



Fig. 22: aerial view of the site following the demolition of Victorian buildings in the summer of 1994. Between the major thoroughfares of Queen Victoria Street (bottom) and Poultry (top), Bucklersbury and Pancras Lane were medieval survivals (left of picture) which have been succeeded by the new development.

Number 1 Poultry -- the main excavation: late Saxon and medieval sequence

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THE SITE OF Number 1 Poultry, at the junction of Queen Victoria Street and Poultry in the City of London, was excavated by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) between March 1994 and June 1996 (Fig. 22). Articles on the primary phase of the excavation and the Roman sequence have appeared in earlier issues of *London Archaeologist*⁴⁵. The main excavations also led to

significant late Saxon and medieval findings, in keeping with the site's location at the eastern end of Cheapside -- the medieval City's principal market, and detailed evidence of the area's topographic development from the 10th century onwards is enhanced by a wealth of comparative documentary material (Fig. 23).

45. P Rowsome 'Number 1 Poultry -- evaluation and Phase 1 excavations' *London Archaeol* 7 no 14 (1995) 371-82; M Burch *et al* 'Number 1 Poultry -- the main excavation: Roman sequence' *London Archaeol* 8 no 5 (1997) 127-36. Summaries of the archaeological findings can also be found in Excavation Round-Up *London Archaeol* 7 no 13 (1995) 337, *London Archaeol* 8 supplement 1 (1996) 7, and *London Archaeol* 8 supplement 2 (1997).

Sub-Roman and Late Saxon evidence

The latest extant Roman buildings and surfaces excavated at Poultry⁴⁶ were sealed by mixed external deposits. Although some of these deposits contained visible tip-lines suggesting intentional dumping, much of the material probably accumulated over a considerable period of time. Towards the eastern end of the site, near the Walbrook stream, similar deposits reached a depth of 2m. Although external dumping along the banks of the Walbrook was greatest during the Roman period⁴⁷, some of this sequence may also be associated with post-Roman deposition. Overall, no structures or artefacts dated to the 5th to 9th centuries can be positively identified at Poultry. This is consistent with evidence from other City sites and suggests a prolonged period of little human activity if not outright abandonment⁴⁸.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle says that Alfred 'occupied London' -- meaning the walled Roman city -- in AD 886. The move to a more defensible site, or *burh*, within the old walls is likely to have been a

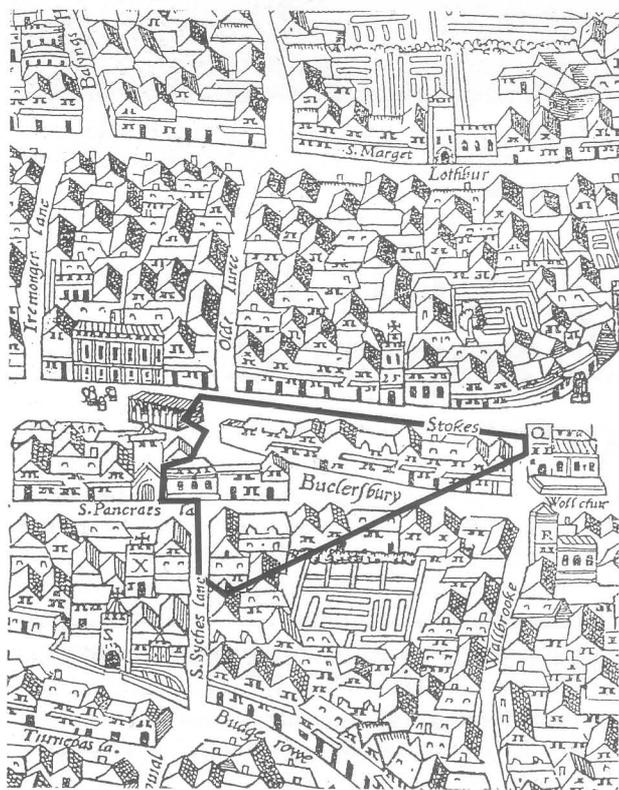


Fig. 23: detail from the Agas Map of c. 1560 with the area of Number 1 Poultry shown outlined. The streets of Bucklersbury and Pancras Lane, the parish church of St Benet Sherehog, and the castellated superstructure of the Great Conduit can all be identified.

response to Viking raids on *Lundenwic*⁴⁹. In the new settlement Number 1 Poultry was some distance to the north of the late Saxon trading shore at Queenhithe but immediately to the south of the streets of Cheapside and Poultry, which formed part of the main east-west route across the new settlement. Within the excavation area the first structures which can be associated with resettlement were scattered late Saxon sunken-floored buildings, and other cut features dated to the late 9th and early 10th centuries (Fig. 24). The arrangement of these buildings and features did not in itself suggest that they were organised in relation to a route along Cheapside and Poultry, perhaps indicating that the area was at first peripheral to the new settlement, or even that the route was not properly established until slightly later.

If anything, the underlying Roman topography may initially have exerted a greater influence on general land-use (open areas) and even the positioning of individual buildings. In the Roman period the western part of the site had been the location of a major street junction which included the main east-west arterial road of the town as well as three secondary roads. This area of gravel metalling, and perhaps the surfaces of the individual Roman streets themselves, would have remained a visible part of

46. The late Roman buildings in Insula I at Poultry were the subject of structural alteration in the 4th century and continued in use into the last quarter of the century. Pottery dated to AD 350-400 and late 4th-century coins including one of Theodosius, AD 379-402, were stratigraphically sealed beneath the latest mortar re-floorings of one of the buildings.
47. The evidence from Poultry shows that the contours of the Middle Walbrook valley were terraced in the 1st century in order to allow the development of both buildings and industry. The lowest terraces adjacent to the stream were subject to a great deal of land-fill during the Roman period, particularly as higher terraces were often re-levelled or cleared of debris after events such as fires and the material shifted down-terrace. This process of making-up the level of the lowest terraces may also have helped to prevent over-bank flooding from a clogged stream-channel.
48. Excavations along the Strand and in the Covent Garden area, particularly those at the Royal Opera House (for a summary see *Current Archaeol* 158 60-63), have confirmed that the Saxon settlement of *Lundenwic* lay to the west of the City, although the western part of the old Roman town must have retained an important status as the location of the cathedral church of St Paul and perhaps a palace at Aldermanbury. The relative lack of early and middle-Saxon finds from the area of the City compared to that of the Strand confirms the view that the bulk of the population lived outside of the walled area.
49. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle also records a 'great slaughter' in London in AD 842 and the evidence from the Royal Opera House excavation suggests that the settlement at *Lundenwic* was in decline and the population partially dispersed before Alfred's re-fortification of the Roman city.



Fig. 24: a late Saxon well found at Poultry. It was constructed from part of a single oak tree-trunk which had been split, hollowed out and then rejoined with timber pegs.

the post-Roman landscape. A linear ditch cut into and running along the centre of the main east-west Roman road may have served as both a drain and boundary during the late Saxon period, and the area of the disused Roman road junction later became a cobbled open area.

Three of the late Saxon sunken-floored buildings excavated at Poultry were clustered around the remains of two adjacent Roman masonry buildings in former *Insula I^o*. One of the sunken buildings, which contained a possible Saxon boat timber dated to AD 820+, was constructed against the exterior face of the west wall of the westernmost of the Roman buildings. There can be little doubt that the Roman building had influenced both the location and constructional details of this sunken building (Fig. 25).

The late Saxon buildings excavated at Poultry were broadly similar in size and structural detail to those found at other sites in the area⁵⁰. Walls and partitions were constructed in a variety of methods, including upright earth-fast posts, horizontal planking and wattle hurdles. Internal floors were of brickearth, brushwood or planking. Thick organic deposits in external areas adjacent to one of the buildings may suggest the presence of contemporary stock enclosures.

Early medieval development

Early medieval levels were particularly well represented at Poultry and included evidence of four historic streets (Poultry, Bucklersbury, Pancras Lane and Sise Lane), over 20 Saxo-Norman and 12th-century buildings, and the small parish church of St Benet Sherehog (Fig. 26).

50. M Burch *et al op cit* fn 45, 133 and fig. 18.

51. See examples in Horsman *et al* 'Aspects of Saxo-Norman London I: Building and Street Development' London Mid-

dlex Archaeol Soc Special Paper 11 (1988) and also in Woodger in a forthcoming MoLAS Monograph 'Excavations at 72-5 Cheapside: Part 2 – The Saxo-Norman and Early Medieval Sequence'.



Fig. 25: one of the late Saxon sunken-buildings recorded at Poultry incorporated the west wall of a late Roman stone building (right of picture). 10xroomm scale.

Rows of Saxo-Norman surface buildings were constructed along the Poultry frontage during the 10th century, replacing the earlier sunken-floored buildings and continuing in use in approximately the same form until the second half of the 12th century. Each building was represented by a sequence of brickearth and mortar floor surfaces, occupation deposits and timber or brickearth walls. Building B7M was particularly well preserved with at least nine successive floors. The earliest building was demarcated by postholes and beamslots, with the western partition wall replaced on at least two occasions. In common with many of these buildings a tile and brickearth hearth was located close to the centre of the western wall. These buildings were on average only 3m wide and extended back from the street frontage for at least 10m⁵².

The northwestern part of Bucklersbury may have originated as a route from Cheapside into the cobbled open area OA8M. Bucklersbury shadowed

the course of a disused Roman secondary road, and in its earliest incarnation appears to have been a wide, hollow way following the line of the southern ditch of the Roman road. The survival of Saxo-Norman buildings was more fragmentary along Bucklersbury than Poultry, but a well-preserved sequence of timber buildings did survive towards the north-west end of the street. The dating of these buildings was comparable to that of the buildings on Poultry, with many of the best preserved phases relating to the period immediately before the Norman conquest. Building BI4M was demarcated by slots and postholes and contained a large, timber-lined hearth with associated iron-working debris and archaeomagnetically dated to AD 1080-1120.

Towards the southwestern part of the site the excavated evidence suggests that Pancras Lane may have developed as a route along the southern edge of the cobbled area OA8M. In the 13th century

⁵². In comparison, in AD 1212-13 the mean width of properties along Poultry is documented as being 7ft 6in (2.3m) whilst their depth ranged from 6ft to 17ft (1.8-5.2m).

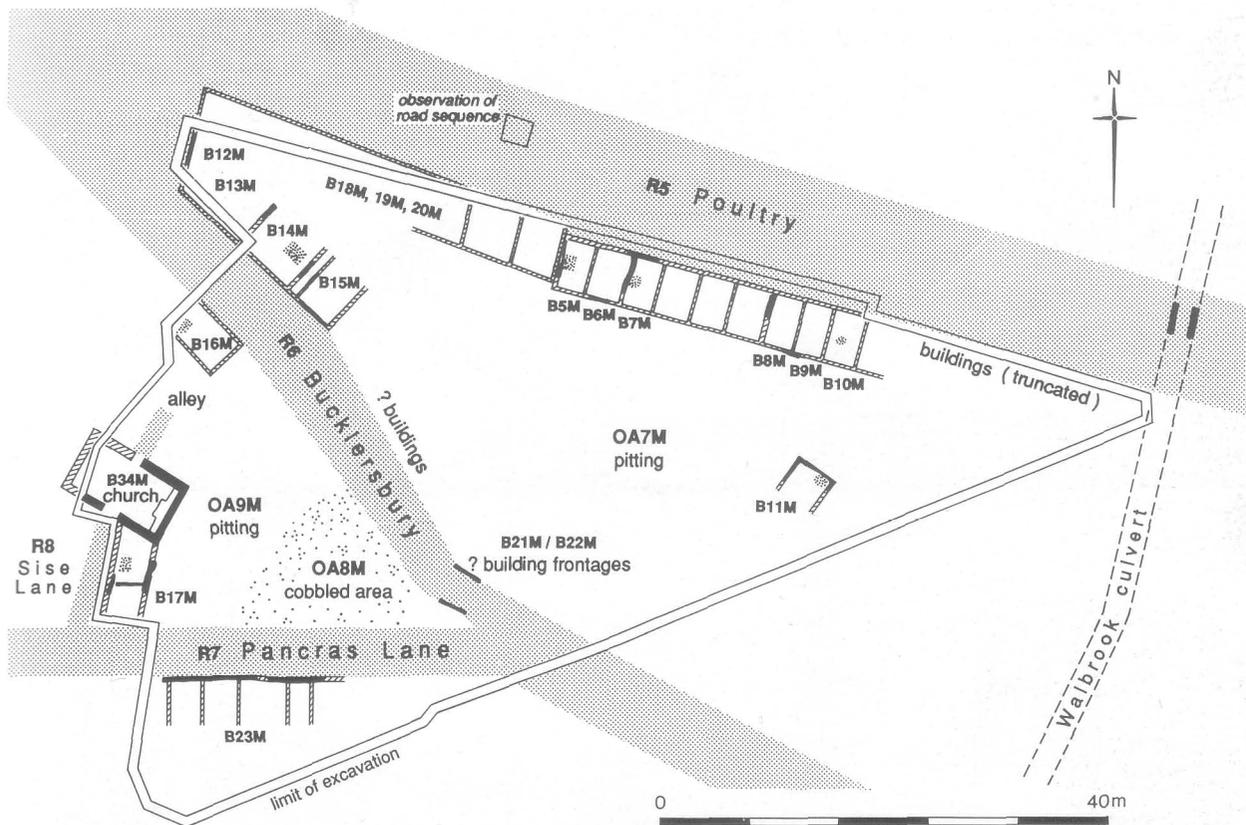


Fig. 26: early medieval development up to c. AD 1150: the archaeological evidence.

Pancras Lane was described as a new street and before that access to the church of St. Benet Sherehog was probably via Sise Lane and an alley or passage leading south off Bucklersbury. The existence of Sise Lane from the 11th century is indicated by the position of the southern door of the church and the layout of timber building B17M to the east.

Until the latter half of the 12th century areas of open ground, some heavily pitted, lay to the rear of buildings on the Poultry, Bucklersbury and Pancras Lane frontages. Excavations at Coppergate in York and Flaxengate in Lincoln have identified a similar pattern of narrow 10th-century buildings with pitted open areas to the rear. At Poultry an area of intensive pitting along the western limit of the site was subsequently occupied by the church of St Benet Sherehog, constructed in the mid-11th century. Many of the pits contained structured organic material, possibly stable sweepings, quanti-

ties of domestic refuse such as animal bone, and leather. Other open areas may have begun life as public open spaces, or even private markets – a possible origin for the cobbled area OA8M (Fig. 27).

Later medieval development

By the end of the 12th century much of the open space had been encroached upon by large stone buildings, the residences of wealthy merchants and financiers, although small shops remained along the main street frontages⁵³. The extensive survival of later medieval chalk foundations, wells and cesspits across much of the site has allowed the reconstruction of the ground plans of several important buildings whose development can also be identified from documentary sources (compare Figs. 28 and 29).

Foundations of building B33M on the north side of Bucklersbury can be identified with a large property which, during the latter half of the 13th

53. See a number of publications by Derek Keene on medieval development in both London and the immediate area of Poultry, including *Cheapside before the Great Fire* ESRC (1985), 'Shops and Shopping in Medieval London' *Brit Arch Assoc Trans* (1990) and 'London in the Early Middle Ages AD 600-1300' *The London Journal* 14: 99-111 (1995).



Fig. 27: successive external surfaces composed of rough cobbling and containing large quantities of butchered animal bone provide evidence for a large open area in the southwest part of the site in the early medieval period.

century, was occupied by John Mansell, a financier of Henry III, before becoming the headquarters of the Riccardi merchants of Lucca. In about AD 1300 a leading merchant and financier, William Servat, took over the property. A rubble foundation associated with the building may have been the base of a towered gatehouse, known as Servat's Tower, which was once a major landmark in the area. To the north of the Servat property building B24M corresponded closely with a stone house which in about 1265 belonged to the Tolesan family. The building was let to tenants, one of whom was a lorimer (a manufacturer of metal pieces for bridles). By the 14th century the front of the property was divided into two shops along Poultry.

Craft, trade and industry

Extensive evidence of craft and industrial processes was also found at Poultry and can be compared with documentary sources for the 12th century onwards, allowing a reappraisal of the development of medieval trades, such as metal-working, around Poultry and Bucklersbury -- an area

whose character seems to have included aspects of both the Cheapside market and the more industrial Walbrook valley. Documentary sources show that by the 13th century the small shops and workshops which lined Poultry and Bucklersbury were occupied mainly by smiths and ironmongers, possibly serving the needs of visitors to the Cheapside market. In consequence, during the 13th century the west end of Poultry was called Ironmongers Row and the eastern end Lorimers Row. It was only towards the end of the 13th century, with the establishment of the stocks market on the site of the present Mansion House, that the street became associated with poulterers. The earlier dominance of metalworking is confirmed by the large quantities of iron working debris, mainly iron slag and hammerscale, recovered from many of the excavated buildings. Most of the evidence points to smithing rather than the production of iron, although, rather surprisingly for an urban context, diagnostic evidence for iron smelting was also identified.

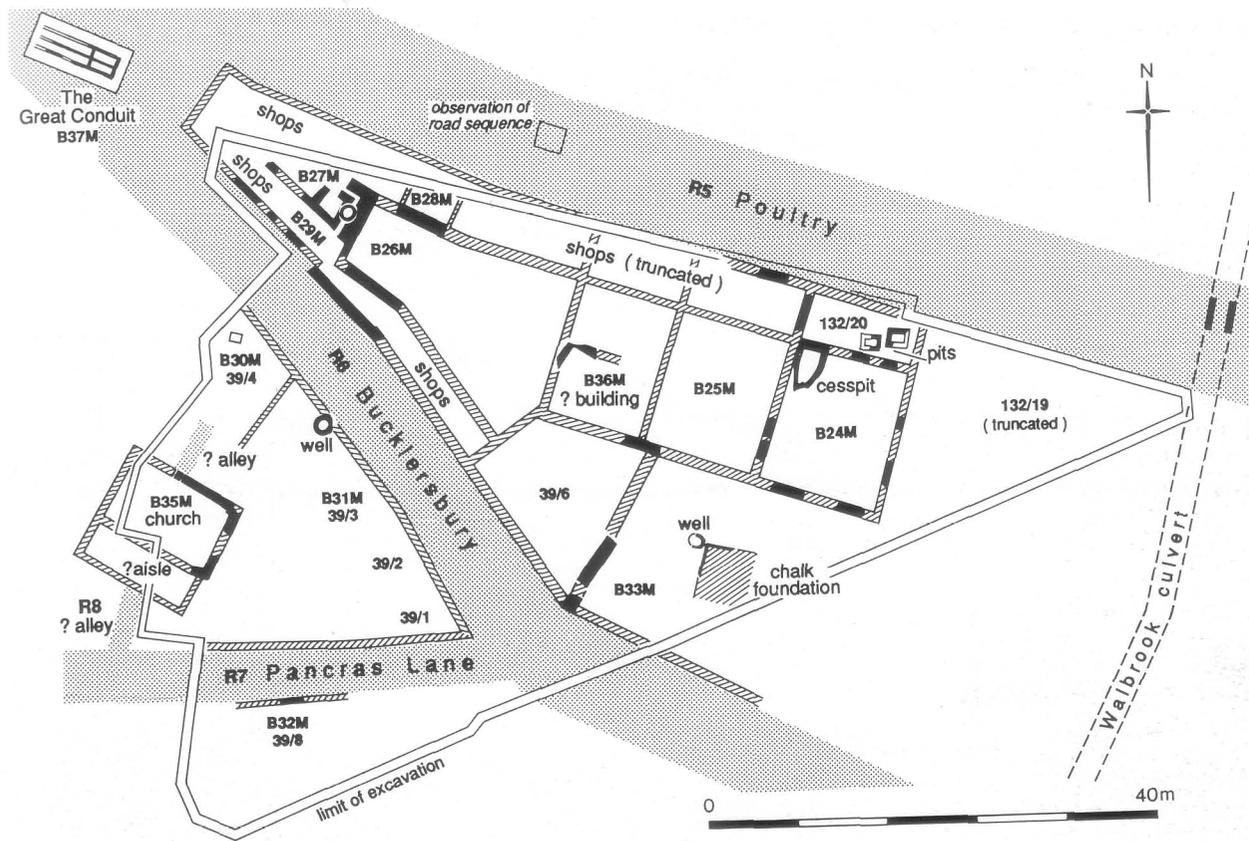


Fig. 28: medieval development after c. AD 1150: the archaeological evidence.

More specialised working of iron also took place from the 12th century onwards. Individual shops at the west end of Poultry sold knives, spurs and horse equipment, and in the mid-13th century one property, now identified with the excavated building B26M (see Fig. 28), was the dwelling of Reginald le Hauberger, a leading armourer. A variety of iron knife blades were found during the excavation, showing a wide range of sizes and styles, including one inlaid with brass and copper-alloy decoration. Horse equipment included a spur fragment, a horse-shoe and a bridle bit.

Many bone and antler artefacts and offcuts, including bone skates and combs, were also recovered. The working of bone may be allied to the manufacture of cutlery, to the production of textiles and to leatherworking. Of particular interest in this respect is the group of pits located beneath St Benet Sherehog, which contained a large assemblage of late Saxon leather fragments, including a number of well-preserved shoes. Arte-

facts associated with textile manufacture, such as pinbeaters, pins, needles, shuttles and spindlewhorls were also found.

Twelfth-century documents also attest to a trade in precious metals in the vicinity of the church of St Benet Sherehog, and this may be confirmed by analysis of ceramic crucible fragments, some containing traces of copper residue, which were recovered from building B17M to the south of the church. Copper-alloy waste fragments, identified as runnels and off-cuts, were also found.

During the 13th and 14th centuries the Poultry area underwent a series of profound changes. Increasing land values caused manufacturing activities to be moved to less central sites, supplanted by the trade in imported luxuries such as precious metals, spices and textiles. At about this time Bucklersbury became the centre of the financial district⁵⁴ and remained so until the mid-14th century, when the focus of activity shifted to Lombard Street.

54. Building B33M, the property of the Merchants of Lucca, was effectively the first financial trading house in the City.

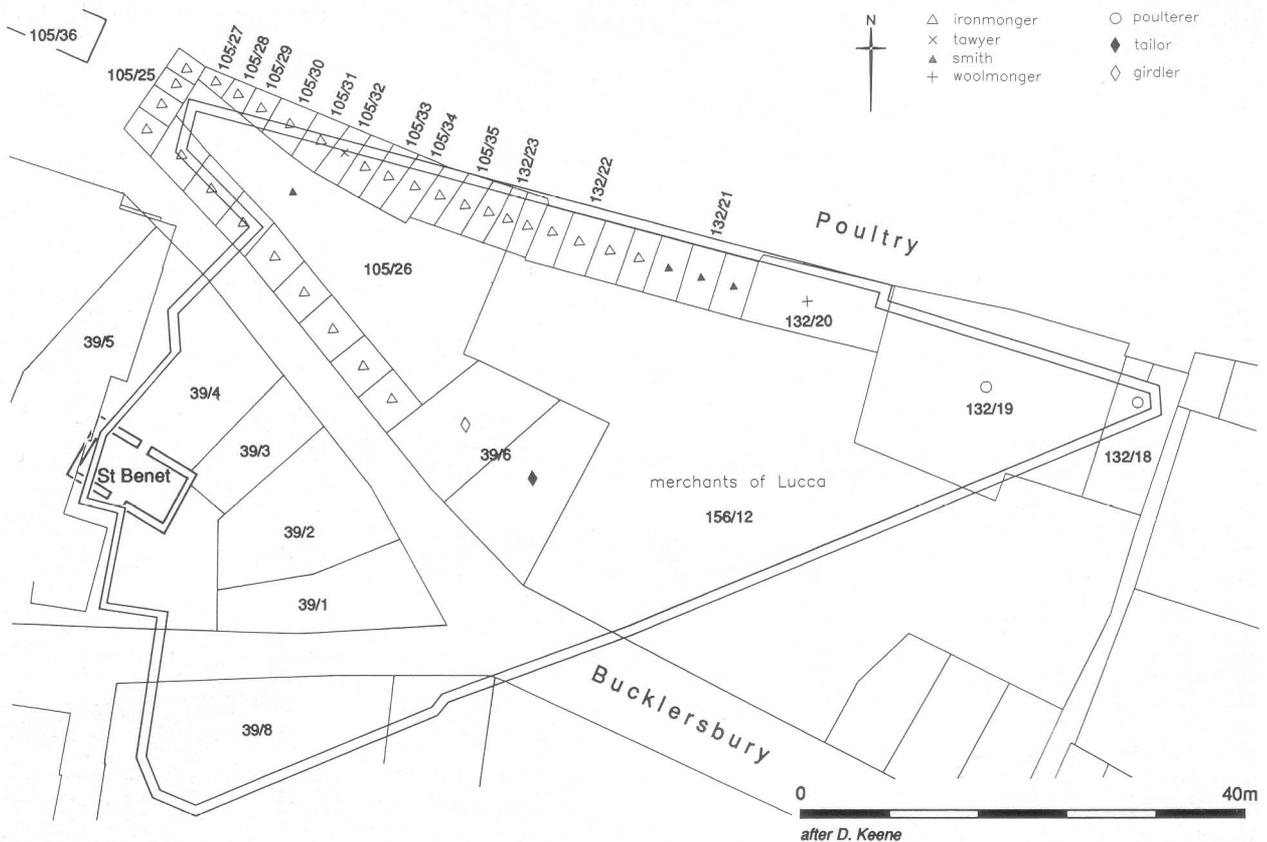


Fig. 29: documentary evidence for property divisions and trades at Poultry in *c.* AD 1300. Initial comparison with the excavated evidence shown in Fig. 28 indicates a remarkable level of correspondence, underlining the potential for an integrated analysis of the documentary and excavation data.

The parish church of St Benet Sherehog

An overview of the parish church of St Benet Sherehog was given in the autumn 1995 issue of *London Archaeologist*⁵⁵. The primary phase of the church (B34M) — a small, single-celled structure with a square eastern end, was exceptionally well-preserved beneath successive medieval rebuilds (Fig. 30). The earliest documentary references to the church are from AD IIII-II31 and finds from underlying pits and associated with the primary phase of the church sequence suggest a construction date of the mid-11th century.

Most City churches were probably initially privately owned, many originating as chapels to private houses. This may be suggested by the position of a church away from the nearest street frontage, as was apparently the case with St Benet — where the north door may have opened onto a private

property on the south side of Bucklersbury — although the existence of a south door opening onto Sise Lane suggests that the church also had a public or parochial use from an early date.

The church was partly demolished and then rebuilt during the 13th century to create a larger building (B35M), represented archaeologically by ragstone foundations, chalk piers and footings, and included the extension of the church to the east, perhaps to allow for the construction of a larger chancel, a common 13th-century development. The addition of a chapel or aisle on the south side of the church required the demolition of the timber building B17M. A chapel dedicated to St. Mary is recorded in 1348 and another to St. Sithe in 1397. There is also limited evidence for a northwards extension to the building. The church was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666 and not rebuilt,

55. P Rowsome *op cit* fn 45, 374-5 and figs. 5-7. That issue also includes a description of the Great Conduit — part of the City's medieval water supply — which is not repeated here.



Fig. 30: view of the eastern end of the church of St Benet Sherehog, including evidence of internal alterations to the area of the altar.

the ground subsequently being used as a subsidiary burial ground for the combined parishes of St Benet and St Stephen Walbrook⁵⁶.

Conclusion

The new James Stirling-designed office building at Number 1 Poultry is now complete, an underground shopping concourse taking the place of the largest archaeological excavation seen in the City of London in recent years. Since the completion of the excavation the archaeological archive has been the subject of a detailed assessment and an Updated Project Design proposing a programme of analysis and publication was approved by English Heritage in the Spring of 1998. Post-excavation analysis is now underway and will result in a number of publications about Poultry over the coming years. These will include MoLAS Monographs on the Roman and Post-Roman sequences and the post-Great Fire Burial Ground, as well as a popular book and numerous papers. The richness

of the medieval sequence from Poultry and the potential for detailed comparison of the archaeological data with documentary sources will allow many important questions concerning the origin, nature and development of late Saxon and medieval London to be addressed.

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56. *Ibid.*, 376. Nearly 300 post-Fire burials were excavated.