Recently another, though less remarkable, parallel (pl. xx, d) was brought to the Guildhall Museum (Acc. no. 21223). This is part of a glass pen, found near the Fleet river in Blackfriars, in an eighteenth-century cellar and associated with a wig-curler. The tip is strikingly similar, with the four reservoirs for holding the ink. Such glass pens are well-known curiosities in the nineteenth century and are not uncommon.

The Guildhall pen, if such it is, has obvious disadvantages for a modern writer. It is both too short and too slender. Nevertheless, it is quite possible to make letters, and certainly to draw lines, although there is no way of achieving variation in the thickness of stroke. It is probably for drawing rather than writing.

The provenience is given as London Wall. This almost certainly means that the pen was found in the city ditch, which was dug in the latter part of the thirteenth century, and in view of the evidence of the Canterbury pen, the Guildhall specimen may well be of this date.

JEAN M. COOK

A MEDIEVAL UNDERCROFT AT 50 MARK LANE, LONDON, E.C.3.

During the excavation of foundations for a new block of offices at 50 Mark Lane, in the city of London, the substantial remains of a stone-built undercroft of medieval date were discovered. The building plans caused trenches to be cut across the site from north to south and it was in two of these neighbouring trenches that the eastern and western parts of the undercroft were found, the centre remaining concealed by the builder's baulk and being at no time available for examination.

The undercroft had apparently been built on undisturbed ground, since the N. wall and parts of the E. wall were laid in the sand and gravel ballast which forms the undisturbed subsoil on this site (fig. 45). Owing to disturbance by later buildings it was not possible to ascertain whether the other walls were also partially laid into the ballast, but it is likely from analogies elsewhere that this was so. The walls were well built and varied in thickness from 2 ft. (N. and E. walls) to 2½ ft. (W. wall). The interior surfaces were of chalk ashlar work and the core of chalk and flint: the exterior surfaces, where visible, were quite rough and laid in the ballast and did not appear to have been dressed. The surviving height of the walls varied from approximately 6 ft. on the W. side to 2½ ft. on the E. side. There were no rough foundations to any of the walls, the interior dressed surface of each wall commencing at its base and resting directly on the ballast below.

In the interior, at the middle of both the E. and the W. walls was a semicircular engaged column in limestone. The base mouldings were simple (fig. 44, sections AB, CD; pl. xxxi, a) and the columns rested on substructures of tightly-packed hearthstone fragments, flint, etc. Engaged attached shafts of limestone stood at each of the four corners of the undercroft and rested on substructures of similar content to those

Thanks are due to the Hammerson Group of Companies, Quadrex House, Park Lane, London, W.1, the owners of the site, for permission to visit it and to the builders, Messrs. Poolman (Builders) Ltd., especially Mr. Oliver, their general foreman, and his men, whose helpfulness and interest made the recovery of the plan of the undercroft possible.

It should be pointed out that this baulk has remained undisturbed except for the sinking of a wooden buttress and that any further building on this site might provide an opportunity to see whether there was an entrance or any other feature on the N. or S. wall.


I am indebted to Miss Helen A. H. Macdonald of the Petrological Department in the Geological Survey and Museum for her kindness in identifying these stones. She described the limestone as 'fine grained and very similar to a specimen of Chipping Norton Limestone from the inferior oolite at Stow-on-the-Wold, Glos.' and the hearthstone as 'a soft calcareous sandstone similar to a specimen in our collection of hearthstone from the Upper Greensand at Merstham, Surrey'.


Guildhall Museum, no. 21155.
FIG. 44
PLAN OF MEDIEVAL UNDERCROFT AT MARK LANE, LONDON (pp. 178, 181)
With sketch map showing position and (inset) elevations of engaged columns
beneath the semicircular piers. All these engaged columns apparently served as vaulting shafts and several fragments of ribs in hearthstone from the vaulting of the ceiling were found reused in later walls and foundations. A fragment of limestone, possibly the capital of one of the semicircular piers, was also noted, reused in the foundations of the modern S. wall of the site (visible upside down at the S. end of the section, FIG. 45).

Although the undercroft appeared to have enjoyed a long period of use and the builder's baulk across its centre provided an excellent section of the filling, it was difficult to find a primary floor level. While the builders were clearing the first trench covering the western portion of the undercroft, archaeological examination was possible only during their lunch and tea breaks, in order not to interrupt their work, and it was therefore impossible to examine the floor levels carefully other than in the section provided by the baulk. The second trench, however, covering the eastern part of the undercroft was begun at the end of a week and it was possible to carry out a limited amount of excavation in the NE. corner during the week-end. The section on the E. side of the baulk corresponded with that on the W. side (FIG. 45) and with the facts revealed by excavation.

At the base of the undercroft the undisturbed ballast mingled, almost imperceptibly, with dirty ballast above it; over this ran a rough, uneven layer of chalk fragments running right up to the S. wall, and up to the N. wall along most of its length. Since the ballast contained only a few fragments of painted wall-plaster, and no pottery came from it or the chalk layer above, it seems reasonable to assume that these two levels represent the initial building (dirty ballast) and the trimmings from the dressed wall surface (uneven chalk). Resting on the chalk was a fairly even layer of gravelly filling containing a small amount of pottery of various dates from Roman to the fifteenth century, of which the Roman sherds represented an extraneous intrusion.

47 Guildhall Museum, nos. 21159-60.
48 Guildhall Museum, no. 21158.
This layer, lying above those representing the initial building, would represent the first floor and occupation level.

Above the floor was a sandy filling containing remains of decayed wood which suggested the presence of beams at some time, although the evidence was insufficient either to reconstruct a wooden floor or to postulate a date for such a structure if, in fact, it had existed. This sandy filling, which was some 6-9 in. thick, was, like the gravelly filling below it, fairly level. In turn it was covered by a layer of burnt material containing charcoal and small patches of orange sand which stepped down sharply southwards (see section, FIG. 45) from an average thickness of 8 in. to approximately 2 in. The narrowing of this level in the southern part of the undercroft was 'corrected' by a layer of sandy earth over which a further layer of yellow earth was added. The sandy filling, the burnt layer and the sandy and yellow earth fillings were more distinct on the W. than on the E. side of the builder's baulk. The material from all of them was of early-seventeenth-century date and included the sherd of two complete bowls and an iron hammerhead (FIG. 46, nos. 1-3).

![FIG. 46](https://example.com/fig46.jpg)

**FIG. 46**

17TH-CENTURY POTTERY AND CLAW HAMMER FROM SITE OF MEDIEVAL UNDERCROFT AT MARK LANE, LONDON (p. 182). Sc. ¼

Above these levels ran the first definite floor (PL. XXI, A), constructed of bricks and mortar in its N. half, but in its S. part consisting solely of a thin layer of mortar. As the sectional drawing reveals (FIG. 45) this S. portion was at a higher level, being stepped down in a similar way to the burnt layer below it, but in the opposite direction. Although the floor was seen only in section in the W. part of the undercroft where a modern brick wall intruded into it at the N. end (FIG. 45), examination of its eastern part was possible. The thin layer of mortar extended northwards from the S. wall of the undercroft to the semicircular vaulting shaft half-way along the E. wall. At this point it was combined with bricks to form a more substantial floor, the place where this happened being marked by the remains of a wooden beam (FIG. 44) just below the mortar and beside the southernmost line of bricks. This brick and mortar combination continued northwards for 6½ ft., when it was partially discontinued, a thin mortar line once more constituting the sole flooring for some 1½ ft. westwards from the E. wall. This change again occurred over the remains of a wooden beam running from E. to W. Beyond the area of mortar, however, the brick and mortar combination continued northwards until it was interrupted by the intrusion of a modern brick wall. Where the bricks lay over the beams they had risen slightly above the surrounding floor level.
Above the brick and mortar floor there had been too many different intrusions, culminating in the erection of the bombed building, for their analysis to be attempted. The base of a seventeenth-century pot resting immediately on this floor would suggest that the cellar was in use at least until 1650, and the Great Fire of 1666 probably provides the reason for its eventual end, although no signs of burning on or above the floor were found. The date of its initial construction cannot satisfactorily be decided on the evidence available at present. The mouldings on the shafts are not distinctive enough to be dated and the scarcity of material in the suggested primary floor level, consisting, as it did, of three Roman, two thirteenth-century and three fifteenth-century sherds, makes precise dating from this source impossible. However, the simplicity of the shafts and their likeness to those of Gerrards Hall crypt, built in the reign of Edward I, and the presence of the thirteenth-century pottery, suggest that the undercroft may quite well have been in existence by the early years of the fourteenth century.

**FINDS (FIG. 46)**

1. *Bowl*; pale buff paste with brown, slightly mottled glaze over interior and accidental patches of greenish glaze on outside. Almost complete. Found in layer of burning beneath brick and mortar floor in E. half of undercroft. *c.* 1600. Guildhall Museum, no. 21151. H. 2\(\frac{1}{4}\) in.

2. *Bowl*; off-white ware with cream-coloured slip over inside and outside, and a clear glaze giving a straw-yellow colour over the interior of the bowl. Associated with no. 1. *c.* 1600. Guildhall Museum, no. 21152. H. 3\(\frac{1}{4}\) in.

3. *Claw-hammer*, iron. Found beneath the mortar floor in the SE. part of undercroft. From same level as 1 and 2, and therefore *c.* 1600. Guildhall Museum, no. 21153. L. 6 in.

4. *Base of vessel*; buff ware with white slip over part of the outside and clear glaze over part of both the outside and inside. The vessel must belong to the second half of the seventeenth century at latest because of its softness and similarity to delft biscuit, both of which render it unlike the increasingly harder wares of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The base was resting directly on the mortar floor in the S. part of the section (FIG. 45) Guildhall Museum, no. 21154. Ht. as extant 3\(\frac{1}{4}\) in.

**EVE HARRIS**

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