic's discovery into the new street. This monument was a stone block 'let into the wall of the subway' at floor level. 'Four feet below this stone marks the spot where the Roman pavement was laid open by the excavators'. The writer suggested that this could be 'indicated by a suitable inscription, thus establishing a connection between the art of the Roman era and the engineering skill of the present utilitarian age'.[27]

For this author, the discovery of the

Fig 4: George Burt in the official dress of the Sheriff of London and Middlesex, oil painting by John Edgar Williams, 1879 (Swanage Museum)

mosaic during construction work presented an opportunity to conceptualise modern industrial identity. By suggesting a connection between Queen Victoria Street and the Bucklersbury mosaic, he implied that the skill needed to construct the new thoroughfare (and the sewers beneath) should be celebrated on equal terms with the production of a revered piece of classical art – remember *c.* 50,000 people had queued to see the mosaic. Through this connection, he validated the status of the street as an impressive product of an equally impressive society.

But he quickly qualified this comparison: by explicitly defining the Victorian period as a 'utilitarian age', he introduced a direct contrast to the Roman era, narrowly represented here only through its artistic skill. The writer neglected the evidence of impressive Roman engineering (a hypocaust) found beneath the mosaic, which would have provided a natural engineering-based comparison for the tunnels underneath the new street. Instead, he used the beautiful Bucklersbury mosaic to imagine a Roman culture in Britain that was essentially artistic, placing it in direct contrast to the functional focus of his own 'utilitarian age'.

By introducing this opposition, the writer seems to have engaged with contemporary anxieties over comparisons between the British and Roman Empires. This context is particularly relevant given London's position as imperial capital. In the late 18th century, Gibbon's influential *Decline and Fall* (1776–88) had partially attributed the failure of the Roman Empire to its self-consuming decadence. Virginia Hoselitz has argued that in the mid-19th century it was feared that the same fate could befall the British Empire.[28] In 1855, Anthony Trollope had considered whether the Victorians' 'wealth and present glory, [...] increasing luxury, [...and] love of **art [were]** but signs of [their] decay'.[29]

By specifically comparing the 'engineering skill' of the Victorians with the 'art' of the Romans, this writer negotiated a clever comparison: he allowed the utilitarian engineering of the modern age to benefit from association with the acknowledged genius behind classical art, whilst carefully protecting the Victorians from the damaging connotations of luxury and decay associated with the mosaic as Roman art. For him, London's new streets and sewers proved that Victorian ingenuity had an improved functional application. The discovery of the Bucklersbury mosaic allowed this author to conceptualise the merits of an emergent 'utilitarian' Victorian identity through both similarity to and difference from London's Roman past.

Haunted by the past

A second article written in the immediate aftermath of the discovery also used the mosaic to think about the future of an increasingly utilitarian society. For this writer, however, the Bucklersbury mosaic framed a worrying story of cultural decline at the heart of the capital. In describing the discovery, the article immediately established an ancestral relationship between Roman and Victorian London: '[h]ard by the Mansion House the pick-axe of an excavator has laid open to view an artificial stratum, showing that beneath the London of the Victorian era lies the *Londinium* of Julius Agricola.'[30] By likening the mosaic to a geological layer in time, the writer framed this ancestral relationship within wider debates about evolution and the Darwinian theories of progress that circulated in the second half of the 19th century.[31]

This overtly geological terminology encouraged readers to expect that Victorian London should have evolved and improved upon *Londinium*, because of its location higher in the strata. But the writer dramatically subverted this expectation: '[t]here is much of splendour in the official residence of the Chief Magistrate of our capital; but his lordship [the Mayor] may look over the brink of the deep pit at the corner of the Poultry, and see the remains of a tesselated [sic] pavement such as no civic gold can buy in the present day'. Rather than feeling validation at his position literally so far above this example of Roman civilisation, this writer instead envisaged looking 'over the brink' into an abyss-like pit that revealed only the failure of Victorian London to live up to its Roman predecessor.

For this reporter, unearthing the Bucklersbury mosaic posed a direct challenge to the utilitarian identity so praised in the previous article: for him '[t]he beautiful pavement in the Poultry […] serves to tell us that we are not in all things superior to the past'. He argued that '[w]e cannot acknowledge that civilisation is declining in these isles, though we must admit that the relics of Roman art seem rather to mock at our feelings of self-complacency.' He characterised this cultural decline as a product of hasty advancements in other fields, such as science, and concluded that '[w]e have made progress', but in doing so 'we have missed something of the classic refinement'.[32] The discovery of the Bucklersbury mosaic forced this Londoner to reappraise the cultural priorities of his modern city and of Victorian society more generally. By suggesting uncomfortable comparisons with the Roman past, the mosaic destabilised ideas about London's

increasingly modern identity and acted as a powerful motivation for change.

'Owning' the past: archaeology and personal identity

So far, I've been thinking about defining or questioning identity on a collective or civic scale. But what about personal identity? In a period of great social upheaval, could London's archaeology help individuals to assert their place in society? For George Burt (1816–94), partner in the construction firm Mowlem, Freeman & Burt, the accidental discovery of the mosaic on his own building site was an unmissable opportunity to stake his claim to the status of a gentleman. Remarkably, he made this aspirational claim by designing a monumental new home around an almost full-scale reproduction of the Bucklersbury mosaic.

Burt had become a wealthy man as the senior partner in a successful London-based construction firm, but his life had much more uncertain beginnings. Until the age of 19, he had toiled in the quarries of Swanage, his hometown on the Dorset coast. After a move to the capital to work for his uncle's construction firm, he prospered. Made a partner in 1844, he helped the firm (later known as Mowlem) to win increasingly prestigious contracts, including building the new Billingsgate Market (1874–7).[33]

Burt was a man of ambition, who wanted to use his newfound financial success to leave his mark both in London and in Swanage.[34] In later life he was elected Sheriff of London and Middlesex (1878, Fig 4), and he bought up so much property in his hometown that the novelist Thomas Hardy called him the 'King of Swanage'.[35] But despite his success, as a self-made man he faced a great deal of social condescension. Indeed, Hardy could not help but remark at how rough Burt's speech was, even after so many years in London.[36]

In a society that was often so dismissive of the self-made man, it could be advantageous for Burt to adopt aspects of a visibly gentlemanly identity. He would build a suitably monumental new home in Swanage to act as a statement of his wealth and power, and to define him as a gentleman. Here, at Purbeck House (begun in 1875, Fig 5),[37] Burt could host important visitors, such as the Mayor of London.[38] As the crowning glory of his impressive home, Burt's replica Bucklersbury mosaic was integral to his strategic display of gentlemanly identity.

The grand entrance lobby of Purbeck House (Figs 6 & 7) was designed specifically to accommodate an almost full-scale reproduction of the Roman pavement. In what was surely an intentional echo of the original mosaic's creation, this Victorian replica was handmade by Italian craftsmen, using marble not modern tiles.[39] Located at the very threshold of his home, this "Bucklersbury mosaic" was the lens through which visitors saw and judged Burt. But what did he say about **his** mosaic, and what did it say about him?

By maintaining the pavement's original function as a floor, Burt could surely imagine himself walking in the footsteps of London's Roman elite. At the time of the mosaic's discovery visitors had imagined the 'polished subjects of the Caesars pac[ing] to and fro' over its beautiful surface.[40] When greeting guests, Burt could now immediately situate himself in a long tradition of wealthy, cultured, and metropolitan Londoners.

While Burt may not have received the advantage of a classical education – still an integral part of elite identity – his mosaic could signify an understanding of and appreciation for classical art. In fact the replica mosaic was part of a much broader programme of conspicuous intellectual engagement with the classics at Purbeck House: neoclassical sculptures, roundels, and plaques filled the interiors and even covered the external walls to the rear of the house. Casts of two sections of the Parthenon Frieze were also built into the stable yard.[41] Within this wider display context, Burt's replica mosaic contributed to a targeted display of

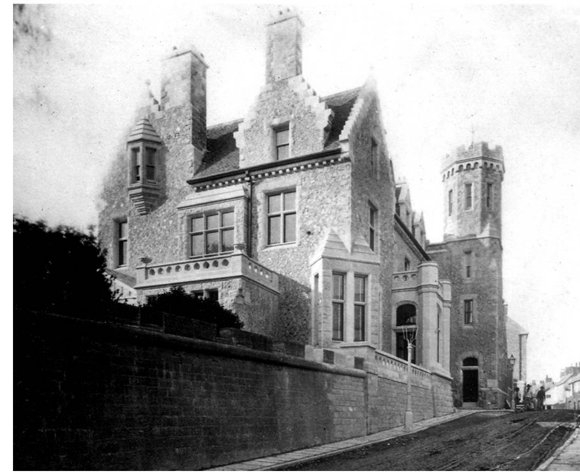

Fig 5: Purbeck House, designed by George R Crickmay, *c.* 1878 (Swanage Museum)

Fig 6: entrance hall at Purbeck House, with replica of the Bucklersbury mosaic, late 19th–early 20th century (Swanage Museum)

Fig 7: the entrance hallway of Purbeck House Hotel as it appeared in 2019 (author)

classical erudition and gentlemanly, sophisticated taste.

The mosaic was, however, unique amongst the classical objects in Burt's collection. As a replica of a discovery from his own construction site, the mosaic had become entwined with Burt's own life story. Unearthed on the first truly prestigious contract won by Mowlem under Burt's directorship, the mosaic neatly encapsulated his business success. Perhaps, much like the article in *The Standard*, Burt compared Victorian construction with Roman art to increase the prestige of his firm. We can only imagine the stories he told his guests. However, we can be sure that when Burt spoke of **his** mosaic, he inevitably also spoke of himself and the gentleman he aspired to be.

And yet I must end on an ambivalent note because audiences are not always receptive to the stories that we tell. A book published in 1910 contains a character heavily based on Burt, and suggests that his mosaic could have been read quite differently by some of his guests.[42] The novel – *The Cradle of a Poet* by Jesse Bedford – is a story of poetic ambition in the quarries, but it regularly descends into a character assassination of Burt. The character based on him (Josiah Jerram) is a 'new man' with a new-build 'mansion' just like Purbeck House.[43] With its copy of a section of the Parthenon Frieze and its profusion of fake historical details, this house is for the author offensively ugly.[44]

Whilst there is no specific mention of a replica mosaic, the collection of classical objects inside attracts scathing criticism. In one humorous scene, Jerram's wife complains about the naked statues in her home, which now make it quite impossible to look the smirking footmen in the eye. Jerram quickly reassures her, but in doing so makes his socially ambitious use of classical art transparent: 'they are quite the correct thing I assure you; all the nobility and gentry have them at their country seats – if they can afford them, that is'.[45]

In this novel, rather than speaking of Jerram's good taste, the classical art in his home only reveals his social pretensions. Although Jerram is not George Burt, the novel does suggest that instead of asserting Burt's ideal social status, his faux Roman mosaic might have exposed him to accusations of being an equally spurious gentleman. Perhaps the archaeological past was an unwieldy weapon for Burt to use in his fight for social legitimacy.

Conclusion: defined by the past?

The chance discovery of the Bucklersbury mosaic during construction work made Victorian Londoners confront their city's Roman past. This encounter with *Londinium* presented an opportunity to rethink or reshape modern identities on both a civic and a personal scale.

Responses to the discovery show that London's material past was (and is) an incredibly productive source for comparisons with the modern world. By suggesting narratives of progress, decline, or continuity, archaeological discoveries are interwoven with modern lives: they alternatively support our ideas about identity, threaten our sense of complacency, or make us re-address our priorities.

However, on both a civic and a personal scale, we have seen that there is something inherently problematic and slippery about using the material past to negotiate modern identity. The same archaeological object can mean vastly different things to different people at different times. Staking a claim on the material past can leave one open to destabilisation and misinterpretation. But perhaps this vulnerability can provide an archaeological antidote of sorts for London in 2024, for contained within it is the potential to rethink, to accommodate, and to change.

Sophie Wardle wrote on the subject of the Bucklersbury mosaic as her MA dissertation at Kings College, London, in 2017. She is currently studying for a PhD at Newnham College, Cambridge.

1. The manuscript archaeological journals of the London antiquarian Charles Roach Smith (housed in the British Museum) give an indication of the frequency of accidental archaeological discoveries made during 'city improvements'.

2. The mosaic is named after its findspot.

3. For a news report on the discovery that describes the visitors to the site, see 'Roman London', *Illustrated London News* (29 May 1869) 550.

4. 'Discovery of a Roman tesselated [sic] pavement in London' *Leicester Daily Mail* (21 May 1869) 3; 'Discovery of Roman architecture in London' *Orkney Herald* (8 June 1869) 4.

5. The mosaic can be found on the floor of a reconstructed room in the Roman London Gallery.

6. A 'considerable portion of a tessellated pavement' had been unearthed on a nearby site on Mansion House Street during the construction for the Union Bank of London, see J E Price *A Description of the Roman Tessellated Pavement Found in Bucklersbury; with Observations on Analogous Discoveries* (1870) 1–2.

7. For information on the discovery and the following events discussed in this paragraph, see *ibid* 1–2.

8. T Milbourn & J E Price 'Roman tesselated [sic] pavement' *Building News* 16 (14 May 1869) 443.

9. For depth of discovery see *op cit* fn 6, 26; although Price's original estimation was 'about 17ft', see *op cit* fn 8, 443. For dimensions of room and findspot, see D S Neal & S R Cosh *Roman Mosaics of Britain*, III (2009) 444, 398 (Fig 369a).

10. *Op cit* fn 6, 27.

11. 'London, Saturday, May 22' *The Standard* (22 May 1869) 4.

12. Neal & Cosh *op cit* fn 9, 444.

13. *Op cit* fn 6, 29.

14. *Ibid,* 70. The style of Price's writing in this section is particularly impenetrable. He suggests that the 'finest examples' of mosaics (presumably in Britain) are usually dated to the 'reign of Hadrian and the Antonines', but later concludes that there is no 'evidence to justify so high an antiquity for the pavements found in London.' This seems to imply a post-Antonine date for the Bucklersbury mosaic.

15. For stylistic analysis attributing the mosaic to the Londinian Acanthus *officina* likely active in the Severan period, see P Johnson 'Town mosaics and urban *officinae*', in S J Greep (ed) *Roman Towns: The Wheeler Inheritance, a Review of 50 Years' Research*, CBA

Subtraction and addition

*Following the sudden death of our Treasurer, **Alastair Ainsworth**, in May, we are pleased to introduce Jacqui Mellows as our new Treasurer.*

Jacqui studied Bioarchaeology at York and then a Masters in Forensic Archaeology and Anthropology at Cranfield University. She may already be known to some because her long-standing interest in archaeology led her to work for MOLA within weeks of graduating from her Masters. She was able to enjoy a range of experiences on different types of London sites including Crossrail. She then moved from the field into the office to become a commercial administrator for MOLA for two years.

We all know the up-and-downs of archaeological work and career opportunities and Jacqui changed direction to start a new career in accounting, but not without some regret at leaving the field of archaeology. She has spent the last three years working for KPMG, one of the top accountancy firms, and is currently acting as assistant manager on financial statement audits, managing a small team. She is due to take her final ACA exam this autumn.

Jacqui says that the role of Treasurer is an amazing opportunity for her to bring these two worlds together, allowing her to gain further experience in an accounting capacity within the realm of London archaeology. She is keen to take on the post and with an archaeological background, she has a good understanding of excavations and the sort of work that *London Archaeologist* does. She has been co-opted by the Publications Committee until her formal election at the next AGM.

She looks forward to getting acquainted with the rest of the committee although that will be on Zoom for the foreseeable future. Alastair will be a hard act to follow but, like all accountants, he was methodical, and Jacqui will be taking over a well-organised set of accounts which have been ably sorted by our Joint Editor, Diana Briscoe. The bank mandate updates are in hand, so that the accounts are ready for Jacqui to take over.

Research Report 93 (1993) 159. Comparable buildings unearthed on a site between 1 Poultry and Queen Victoria Street in the 1990s have been dated via dendrochronology to the early 3rd century, suggesting a similar date for the Bucklersbury mosaic. See Neal & Cosh, *op cit* fn 9, 446, 437–40.

16. For example, about one third of the coarse red tessellated pavement surrounding the Leadenhall Street Bacchus mosaic (discovered in 1803) had been cut away during sewer construction. See *ibid*, 424.

17. See the small areas of damage present in Fig 1.

18. For information on the events following the discovery described in this paragraph, see *op cit* fn 6, 2.

19. F Sheppard *The Treasury of London's Past: An Historical Account of the Museum of London and its Predecessors, the Guildhall Museum and the London Museum* (1991), 22.

20. An example of this invitation can be seen in W Sedgwick Saunders 'Roman London' *The Times* (18 May 1869) 11. *Op cit* fn 3, 550 suggested 33,000 visitors; *op cit* fn 6, 3 suggested 'more than 50,000'.

21. For the potential association of the room with a Roman bath, see *op cit* fn 3, 550. Price interpreted the room instead as a 'dining-hall or *triclinium*', see *op cit* fn 6, 37.

22. *Op cit* fn 19, 25.

23. *Op cit* fn 6, 43. In his account, Price refers to consulting 'Professor Tennant'. My identification of this man as James Tennant is based on his professorship at a local London university, his specialism in geology, and his relative fame (which would explain why Price could simply call him 'Professor Tennant').

24. H Torrens 'Tennant, James (1808–81), mineralogist and mineral and shell dealer', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004). Available online at https:// doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27133 [accessed 7 April 2020].

25. *Op cit* fn 6, 43.

26 *Ibid*, 44.

27. All quotations in this paragraph are taken from 'The new street from Blackfriars Bridge to the Mansion House' *The Standard* (25 September 1869) 6.

28. See V Hoselitz *Imagining Roman Britain: Victorian Responses to a Roman Past* (2007) 40.

29. N J Hall (ed) *The New Zealander* [written by A Trollope in 1855–6] (1972) 10, my emphasis. For discussion of this passage, see also *op cit* fn 28, 40.

30. *Op cit* fn 11, 4.

31. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859. The work of Alfred Russell Wallace was also a significant contribution to this wider debate.

32. All quotations in this and the preceding paragraph are taken from *op cit* fn 11, 4.

33. All biographical information is taken from M Port 'Burt family (per. c. 1830–1964), building contractors and civil engineers', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004). Available online at https:// doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/51893 [accessed 7 April 2020].

34. Burt truly left his mark in Swanage. For his contributions to the infrastructure of his hometown, including providing Swanage with gas streetlights, water, and a town hall, see D Lewer & D Smale *Swanage Past*, 2nd edn (2004) chapters 12–13. In London too, Burt was active: he was master of the Worshipful Company of Glass Sellers three times and was 'an active member of the Metropolitan Asylums Board'. See *op cit* fn 33.

35. Lewer & Smale *op cit* fn 34, 137. From Hardy's description, it is unclear whether he was the first to give Burt this regal title. For an idea of his extensive property, see the discussion of Burt's Durlston Park estate, the site on which he intended to build a Swanage suburb, in *ibid*, 114–15, 130–1.

36. *Ibid*, 120.

37. The foundation stone of Purbeck House was laid on 27 December 1875, see *ibid*, 124.

38. For visit, see *ibid*, 120.

39. For details about the production of the mosaic, see Messrs. Fox & Sons of Bournemouth and Southampton *[Catalogue for Sale of Property Owned by Burt Family, 6 April 1921*) 22. A copy is held at Swanage Museum. For more information on the replica mosaic, see R Field 'A Roman mosaic and Victorian Swanage' *Mosaic* 23 (1996) 7–9. Field notes that Burt's mosaic is very slightly smaller than the original; there are also some differences in colour and pattern, many of which stem from inaccuracies in the chromolithograph of the mosaic (Fig 2) likely used as a model.

40. *Op cit* fn 11, 4.

41. The casts of the Parthenon Frieze and many neoclassical roundels and plaques were still visible at Purbeck House Hotel when I visited in 2019. An inventory of the contents of Burt's house at the time of his death is held at Swanage Museum. This lists the neoclassical and replica classical statues inside Burt's home. See *Inventory of household furniture, pictures, statuary, curiosities, [… etc.] being heirlooms, the property of [the] late George Burt, Esq., J. P.* (July 1894).

42. I was alerted to the existence of this novel and its connection to Burt by the work of Lewer & Smale, *op cit* fn 34, 139.

43. E Godfrey (J Bedford) *The Cradle of a Poet* (1910) 54, 36. The novel was written by Jessie Bedford under the pseudonym of Elizabeth Godfrey.

44. See *ibid*, 35, the house is covered in 'absolutely unmeaning adornment', including '[s]ham gothic arches, leading nowhither'. Above the front door is a 'copy in plaster of a piece of the frieze of the Parthenon'. See also *ibid*, 36, '[i]t seemed an irony that this, of which the aim was so obviously beauty, should have achieved so startling an ugliness'.

45. *Ibid*, 38.