

DMT88

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DMT88

Dominant House, 85 Queen Victoria Street, EC4
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This site comprised the W half of a scheduled ancient monument, the Huggin Hill baths (partly excavated in 1964 and 1969; GM240 above) and an area further to the W. Trial excavations took place in 1988 (DMT88) and Scheduled Monument Consent entailed major excavations, funded by Hammersons plc, in 1989. An agreement was subsequently reached to preserve most of the Roman structural remains that had been found on the site. These are now beneath the new building on the site, but are not accessible; they were covered with suitable material and built over.

To the N, truncated natural gravel and, to the S, river-scoured natural gravel overlaid by natural clay, reflected a steep slope down to the Thames. The earliest activity recorded was terracing of this slope in the 1st c. A lower terrace formed the construction level for a large masonry building of early to mid-Flavian date, thought to have been the main public baths of the city. Oak piles supported foundations of Kentish ragstone and concrete and, internally, a thick ragstone and concrete raft. The superstructure of the building, much of it built of tile, and retaining walls to N and W, survived up to a height of 3m.

The building (Fig*DMT) contained a suite of large rooms originally extending further to the E, along the river. To the W, two rooms heated by an interconnected hypocaust and containing fragments of a polychrome mosaic floor are identified provisionally as a double-apsed caldarium and a tepidarium. To the E, two unheated rooms, probably frigidaria, contained internal corner-buttresses or pier bases and mosaic floors. Substantial masonry culverts and drains through the foundations carried off ground water. Subsequently many modifications were made internally, a timber drain was inserted around the building to the W and, in the early 2nd c, another large double-apsed heated room was added. The terraced gravels to the W remained open ground; there was no sign of a waterfront revetment.

The baths were dismantled in the late 2nd c, valuable materials being salvaged, and evidence for glass and metal-working suggests that industrial use was then made of the ruins. Clay-and-timber domestic buildings were constructed during the 3rd c, incorporating surviving masonry. Two large ditches were cut through the ruins, draining to the S. Later features included a sunken building of 10th-11th c date, chalk foundations of other medieval buildings and, to the E, the tile-floored cellars of two 17th c brick buildings containing evidence of fire destruction.

The site produced large quantities of Roman building material including several complete roof tiles. Some tile fragments bear a stamp, 'PPBRLON' or 'PPRBR', pertaining to the Procurator of the Province of Britain and may have been intended for use in an official building. Part of a Purbeck marble slab from the site is inscribed '...]MAX...]NIA' and may have formed part of a dedicatory inscription. One of the drains consisted of nineteen sections of ceramic drain pipe still *in situ*. Many fragments of Roman painted wall plaster were uncovered, some with elaborate and colourful designs.

Part of a late Roman or Saxon casket was found. The original wooden box had decayed but its decorative bone mounts survived intact. The casket appears to have been empty when buried. Many ceramic lamps were found including one in the form of the theatre mask of a slave, Flavian in date and probably made in Italy, and three late 1st or 2nd c Verulamium mica-dusted lamps, the only examples of such lamps known from London. Another unusual find is a limestone mould which would have been used in the production of small metal dishes. Roman glass finds include fragments of some high quality vessels and a spindle whorl.

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