

# New evidence for early Roman road alignments and medieval activity south of Cripplegate; excavations at 1 and 2–4 Carey Lane and 11–12 Foster Lane

Jo Lyon

## Introduction

THE MUSEUM of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) carried out an archaeological excavation and watching brief in advance of redevelopment of the site at 1 and 2–4 Carey Lane and 11–12 Foster Lane, in the summer of 2001 (Fig. 1). Evaluation of the site in 1997 had demonstrated that a significant depth of horizontal Roman archaeology and post-Roman cut features had survived under the basement slab of the previous property. The site archive is available for consultation in the LAARC<sup>1</sup> under the site code of FOT01; tabulated data and detail from the site not published here can be found there by arrangement. The archaeological work was funded by Green Property plc and Nightingale Estates.

## Archaeological and historical background

During the Roman period, the site at Carey Lane was situated near to the western boundary of the city. Extensive evidence for Roman occupation has been recorded on sites in the vicinity, and the archaeological sequence on this site is typical of that found in the area. The site was located to the south of Cripplegate fort, and to the west of the main road running south from the fort to the east-west road leading to Newgate. There is also evidence that an angled northeast-southwest road may have been situated close to the eastern perimeter of the site. The eastern edge of this road and an associated drainage ditch were identified at 33–39 Gutter Lane (ABC87), immediately to the east of the site.<sup>2</sup> Further evidence for this road was discovered to the south-west of the site at 7–10 Foster Lane (OST82) where gravel

metalling interpreted as the west side of the road was recorded in section (Fig. 2).<sup>3</sup>

Excavations at nearby sites have demonstrated that the roads of the Roman city were lined with buildings by the end of the 1st century AD. The earliest of these were constructed of timber, based on sleeper beams, with floors of beaten earth. On 2–12 Gresham Street (GSM97) just to the east of the site, extensive evidence for 1st- and 2nd-century buildings was recorded.<sup>4</sup> These properties were narrow, timber-walled, masonry and mud-brick buildings with open yards, fronting onto a

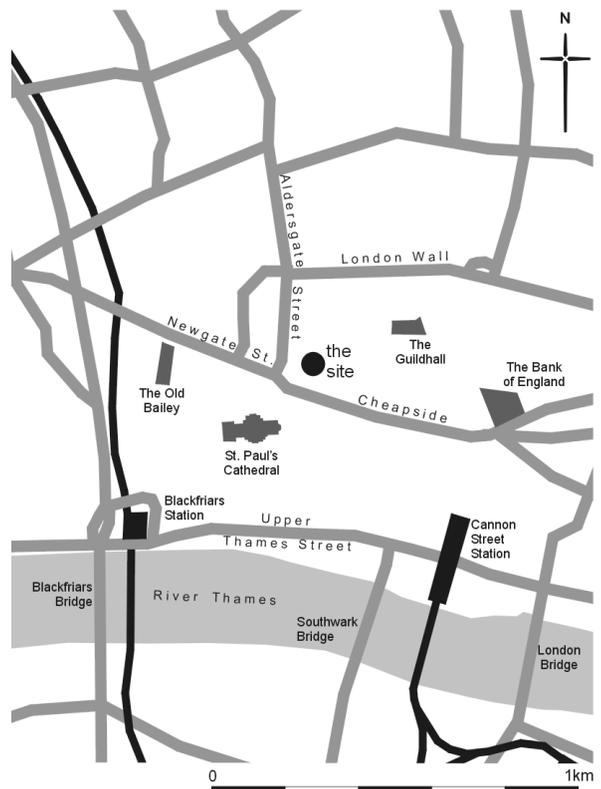


Fig 1: site location

north-south road, which bisected the site. One of the timber-framed buildings contained a room with a fine mosaic with a central polychrome design and plain red tessellated border. At the Blossom's Inn site (GHT00) situated further to the east, a similar range of buildings were excavated, including two late 1st- or early 2nd-century houses with stone foundations (and possibly timber-framed superstructures).<sup>5</sup> The larger house contained at least nine rooms, with *opus signinum* and cement floors. One room possessed a large mosaic, which was removed in antiquity, apart from tiny fragments of its plain border. At 124 Wood Street (ABS86),<sup>6</sup> to the south-east of the Carey Lane site, and also at 7–10 Foster Lane (OST82) to the west, 1st- and 2nd-century wattle-and-daub buildings with beaten earth and *opus signinum* floors, were excavated. Many of the city's buildings were destroyed by fire in the Boudican revolt of AD 60–61 and the Hadrianic fire of AD 120–130. These fire horizons have been identified in the stratigraphic sequences of many archaeological sites in the city. In the 3rd and 4th century the

Roman city appears to have begun to contract; its character changed and it became less densely populated. During this time the majority of the larger masonry houses were built, along with the city wall and its bastions.

During the medieval period the street pattern around the site changed, ignoring the earlier Roman pattern. Medieval archaeology excavated in the vicinity of the site is represented largely by rubbish pits and cesspits, although masonry walls have also been found. At 7–10 Foster Lane cesspits contained 14th-century crucibles for metalworking. Goldsmiths' Hall is situated directly opposite the site and the Goldsmiths' Fraternity was one of many guilds established after the conquest, working in this part of the City. This craft body became one of the most wealthy and powerful of the 'Great Companies'. It had absolute responsibility for the quality of gold and silver objects, which had to be marked in Goldsmiths' Hall (hence hallmarking) before they could be sold.

Goldsmiths' Hall was rebuilt in 1634–6 on the site of the medieval hall; this building was

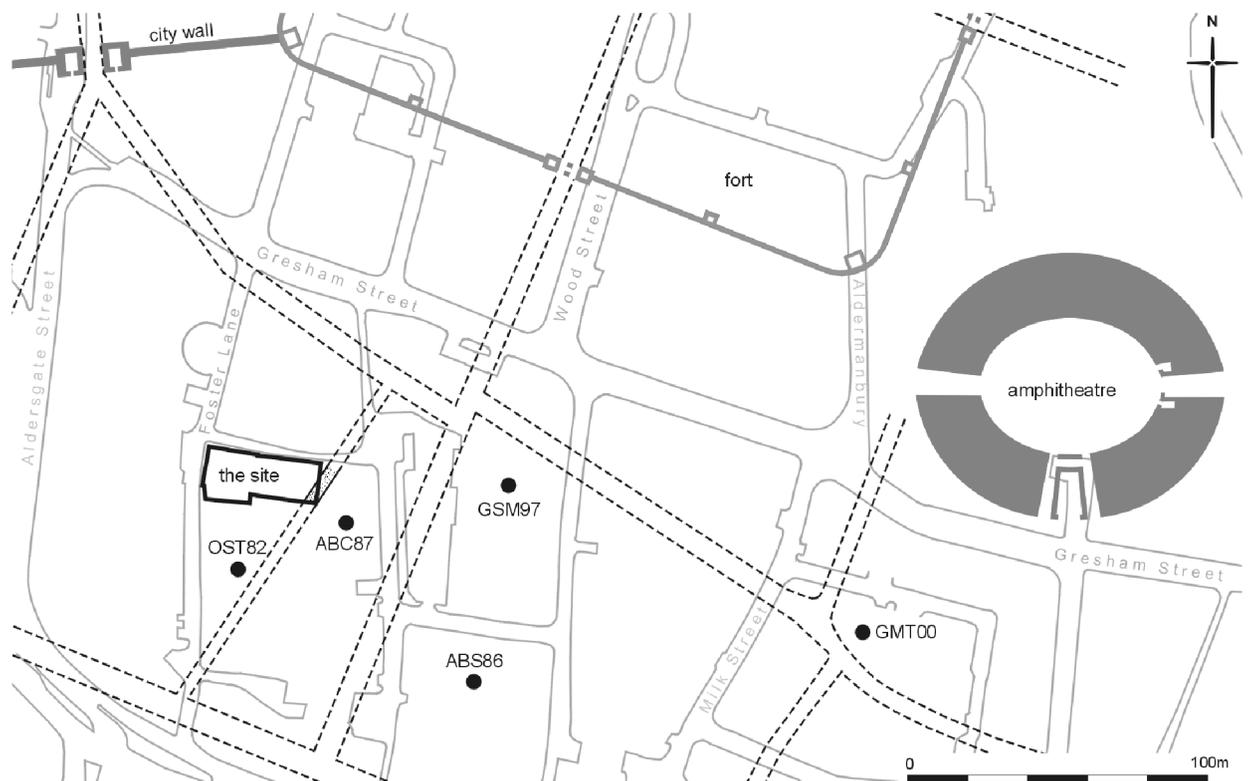
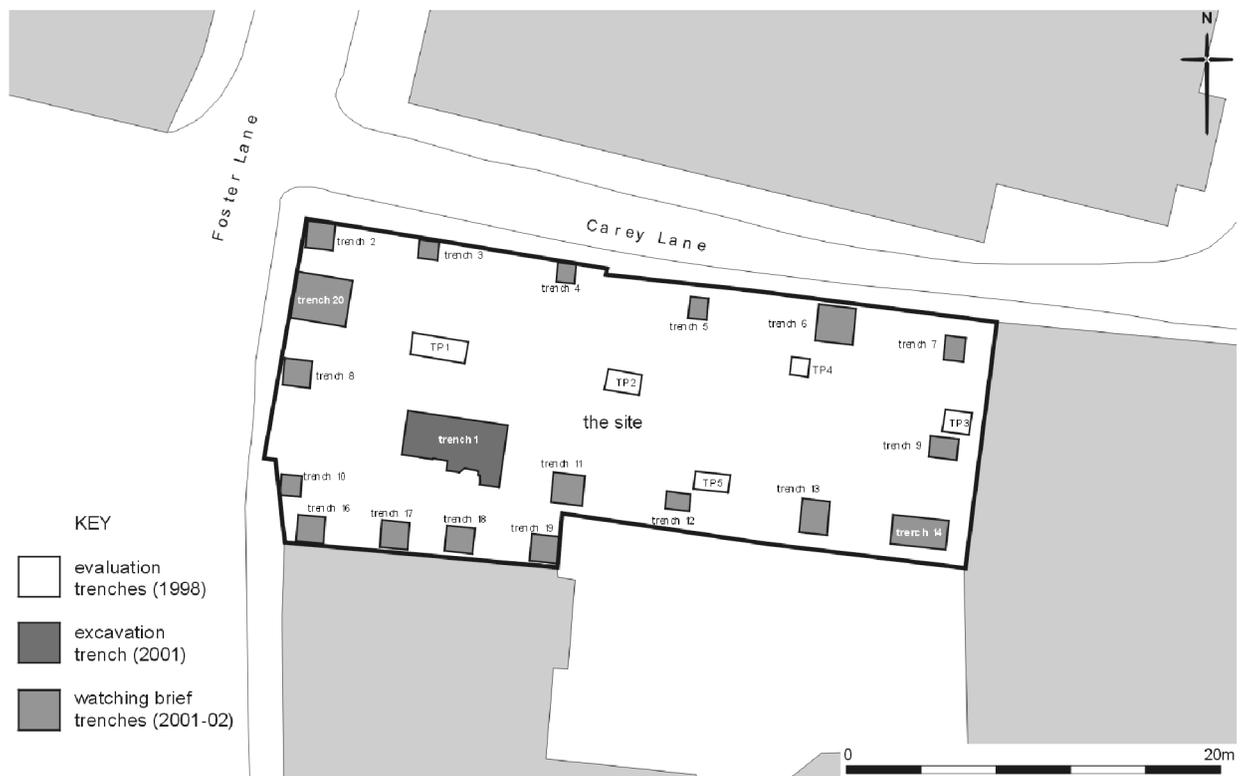


Fig 2: site location in Roman city



**Fig 3: trench locations**

damaged by the Great Fire of 1666. Following the Great Fire the study area appears to have been occupied by tenement buildings and courtyards. Tenements continued to occupy the site until the mid-19th century, at which point the site was occupied by a single building. Goldsmiths' Hall was rebuilt once again in 1829–35, on the site of the previous hall. The buildings in the vicinity of the site survived the Second World War, along with Goldsmiths' Hall, which was only slightly damaged.

### Geology and topography

Natural brickearth deposits were found on the site between 11.88m in the west, and 12.28m OD in the east, suggesting an east-west slope. Natural brickearth has been recorded at similar heights on nearby archaeological sites.

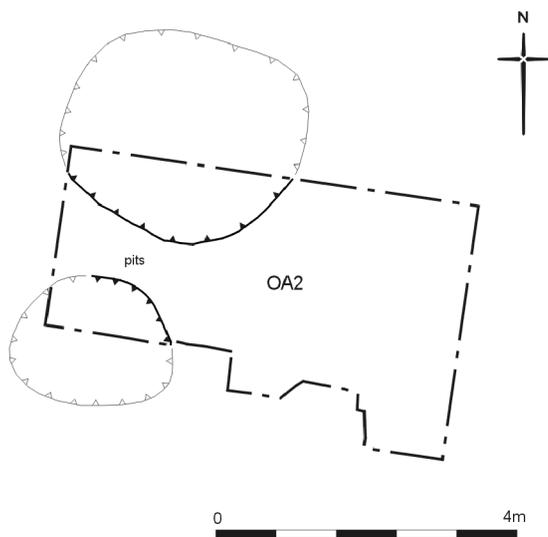
### Results of the archaeological fieldwork

A single trench was subject to archaeological excavation on the site, in advance of the

installation of a lift-pit for the new building. Other trenches were excavated through the foundations of the previous building under watching brief conditions (Fig. 3). As a result a relatively small amount of information was recovered, with most of the archaeological sequence preserved *in situ* as part of a mitigation scheme.

### The Roman sequence c AD 43-400 (period 1)

Redeposited natural brickearth was located during the excavation of trench 1 (Open Area 2) and pottery dating c. AD 70–100 was retrieved from this deposit. Two quarry pits or wells had been dug into the deposit (Fig. 4). These features were situated at the very limits of the excavation in trench 1 and it was only possible to excavate the uppermost fills. The upper fill of the northernmost pit consisted of slumped post-Hadrianic rebuilding layers (see below), the primary backfill of the feature was not reached, but augering indicated that it is at least 4m deep.



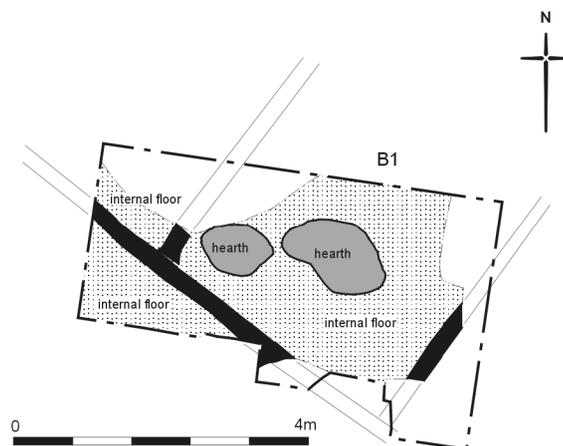
**Fig 4: pits in Open Area 2**

The backfill of the southernmost pit was also not seen, as the cut sloped beyond the limits of the excavation. Similar quarry pits have also been found on nearby archaeological sites, for instance at 7–10 Foster Lane (OST82).

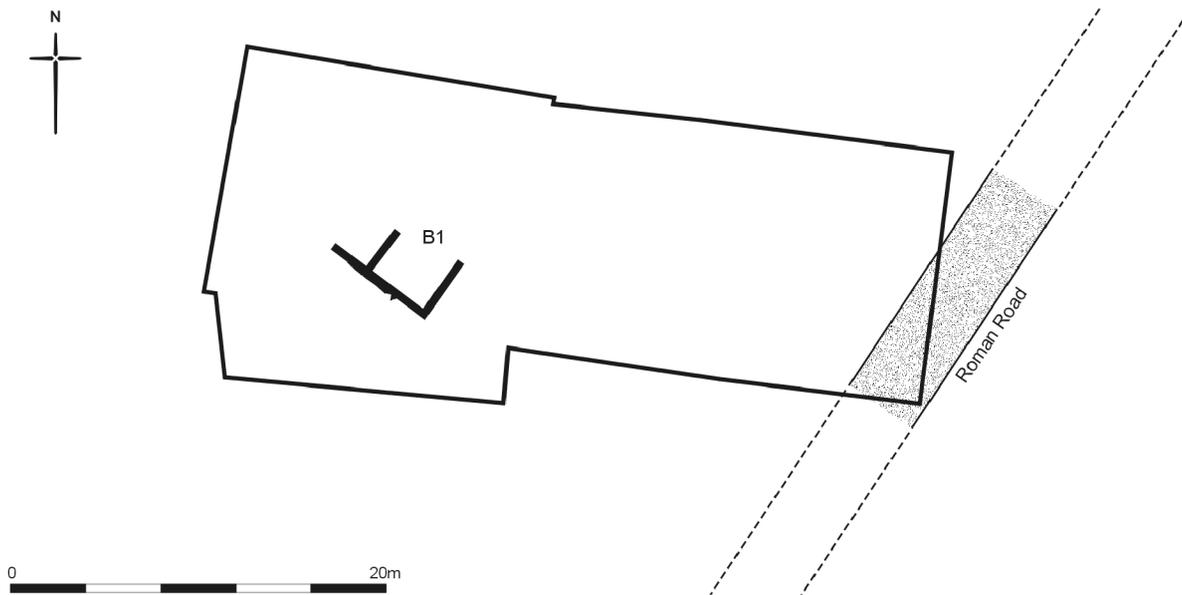
The quarry pits/wells in trench 1 were overlain by a series of 0.45m thick, mixed gravel and brickearth dumps; the primary levelling slabs for a clay and timber building (B1, Fig. 5). These deposits contained pottery dating from AD 60–100, and a fragment of an early Roman glass bottle (<19>). A series of brickearth floor surfaces, thin gravel layers and occupation trample were deposited directly onto the construction slab, and formed parts of three buildings covering the full extent of trench 1. Associated pottery dates the building to the late-1st to early-2nd centuries (*c.* AD 70–120). Other finds include the remains of two Roman square bottles (<17> and <28>, Isings Form 50), of a type common until the end of the 1st century AD, the shaft of a copper-alloy pin or needle (<11>), and a small runnel of molten lead (<10>). The remains of two simple bowl hearths cut into the brickearth floors in one of the rooms seem to have been domestic in nature. The sequence culminated in a badly scorched and heat-hardened brickearth floor surface. Associated with the internal floors were three beam slots, with parts of charred clay wall bases still in place. These walls delineated parts of at least three separate

rooms, and indicate that Building 1 was aligned with the nearby angled road to the east (Fig. 6). Fragments of this angled road were identified during excavations at sites 7–10 Foster Lane and 33–39 Gutter Lane; 1st- to 3rd-century clay and timber buildings were found to be aligned with the road on both sides (Fig. 7).<sup>7</sup> No evidence of the road was discovered on the Carey Lane site, despite the fact that it is projected to pass across the south-eastern portion of the site (see Fig. 6). The evidence from 7–10 Foster Lane and 33–39 Gutter Lane suggests that the road lay at between 12.24m and 12.39m OD. However, on the Carey Lane site modern truncation extended down to *c.* 12.00m OD in trench 14,<sup>8</sup> which could account for the absence of evidence for the road in this area. The presence of road gravels in the north-west portion of the 2–12 Gresham Street site allows the road to be projected at least this far north (see Fig. 2).

The structural slots of Building 1 were backfilled with a layer of burnt daub (Open Area 3), which sealed the whole sequence. This deposit was probably formed of debris associated with the Hadrianic fire, which swept through the area AD 120–130, as it contained sherds of badly burnt pottery dated to AD 120–160, including a single sherd of samian ware, a cup from Les Martres de Veyre.<sup>9</sup> The deposit at Carey Lane also contained frequent fragments of burnt daub with chevron keying (impressions left by flat wooden laths). The daub showed no sign of having been plastered and it is possible that it was left



**Fig 5: early Roman clay and timber building**



**Fig 6: early Roman clay and timber building aligned with angled road to the east**

unplastered, with the chevron keying forming a decorative pattern in its own right, as in other known cases.<sup>10</sup> Keyed clay walling was not used in Britain after *c.* AD 200, providing further evidence that this deposit relates to the Hadrianic fire. The deposit also contained several pieces of painted wall plaster, white with red floral motif decoration, indicating that a building of higher status may have been situated nearby. Other finds from the deposit included part of a glass bath-flask (<9>) of the form common from the 1st century through to the 3rd century,<sup>11</sup> and a complete plain copper-alloy finger ring with a D-shaped section (<12>).

A truncation horizon was located at the top of the scorched Hadrianic fire deposit in trench 1; this was also identified during the 1998 evaluation in test-pit 5.<sup>12</sup> In trench 1 the truncation horizon was sealed by a layer of fine dark silty soil, containing residual pottery dating from AD 120–160, which has been interpreted as the base of late Roman ‘dark earth’. Apart from the dark earth, no deposits relating to later Roman occupation were excavated *in situ* in plan. In the north-west corner of trench 1 the remains of a post-Hadrianic fire clay and timber building (B2) were identified in the south facing section of the trench, slumping into the backfill of an early Roman quarry pit (in OA2). It was not possible to obtain dating



**Fig 7: recording of early Roman clay and timber building**

evidence from these layers, but they clearly sealed the fire deposits. These layers consisted of brickearth floors and occupation layers, including a surface with a thick Roman tile set into it. A similar sequence was present on the site at 7–10 Foster Lane (OST82), where the 2nd-century Roman sequence had been deliberately truncated during the late Roman period, and then sealed by layers of dark earth. This was indicated by the presence of 3rd-century deposits in a localised area of subsidence.

A similar range of deposits were observed during the initial evaluation of the site and during the later watching brief (see Fig. 3 for location of these trenches). Early Roman clay and timber building sequences, sealed by possible Hadrianic fire deposits, were excavated in test pit 5 during the 1998 evaluation, and internal floor surfaces of clay and timber buildings were seen during the watching brief in trenches 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8. A possible external area was identified in the west-facing section of trench 20, where natural was overlain by a compact layer of metalling. It is probable that this represents the edge of a road or external yard surface.

## The medieval sequence c. 400–1500 (period 2)

Medieval features on the site were limited to a few pits and three possible chalk-lined cesspits (S1–S3). The edges of the latter were only observed in the sections of trench 1 and in the sections of watching brief trenches 3 and 20 (Fig. 8). Two medieval pits were excavated in trench 1; one of them contained an assemblage of medieval pottery, closely dated to 1270–1310. The pottery assemblage included fragments of three London Ware crucibles, with a shallow dish form and one crucible in Surrey Whiteware with a globular body <24>, <25>, <27> and <30>. None of the crucibles have internal residues, indicating that they are unused; their size and shape indicate that they may have been intended for assaying rather than melting metals. The presence of these crucibles fits in well with the evidence for industry, particularly metalworking, in this area. Cesspits on the nearby site at 7–10 Foster Lane (OST82) also contained a number of metalworking crucibles, some of which were

unused. It has been suggested that these may have been spares.<sup>13</sup> The remaining crucibles from the latter site had been used for copper, silver and in one case gold working (*ibid*).

Other pottery types represented in the pits at the site served a domestic purpose as kitchenware, including four pots in Kingston-type ware (KING). One of them is a highly decorated conical jug with deep thumbing around the base, decorated with applied strips in a lattice pattern, with part of an applied leaf sprig.<sup>14</sup> The others comprise two cooking pots (one lid-seated, the other flat-topped), and a late 13th-century cauldron with applied thumbed strips all over the body.<sup>15</sup> Four pots are in Mill Green Ware, which is dated to 1270–1350.<sup>16</sup> Two of these are jugs in the fine fabric (MG); one is conical, the other a squat jug with white slip decoration and a notched cordon below the collared rim. This rim/neck form is uncommon in London, but is known from Trig Lane,<sup>17</sup> while a related type was found on the Millennium Bridge site.<sup>18</sup> The other sherds are from two cooking pots in the coarse variant (MG COAR), one of which has a well-finished angular flat-topped rim. There are also two sherds of south Hertfordshire-type greyware (SHER), and three in London-type ware (LOND), the latter from cooking pots.

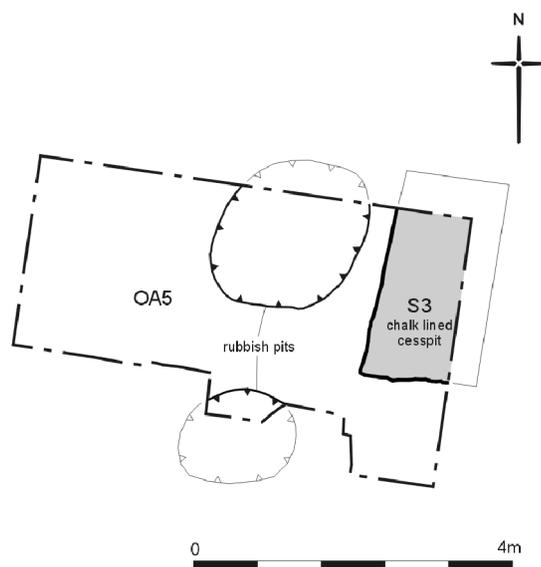
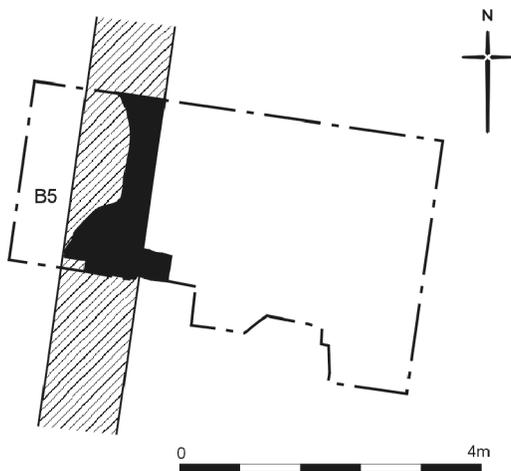


Fig 8: medieval pits in Open Area 5 and chalk-lined cesspit (S3)



**Fig 9: post-medieval foundation (B5)**

The comparatively high proportion of Mill Green ware and the general lack of London-type ware is of interest, as it is atypical for this period. The size of the pottery sherds contained in the pits and the fact that numerous fragments from the same pots are present indicates that the pottery had not travelled far, and probably derives from properties fronting onto Foster Lane. The style and decoration of the jugs suggests that they were from a middle or upper class household. In addition to the pottery obtained from these pits, a virtually complete cat skeleton was recovered along with a large iron key. The key is plain with an oval bow and its size indicates that it was probably used for a door.

### **The post-medieval sequence c. 1500–1900 (period 3)**

Post-medieval features were limited to 18th- or 19th-century brick foundations and a brick-lined cesspit. In trench 1 a north-south running brick foundation was excavated (Building 5), which consisted of a shallow brick-built pier with a stepped ledge around the base (Fig. 9). Only three courses of the structure remained, standing to a height of *c.* 0.30m. At the southern end it had a brick-reinforced horizontal shaft, which had once contained a square cut timber.

### **Discussion**

Excavation and analysis of this site has demonstrated the presence of Roman and post-

Roman archaeological deposits typical of those found in this area of the City of London. The main excavation trench (trench 1) overlay the centre of an early Roman strip building which appears to be aligned with the angled northeast-southwest Roman road to the east. The eastern and western edges of this road were identified on sites 33–39 Gutter Lane and 7–10 Foster Lane respectively. The nature of the finds from this building indicate that it was of fairly low status, and may well have had a mixed domestic and industrial function, as did many other clay and timber buildings of this period in the city.<sup>19</sup> The building was destroyed by fire *c.* AD 120–160, and its remains were sealed by a substantial deposit of burnt daub and other debris. The later Roman deposits had been truncated and the fire horizon sealed by a layer of dark earth. Similar Roman sequences are known from nearby sites at 2–12 Gresham Street and 7–10 Foster Lane.

The medieval and post-medieval deposits relate to buildings fronting onto the later surrounding road system. The finds associated with the medieval pits are indicative of the metalwork industries taking place in this area of the City during this period. The proximity of the site to the Goldsmith's Hall is significant, and the crucibles from the site may have been intended for use in the production of precious metals.

### **Acknowledgements**

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# Books

## Settlement in Roman Southwark

Archaeological excavations (1991-8) for the London Underground Limited Jubilee Line Extension Project

James Drummond-Murray and Peter Thompson with Carrie Cowan

*Museum of London Archaeology Service*, 2002

308 pages, with photographs and drawings in colour and in black and white, bibliography and index. £22.95 paperback.

This is the report of the series of evaluations, excavations and watching briefs carried out by MoLAS between 1991 and 1998, when construction work on the Jubilee Line Extension near London Bridge Station offered a major archaeological opportunity. As the title suggests, this work concentrates on the Roman period, and

a volume on the medieval and later remains will follow.

An Introduction explains the circumstances of the fieldwork, the sites and phases of work involved, and reminds the reader that although Roman Southwark has in the past had a low profile, it is now starting to take its rightful place as an important suburb of *Londinium*.

The eyots and shifting river channels that make up the underlying topography of north Southwark are described, with specific reference to the JLE sites investigated, and evidence of early Roman activity is presented. A chapter is devoted to the pre-Boudican settlement, including the remains of what are described as the first buildings in Southwark; this is followed by evidence of the destruction of the settlement by fire, which is attributed to the Boudican revolt.

Successive chapters deal with the late 1st century reconstruction, the expansion of the

(continued from p. 193)

1. London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London, N1 7ED.
2. I. Blair *An Archaeological Excavation at Abacus House, 33-39 Gutter Lane, City of London EC2* MoLAS unpub rep (1987).
3. L. Casson and A. Francis *2-12 Gresham Street, City of London, EC; A Post-Excavation Assessment and Updated Project Design* MoLAS unpub rep (2002).
4. I. Blair, J. Taylor and B. Watson *30 Gresham Street, City of London EC; A Post-Excavation Assessment and Updated Project Design* MoLAS unpub rep (2002).
5. P. Chitwood and J. Hill *An Archaeological Excavation at St Albans House, 124 Wood Street, City of London EC2* MoLAS unpub rep (1986).
6. I. Blair *An Archaeological Excavation at 7-10 Foster Lane and 5-6 Rose and Crown Court, City of London, EC* MoLAS unpub rep (1982).
7. I. Blair *An Archaeological Evaluation at 1 Carey Lane, 11-12 Foster Lane and 2-4 Carey Lane, City of London, EC2* MoLAS unpub report (1998).
8. J. Lyon *1 & 2-4 Carey Lane, 11-12 Foster Lane, City of London, EC2; A Post-Excavation Assessment and Updated Project Design* MoLAS unpub rep (2002) fig. 10.
9. This is in marked contrast to the Hadrianic fire assemblage from Regis House (KWS94), which had a large amount of Les Martres de Veyre samian ware, perhaps due to the site's proximity to the port area and warehousing.
10. M. Russell in I. M. Betts, E. W. Black and J. Gower 'A Corpus of Relief-Patterned Tiles in Roman Britain' *J Roman Pottery Stud* 7 (1994) 49.
11. J. Price and S. Cottam 'Romano-British glass vessels: a handbook' *CBA Practical Handbook in Archaeology* 14 (1998) 188-9.
12. *Op cit* fn 7.
13. N. Tobert *Foster Lane 1982: the finds, an appraisal report* DUA unpub rep (1982).
14. J. Pearce and A. Vince 'A dated type-series of London medieval pottery part 4: Surrey whitewares' *London and Middlesex Archaeol Soc Spec Pap* 10 (1988) 25; no. 66.
15. For similar rim forms see *op cit* fn 14, nos. 301, 302, 321.
16. J. E. Pearce, A. G. Vince and R. White with C. M. Cunningham 'A Dated Type-Series of London Medieval Pottery Part 1: Mill Green Ware' *Trans London and Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 33 (1982) 266-98.
17. *Op cit* fn 16, no. 42.
18. L. Blackmore 'The pottery' in J. Ayre and R. Wroe-Brown 'The London Millennium Bridge, Excavations of the medieval and later waterfronts at Peter's Hill, City of London, and Bankside, Southwark' *MoLAS Archaeology Studies Series* 6 (2002) 90-92, fig 42.
19. D. Perring, S. P. Roskams and P. Allen 'The early development of Roman London west of the Walbrook' *The archaeology of Roman London 2, CBA Res Rep* 70 (1991); J. Hill and P. Rowsome *Excavations at 1 Poultry: the Roman sequence* (in prep) MoLAS Monograph.