

**METRO**Property

New-Build News **METRO**Property

# EVIDENCE OF SOUTHWARK'S COFFIN CULTURE

Jo Knowsley learns more about a 1,600-year-old sarcophagus found during a dig at a Southwark building site in London

All archaeological exploration had already yielded shards of Roman pottery and coins, as well as excavating part of a major Roman road leading from the City of London to Chichester.

But six months into the dig on a Southwark building site, the council's pre-construction archaeologists made a remarkable discovery: a 1,600-year-old stone sarcophagus – around which the bones of an adult and a small child were scattered.

"We think it may have contained the body of a member of the nobility – the quality of the stone and the fact it was surrounded by chalk.

Sandstone indicates it may even have been part of a mausoleum," says Richard von Kalinowski-Meier, an archaeological consultant on the site.

"It would normally have been lined with a lead casing, but as the lid had been turned, it was probably robbed

by thieves in the 18th century and it ended up being filled with soil. So we have more work to do to discover its exact contents."

"It was all rather exciting," adds Chris Drennon, site manager for Galliard Homes – which is working with Avoca Property Group and Otello London to create Trilogy SE1. The complex of 64 contemporary apartments will be set across three brick and aluminium-clad buildings on the 24,750sq ft site.

"As we demolished the old construction and worked towards demolishing an old Post Office storage building, the archaeological teams began their dig," Chris explains.

"We were working side by side with

the archaeologists, which in Southwark is all part of the required planning process for new builds. But for us, it was quite an unusual element of the job.

"At first, when they found the sarcophagus in June, they kept it pretty quiet. But I walked them lifting it out of the ground in July. I've been on building sites for 17 years and I've certainly never seen anything like it."

The first building is a seven-story, 32-apartment block, with communal space at ground level, while the second tower (five-story with 18 apartments) and third (four-story with 14 apartments) are solely residential. The new



**Historic:** Plundered by thieves 300 years ago, the sarcophagus may have contained a member of the nobility

development is in one of the most historic parts of London – with Southwark and the City of London being the only two London boroughs to have their own dedicated in-house archaeologists.

Gillian King, senior planner of archaeology at Southwark Council, says: "In my long archaeological career, this is the first Roman sarcophagus I have discovered still surviving in its original place of deposition. It really is a very special discovery."

Trilogy SE1 is located next to Southwark's historic Trinity Village. With its landmark Georgian



**Find of a lifetime:** Archaeologists say it could have been part of a mausoleum

architecture, Trilogy SE1's style and building materials are designed to pay a strong and sympathetic homage to the past.

The facade consists of a mixture of pale cream brickwork, light bronze aluminium cladding and flashes of Portland stone on the window sills.

Prices start from £550,000. The development will feature lofty roof terraces (some private and some public) and will see the adjacent Swan Street planted with a dozen new trees.

Before Trinity Village was developed for residential use, the site, Harper Road (formerly



Trilogy SE1 comprises three striking buildings featuring panoramic roof terraces and ultra-modern cladding



known as Hiersmange Lane), which adjoins Swan Street, was lined with orchards and fruit trees. Nearby is the Grade II-listed Henry Wood Hall – originally the Holy Trinity parish church – designed by Francis Bedford in 1824 and now a venue for orchestra

performances. Today, the area's rise in popularity reflects its cosmopolitan development over the past couple of decades and its proximity to the City. Close to Borough Market, and within walking distance of the City, it is staffed with elegant eateries, bakeries,

deli-cafes, wine and tapas bars. Nearby is Maltby Street Market, held each weekend in the working yard of Laneset, an architectural salvage business which passed its own bar and restaurant into the state of the year. Borough, Elephant & Castle and London Bridge Underground stations are also within easy reach. Trilogy SE1 goes on sale from this autumn and is due for completion by the end of next year. Stephen Croxey, CEO of Galliard Homes, says he was delighted to have been able to work so

intensively with the council to protect a piece of London's history. "Buyers will be thrilled that they can enjoy a slice of history," he says. "It's a remarkable discovery."

jo.knowsley@galliardhomes.com  
[www.galliardhomes.com](http://www.galliardhomes.com)  
[www.trilogypropertygroup.com](http://www.trilogypropertygroup.com)