

A lion killing a stag from a funerary monument, Roman

Limestone

Found: Camomile Street, London Wall

In September 1876, workmen on a building site on Camomile Street, Bishopsgate, uncovered the remains of one of the bastions of the Roman city wall. The bastions were semi-circular defensive towers which had been added to the wall around AD 351 to 375, towards the end of the Roman period, when there was a growing concern about the city being attacked by the Saxons.

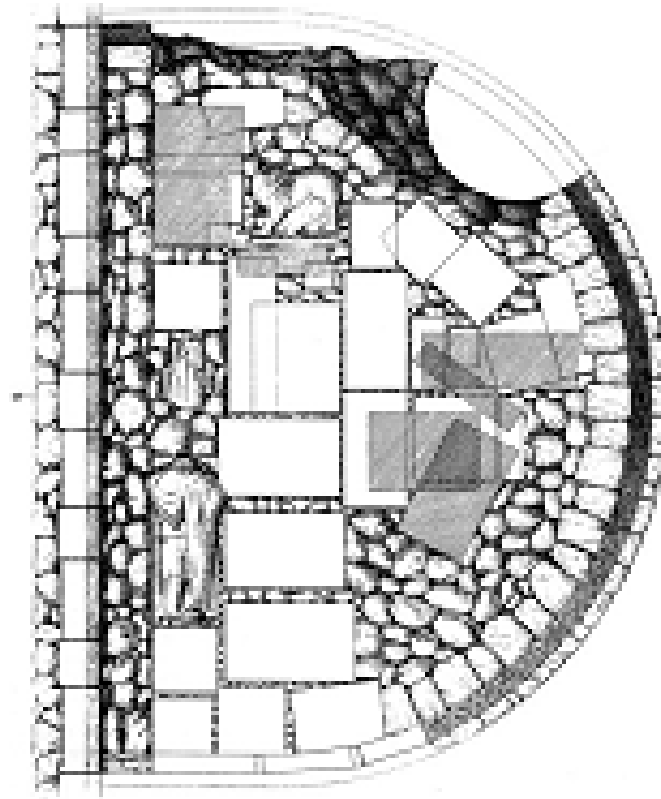
In the remains of the foundations of the Camomile Street bastion a number of stone sculptures were found, as well as the remains of columns and other building stone. The sculptures included this figure of a lion vanquishing a stag, the head of a man, which is also in the exhibition, and the figure of a soldier, which can be seen in the Roman Gallery at the Museum of London. All are thought to have come from funerary monuments, which would have been located in the cemeteries to the north or east of the city and just outside the wall. It appears that monuments in the nearby cemeteries were plundered to provide building stone for the late Roman defences. When found, the lion sculpture was crammed tightly (see image below – for your benefit, Matt!) into the rubble core of the bastion, amongst blocks of Kentish ragstone.

The lion is made from oolitic limestone from the south Cotswolds. Its head is damaged and the head and front legs of the stag are missing. The sculpture is carved in the round which indicates it may have been meant to have been viewed from all sides (as opposed to being placed in an alcove or niche). It is thought that it would have decorated a tomb, or possibly a mausoleum.

The lion is shown killing a stag and symbolises the power of death. Lions are quite a common animal to feature on tomb monuments. Examples have been found in Germany and Gaul as well as Britain.

The exhibition has given us a great opportunity to remove objects such as this from our permanent gallery and redisplay them in a better way in the exhibition. In our Roman Gallery, this lovely lion is displayed up high in a location where many people probably don't see him. Also he is so

high up that it is possible to only see one side of him. On taking him down we were able to have a close up look at his other side and have decided to display that side in the current exhibition.



Drawing from 1880 showing the lion (near the top) in situ in the bastion.