

### 35 Vine Street, City of London ~ major Roman defences discoveries revisited and redisplayed and now including a 'mini-museum'



Pl. 1. Crosswall 1979. Brick-lined pit constructed against the Roman city wall.

**Above:** 8-10 Crosswall: the outer face of the Roman wall and the 18<sup>th</sup> century brick cess pits at either end



**Above:** Part of the Crosswall archaeological team: from right to left, Cath Maloney, the late Geoff Egan and Ian Blair



**Above:** Sir Ronald Gardner-Thorpe, Lord Mayor of the City of London and me opening the Dukes Place subway Roman wall tile mural in 1980.

No. 35 comprises two former sites, 8-10 Crosswall and 1 Crutched Friars. In 1979-80, I supervised archaeological excavations at 8-10 Crosswall in the City of London. The team uncovered a fine stretch of the Roman defensive landward wall [approx. 10m long and 3m high] and the foundation of an associated tower (Bastion 4A). The Roman wall had been incorporated within the basement wall of a 19<sup>th</sup> century warehouse, concealed by a whitewashed mortar render surface. The tower base was rectangular and of mixed material, though mainly of packed chalk. On top of the foundation were the sparse surviving remains of its superstructure which consisted of part of a Roman tombstone and imprints of other such large stones [see next page]. The discovery of this previously unknown B4A was important in determining that the spacing of the Roman bastions on the east side of the city wall was at intervals of approx. 186 Roman feet.

At either end of the wall were two similar 18<sup>th</sup> century brick cess pits full of discarded materials which indicated the likely location of property boundaries.

I was intent on negotiating the retention of the wall and tower base in the new building as such opportunities were rare in the City [see opposite: some years earlier, in the case of the Dukes Place Roman wall only a representation had been possible]. In the event, the developers [European Ferries] agreed to the proposal and display in the new building (named Emperor House). The architects, Joseph & Partners, designed a viewing gallery which could be viewed from the service yard. They regarded the scheme as an aspect of 'placemaking'.

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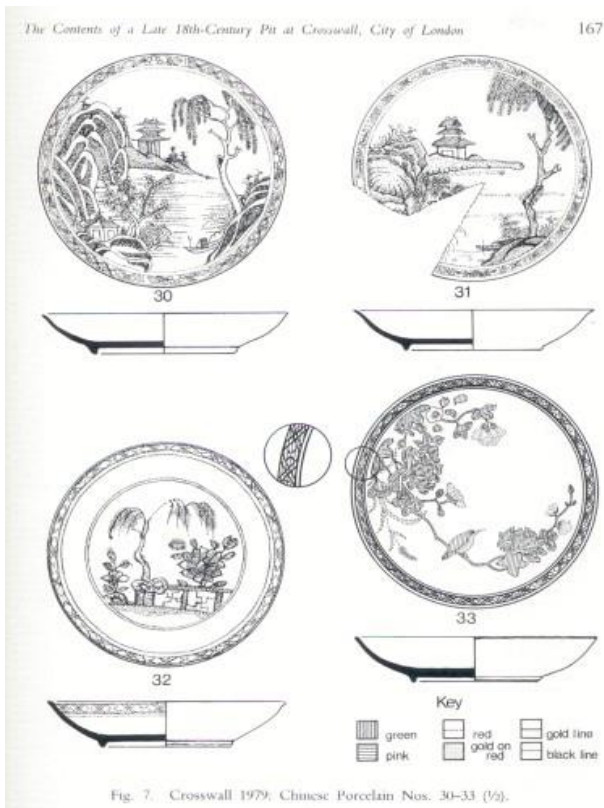


### 8-10 Crosswall, City of London

- (top) Roman city wall and foundation of Bastion 4A
- (right) Tombstone of Marciana who died aged 10
- (middle) section through building showing retention of Roman city wall and Bastion 4A foundation
- (left) glazed viewing gallery in service yard

*Photographs on this page and the previous page, courtesy of the Department of Urban Archaeology, Museum of London*

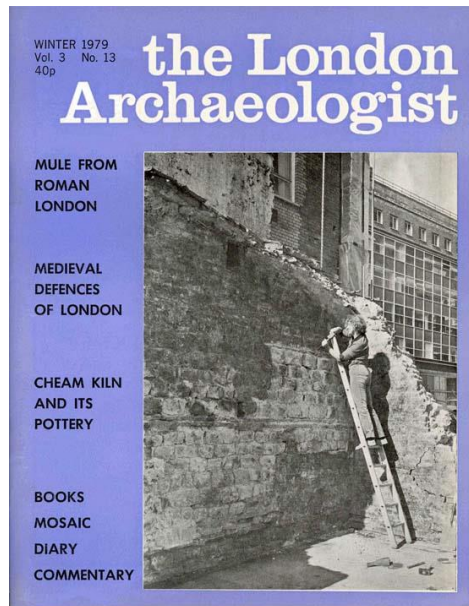
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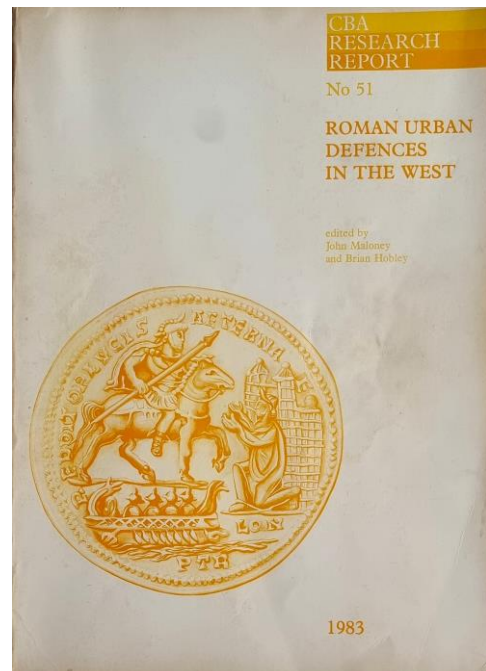
Notable amongst the remains from the cess pits were two sets of high quality Chinese porcelain [examples **above, top**] dating to c. 1700-25; two fineware drinking glasses and pharmaceutical glassware [one dated 1754]; the skeleton of an angora rabbit and a bone from a linnet song-bird [both high status 'pets']; and the top of an unusual glass bird feeder [a man in a tricorne hat] for use in a bird cage [see **above**].

All the items appear to be part of a contemporaneous group deposited c.1770, possibly representing a household clearance.

For details of the Roman wall and Bastion 4A and cess pits see various Crosswall reports at <https://independent.academia.edu/JohnMaloney26>



**Above:** The front cover of *the London Archaeologist* magazine featuring the uncovering of the Roman wall at 8-10 Crosswall



**Above:** The front cover of *Roman urban defences in the West* [eds. Maloney & Hobbey], the papers from an international conference held at the Museum of London in 1980 and featuring a major article on London's Roman defences.

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As has been the case in the City in recent times, the approx. 20 year cycle of redevelopment led to Emperor House and Roman Wall House backing onto it [1-2 Crutched Friars] and sharing a party wall, being demolished together. The developer is Urbanest UK Ltd., and the development consists of 11 floors of mixed use, including swish student accommodation which have 'fantastic views across London'. The development provided a great opportunity to improve the appearance of the Crosswall Roman remains and the interface of that stretch of wall on the neighbouring Roman wall site.



**Above:** The Urbanest building is in the foreground with the distinctive curved roof

And thanks to an innovative collaboration between Urbanest, the City of London Corporation, Historic England and the Museum of London, the preservation and display of the remains were enhanced, not least by the inclusion of a 'mini-museum'.



**Above:** The external face of the Roman wall and Bastion 4A [see page 23] and - to the right - the mini-museum of artefacts from the site and elsewhere in the City. In the foreground is a seating area and beyond it to the right [out of view] a Senzo café.

Early this August the display aspect of the scheme attracted considerable coverage in newspapers, magazines, a variety of blogs and on BBC TV and its website. For *History Today*, Mark Bridge wrote 'New mini-museum showcases London's massive Roman wall .... As a result of the redevelopment, it is freely accessible for the first time, enclosed by an exhibition space that houses hundreds of artefacts excavated nearby. It is also clearly visible to passers-by on the street.'

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**Above:** The Times article about the Roman remains at 35 Vine Street.

The discoveries were described as an 'epic find nearly 2000 years in production'!



**Above:** interior face of the Roman city wall supported by underpinning jacks.



**Above:** Me standing recently by the bastion base with [behind] some of the 'mini-museum' display cases.

The display also consists of a video about Roman London's defences; a Roman sculpture in a display case, and is a large and impressive artwork, 'Wall of Antiquities', by East End artist Olivia Whitworth.

Credit to all those involved including, originally, an antiquarian in 1906 and, in 1979, the Department of Urban Archaeology, Museum of London, and the archaeological team that excavated the site at Emperor House and discovered the highly significant site of Bastion 4A, of which there is scant mention in the displays. And, of course, Urbanest UK Ltd!

In a paraphrase of Winston Churchill it is said 'the winners write history' but to my mind it would often be more apt to state that 'history is written by the latest comers'!

If you would like to visit the Roman remains and 'mini-museum' it is **FREE** but booking beforehand is advised at [bookings@citywallvinestreet.org](mailto:bookings@citywallvinestreet.org)