

# Archive Cold Cases

Laura Schaaf

Roy Stephenson

*London Archaeologist* readers will know that the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) is located in the Museum of London's collections building, Mortimer Wheeler House. The LAARC was opened in 2002 with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the City of London Archaeological Society and other donors and it is now the main repository for London's archaeological finds and records.

Over the past six years, much effort has gone into ordering the archives so that they are available to the public. This mammoth task has only been possible with the help of volunteers, students and people seeking work experience. Archive projects and achievements have included winning the Conservation Collections Care award in 2005 and undertaking community excavations in Shoreditch Park, Bruce Castle Park (see pp. 315–7), and Michael Faraday School in Southwark. The Heritage Lottery funded a successful archive learning project in 2007 which resulted in a number of participants successfully gaining employment. The LAARC continues to be an inspiration for archaeologists and archivists at home and abroad seeking to replicate all or elements of its successful formula. Currently archive volunteers are working on repackaging and ordering such noteworthy London excavation projects as Whitehall Palace and Highgate Wood.

The systematic ordering of such a large number of archives created and collected at various times and by different methods has revealed some finds for which there are presently few records and uncertain provenance. The purpose of this short article is to ask readers help in:

- Confirming the site where the finds were collected
- Identifying which organisations or individuals were involved in collecting the material
- Identifying the location of any other parts of these archives, both site records and finds.

A rapid scan of the archives suggests that the finds were collected mainly during the period 1950–1980 and some may have been brought into the Museum of London or its forerunners, the London and Guildhall Museums, for identification. The table below summarises available information about the archives including site names or codes, dates of fieldwork or collection, the type of finds and notes on boxes or labels which we hope may prompt memories.



Fig. 1: Roman and other finds from RL71



Fig. 2: post-medieval tile from Sprout Lane



Fig. 3: medieval pottery from Wigmore Street

## ARCHIVAL FINDS

Recorded site name or code	Material	Notes
Baker Street 21 August 1961	Post-medieval pottery	
Bank of England loan, St L	Post-medieval pottery, animal bone, metal objects	Old exhibition label reads 'objects excavated during rebuilding'
Creffield Road 74	Charcoal samples	Labels read, e.g. 'F2 520 (in triangle)'
FC	Building material in paper bags	Paper bags stamped 'site, trench, layer'; labels read, e.g. 'FC 9/7/71'
Harrow	Roman, post-medieval pottery	
Horseferry 1963	Post-medieval pottery	
Inmost Ward TOL 1976	Glass	
London Bridge Station 1954	Post-medieval pottery	
Marble Arch 15/1/61, 28/3/61	Metal object, road samples	Label reads 'Odeon subway Marble Arch collected from crane driver'
ODM77	Post-medieval pottery, clay tobacco pipe, animal bone	Labels read, e.g. 'wall/cesspit 4 (in circle)'
RGS	Roman pottery	Labels on back of FC 1971 labels (see above) read, e.g. 'RGS IIB 61'
RL71 (Fig. 1)	Roman, post-medieval pottery, clay tobacco pipes, leather, building material, 'residues and bone'	Labels read, e.g. 'RL71 B3 organic silt' and 28/1/71
Sprout Lane (SL) (Fig. 2)	Mainly post-medieval pottery, building material, metalwork, slag	OHMS labels read, e.g. 'Streeters gravel pit' and 'SL 2 (in circle) 2105/2'
St Mary's Church Willesden 1973	Post-medieval building material	Label reads 'finds sealed below chalk layer' initialed MJH or MHK
Thames Strand on the Green	Post-medieval pottery, metalwork	Labels read 'from around kiln waste 7/92' and 'stoneware kiln material'
Westminster Colonial Office, site no. 1365	Post-medieval pottery, stone objects, stone building material	Labels read 'WCO' plus 2-digit number and 'OHMS St Stephens House, Cannon Row, SW1'
Wigmore Street 1972 (or 1973) (Fig. 3)	Post-medieval pottery and building material	OHMS labels read, e.g. 'WS73 A 2 (in circle)'

If you have any knowledge, even anecdotal, about these archives, LAARC staff would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact Roy Stephenson at the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre, Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7ED (020 7566 9317); email [rstephenson@museumoflondon.org.uk](mailto:rstephenson@museumoflondon.org.uk).

### Acknowledgements

Thanks to Adam Corsini for photographing the finds shown in Figs 1–3.