

A pottery assemblage from a 17th-century revetted channel at 12-26 Magdalen Street, Southwark

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THE MUSEUM of London Archaeology Service (MOLAS) was commissioned by Hollybrook Ltd to carry out an archaeological evaluation on the site of 12-26 Magdalen Street, SE1, TQ 3308 8005 (Fig. 1) in April and May 1996 and then to carry out an archaeological excavation on the same site in May and June 1996.

This article describes the results of the archaeological fieldwork, particularly the development of the site from the late medieval/early post-medieval periods through to the 19th century. It focuses on an important pottery assemblage dating to c. 1630-1680 and also describes another group of later pottery from the period c. 1785-1835. Assemblages of metal objects, glass, leather and post-medieval timberwork were also retrieved during the excavation and elements of them form the subject of another paper¹.

Truncation and survival

The modern ground surface was at 4.30 m OD, although there was site-wide horizontal truncation down to c. 3.5 m OD during the construction of the Magdalen Street School in the late 19th century. The intermittent concrete foundations of this structure were in excess of 2.30 m from the modern ground surface and intruded below the level of horizontal truncation, resulting in localised removal of deposits down to a level of c. 0.80 m OD. Additionally, a number of 19th- and 20th-century drains and a Victorian soakaway had removed all archaeological remains in localised areas.

Topography

The site lies over a channel on the western edge of a sand and gravel eyot known as Horsleydown. Naturally-deposited London Clay was discovered at 0.47 m OD at the east of the site. Three inundations in antiquity had left clay and silt horizons on

the site up to 2.57 m OD. A 2.50 m wide gully, aligned east-west, was discovered cutting into these alluvial deposits. The fills of this feature contained no finds and the gully is assumed to be natural in origin, perhaps cut by water action. Certainly it was filled by water-lain deposits. Later, the site was flooded twice more; the second inundation, at 1.69 m OD, yielded a single sherd of pottery dating to the 2nd century AD.

Early post-medieval activity

In the late medieval period the site comprised low-lying ground susceptible to flooding, with a

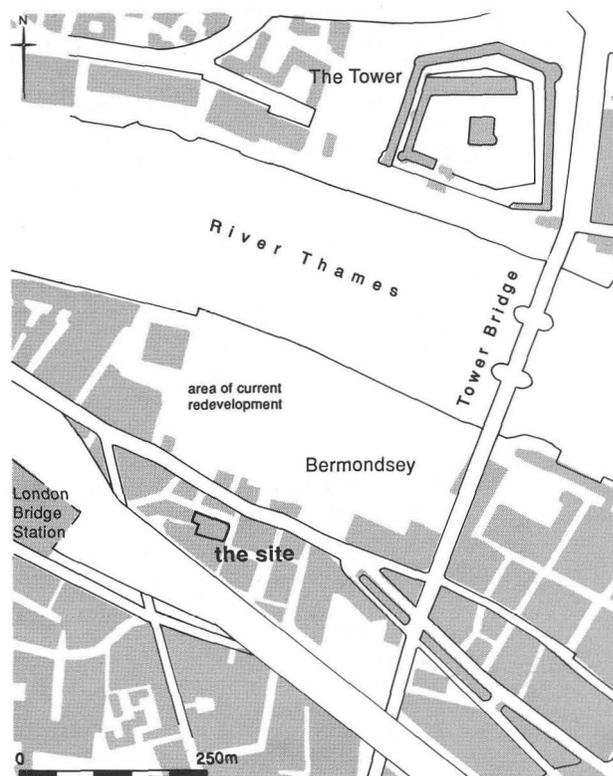


Fig. 1: site location

1. S Chew '16th and 17th century ships' timbers from Magdalen Street Southwark' *Int J Naut Archaeol*, in prep.

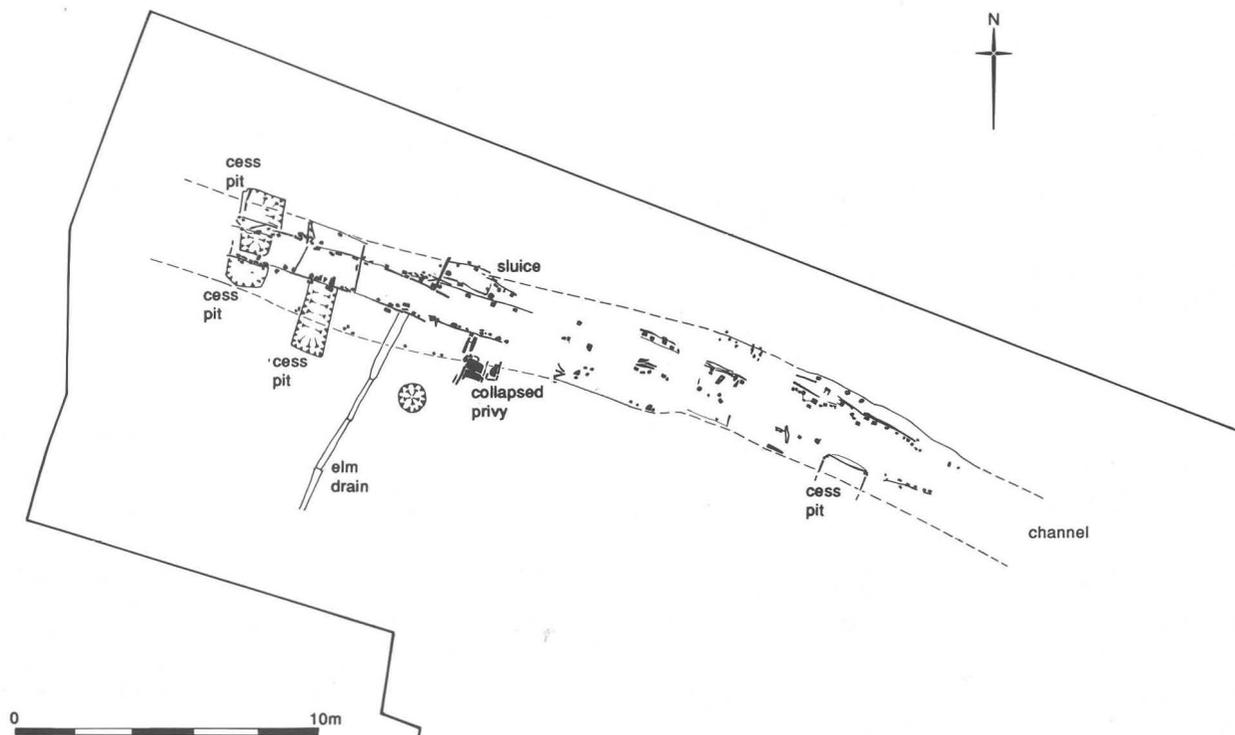


Fig. 2: 16th- and 17th-century occupation

naturally-formed, 3 m wide channel running east-west across the north of the site (Fig. 2). The earliest evidence for human activity on the site was the first dumping of backfill into the channel, which contained pottery dating to *c.* 1480-1620. The feature was subsequently recut, and was canalised and revetted several times from the late 16th century onwards. The revetments consisted of overlapping, iron-riveted, clinker boat planking re-used in the manner of shuttering ply and retained by large stakes. This planking, comprising both sawn and cleft oak timbers, together with some elm, appears typical of 16th- to 17th-century boat remains found in London. A 2.45 m long section of elm planking from a river barge or similar craft is illustrated in Fig. 3. The planking still retained evidence of white-lead paint and tarred horse-hair tufts, both of which had been used as waterproofing agents. A number of the plank-retaining piles were re-used sections of oak framing timber, identified by the presence of 'trenails' or neatly-rounded, specialised oak pegs, as used to hold the original planking to the parent vessel or vessels, which were larger than the river barge mentioned above.

A less common nautical timber was the complete elm keel, 1.70 m in length, from a small or medium-

sized river vessel. This is one of the very few occasions that a complete ship's keel from a British site has been recorded in detail².

A sluice or overflow had been constructed into the revetment, retaining the north side of the watercourse, and a wattle fish or eel trap was built against the south side. These features, together with cess pits, tanning pits, a barrel-lined liming pit, a privy and an elm water pipe are contemporary with the later use of the channel, which was backfilled between 1650 and 1680. Six late 17th-century cess pits were cut next to, or on top of, the backfilled channel (Fig. 2).

No dwellings were discovered that were immediately associated with the use or disuse of this channel, although differences in the build and repair of the revetments and different dumped deposits and backfills within the drain may indicate separate tenements and boundaries that existed in the late 17th century. It is presumed that these dwellings were to the north of the excavated area and that Magdalen Street was a much narrower thoroughfare than it is today – with parts of its buildings lying under the modern roadway and pavement.

2. D Goodburn 'Aspects of the ancient woodwork found at MoLAS site MGS96, Magdalen Street, Southwark', in Chew *op cit* fn 1.



Fig. 3: an archaeologist recording re-used elm boat planking from the south revetment

Some time in the late 17th century the site flooded once more, and the backfilled channel and its associated features were covered by a deposit of fine, dark grey silt up to 0.50 m thick. Thereafter, six distinct dumping/make-up deposits were deposited in the years up to c. 1785 to finally raise the contemporary ground surface to c. 3.44 m OD. The purpose of this dumping, up to 1m thick, may have been to raise the ground surface above potential or actual flood-water levels, and had the effect of preparing the site for later construction.

The pottery sample

A sample of approximately 70% of the pottery recovered was examined (2139 sherds from a minimum of 1290 vessels or MNV). There is a high incidence of joining sherds throughout the material, and numerous large, closely datable groups,

3. S Nelson 'A group of pottery waster material from Kingston' *London Archaeol* 4 no 4 (1981) 96-102.

4. S Pryor and K Blockley 'A 17th century kiln site in Woolwich' *Post-Medieval Archaeol* 12 (1978) 30-85.

including a considerable number of reconstructable vessel profiles and complete or near-complete pots. All this is clearly indicative of contemporary dumping on a large scale.

16th- to 17th-century pottery (Figs. 4-6)

Comparatively little 16th-century pottery was recovered (37 sherds/27 MNV). Most of it is probably residual in rubbish and cesspits associated with the mid 17th-century backfilling of the channel, although some long-lived fabrics and forms could date from any time between c. 1550 and 1700 (e.g. Surrey-Hampshire Border wares and Frechen stonewares). Local coarsewares predominate: Early post-medieval redware (PMRE, formerly 'Tudor brown ware') and post-medieval slipped redware (PMSR, formerly 'Guys Hospital ware') with clear or green glaze. Made at various kilns in the London area, with known production sites at Kingston³ and Woolwich⁴, local redwares are one of the principal kinds of pottery used in the capital from the 16th century onwards. The range of forms is limited: bowls, cauldrons, a pipkin, a jug, a rectangular dripping dish and the neck of a distilling flask, a relatively uncommon and specialised form used industrially in the preparation of nitric acid which was an important element in the parting and assaying of precious metals⁵. Large concentrations of such flasks have been found in the Gresham Street/Cripplegate area and at the Tower of London, both associated with well-established metalworking industries⁶. There are, however, far too few metalworking ceramics from the site to suggest the presence of any such activity on a large scale in the vicinity.

The bulk of the pottery recovered dates to the 17th century (1947 sherds from 1160 MNV), and particularly to the period c. 1630-80. All the large contexts examined (those with more than 100 sherds) come from the backfilling of the channel, dated to c. 1630-50, and from the associated cesspits, representing the main period of domestic dumping on the site. Several contexts associated with the 18th- to 19th-century buildings were also dated to the 17th century (211 sherds from 141 MNV), and include both residual material and long-lived types which cannot be closely dated.

In general, the 17th-century fabrics and forms are those common throughout the London area at this period, and compare closely in their range and relative proportions with large assemblages from

5. S Moorhouse 'Medieval Distilling Apparatus of Glass and Pottery' *Medieval Archaeol* 16 (1972) 79-121.

6. L Blackmore and J Pearce *Metalworking Ceramics in London* in prep.



Fig. 4: 17th-century pottery (clockwise from top left): Montelupo maiolica dish; group of dated, inscribed porringers in tin-glazed ware; parts of two dishes in Late Valencian lustreware.

the City, such as the massive group recovered from the City Ditch at Boston House, Broad Street⁷. Local coarsewares remain the chief source represented: Post-medieval redware (PMR), which developed from PMRE at the end of the 16th century; and PMSR which went out of production during the second half of the 17th century. Together, they account for 30.4% by MNV of all 17th-century pottery sampled. Border wares, both the whitewares which ceased production in the early 18th century and the longer-lived redwares (RBOR)⁸, are the next most common source of pottery at this period (25.7% MNV). Fine redwares from the Harlow area of Essex – post-medieval fine redware (PMFR), post-medieval black-glazed redware (PMBL) and Metropolitan slipware (METS) – are found in similar

7. J Pearce *The Pottery from Excavations at Boston House, 90-94 Broad Street, London, BRO90, Assessment Report* (MoLAS 1994).

8. J Pearce *Post-Medieval Pottery in London 1500-1700 Volume 1:*

proportions (14.6% MNV) to tin-glazed wares (TGW), including unfinished, biscuit-fired vessels (BISC) (a total of 15.5% MNV) and imported continental pottery (13.2% MNV).

Cooking and other kitchen vessels are the most numerous forms recovered in both coarse redwares and Border wares (40.7% MNV): cauldrons, tripod pipkins, bowls, and dishes of various types which could also be used for serving in the broadest sense, as well as pipkins, skillets, dripping dishes and chafing dishes. Serving vessels in several different fabrics (BORD, TGW and PMBL in particular) are the next most common functional group (16.6% MNV): dishes, plates, jugs, porringers, mugs, tankards, caudle cups and tygs. Among these is a fine, complete rounded jug in PMSRG from the fill of the channel and several large dishes in METS, including one with an unusual design of overall random trellis motifs.

Other functional categories well represented are storage vessels, including forms such as bottles (FREC and TGW) used also for serving (6.5% MNV), and jars of various types and sizes; and sanitary vessels (6.7% MNV), mostly cham-

ber pots in BORD and PMR, as well as a near-complete bedpan in RBOR. More unusual are a condiment dish and a 'chicken feeder', both in BORDY. The latter is an enigmatic form which defies satisfactory interpretation⁹.

Much of the TGW, dating to the early and mid 17th century, is quite decorative and would originally have been intended largely for display. Of particular note are the complete base of an early 17th-century charger with 'bird-on-rock' decoration, a kind associated with Christian Wilhelm's factory at Pickleherring, situated nearby¹⁰. This sherd was clearly a waster, since the glaze has 'crawled'. Part of a fluted dish with overfired, bubbled glaze represents another waster, again paralleled by ma-

Border Wares (London 1992).

9. *Ibid.*, 44.

10. F Britton *London Delftware* (1987) 35-6.



Fig. 5: 17th-century fluted bowl in Central Italian tin-glazed ware.

terial from the Pickleherring factory¹¹. There are also chargers with pinwheel and Wan Li-style decoration in blue and white, and several porringer, including substantial remains from a matching set of four vessels of straight-sided profile¹², with overall white glaze and a central cartouche containing the letters NRF finely painted in blue, all dated, somewhat illegibly, "1653" (Fig. 4, top right). A complete plain white TGW drug jar has its original powdery white contents packed solid to the rim. Considering the proximity of the site to several tin-glazed ware factories operating during the 17th and 18th centuries (in particular, Pickleherring, 1618-1723; Still Stairs, 1663-1685; and Horsely Down Lane, 1714-1772¹³), the overall quantity of BISC and TGW wasters is unremarkable and does not suggest large-scale dumping of ceramic waste in the immediate vicinity.

Rhenish pottery is by far the most common import (8.1% MNV), principally Frechen stoneware Bartmann jugs. Other relatively common continental wares include sherds from *pégauux* in unglazed Saintonge ware from south-west France; a Spanish starred costrel with unusual spiral decoration; and Martincamp flasks from Normandy. A total of 3.1% MNV comes from the Low Countries, including several cauldrons, bowls and a frying pan in Dutch red earthenware (DUTR), as well as two complete



Fig. 6: 17th-century Westerwald stoneware panel jug.

fuming pots or braziers, and a number of redwares with slip coating and decoration.

Several vessels are especially noteworthy, particularly among the imported wares. Some are of high quality, and may have been discarded by relatively wealthy middle class households living nearby; or they may represent some of the more unusual trade goods and souvenirs brought back from foreign travels by merchants, sailors and others living or working near the waterfront. Among them are part of a chafing dish in Beauvais green-and-yellow-glazed ware¹⁴; the rim and supporting knob of a green-glazed French chafing dish¹⁵; the rim of a large, triangular crucible, probably of Hessian origin and used for refining precious metals¹⁶; two dishes in 16th-century Late Valencian lustreware, with zoned decoration in overall copper lustre (VALL; Fig. 4 bottom); and a plate in Portuguese tin-glazed ware decorated in the Wan

11. Roy Stephenson *pers comm.*

12. C R Orton 'Post-Medieval Pottery' in P Hinton (ed) *Excavations in Southwark 1973-6, Lambeth 1973-79* London Middlesex Archaeol Soc/Surrey Archaeol Soc Joint Publ 3, 311, type A.

13. Britton *op cit* fn 10, 35-8, 41.

14. J G Hurst, D S Neal & H J E van Beuningen *Pottery Produced*

and Traded in North-west Europe 1350-1650 Rotterdam Papers 6 (1986) fig 49, no 152.

15. *Ibid* fig 36, no 106, dated c. 1575-1625.

16. J Cotter 'The Mystery of the Hessian Wares. Post-Medieval Triangular Crucibles' in D Gaimster & M Redknap (eds) *Everyday and Exotic Pottery from Europe c. 600-1900* (Oxford 1992) 256-272.

Li style. One of the most notable and unusual imports is a fluted bowl in Central Italian tin-glazed ware, possibly from Urbino, Deruta or Faenza (Fig. 5). It may have stood on a pedestal base and has two opposed, vertical loop handles with elaborately curled terminals. The decoration is in yellow, ochre and manganese on a white ground, and consists of finely painted birds, snails, assorted grotesques and other creatures. This type of decoration became popular in Italy after the rediscovery c. 1480 of 'grotesque' wall paintings of fantastic creatures in the underground caverns or *grottesche* of the *Domus Aurea*, Nero's former palace in Rome¹⁷. The vessel can be dated on stylistic grounds to the late 17th century. Another exotic import is part of a dish in Montelupo maiolica (MLTG) with fruit and foliage decoration (Fig. 4 top left). A second dish in MLTG is painted with large oak leaves. The long, narrow neck of a flask with two vertical loop handles springing from the shoulder in an unidentified whiteware with overall clear

17. T Wilson *Italian Maiolica* (Oxford 1989) 64-6.

glaze, appearing dark yellow, is probably a Mediterranean import. A large part of an elaborately decorated panel jug in Westerwald stoneware depicts the muses holding architectural and drawing implements (Fig. 6).

There is little pottery datable to the last quarter of the 17th century, most of it coming from the cesspits associated with the backfilling of the channel: a single sherd from a Bartmann-style bottle with a medallion in the form of scorpion, made in London stoneware, probably from Dwight's Fulham factory; TGW plates decorated with 'Chinamen among grasses', a style common c. 1670-90¹⁸; and a biscuit tin-glazed ware plate, a form not introduced before the mid 17th century.

18th- and 19th-century occupation

The sequence of dumped deposits mentioned above is seen to have been laid to facilitate the construction of four brick buildings in the late 18th century (Fig. 7). These structures were severely truncated

18. Orton *op cit* fn 10, 327.

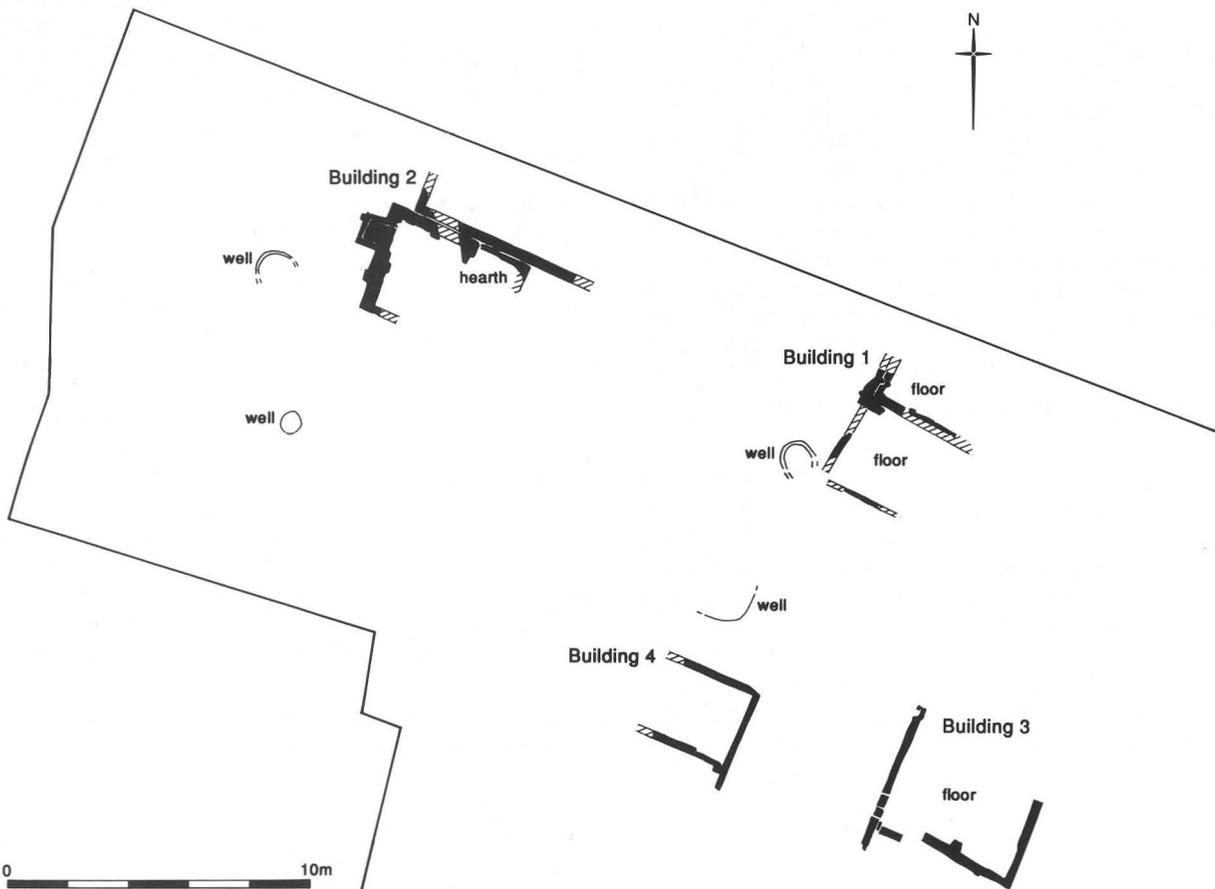


Fig. 7: 18th century occupation

horizontally by the construction of a school in the mid 19th century and the basal courses only survived for three of them.

No definite functions can be ascribed to the buildings, although ash dumps and burnt clay deposits associated with Building 1 may indicate that some form of industrial activity was taking place nearby. Building 3 appears to have been an enclosing wall for a yard or garden, as its walls and footings were not substantial enough to have been load-bearing. The shape and size of Building 4 (c. 2 m square) suggests that it was some form of outbuilding, perhaps a shed or privy.

The size of the bread oven discovered within Building 2 (Fig. 8) indicates that it was domestic rather than commercial; an external pitched-tile hearth, adjacent to the building's robbed-out east wall, suggests that some form of industrial activity may also have been taking place near this structure.



Fig. 8: Building 1 from the south showing bread oven and pitched-tile hearth.

Various rubbish and cesspits, wells and post-holes were discovered associated with this period of occupation, and could be ascribed to the four buildings. Other features belonged to another structure further west, under the present Gibbons Rents. The 18th-century structures were demolished c. 1850 to make way for the Victorian school buildings.

18th- and 19th-century pottery

The latest material in the sample dates to c. 1830-50, although a cursory examination of the undated 20 boxes of pottery showed that there are large 18th- to 19th-century groups yet to be recorded.

There is no obviously early to mid 18th-century pottery in the sample spot-dated. In contexts dated later than 1785, associated with the occupation of the four buildings, the usual range of coarsewares and industrial finewares occurs and there is little of particular interest. The only items worthy of note are a teabowl in Worcester porcelain with underglaze blue transfer decoration, marked under the base with an infilled crescent; this mark was used by the factory on underglaze transfer-printed wares in the Dr Wall period, from the 1760s to 1783¹⁹. This sherd and part of a jug in transfer-printed ware of the period 1830-50 are the latest in a group which would otherwise be dated to the 17th century and they may therefore be intrusive. Part of a jug in English yellow-glazed earthenware dates to 1785-1835 when this distinctive pottery was in production. There are also two complete teapot lids in Black Basalt ware, one with engine-turned decoration in a basket-weave pattern and the other with a 'widow' finial; both probably date to the 1790s.

Conclusions

The excavation at 12-26 Magdalen Street, Southwark, is important for a number of reasons. First, the existence of the two natural channels should aid in the creation of topographic models of this part of Southwark during the prehistoric and late medieval periods. Second, the intensive activity and occupation which took place on the site from c. 1580, can be linked to the expansion of Southwark in the early post-medieval period, and corroborates the evidence from documentary sources and from related archaeological sites such as Abbots Lane (AB092)²⁰, Battle Bridge Lane (BAB95)²¹ and 4-42

19. H Sandon *The Illustrated Guide to Worcester Porcelain* (London 1969) 43.

20. R Bluer 'Excavations at Abbots Lane, Southwark' *London Archaeol* 7 no 3 (1993) 59-66.

21. I Grainger 'Excavations at Battle Bridge Lane in 1995. Medieval and early Post Medieval development along Tooley Street, Southwark' *Surrey Archaeol Collect*, in prep.

Brunswick Court (BRC93)²². This period is extremely well represented in the stratigraphy from the site. The existence of tanning and liming pits, together with an external pitched-tile hearth and areas of burnt clay and ash and waste dumps, indicate that industrial activity was taking place on the site. These discoveries are similar to finds from Brunswick Court, Queen Elizabeth Street (QEN88)²³ and 283 Tooley Street (TOS93)²⁴, and indicate that this part of Southwark in the post-medieval period comprised relatively small tenement buildings where frequent industrial activity took place, albeit generally on a small scale and of limited duration²⁵.

Finally, the artefactual remains recovered are diverse and of high quality. The post-medieval re-used ship's timbers add to our corpus of knowledge concerning water management and ship manufacture in this period and are comparable to discoveries from Bellamy's Wharf (BEY93)²⁶, Jacob's Island (JAC96)²⁷ and Tunnel Road, Rotherhithe (RTH96)²⁸.

The 17th-century pottery from Magdalen Street constitutes one of the most significant assemblages of this period recovered in London in recent years, and bears comparison with large, well-dated groups from the City, particularly material dumped

in the City Ditch (e.g., at Broad Street)²⁹. The pottery is outstanding because of its great quantity; the numerous sizeable groups which can be closely dated; the large number of vessel profiles, and complete or near-complete vessels; for the range of fabrics and forms represented which, although mostly those in common use throughout London, give a sharply focused picture of ceramic supply and function in this area of Southwark at the time of the Civil War and Commonwealth; and for the presence of several unusual and high quality imported wares.

Acknowledgements

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22. B Watson *4-42 Brunswick Court and 12-16 White's Grounds, London SE1, an Archaeological Evaluation*. MoLAS report.
 23. L Wheeler *pers comm*.
 24. J Drummond-Murray, D Saxby and B Watson 'Recent Archaeological Work in the Bermondsey District of Southwark' *London Archaeol* 7 no 10 (1994) 251-7.
 25. Chew *op cit* fn 1.
 26. D Saxby and D Goodburn 'Recent Maritime Archaeological Discoveries on the Thames Waterfront at Bellamy's Wharf,

- Rotherhithe, London SE16' *Mariner's Mirror*, forthcoming.
 27. D Saxby *Jacob's Island bounded by Mill Street, George Row, Jacob Street and Bermondsey Wall West, London SE1, an Archaeological Post-Excavation Assessment* MoLAS report.
 28. S Chew 'Re-used Ships Timbers from the Knot Garden, Rotherhithe, adjacent to the Mayflower Inn, London Borough of Southwark, London, England' *J Soc Hist Archaeol* (USA) in prep.
 29. Pearce *op cit* fn 7.

Excavations and post-excavation work

City of London. Museum of London Archaeology Service, Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB (0171-410 2200).

Croydon & District, processing and cataloguing of excavated and museum collections every Tuesday throughout the year. Archaeological reference collection of fabric types, domestic animal bones, clay tobacco pipes and glass ware also available for comparative work. Enquiries to Jim Davison, 28 Blenheim Park Road, South Croydon, CR2 6BB.

Greater London (except north-east and south-east London), by Museum of London Archaeology Service. Excavations and processing in all areas. General enquiries to MOLAS, Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB (0171-410 2200).

Borough of Greenwich. Cataloguing of excavated and other archaeological material, the majority from sites in the borough. For further information contact Greenwich Borough Museum, 232 Plumstead High Street, London SE18 1JT (0181-855 3240).

Hammersmith & Fulham, by Fulham Archaeological Rescue

Group. Processing of material from Fulham Palace. Tuesdays, 7.45 p.m.-10 p.m. at Fulham Palace, Bishop's Avenue, Fulham Palace Road, SW6. Contact Keith Whitehouse, 86 Clancarty Road, SW6 (0171-731 4498).

Kingston, by Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society (KUTAS). Processing and cataloguing of excavated and museum collections every Thursday (10 a.m.) at the North Kingston Centre, Richmond Road, Kingston upon Thames KT2 5PE. Enquiries 0181-546 5386.

Surrey, by Surrey County Archaeological Unit. Enquiries to Rob Poulton, Archaeological Unit Manager, Old Library Headquarters, 25 West Street, Dorking, RH4 1DE (01306-886 466).

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