



Fig. 1: the location of the site

# A group of German stonewares from 2–4 Holywell Lane, London EC2, in their local and wider context

Lyn Blackmore

## Introduction

In July 2006 two evaluation trenches were excavated in advance of development by the then Museum of London Archaeology Service (now MOLA) on a site at 2–4 Holywell Lane (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Trench 1 (3m square) lay close to the southern limit of the site and revealed two 19th-century cellars. Trench 2 (2.2m x 2.9m) was 4 metres to the north and revealed archaeological deposits that include a 16th-century pit, the pottery from which includes five German stoneware jugs (Fig. 2). This work was followed by a watching brief in 2010.<sup>2</sup> Extensive excavations were carried out to the south and west of the site between 2005–7 as part of the East London Line project (hereafter ELLP).<sup>3</sup> The aim of this paper is to outline the development of the site, contribute to a wider understanding of land-use in this part of London and to discuss the stonewares within their historical context. As documentary sources are quoted in the ELLP publications,<sup>4</sup> they are not repeated here.

## Location, topography and historical background

The site lies at the corner of Holywell Lane and Haliwellestrete (now Shoreditch High Street), just outside the

south-east corner of the precinct of the Augustinian nunnery of the Virgin Mary and St John the Baptist, Haliwell, generally known as Holywell Priory (Fig. 1), which was founded between



Fig. 2: Frechen stoneware Bartmann jugs from pit [11]; from left to right, Nos. 2, 4, 3, 1)

1152 and 1158.<sup>5</sup> It was, however, probably part of the later priory estate, which included land and properties in the 'parochia de Halywell' (some within the precinct), and St Leonard's Shoreditch and associated property. The site is a short distance to the south of the junction of Kingsland Road and Old Street, which is thought to have been the nucleus of Shoreditch village in the medieval period.

This part of Hoxton and Shoreditch is located at the head of the Walbrook valley, on Hackney Terrace Gravels that are capped with brickearth. Holywell Lane, which runs roughly along the interface of the Hackney and Taplow gravel terraces, and where the underlying London clay is almost exposed, is thought to be a natural spring line.<sup>6</sup> Archaeological interventions in the general area have shown that between Hackney Road/Old Street and Spital Square the natural ground surface drops from c. 14.5m OD to c. 10.4m OD, while the ELLP excavations confirmed that the priory was situated on locally high ground that extends to the north; to the south the land slopes downwards, and the natural topography in the area becomes

increasingly wet due to known watercourses that include a tributary of the Walbrook to the east<sup>7</sup> (Fig. 3). The projected course of the latter, thought to spring from a source to the north-west, flows south along the line of Anning Street, crossing the site of 2–4 Holywell Lane and curving to the south-west just to the south of the Holywell Lane, where gravels eroded by water features and a pond fed by a stream were identified in the ELLP excavations (see Fig. 3). To the north-west, a channel with a series of flood deposits was identified in Trench 2, which by the mid-12th century had become a pond.<sup>8</sup> The land was still waterlogged at this time; by 1148 the area known as *Soerdich* (sewer ditch) had taken its name from this badly drained terrain, while 1.2 hectares of 'moor' formed the original estate of the priory; these included the spring *Haliwell/Halliwell* (or Holy-well) from which the priory takes its name.

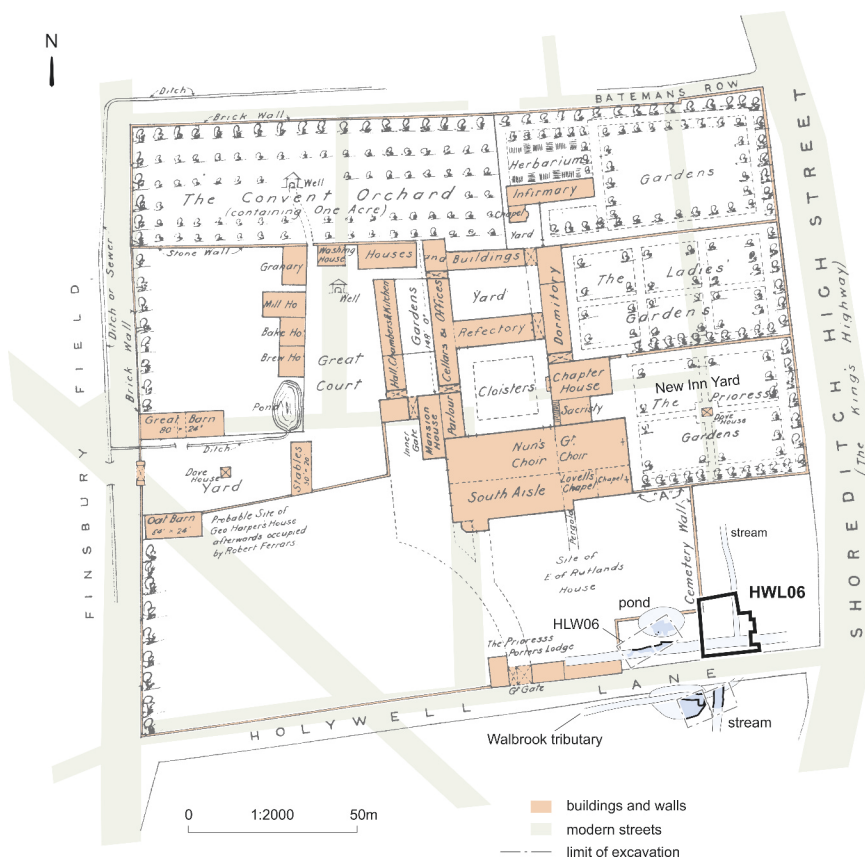
The strata revealed at 2–4 Holywell Lane are consistent with the deposits recorded during the ELLP fieldwork. Natural sands and gravels were recorded at a height of between 9.77m OD (Trench 1) and 10.52 m OD

(Trench 2), and were overlain by pale grey-brown silty clay deposits that were between 1.8m and 2.3m thick (Trenches 2 and 1 respectively). These alluvial deposits are likely to result from the accumulations deposited by standing or slowly flowing waters associated with the watercourses and a possible tributary of the River Walbrook in this area. By the later 12th century, no doubt in an attempt to alleviate some of the waterlogging in this area, it would seem that a drainage ditch at least 2.3m wide (possibly also a boundary ditch), had been cut along the southern side of the adjacent priory precinct. The lack of medieval pottery on the present site shows that, doubtless also due to the generally boggy conditions, the open land in this area remained largely unoccupied until the 16th century, when the ground appears to have been consolidated and raised. It is, therefore, possible that the irregular outline of the south-eastern part of the Priory precinct, as recorded in 1532 (Fig. 4; see below) may have been dictated by this watercourse and that, while the cemetery wall may demarcate and respect an existing boundary, it was cut into drier ground, or so-placed in the attempt to control flooding. How the boundary ditch related to the 15th-century buildings fronting onto Holywell Lane (which included the main entrance to the priory) is unclear.

**The development of Holywell from c. 1500**

*Documentary evidence*

During the 16th century the priory, like many others, boosted its income by leasing a number of buildings or plots in the southern part of the precinct, and apparently within part of the former cemetery, as private residences (Fig. 4). Probably the first resident in the area to the south of the church was Sir Thomas Lovell, an important courtier and, from c. 1510, also the greatest benefactor of the priory, whose mansion lay at the south-east end of the church, and was linked to his chapel by a covered walkway.<sup>9</sup> The eastern limit of his property was the cemetery wall (see below); to the west were the houses of his servants Laurence Foxley, and John Thomson, with that of William Berners/Barnes between them (Fig. 4). Two years after Lovell's death in 1524,



**Fig. 3: conjectural plan of the Priory (after LCC 1922) showing the location of the site and ELLP trenches in relation to the modern street plan**

a new lease was granted to Sir Thomas Manners (d 1543), the second Earl of Rutland, son of Sir George Manners (nephew of Lady Lovell, who was buried in Holywell church in 1513), and husband of Lovell's niece, who by 1533/4 was the chief steward of Holywell; the auditor was William Berners, while Alexander Harrington was the receiver.<sup>10</sup> By 1539–40 the Earl of Rutland held most of the southern part of the precinct, comprising not only Lovell's mansion with garden but also the properties of Foxley and Berners, 'le Porter's Lodge' (formerly 'le Prioress Porter's Lodge'), four chambers with a piece of land adjacent to the cemetery and stables to the south of Holywell Lane.<sup>11</sup> Wyngaerde's panorama of c. 1543 must be the last record of the church and associated buildings prior to their demolition after the Dissolution of the priory in October 1539. Although sketchy, it shows some buildings to the south of the church, and possibly a precinct wall. As the Crown began to sell the freehold in the early 1540s, the bulk of the northern half of the precinct was granted to Henry Webbe, while the Earl of Rutland retained the bulk of the southern part.<sup>12</sup> In 1536 the third earl, Henry Manners (c. 1516–63) married Lady Margaret Neville at Holywell Church, while Edward Manners (c. 1548–87), the fourth earl, apparently held his grandfather's properties, which were re-leased to him for 60 years in 1584 without any change to the descriptions of the property. The 5th and 6th earls were Edward's brother John (c. 1552–88) and Roger Manners (1576–1612). In 1610 the various buildings forming the Earl of Rutland's property were sold to George Salter and John William, and by them to Thomas Screven; bequeathed by him to Francis Gofton in 1613, it then remained in that family until being sold in 1709 to the Westrow family.<sup>13</sup>

References to properties immediately outside the precinct are rare, but in 1532 three houses (originally four) with cellars, shops, upper floors and gardens (probably at 187–190 Shoreditch High Street) were let by the prior to Thomas and Margaret Towle.<sup>14</sup> The grant is important in defining the size of the plot, which had a street frontage of 3 rods (15.09m) and extended 6.5 rods (39.62m) from the

street frontage to the cemetery wall, which was at least 6 rods and 2 feet (35.81m) in length (Fig. 4). In 1537 Alexander Harrington and his son Thomas were jointly appointed receivers and collectors of rents in London, and in November of the same year Thomas Harrington was granted a 60-year lease of two houses in Holywell Street (Shoreditch High Street).<sup>15</sup> Whether this was to the north or south of Holywell Lane is unclear, but in October 1538, two tenements on the site of 191–193 Shoreditch High Street, on the northern side of Holywell Corner, were leased by the priory for 60 years to one Thomas Grenell.<sup>16</sup>

The Copperplate map of 1559 (Fig. 5a) shows the gable end of a large building at the junction of Holywell Lane and Shoreditch High Street, known in 1543 as Haliwell Corner and described as having cellars, a shop front, a solar and a garden.<sup>17</sup> To the north were other buildings, mainly aligned north-south, probably including

those noted above. To the west of the garden, a drainage ditch ran along Holywell Lane; this must equate to a ditch found during the ELLP excavation, which was maintained for water management into the later part of the 16th century.<sup>18</sup> The Agas map (Fig. 5b) suggests that by 1562 the area had been transformed by the building of a wall along Holywell Lane with a gateway at the mid-point. Although there are differences in the portrayal of the building on Haliwell Corner, both maps show a door and two windows at the point where 2–4 Holywell Lane would have stood. The Newcourt and Faithorne map of 1658 (Fig. 5c) suggests that the site was by then occupied by a single property, while Rocque's map of 1746 shows the site to be occupied by buildings around Holywell Court. By 1792 this layout was replaced by tenements fronting onto Holywell Lane, which remained standing until World War II.

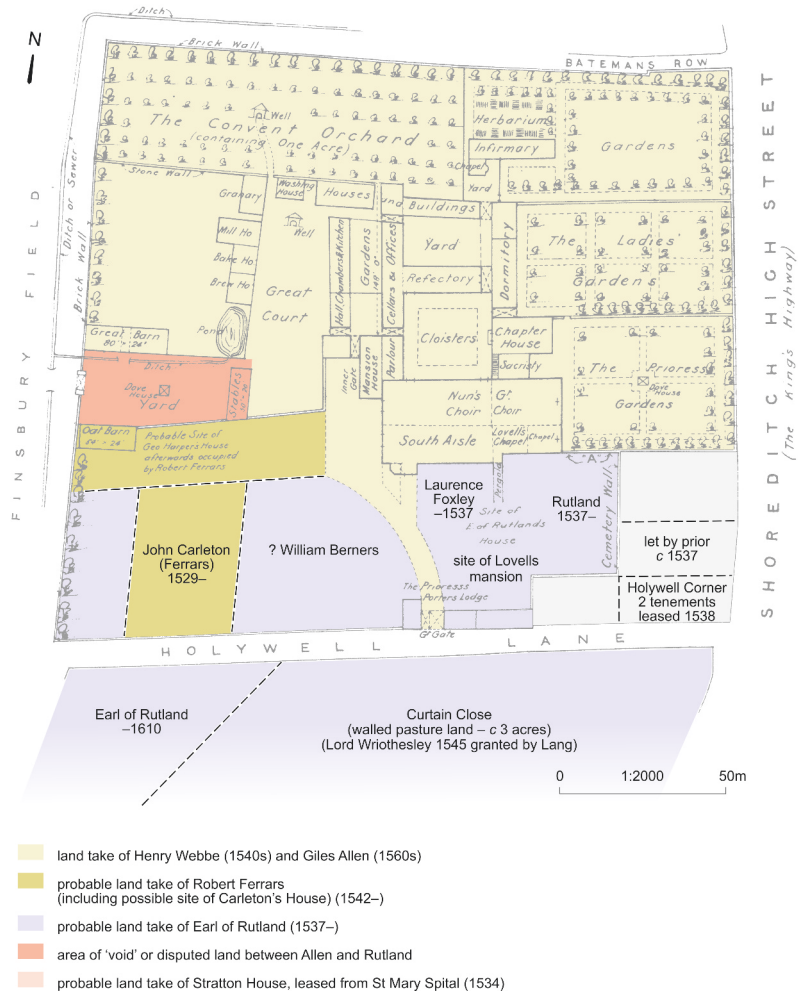


Fig. 4: reconstructed plan of tenement property boundaries at the time of the Dissolution (after Bull et al 2011)

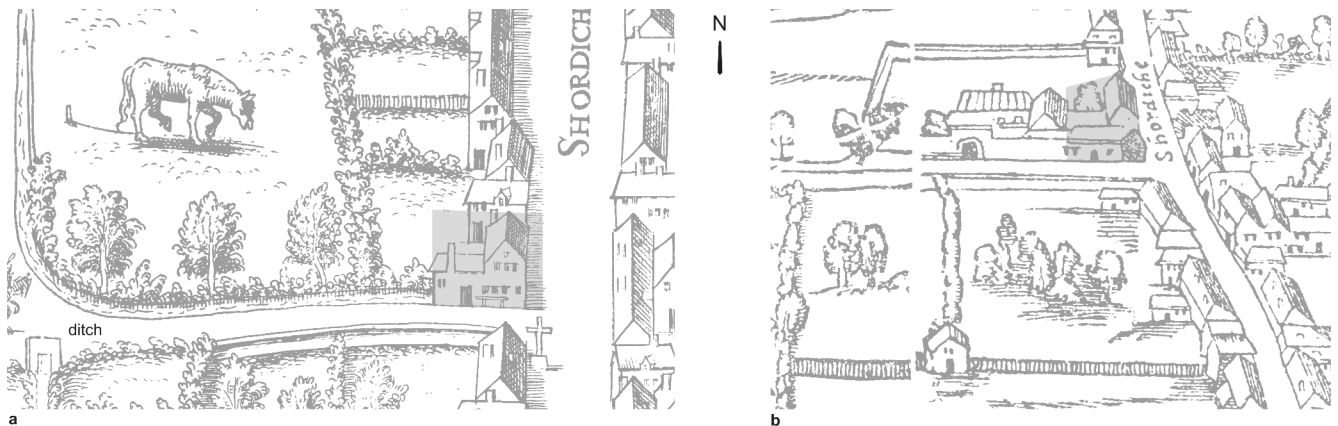
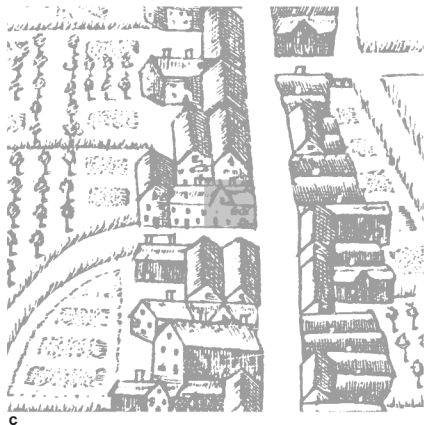


Fig. 5: the changing landscape, as shown on a) the Copperplate map, c. 1559; b) the Agas map, c. 1562; c) the Newcourt and Faithorne map, c. 1658



the north of the street frontage and containing the pottery discussed below.

The pit was sealed by a layer of silty gravel ([4]), from which a second rubbish pit was cut ([8], not illustrated). This contained building material but no pottery. The gravel was in turn sealed by two later dumped deposits ([6], [5]). Both were cut through by a late 18th- or 19th-century brick-lined well ([2]) in the north-east corner of the trench (Fig. 6), which survived to a height of 14.92m OD, was c. 2m deep and contained contemporary pottery showing that it was probably constructed at the same time as two cellars found in Trench 1.

**The pottery from pit [11]**

Pit [11] contained a small but highly significant group of pottery, comprising 31 sherds from 10 vessels (2.113kg). Imports are the main category, with one sherd of Raeren stoneware dating to 1480–1550, and 23 sherds (1.795kg) from five Frechen stoneware jugs datable to c. 1550–1600. English wares comprise slipped post-medieval redware (PMSRY) and approximately 30% of a cylindrical mug in post-medieval Essex black-glazed redware (PMBL), dated to between 1580 and 1700. Two sherds from jugs in a fine London stoneware dating to after 1670 (120g) could be intrusive.

**Archaeological evidence**

Foundations associated with the post-Dissolution manorial complex of the Earls of Rutland were discovered during excavations in 1989; more foundations, thought to be part of an ancillary building or store, were revealed in 2006.<sup>19</sup> The drainage ditches noted above seem to have remained functional until the late 16th century, by which time they had probably silted up through lack of maintenance and went out of use. The resultant waterlogged land surfaces were subsequently raised as a means of preventing further inundation and consolidated in advance of the re-development of the dissolved priory lands.<sup>20</sup>

This pattern of flooding or waterlogging (?abandonment) followed by periods of consolidation, discrete activity and further ground make-up seems also to have occurred at 2–4 Holywell Lane. Here a dump of grey silty material (observed in both trenches) was laid down and appears to have extended across the site. In Trench 2 this layer was overlain by a further dump, through which was cut a late 16th-century circular rubbish pit [11] (12.25m OD at its base), c. 11.6m to



Fig. 6: plan of excavations at HWL06, showing the relationship of pit [11] to pit [2089] on site HWL06 to the west



Fig. 7: Frechen stonewares, Nos 1–4, from pit [11], with detail of the figurative medallion on No. 4

*The German stonewares: decorative elements and contemporary costume*

The fine nature of stoneware clay makes it ideal for modelling, and the use of ceramic moulds, some made from sandstone matrices, others possibly made by woodcutters and metal-smiths, meant that images, often accompanied by text or mottos, could be produced in bulk with remarkable sharpness and clarity.<sup>21</sup> In the Rhineland, simple applied roundels with relief decoration were first used at Siegburg between 1400 and 1450; the technique was developed between c. 1500–1550 at Cologne and perfected at Siegburg and Raeren, reaching its peak between c. 1560 and c. 1600.<sup>22</sup> The same standard could not be achieved at Frechen due to the heavier clay used, and the potters there seem to have been more concerned with quantity rather than quality. Nonetheless, increasingly complex motifs and images appeared at all three centres that were strongly influenced by contemporary woodcuts, the development of printing and the

changing tastes of the Renaissance.<sup>23</sup> As a result, during the 16th and 17th centuries stonewares were widely used on the Continent as statements of status, affiliation or provenance, for celebrating occasions such as weddings, for didactic purposes and for religious propaganda, whether devotional, allegorical or satirical.<sup>24</sup>

Rhenish stonewares are collectively the most common import found in 15th- to 17th-century contexts in London and elsewhere in England.<sup>25</sup> In the 14th and 15th centuries the main export centres were at Siegburg and Langerwehe, but between c. 1480 and c. 1550 the main source was Raeren, which mainly supplied mugs and jugs for the masses; from c. 1500 smaller amounts of higher quality pottery were also imported from Cologne. Around c. 1550 this changed and until c. 1700 the English market was dominated by



0 25mm

jugs and bottles from Frechen, many of Bartmann type, with applied face masks; later forms from Siegburg and Raeren, and, after c. 1590, from Westerwald also reached England in smaller numbers.<sup>26</sup>

*Face masks*

From the 1630s, if not earlier, *Bartmann* jugs were associated in the popular imagination with strongly anti-Protestant Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino, whom they were thought to satirize.<sup>27</sup> The tradition, however, dates from well before his birth in 1542, as applied face masks with incised or impressed details appear on tall drinking jugs made in Saxony c. 1450<sup>28</sup> and from here the fashion spread southwards. By the late 15th century, round-bodied stoneware jug forms produced at Aachen and Raeren were embellished with more sketchily applied anthropomorphic features, including arms,<sup>29</sup> and from c. 1500 the fashion was developed at Cologne, where fully developed face masks were first used on large rounded mugs and jugs. By c. 1550 the tradition had spread to Frechen, Raeren and Siegburg. The study by Holmes, now neglected but still valid, presents a series of nine mask types that follow a broadly chronological sequence, now reinforced by dating from sealed contexts such as shipwrecks.<sup>30</sup> Early mugs and jugs usually have a ring foot; the large face mask with squared beard (type I), is often combined with inscribed bands and alternating small portrait medallions and acanthus leaves.<sup>31</sup>

Masks dating to after 1550 are in the same tradition, well carved but less

sculptural and with more rounded beards (type II).<sup>32</sup> Although the eyes are more schematic, the large face mask is still in the Cologne style and is typical of the contemporary burgher class, dignified yet jovial, slightly plump with clearly defined moustache and a broad bushy beard falling in long, well groomed curls. On later masks the moustache and mouth blur into an exaggerated grin, or grimace (type III); eyebrows, which are generally absent on the earlier examples, are now more prominent; dated examples range between 1590 and 1606.<sup>33</sup> After this, the masks are increasingly schematic.

At least four of the five Frechen jugs from pit [11] are of *Bartmann* type, with applied face masks (Fig. 7). Three are substantially complete and have three large, identical applied medallions, one below the face, the others at 90° to the first. Jug No. 1, which has a turned base, large cylindrical neck and turned collared rim has a type II face mask, and from the size of the neck, No. 2 is almost certainly from the same form of jug, although perhaps slightly later as the moustache is less distinct and the beard more rounded. On No. 3 the mask is elongated to fit the narrower neck. This jug would have had a base of simple tapering form like that on No. 4, where the facial features are broadly the same but the beard is thinner and slightly more pointed. In some respects jug No. 4 has elements in common with the type III masks; while the lack of eyebrows and style of the mouth place it with the others, it could be considered a transitional type and is the latest of the illustrated finds.

*16th-century non-figurative medallions*

From c. 1550 jugs with turned foot-rings were less common and jugs with type II masks generally occur with one or three large medallions; jugs with type III masks tend to have one smaller medallion. Heraldic motifs were the most popular, serving as indicators of personal status, to identify merchants, to denote provenance (e.g. Amsterdam) or affiliations (e.g. the Hanseatic merchants). The medallions on Nos 1 and 3 have small rosette motifs at the centre, one within a larger floral motif (No. 1), the other within a double lozenge that is framed by scrolls (No. 3).

*16th-century figurative medallions*

Figurative medallions are generally rare, and they are usually associated with type III masks. They evolved from small roundels with busts of both sexes to standing figures. Of the latter, those on Frechen stonewares are almost all men; some show aristocratic figures, cavaliers,<sup>34</sup> or 'sportsmen'.<sup>35</sup> On tankard-like *Schnelle* and *Pinte* forms, panels made larger *Landsknecht* figures possible.<sup>36</sup> Female figures are much rarer, and usually occur on Siegburg and Raeren stonewares, either in friezes showing the peasant dance or biblical scenes, or in a larger panel, for example as representations of biblical or mythological figures, the virtues or the muses.<sup>37</sup> A rare example from London is known from Leonard Street, Shoreditch.<sup>38</sup>

Much information on 16th- to early 17th-century costume can be gleaned from contemporary engravings, stonewares<sup>39</sup> and slipware dishes made in the Werra valley from c. 1580 and at Enkhuizen, Holland,<sup>40</sup> c. 1605–7, the latter showing three types of female dress, worn by young women of different classes in Westfalen and Hessen, and in the Netherlands. In all cases, women are usually shown in high-waisted dresses, sometimes with an apron and often wearing a cap. Where dancers are portrayed they are usually dressed for an occasion, and on Raeren stonewares they appear in a frieze, not singly. Some slipwares show a couple jointly holding a pedestal cup, and dancing men also appear singly, but women tend to be more composed and holding a tambourine.<sup>41</sup>

The right-facing figure shown on No. 4 (Fig. 7) is puzzling in that the head is quite masculine and almost bearded, while the cap appears to have horns. The body seems androgynous, while the simple pleated gown differs from the contemporary female dress in that although it has a high, slightly scooped neckline and puffed sleeves, there is no bodice detailing and no apron; the low waist and sash are also atypical and suggest a person of very low status, perhaps a servant. The flow of the skirt (swirling to the right) and sash (to the left) suggest walking or dancing, with a lamp or goblet in the left hand.



Fig. 8: Siegburg stoneware *Schnelle* from pit [2089] on site HWL06 (location shown on Fig. 6)

The simple dress can, however, be explained as an earlier fashion, resulting from the reuse of a Siegburg motif of c. 1540 or earlier by a later potter working in Frechen.<sup>42</sup> Similarly although the face might appear slightly sinister, the absence of other devilish features shows that this is due to the sketchiness of the design, which was not intended as a satire, and while it may be a didactic message against the perils of drink, it may also represent the wine and bread served at the Last Supper. The image is most probably a female allegory such as the virtue Faith, shown in 16th-century contemporary engravings and stove-tiles in classical robes with a chalice in the right hand and cross in the left, or the parable of the Wise Virgins.<sup>43</sup> One of the closest parallels for the design is a smaller medallion on a Siegburg beaker of 1586 which shows a crowned female in a simple waisted dress holding a flower, perhaps Virgo, or the Wise Virgin.<sup>44</sup> Other possibilities are St Cecilia, shown holding an oil lamp in a Liège psalter dated to the late 13th century<sup>45</sup> and St Lucy (AD 283–304), patron saint of the blind, usually portrayed holding a flat or pedestal dish with her eyes on it, and carrying a palm leaf. As it is unclear what the Holywell figure is holding, the meaning of the medallion must remain undecided.

### Discussion

Three of the jugs found in the pit are substantially complete; the sherds are all large and in good condition and it is likely that they were used in a property close by. The assemblage is, however, quite small and lacks contemporary ware types such as Surrey-Hampshire border ware and early English tin-glazed wares. The combination of fabric types, forms and decorative styles points to use for the consumption of drink and a deposition date of c. 1580–1610, assuming the English stonewares are intrusive.

From the above, it can be surmised that the pit group derives from the property on 2–4 Holywell Lane, and/or from the Earl of Rutland's estate, within which it may have been included. Lovell's house, as described in 1524, was apparently a single building of at least two storeys,<sup>46</sup> but the Earl of Rutland's residence was a much larger

complex with multiple phases of construction. Ownership of this property was relatively constant until the later 17th century, but the history of Holywell Corner is much less clear. The annual salary of £10 paid to Alexander Harrington in 1534 was considerably more than that of the other officers, and as he and his son were entitled to free food and drink at the priory<sup>47</sup> they may well have had a disposable income. Whether their properties were the same as those leased by Grenell is unclear, and even if they were not, it is not known whether the leases were held for their duration, or whether the properties were sublet. By the late 16th century, however, tenancies are likely to have changed more frequently, as the village of Shoreditch grew in the second half of the 16th century and development along Bishopsgate spread northwards, to the extent that by the 1590s Stow reported that 'many houses have been builded for the lodgings of noble men, of strangers borne and other'.<sup>48</sup>

The pottery from pit [11] could equally have been discarded after the expiration of the leases of Harrington (1597) or Grenell (1598), after the deaths of Edward or John Manners (1587, 1588), after the sale of the Earl of Rutland's property to Thomas Screven in 1610, or when it passed to Francis Gofton in 1613.<sup>49</sup> The pottery from pit [11] comprises the most impressive cluster of stonewares from the area, as although imported pottery was relatively common in excavated contexts of c. 1540–1600 within the precinct, the finds are generally scattered and fragmented. The most complete German stoneware finds are a Raeren drinking jug, a Frechen *Bartmann* jug of the later 16th/earlier 17th century with a well-defined Holmes type III mask and three large, identical heraldic medallions,<sup>50</sup> and a near complete Siegburg *Schnelle* dated to 1582<sup>51</sup> with three panels bearing the Imperial double eagle, used for Aachen and the Empire,<sup>52</sup> and adopted by Hanseatic merchants (Fig. 8).<sup>53</sup> The *Schnelle* was found with other pottery dated to 1580–1610 in a cesspit located to the rear of a late 16th-/17th-century building, c. 14.5m to the north of Holywell Lane and only c. 13.5m to the west of pit [11] (Fig. 6). This is only the second example of the Imperial double

eagle from London; how it reached Holywell is unclear, but it suggests some connection with the London headquarters of the Hansa at the Steelyard, whether through the importation of wine, or on a more personal level.<sup>54</sup> Whatever the events that led to the disposal of the stoneware discussed here, their high quality and the proximity of the two pits suggests that they were contemporary and possibly from the same high-status property. As such they contribute a tantalising glimpse into the changing land-use and population of Holywell in the years following the Dissolution.

### Acknowledgments

Museum of London Archaeology is grateful to Willingale Associates for commissioning the work on behalf of the clients, Breanstar Limited. Thanks are due to Alexandra van Dongen (van Boymans Museum, Rotterdam), David Gaimster (University of Glasgow), Jette Linaa (Denmark), and Marion Röhmer (Hetjens-Museum Deutsches Keramikmuseum, Düsseldorf) for their comments on the medallion on No. 4, to Jacqui Pearce and Simon Davis for their comments on the text and to Simon Davis for his assistance with the maps and plans. These were prepared by Judit Peresztegi, while the pottery was illustrated by Hannah Faux and photographed by Edwin Baker. The fieldwork was managed by George Dennis and carried out by Pete Cardiff and Pat Miller. The post-excavation manager was Nicola Powell.

*Lyn Blackmore is a Senior Finds Specialist for Museum of London Archaeology and has worked for MOLA and its predecessors for almost 30 years; during this time she also worked a number of seasons on the pottery and finds from excavations in Trondheim, Norway. Lyn's special interests lie in the Anglo-Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval periods, notably the development of London and the role of local, regional and imported pottery and finds in trade and exchange. She has published widely on different aspects of her work, and recently finished a 5-year term as Assistant Treasurer of the Medieval Pottery Research Group.*

# Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir

Following the establishment of Historic England on 1st April 2015, I thought it would be timely to write in response to a news item in your winter edition where you explain that English Heritage is to split and go on to say that it is not yet clear how these changes will affect the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS).

I would like to take this opportunity to reassure your readers that GLAAS will continue to provide archaeological planning advice to the London boroughs outside the City of London and Southwark (which have their own in-house advisers). This positive commitment has been demonstrated over the last two years by increased

resources at a time when many local government archaeology services across England have suffered worrying cut-backs.

We also continue to operate and develop the Greater London Historic Environment Record (GLHER). The winter issue's *Gromaticus* observed that the huge resource of archaeological information available to us is 'crying out for a searchable database linked to a GIS'.... The GLHER is [one] such a database which has been built up over decades. Doubtless more could be done, and perhaps there is scope for a partnership.

Whilst the core roles of GLAAS will continue I would not wish to leave you with the impression that nothing is

changing. Far from it, Historic England is creating both a new brand and organisational culture and GLAAS is already changing some of the ways we go about our business. For example, we are embarked upon a comprehensive modernisation of the strategic planning framework for managing London's archaeology – articulated through the 'Archaeological Priority Areas'. To explain all this more fully, perhaps a future edition of *London Archaeologist* could carry an article on GLAAS and the management of archaeology in London?

Yours faithfully

Sandy Kidd

Principal Archaeological Advisor  
GLAAS

## *Blackmore cont'd...*

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6. Bull et al *op cit* fn 3: 11, 13.
7. Bull et al *op cit* fn 3: 3, 11–3, table 5, figs 3, 5. The Walbrook itself flowed south through Moorfields to London Wall, entering the Thames by Dowgate.
8. Bull et al *op cit* fn 3: 13, 29, figs 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 17, 21, 31.
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12. Bull et al *op cit* fn 3: 49, 85–6, fig 68.
13. Bird *op cit* fn 5; Pearce *op cit* fn 3.
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