

Fig. 1: site location

# 1600 years of the City defences at Aldersgate

Jon Butler

## Introduction

PRE-CONSTRUCT Archaeology was commissioned by the Argent Group Investments plc to conduct an archaeological field evaluation and excavation within the area formerly occupied by Alder, Castle and Falcon House at 1-6 Aldersgate Street in the City of London (Fig. 1). The main phase of excavation and evaluation took place between November 1997 and February 1998. Thereafter a small controlled excavation in new drainage runs along the north-west side of the site was undertaken and an intermittent watching brief

was maintained until May 1998 when all relevant groundworks were completed. This paper is preliminary and a much more detailed publication is planned for when the analysis has been completed.

The site included three Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs): the city wall bastion, the Roman, medieval and post-medieval city wall, and the Roman, medieval and post-medieval city gate of Aldersgate. The investigations revealed a complex history of the City of London's defences from early Roman times to the post-medieval period.

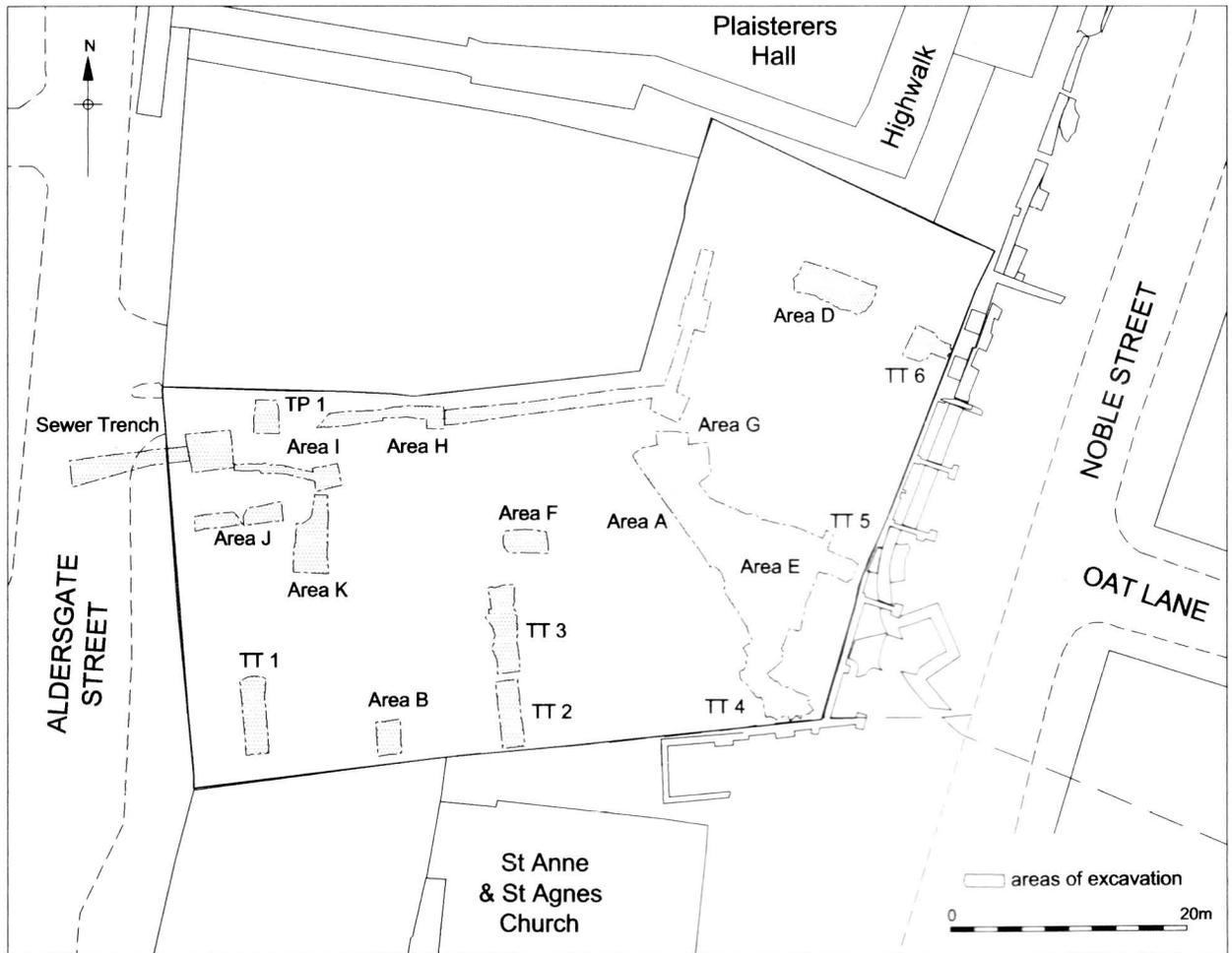


Fig. 2: areas of archaeological investigation

### The archaeological investigations

The site, on the east side of Aldersgate Street, was roughly 'L' shaped, respecting the historic property boundaries determined by the city wall. The development area was in an important location, on the boundary of the Roman city, at the junction of Cripplegate fort and the Roman city wall.

The strategy for the site was dual purpose; on the one hand involving an evaluation of the extent of survival of the city wall, Aldersgate and Bastion 15 along the southern and eastern boundaries of the site, and on the other, for the excavation of limited areas within the city ditch where new lift shafts were to be sunk, for a sewer heading in the north-west corner of site and new drainage runs along the north-western boundary. A watching brief was maintained during the rest of the ground works (Fig. 2).

With the exception of the areas where consent for archaeological excavation was given, no medieval

or Roman deposits were removed. In the southern part of the site, in the area of the SAMS, the archaeological deposits were recorded in top plan and section where possible. Finds retrieval from these areas was therefore limited. Once the archaeological investigation of the areas was completed the surviving archaeological deposits were protected with a layer of *terram* geotextile. Thus, most of the archaeological remains encountered on site were left preserved *in situ* as agreed in the mitigation strategy.

### The City Defences

The fort at Cripplegate, laid out some time between AD 90 and 120, was defended by a 'V'-shaped ditch up to c. 3.m wide. Between AD 190 and 225 a defensive wall two miles long, encircling the landward side of the city, was constructed. The western and northern sides of the fort were incorporated into the city wall by adding 1.2m thickness of masonry internally to strengthen the existing walls. The city wall was 2.4m thick and constructed of

ragstone and mortar with tile lacing courses at regular intervals and a red sandstone plinth on its external face at ground level. The masonry rested on a foundation of puddled clay and flints. The wall was defended by a roughly 'U'-shaped ditch about 4.5m wide and 1.8m deep, the upcast of which was piled inside the wall to form a rampart about 4.9m wide and 1.8m high<sup>1</sup>. Later a gate was inserted at Aldersgate, perhaps to replace a small postern, which may have served a narrow road recorded to the north at 7-12 Aldersgate Street, and dating from the 1st/2nd century. During the 4th century bastions were added to the eastern circuit of the wall and the ditch was greatly enlarged to accommodate them.

The City was largely abandoned at the end of the Roman period, the Anglo-Saxons preferring to settle in the Strand/Covent Garden area. In response to Viking raids on London in 841, 851 and 871 it appears that by c. 890 the Saxons had to a large extent moved from *Lundenwic* on the Strand back within the former Roman walled city<sup>2</sup>. The Saxon king who has been most frequently associated with the planning and re-population of the former Roman city is Alfred the Great<sup>3</sup>. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 886 states that "The same year King Alfred occupied London and all the English, those of them that were free from the Danish bondage, turned to him, and he then entrusted the burgh (fortified place) to the keeping of the ealdorman Ethelred."<sup>4</sup>. It is more than likely that the city defences would have been repaired and the ditches maintained. The success of London in holding off Danish attacks in 994, 1009 and 1013 suggests that the defences were probably in good order.

During the medieval period the walls and ditch were continually repaired and maintained. It appears from the archaeological evidence that bastions were added to the western circuit at this time, including Bastion 15 at the junction of the city wall and the former Cripplegate fort. Stow mentions repairs to the walls being undertaken in the reigns of John, Henry III, Edward III, Richard II and Edward IV<sup>5</sup>. He records that "the ditch . . . was begun to be made by the Londoners in the year 1211, and was finished in the year 1213, the 15th (year) of King John. This ditch being then made of 200 feet

broad". Thereafter it was "cleansed" in 1354, 1379, 1414 and 1477. Regular "cleansings" were recorded until the end of the 16th century. However, much of the circuit of the ditch had been infilled by the second half of the 16th century to satisfy the constant need for more space within the cramped City.

### Roman activity before the City wall

A 'U'-shaped ditch was recorded in a NE-SW aligned section in the south-east corner of site. An apparent return, heavily truncated by a later cut, continued in the NW-SE section. The ditch was backfilled with a mixture of brickearth and gravel, from which no datable finds were retrieved. However, this cut predated the Roman city wall, which was built over it, and was probably associated with the Cripplegate fort, as it seems to have respected the rounded south-west corner of the fort. It did not align with the fort ditch excavated by Grimes in the Noble Street garden area but was very similar in size to that recorded by him<sup>6</sup> and the base was at an almost identical level<sup>7</sup>. It may, therefore, represent a second ditch beyond that recorded by Grimes, suggesting that the fort may have been protected by a double ditch on its western side.

An east-west aligned cut backfilled with a homogeneous dark grey brown silty deposit was encountered in top plan along the southern boundary of the site (Fig. 3). In section it was flat-bottomed and cut to the north by a later city ditch. The cut was traced for up to 23.4m across the site, roughly following the line of the later city wall, and survived to a width of up to 6.6m and depth of 1.5m. The ditch did not continue on the line of the later city wall into the south-eastern corner of site. This large feature could represent a city boundary ditch, which preceded the construction of the city wall. In other Romano-British towns, such as *Verulamium* and Silchester, the construction of walls was preceded in the 2nd century by a ditch and rampart defence<sup>8</sup> and this may well have been the case in *Londinium* as well. Other traces of a pre-wall ditch have been found to the east of the fort at Crosswall<sup>9</sup>, Dukes Place<sup>10</sup>, 1 Crutched Friars<sup>11</sup>, 85 London Wall<sup>12</sup> and opposite 57 London Wall<sup>13</sup>. The ditch's alignment with the south-west corner of Cripplegate fort and the dating of it to the first half of the 2nd century for its infilling suggests

1. P. Marsden *Roman London* (1980) 120-1.

2. A. Vince *Saxon London* (1990) 20.

3. J. Clark 'King Alfred's London and London's King Alfred' *London Archaeol* 9, no. 2 (1999) 35-8.

4. G. N. Garmonsway *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (1954).

5. J. Stow *A Survey of London* (1598) 41-2.

6. W. Grimes *The Excavation of Roman and Medieval London* (1968) 52.

7. B. Watson *The Plaisterers' Company Garden, Noble St., EC2: An Archaeological Assessment* (1993) MoLAS, 9.

8. J. Wacher *The Towns of Roman Britain* (2nd ed. 1995) 71.

9. G. Egan, C. Maloney & J. Maloney *Excavations at Crosswall, London EC3, 1979-80* DUA Archive Report (1981) unpub.

10. J. Maloney 'Recent Work on London's Defences' in *Roman Urban Defences in the West* CBA Research Report 51 (1983) 97.

11. R. Merrifield *The Roman City of London* (1965) 291.

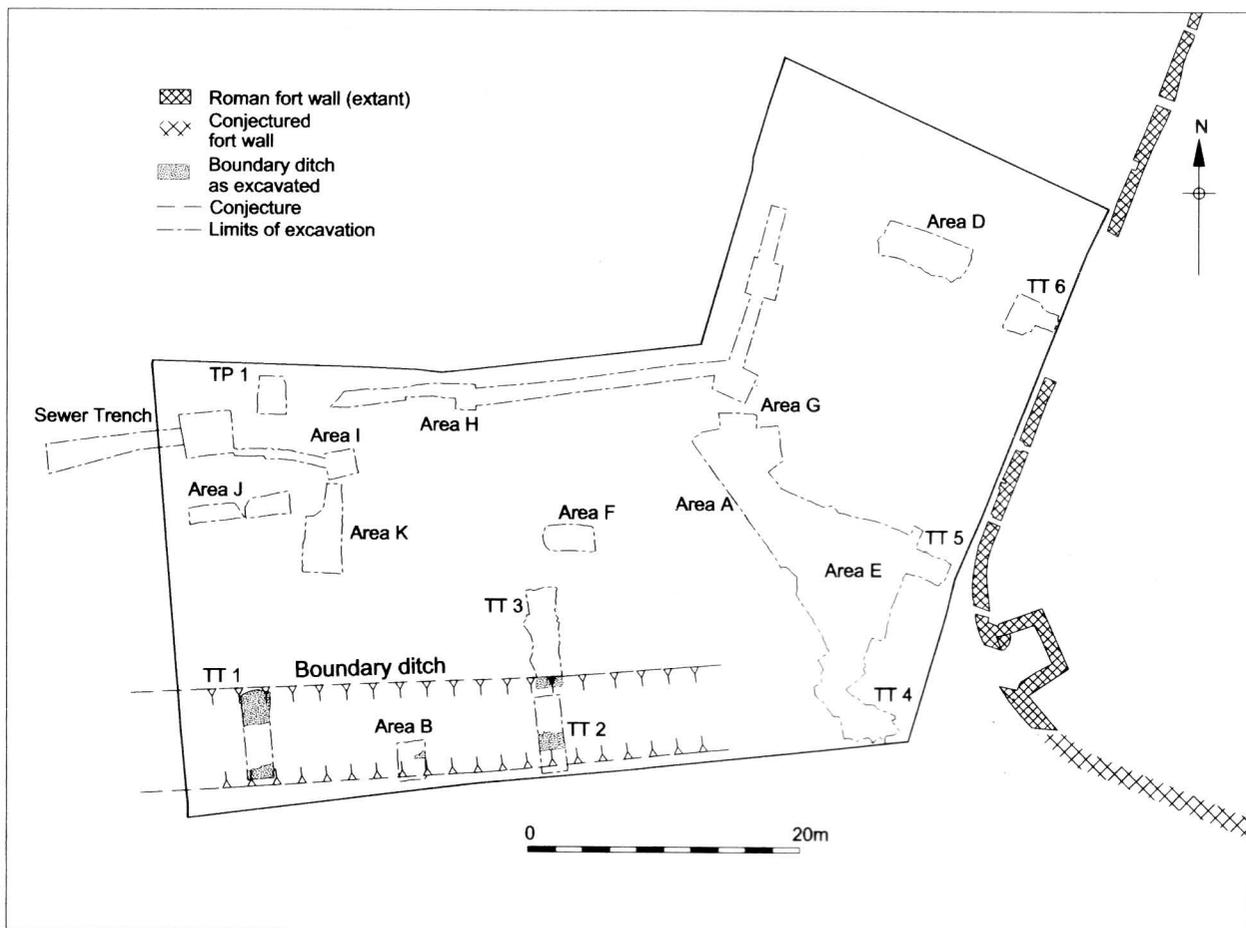


Fig. 3: 2nd-century boundary ditch and Cripplegate Fort

that it may have been contemporary with the fort, and together with the remains found to the east on several sites may represent the late 1st/early 2nd century boundary/*pomoerium* of *Londinium*. However, previously the 1st-century boundary has been postulated as being on a line south of the south-west corner of the fort, based on a change in the alignment of the east-west street, at a point where it was intersected by other roads, and the distribution of early burials<sup>14</sup>. This would be the first evidence of such a boundary west of Cripplegate fort.

In a sewer heading in the north-west corner of the site an island of Roman archaeology survived the extensive truncation caused by the city ditch. Thin gravel surfaces, up to 2.2m wide, were observed. A roughly north-south aligned road up to 2m wide

was found on the site immediately to the north at the same height and in direct alignment<sup>15</sup>, where the gravel was mixed with mortar. It seems likely that this was a continuation of the metalling observed in the sewer heading. A slight hollow backfilled with a mixture of silt and gravel at the east side of the road could be the remains of the attempted repair of wheel ruts, a feature also observed to the north<sup>16</sup>. A series of seven vertically driven stakeholes, roughly aligned north-south along the eastern edge of the road, might represent the remains of a road-side fence. Two postholes, one vertical, the other set at an angle of 45° could possibly represent part of an upright and brace of a wooden bridge across the city ditch. Both were only recorded in section and definite interpreta-

12. D. Sankey & A. Stephenson 'Recent Work on London's Defences' in *The Defences of Roman London* reprint from Roman Frontier Studies 1989: Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies (ed. V. Maxfield & J. Dobson) University of Exeter (1991) 117-8.

13. B. Pye *A Watching Brief opposite 57 London Wall, EC2 DUA* Archive Report (1985) unpub., 16.

14. P. Marsden 'Two Roman Public Baths in London' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 27 (1976) 47-9; D. Perring & S. Roskams with P. Allen 'Early Development of Roman London West of the Walbrook' in *Archaeology of Roman London* vol. 2, CBA Research Report 70 (1991) 108-9.

15. G. Egan 7-12 *Aldersgate Street DUA* Archive Report (1985) unpub. 16. *Op cit* fn 15.

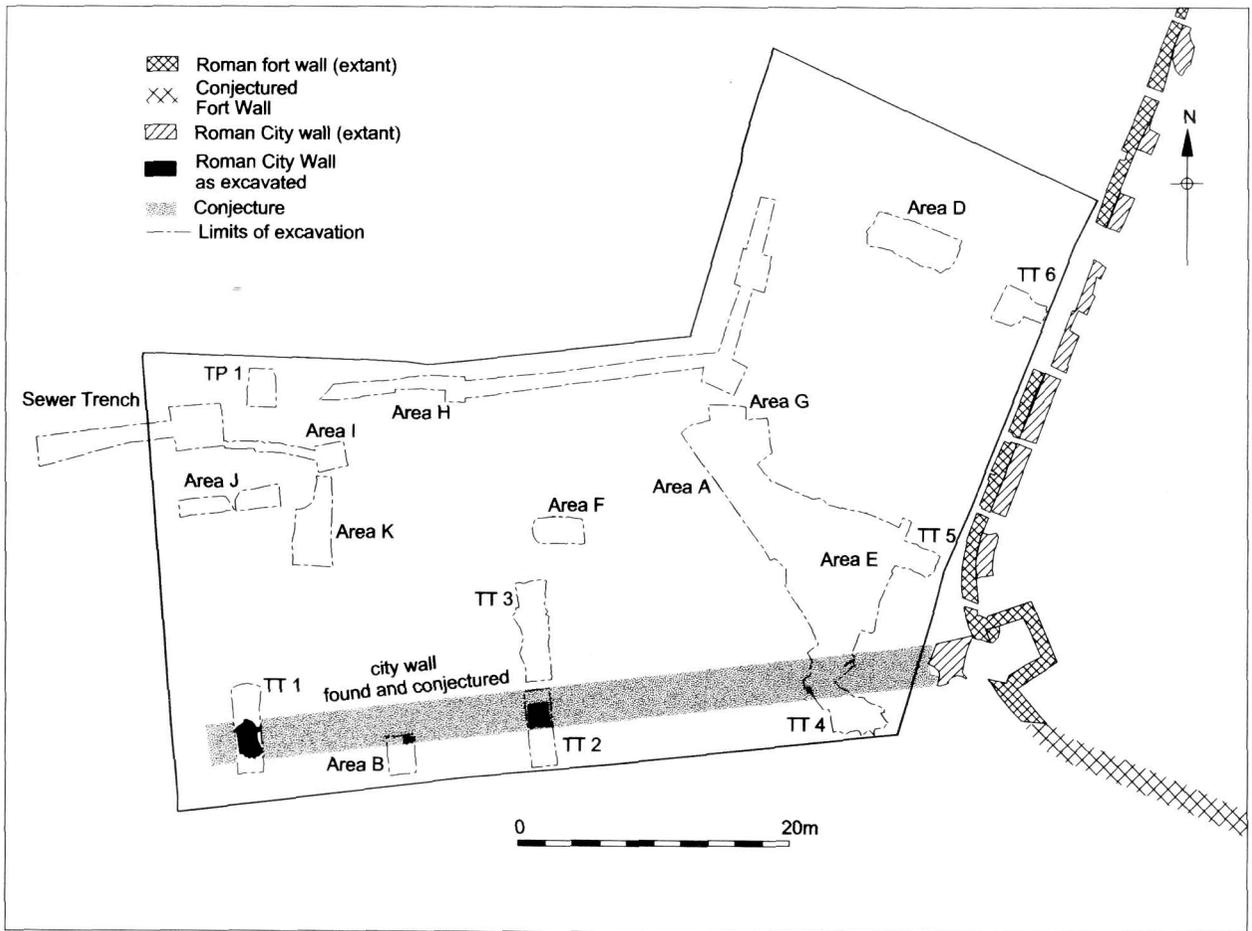


Fig. 4: the Roman City Wall

tion is not possible. This road was on a direct alignment with the projected eastern passage of the later Roman Aldersgate, which was unfortunately not observed on site, and it may be a forerunner of the later major Roman street which left the City through Aldersgate.

### The Roman City wall and ditches

The foundations of the Roman city wall were observed along the southern part of the site (Fig. 4). They consisted of lumps of roughly-hewn ragstone and flint in a bonding matrix of sticky light brown puddled brickearth clay. The foundation had a maximum width of 3.23m in the west, in the only area in which an untruncated width could be observed, as it was heavily truncated by modern concrete footings elsewhere. This was much wider than the *c.* 2.7m encountered elsewhere on its circuit<sup>17</sup>. The construction of a wider foundation at this point could have been in response to the local ground conditions. In 1939 the opening of a

GPO tunnel beneath Aldersgate Street in the south-west corner of this area found that the site was occupied by a marshy hollow or stream bed filled with black silt to a depth of at least 18 feet below street level. The footings of the city wall had been widened and deepened and then reinforced with large blocks of ragstone and timber piles<sup>18</sup> to overcome the problem. To the east, remnants of ragstone foundation bonded with a light brown sandy mortar and up to 0.52m high were revealed on top of the puddled clay foundation, which was at least 0.6m deep. The surviving fragments of wall were directly aligned with the heavily truncated stub of city wall in the south-west corner of the Noble Street Garden, discovered by Grimes<sup>19</sup>. It would appear that the foundations of the wall were deeper the further west they progressed across site.

Associated with the Roman city wall were a series of brickearth, gravel and clay silt layers against the internal face of the wall. A similar sequence of

17. D. Perring *Roman London* (1991) 90.

18. *Op cit* fn 11, 103.

19. *Op cit* fn 6.

brickearth sealed by gravel was recorded in very truncated form against the wall in Area B. Similarly a gravel deposit was found against the wall in the south-east corner of site. These were probably the remains of the internal rampart against the city wall, which was most notably found at the Central Criminal Court, Warwick Square<sup>20</sup>.

Remains of a ditch were observed in the south-east corner of the site, where a flat-bottomed cut, measuring at least 2.07m wide and 1.25m deep with a gently sloping side to the south was recorded in section. This was backfilled with a mixture of silt and brickearth deposits containing large lumps of ragstone, presumably originally part of the city wall. The city wall ditch was typically 3.05m to 4.88m wide, between 1.17m and 2.00m deep<sup>21</sup> and lay between 2.7m and 4.5m from the external face of the city wall. This cut lay *c.* 2.2m from the projected line of the wall and would therefore seem to fulfil all the characteristics of the original Roman city ditch associated with the building of the wall.

Truncating the southern edge of the city ditch was a 'V'-shaped cut, measuring 2.26m wide by 1.00m deep in section. It was backfilled with mixed brick-earth and clayey silt deposits. Partial excavation for finds retrieval showed the cut to be aligned east-west on its northern side (the southern edge was truncated), running parallel to the city wall with its truncated southern side at a distance of only 0.60m from the outer face of the city wall. It probably represented a drainage ditch associated with the later Roman ditch.

Evidence of the later, wider flat-bottomed Roman city ditch found elsewhere on the wall circuit at Ludgate Hill<sup>22</sup>, Aldgate/Dukes Place<sup>23</sup> and the GPO site<sup>24</sup> is less forthcoming on this site. This is probably due to it being largely cut away by the later deeper medieval ditch; also as Maloney points out a large late Roman ditch could have remained open for a long time, especially after the abandonment of the city after the end of the Roman period and the upper fills might well contain pot of early medieval date, as was the case in the possible late Roman ditches found at Houndsditch and Dukes Place<sup>25</sup>. However, in the tunnel beneath Aldersgate Street, which connected the sewer heading in the north-west corner of site to the main sewer, a flat-bottomed cut slightly sloping from north down to south was observed. The cut measured at least

6.48m east-west by at least 2.2m north-south by 1.5m in depth. It was backfilled with a mixture of dark grey and dark brown waterlain silt and sandy silt containing frequent Roman ceramic building material and animal bone. It may represent the late Roman ditch. Two sherds of Saxon pottery recovered from the tunnel may represent the scanty remains of the later Saxon city ditch. Stratigraphic retrieval of finds was impossible and the finds which were recovered came from the contractors' spoil during a watching brief on the digging of the tunnel. To the east of the sewer heading, a north-south possibly linear cut, heavily truncated to the east by later ditches, was observed. The silt backfill contained 2nd-century pot and was apparently contemporary with the ditch deposits in the tunnel to the west of the gravel surfaces in the sewer heading. It would therefore appear that the strip of land occupied by the earlier road has been left as a causeway approaching the site of the Roman gate at Aldersgate. This causeway through the ditches seems to have been respected by the Saxon ditch and in part by the medieval city ditch, the sides of which rose as it approached the western edge of the site.

The edge of the later Roman city ditch closest to the Wall has been lost on the site due to the presence of the large medieval ditch *c.* 3m from the Wall. However, a large ditch to the north of the site contained much Saxo-Norman pot and could well have originally been the late Roman ditch. Evidence for this ditch can be found on other surrounding sites. The western edge of the late Roman ditch was recorded at a distance of *c.* 25m from the outer face of the city wall at 7-12 Aldersgate Street<sup>26</sup>, making the late Roman ditch some 23m wide. On the east side of Aldersgate Street in 1887 G. Fox observed a large flat-bottomed ditch 22.71m wide by 4.29m deep with an inner edge 3.12m from the face of the Roman wall, which he interpreted as Roman, although this dating was doubted by Wheeler<sup>27</sup>. Tunnelling for a sewer in 1924 revealed "black mud, still oozing in some places, and very foul smelling" a few feet to the north of the city wall and extending 21.3m to the north, containing numerous animal bones<sup>28</sup>. This was then reckoned to be part of the medieval city ditch, but is very similar to the material observed in the sewer tunnel excavated as part of the current project which was dated to the Roman period.

20. *Op cit* fn 1, 120-1.

21. *Op cit* fn 17, 91.

22. C. Hill in B. Hobley & J. Schofield 'Excavations in the City of London: First Interim Report 1974-5' *Antiq J* 57 (1977) 45.

23. P. Marsden 'Archaeological Finds in the City of London 1966-

8' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 22 pt. 2 (1969) 20-6.

24. RCHM Vol. III *Roman London* (1928) 94, 96.

25. *Op cit* fn 10, III.

26. *Op cit* fn 15.

27. *Op cit* fn 24, 94.

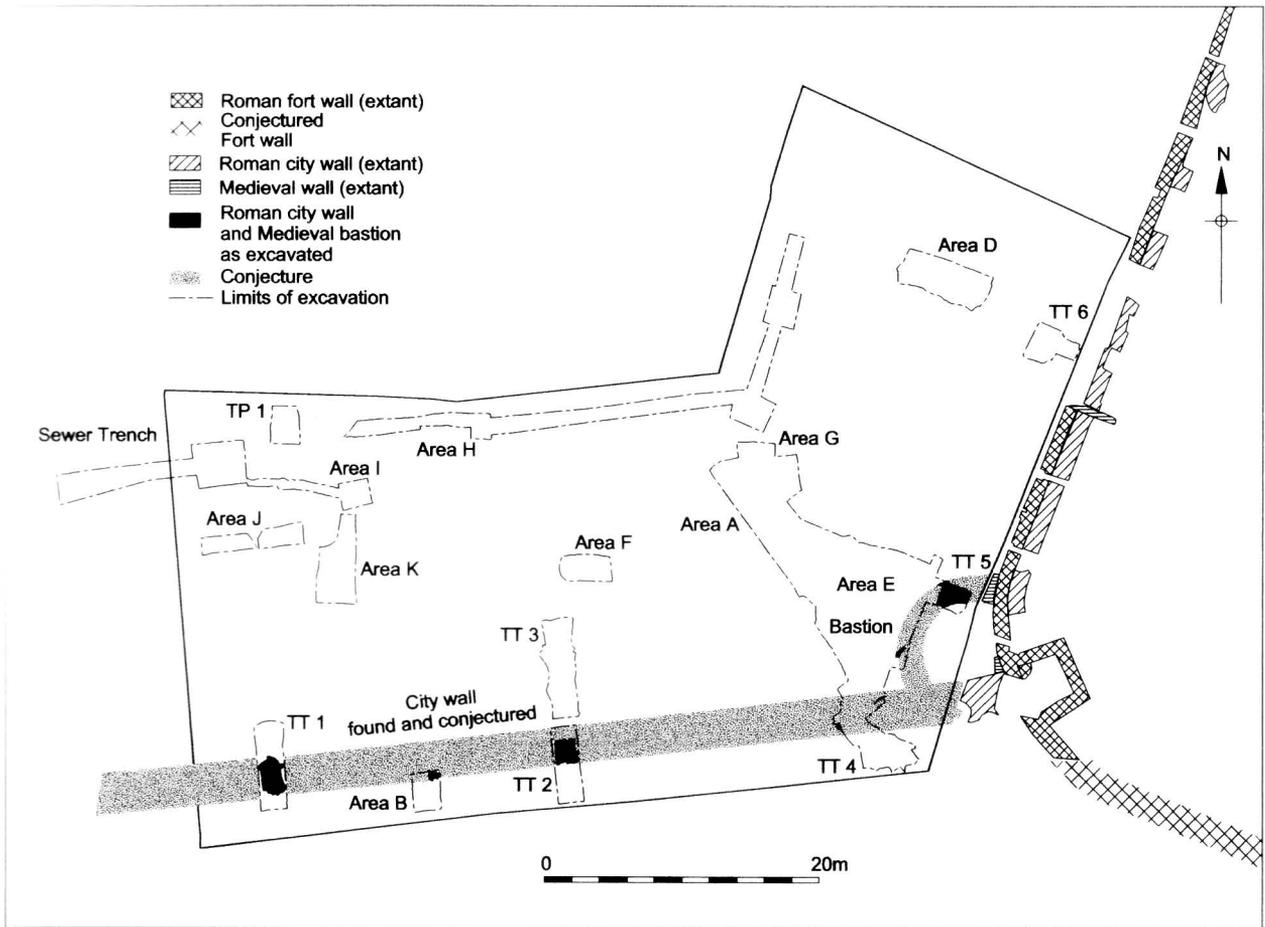


Fig. 5: the medieval City Wall and Bastion

No remains of the Roman, medieval or post-medieval gateway at Aldersgate were observed on site. During the construction of the 1924 building 210ft (64.01m) of Roman wall traced from Bastion 15 was observed<sup>29</sup> but no mention was made of the gate. If the interpretation of the ragstone masonry found in the GPO tunnel beneath Aldersgate Street in 1939 is correct, the eastern side of the gate was predicted to lie in the south-west corner of the site<sup>30</sup>. Indeed the eastern opening would have been in direct alignment with the earlier Roman road, found in the sewer heading and at 7-12 Aldersgate Street, with the apparent remains of a causeway crossing over the Roman and later city ditches. However, it was not possible to excavate in the predicted location of the gate due to the presence of large steel supports maintaining the integrity of the party wall of the *Lord Raglan* public house.

### Saxo-Norman City ditch

In the north-western part of the site next to the boundary wall of 7-12 Aldersgate Street a sequence

28. SMR 040466.

29. *Op cit* fn 24, 90.

of fills was revealed. One mid-brown organic deposit extended along the length of the party wall suggesting that the fills were all contained in one large east-west feature. A Saxo-Norman date has been given to these deposits, which may form part of a large defensive city ditch. The maximum width of Saxon ditch observed was 6.6m north-south. However no sides or base were visible, since its southern edge was cut away by the later medieval city ditch and its northern edge would appear to be just beyond the site boundary.

A north-south aligned ditch of similar date was recorded in the south-eastern corner of 7-12 Aldersgate Street<sup>31</sup>, the outer edge of which extended at least 25m from the city wall. No evidence of any east-west aligned ditch was found along the southern periphery of 7-12 Aldersgate Street, but if a distance of *c.* 25m from the city wall was maintained round the dog leg to the west the edge of the ditch would have been positioned on the party wall boundary. To the west at the junction of

30. *Op cit* fn 10, 110-1.

31. *Op cit* fn 15.

Little Britain and King Edward Street a large east-west ditch, with stakes driven in its sides, contained a fill dated mid-11th to mid-12th century, and could provide further evidence for a late Saxon city ditch<sup>32</sup>. Other evidence for a Saxon city ditch was observed at Ludgate Hill<sup>33</sup> and possibly at Houndsditch<sup>34</sup>.

### Saxo-Norman pitting

Several pits cutting into the infilled Saxon ditch in the north-west part of the site were identified in both plan and section. The organic remains within them suggest their primary use as cess-pits. An excavation at 7-12 Aldersgate Street revealed a series of pits of Anglo-Norman date along the east side of Aldersgate Street, suggesting an extramural ribbon development<sup>35</sup>. The cess pits found on the current site are probably part of the same development, encroaching on the partially filled in late Roman/Saxon ditch.

### Medieval Bastion 15

A curving masonry fragment constructed of roughly hewn lumps of ragstone, chalk, flint and occasional tile bonded together with soft dark yellow very sandy lime mortar was found in the south-east corner of the site. The external stones were faced and the wall curved round to the south. It measured 1.9m north-south by 2.9m east-west by at least 0.32m high. A smaller fragment to south, respecting the same curve, represents the remains of medieval Bastion 15 that was inserted into the

angle formed by the junction of the city wall and Cripplegate fort (Fig. 5). The northern end of the wall roughly aligns with the small fragment of wall keyed into the fabric of Cripplegate fort in the Noble Street garden. The bastion was circular according to its representation on Ogilby and Morgan's Map of 1676, but the maps of Agas *c.* 1562, Braun & Hogenberg 1572 and Leake & Hollar 1667 and the archaeological evidence, observed both on the present site and in 1922, seem to point to a semi-circular or horse-shoe-shaped bastion<sup>36</sup>. A fragment of pot recovered from the bastion was dated to 1080-1350, and its foundation cut through an apparently 3rd/4th-century Roman deposit. Although finds retrieval was minimal because of the restrictions on excavating within the SAM, the fabric of the masonry, which included a fragment of medieval tile, certainly points to a medieval date for the bastion.

### Medieval City ditch 13/14th century

Area A, the main area of excavation, contained a sequence of six large infilled cuts, which are interpreted as being the city ditch with evidence for its periodic cleaning out and re-cutting (Fig. 6).

The medieval ditch was found to be at least 17.5m wide extending from 3.1m from the city wall in the north and being up to *c.* 4m deep. In the excavation at 7-12 Aldersgate Street the edge of the medieval ditch was observed at a distance of *c.* 25m from the line of the city wall. These measurements are

32. S. Gibson *Watching Brief and Evaluation at 71-6 Little Britain, 10 King Edward Street* MoLAS (1995).

33. *Op cit* fn 22, 45.

34. *Op cit* fn 2, 90.

35. *Op cit* fn 15.

36. *Op cit* fn 24, 104.

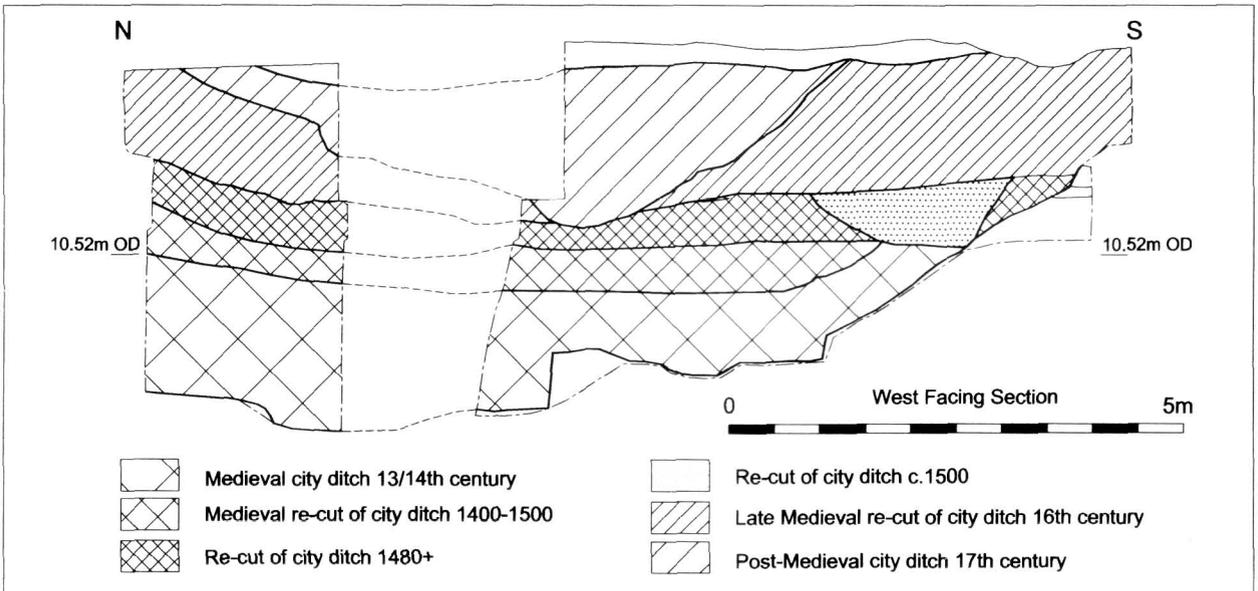


Fig. 6: section across the medieval ditch and post-medieval City ditch, Area A

comparable with observations elsewhere on the circuit, which seem to suggest that the ditch was not a constant width. Stow mentions the ditch as being up to 200ft wide (c. 61m).

The earliest phase of the medieval city ditch measured at least 11.24m wide by at least 1.9m deep and indicated that it had a gradually sloping side to the south and a flattish base. It continued beyond the limit of excavation to the north. It was filled with dark brown and grey waterlain silts, suggesting that the bottom of the ditch was filled with water. For a great part of its history the city ditch at Aldersgate would appear to have been filled with water. The maps of Agas c. 1562 and Braun & Hogenberg 1572 both show the ditch slightly to the north of the site as being waterfilled. This was certainly the case at Houndsditch, where a fresh-water (slow-moving and unpolluted) environment for the lower levels of the ditch was identified, with a more stagnant environment in the upper levels<sup>37</sup>. Towards the northern end of the ditch attempts seem to have been made to consolidate the bank by dumping gravel and large lumps of ragstone, chalk and ceramic building material. The fills have been dated to 13th/early 14th century and it probably represents the remains of the city ditch which Stow in his Survey of 1598 records was "begun to be made by the Londoners in the year 1211, and was finished in the year 1213".

#### **Medieval re-cut of City ditch 1400-1500**

This ditch was later re-cut by a similar flat-bottomed one, measuring at least 8.30m wide north-south by c. 0.54m deep. This ditch seems to have been prone to silting up, as it was infilled with a mixture of apparent waterlain silts and bands of pure silts and sand lenses.

#### **Re-cut of City ditch 1480+**

The previous ditch was later re-cut by another flat-bottomed one, measuring at least 10.46m wide north-south by c. 0.5m deep, which continued beyond the northern limit of excavation. This ditch also seems to have been subject to silting-up with frequent sand lenses within the fills. This phase of re-cut could represent another cleaning episode of the ditch or may perhaps have been done in response to the need for the city defences to be rebuilt during the Wars of the Roses when Ralph Joceline, mayor of London, in 1477, "caused the whole ditch to be cast and cleansed"<sup>38</sup>. This may have been a direct response to the poor state of the defences. Previously the dilapidated condition of the walls of London may well, in part, have ac-

counted for the readiness of the City fathers to negotiate with both Yorkists and Lancastrians in the 1450s and 1460s; and in 1461 and 1471 when London was threatened by Margaret of Anjou and then by the Bastard of Fauconberg whose guns shot at Aldgate and London Bridge<sup>39</sup>.

#### **Re-cut of City ditch c. 1500**

The sequence of three flat-bottomed ditches was replaced by a much smaller cut with sharply sloping sides and a narrow flat-bottomed base which was only 0.90m wide. It measured 2.4m wide north-south by 0.89m deep. It was filled with an organic rich silty clay. This phase of the city ditch would appear to be much narrower and slightly deeper than that which it replaced. It does not appear to have been in use for long and must have quickly filled up either naturally or deliberately.

#### **Late medieval re-cut of City ditch 16th century**

The smaller ditch was replaced by another large flat-bottomed cut, measuring at least 10.9m wide N-S by 1.37m deep. It was gradually filled in by the dumping of domestic and other waste.

#### **Post-medieval City ditch 17th century**

One last phase of city ditch was revealed, being much smaller and with its south side at c. 9m from the city wall being much further away than the other ditches. It was roughly 'V'-shaped with fairly steep sides and a rounded base which measured 5.52m wide north-south by 2.04m deep. It perhaps represents one last attempt to improve the city defences in response to a time of political crisis, most probably the Civil War. Could this be the ditch shown on the Newcourt & Faithorne map of 1658, and which seems to be narrower with a much wider berm separating it from the city wall than the ditch which appears to the north of the site on the earlier Agas and Braun & Hogenberg maps?

So when was the city ditch backfilled? According to the map evidence (Agas c. 1562 and Braun & Hogenberg 1572) it seems that the ditch was already backfilled by the middle of the 16th century in the area occupied by the site, although it seems to reappear in the Newcourt & Faithorne map of 1658. The archaeological evidence, however, seems to indicate that the last phase of the ditch was back-filled some time in the 17th century. Was the ditch redug in the late 16th century or 17th century, for example at the time of the Civil War? Evidence of such an occurrence was previously found by Grimes at St Alphage. An Act of Common Council of 1643 ordered the destruction of buildings erected against

37. J. Maloney 'Dukes Place and Houndsditch: the medieval defences' *London Archaeol* 3 no. 13 (1979) 351.

38. *Op cit* fn 2, 51.

39. J. R. Lander *The Wars of the Roses* (1990) 145c.

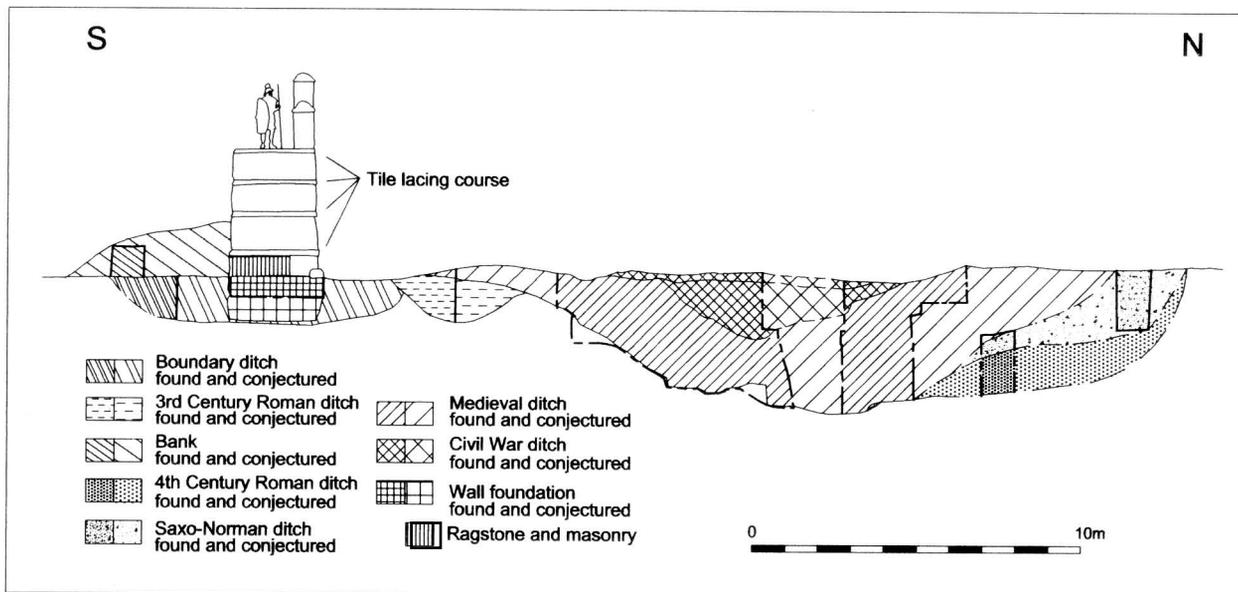


Fig. 7: composite section across the site

the outer face of the city wall, suggesting that preparations were made to improve the City's original defences at the time of the Civil War despite the impressive modern defences that were constructed on London's outskirts. So it is not unreasonable to suggest that the ditch was reinstated at the same time.

### Post-medieval structures on the infilled City ditch

After the Restoration in 1660 the city ditch was no longer required and was infilled with domestic and other waste containing a great deal of animal bone and building material. Evidence of post-medieval structures built on the infilled ditch was recorded across the area. In the centre of the site, towards the north of the main excavation area, a 17th-century brick wall aligned north-south with associated postholes was recorded. To the north-east a 17th-century brick cellar and later brick-lined well were uncovered. Further east a brick-floored cess-pit, dating to the late 17th century, was found and in the south-east corner of the development a rectangular brickearth filled cut was probably the clay floor of a post-medieval structure.

### Conclusions

The site at 1-6 Aldersgate Street is of particular importance in contributing to the history of London's defences from Roman times to the post-medieval period (Fig. 7). This is the first evidence of an early Roman city boundary ditch to be found west of Cripplegate fort. The city wall has been located with certainty, being slightly further to the north than some commentators had previously believed. The city gate at Aldersgate, how-

ever, was not observed on site and the eastern part of it may have lain slightly to the east of the evaluation trench in an area where excavation was impossible. The remains of the Saxon ditch are a rare survival as elsewhere on the defensive circuit most of the evidence for it has been destroyed by the later medieval ditch. The presence of medieval tile in the fabric of Bastion 15 proves its origin as medieval and contributes further proof to the suggestion that all the hollow bastions on the western circuit of the wall are of similar date. The several phases of re-cuts demonstrate that the cleaning and maintaining of the ditch was a continual process during the medieval and early post-medieval periods, necessitated by constant silting up of the waterfilled moat, and by its continuing use as a rubbish dump by the citizens of London. And finally the 17th-century ditch suggests that London was protected during the Civil War by an inner ring based on its 1600-years-old defences.

### Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology would like to thank Argent Group Investment plc for funding the archaeological work at 1-6 Aldersgate Street, and Richard Hughes (Ove Arup Geotechnics) for his help and encouragement. Thanks are also extended to Kathryn Stubbs of the Corporation of London and Ellen Barnes of English Heritage for their constructive comments and suggestions during the fieldwork and post-excavation phases of the project. The author would like to thank the project manager Gary Brown, and Dr. Frank Meddens for editing the text, and the many people who have worked on the site and analysed the finds.