

**ROMAN BURIALS AT BALDOCK** by *Kit Westaway*

The first burial was found in the side of a deep sewer trench in the grounds of the Convent of Providence (TL 248 333); fragments of Samian were taken out in May 1971, but the dangerous condition of the trench made it impossible to excavate for the rest of the group until July.

The cremation burial had been in a box; the position of the four nails, each with bone on the shank gave the approximate dimensions as 1 ft by 6in. Four Samian vessels were to the south of the box, and two silvered bronze dishes, a flagon and two poppyhead beakers to the north. The main axis of the box was east-west.

The burial lay over features which were out of use long before the deposition. Romanised Belgic sherds were found nearby, as were struck flints, including a rejuvenated core of Neolithic date.

The Samian, forms 18, 18/31, 36 & 27 are dated to c. 115 A.D., which is consistent with the coarse wares. The silvered bronze dishes originally had **triangular bronze loops welded diametrically opposite one another to stand proud of the rim**. On one dish they were inside, and the other outside the bowl. The use of these dishes is unknown; they are unlikely to be scalepans, as these would require three suspension loops.

An interesting smallfind from above the poppyhead beakers was a piece



of what looked like bone, about 11mm square and 5mm thick, which has been tentatively identified, after X-ray crystallographic examination, as mineralised Narwhal tusk. This material was often used in the past for amulets and talismans.

The examination of the bones, which were very fragmented, gave no indication of disease, and it was not possible to tell whether the body was that of a man or a woman. It is clear that the body (if there was only one person represented) was that of an adult; he or she may have been elderly.

Another cremation burial, a late Belgic urn with a burnished jar and a Flavian Samian cup was found by foundation trenching about 40ft from the first one, in October.

A full report of the burials, and the other finds from this site has been submitted to Hertfordshire Archaeology.