

Post-Roman Pottery Assessment

Site code: ONE94, PLY87, BUC87, CID90, DOC87, KNG85

Undated

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Introduction

This assessment is primarily based on material recovered during excavation of the control excavation areas at Number 1 Poultry. In addition to this, selected pottery assemblages from other sites in the area identified as key sequences to Poultry have also been scanned and briefly assessed with reference to their direct relevance to the updated research aims for Poultry.

The quantities of Post-Roman pottery by sherd count from all areas breaks down as follows:

Area*	Medieval	Post-medieval	Total
Area 1 (Pt 1 - cemetery)	139	164	303
Area 1 (Pt 2 - church)	2803	4	2807
Area 2	540	2	542
Evaluation Shafts	49	19	68
Area 5 (Service Yard)	118	1	119
Area 8	358	1	359
Area 9	127	3	130
Area 10	1171	6	1177
Area 11	919	825	1744
Period totals	6224	1025	7249

* Note: Areas 3 and 4 (the Observe and Record excavations), Area 6 (perimeter works), and Area 7/12 (the apex) produced very little post-Roman pottery, and have therefore not been included here.

Condition and size

The Late Saxon/early medieval pottery varied considerably both in terms of size and condition. Sherds were often small, abraded and burnt/sooted, but in certain cases preservation was better and there were several examples of almost complete cooking pots. In addition a single intact vessel was recovered from this early period. Much of the pottery showed evidence of usage in the form of sooting, or internal residues. The medieval and post-medieval ceramics were generally better preserved. For the most part the quantities of pottery of all periods from individual contexts is small (less than 30 sherds), the largest groups being found in the post-medieval period.

Recording

All the Post-Roman pottery from the main excavations at Poultry has been identified and spottdated according to standard MoLAS procedures. The first phase of excavation (Areas 1 and 2) and part of the second phase (Area 9 up to context number [3000]) was recorded on the Unix database where sherd count was recorded on the proforma sheets but not on computer. The resulting information was transferred to the Oracle system, but sherd counts are not present. Fabric, form, condition and other details were recorded, as were recommendations for illustration and display.

The rest of the assemblage has been recorded on the Oracle database, where the details listed above were recorded and in addition, sherd count and estimated number of vessels was noted. These methods of ceramic quantification will provide the means for statistical analysis, so that the resulting data will provide summaries by individual phases and groups. Manipulation of the data in this way will allow comparative work on the assemblages within excavation areas, between different areas, and with other assemblages from selected site sequences in the vicinity of Poultry and beyond.

The assemblage (statistics based on fully computed material)

Late Saxon/early medieval

Number 1 Poultry

Late Saxon/early medieval ceramics dominate the overall assemblage, with a wide range of locally produced wares, and a number of less local products and imports. As stated above, the majority of contexts consisted of small groups made up of less than 30 sherds. The largest groups of individual sherds were found in deposits in Areas 1 and 10. In some instances these consisted of medium sized groups, that is, between 30 and 100 sherds. Examples of these include contexts [1757], [1834], [1907], [11009], [11126] and [11179].

Twenty-three fabric types of the early medieval period were identified, consisting of fourteen locally made fabrics and nine non-local and imported wares. The earliest Post-Roman pottery recovered from the excavations was Late Saxon Shelly ware, which dates from the tenth/eleventh centuries. This is sometimes found on its own, but is often found with residual Roman material. Thereafter a range of local handmade wares are present in the assemblage, often with some regional fabric types such as Stamford-type and Thetford type wares. In addition there is a consistent presence of imported wares, in the form of Red painted ware from the Rhineland, and French whitewares.

Where assignable to identifiable forms, the vast majority of pottery at this period was from cooking vessels, although bowls, dishes and jars were also identified. Some unusual forms were noted, including a complete sprinkler made from Stamford ware, and a goblet fragment also made from this fabric. Crucible and lamp fragments in certain fabrics were present throughout most of the early medieval deposits, but these have been accessioned, and have been assessed separately.

In view of the fact that there are some medium-sized groups, in particular from Area 1 and Area 10, it is important that sherd counts are included for all fabric types, and added to the Oracle database. Many groups of pottery consist of small body sherds, and it is considered that sherd count and estimated number of vessels will be an adequate method of quantification, given the nature of the deposits.

Assemblages from other key sequences

DLR Bucklersbury (BUC87)

The assemblage from Bucklersbury consisted mainly of Roman ceramics, but some small early medieval groups were recovered from the later part of the sequence. Individual early medieval vessels of particular interest include an LOGR lamp from context [19], and an LOGR lamp and EMS crucible fragment from context [42].

72-5 Cheapside (CID90)

The bulk of the ceramics from CID90 are of Roman date, but a quantity of post-Roman pottery was recovered, in particular from Late Saxon and Early medieval features (74 contexts). The pottery of this date consisted of small groups of small to medium sized sherds which were for the most part unabraded. The assemblage is similar in fabric types and forms to that excavated from Poultry.

The most productive features from the site in terms of the ceramic assemblage were found to be the wattle lined cesspits and pits at the south end of the trench in Open Area 39. Both these groups of features contained early medieval pottery, both locally made and from non-local production centres such as Stamford and Thetford, as well as imports from Andenne and the Rhineland. A lamp made in an unusual form was recovered from context [2333].

Pottery of an early medieval date was also recovered from the Saxo-Norman buildings B22 and B23, which have been interpreted as a possible metalworking complex. No crucible

fragments were found in association with these buildings, although the quantities of domestic pottery found were not large.

Pitgroup 36 in Open Area 33 contained a quantity of interesting finds types of Late Saxon/early medieval date (also see the lead alloy and copper alloy assessments), as well as pottery dated c 950-1050. This material will be published as part of a separate publication of 72-5 Cheapside (forthcoming LAMAS), and will only be summarised within the Poultry publication.

36-7 King Street (KNG85)

Once again, the bulk of the ceramics from the KNG85 sequence are of Roman date, but some post-Roman pottery was recovered from the late Saxon and early medieval sequence. The sequence includes evidence of two late Saxon sunken-floored buildings, and associated pits and open areas (Groups 23-5 North Area and 41-43 South Area). Evidence for the dating and function of buildings and other features associated with the late Saxon reoccupation at KNG85 is of a direct relevance to Poultry research aims.

There is a small quantity of early medieval pot from contexts [37] (EMS, EMFL, 970-1100), [38] (LSS, EMS, EMFL 970-1100), [68] (LSS 900-1050), [69] (LSS 900-1050), [2090] (EMSS, THET 1000-1150), [2092] (LSS 900-1050), [2186] (LSS, EMS 970-1100) and [2292] (LSS 900-1050).

The dating needs to be adjusted in the light of current research.

DLR Lothbury (LHY88)

The majority of the excavated sequence at LHY88 was of Roman date, and a very small amount of evidence for late Saxon reoccupation was found, in the form of part of a sunken-floored building constructed within the ruins of a late Roman masonry building. Given this context, any evidence for the dating and function of this late Saxon building may be able to contribute to the understanding of the influence of late Roman topography on the siting of late Saxon features.

The pottery consists of small groups from contexts [31] 1050-1150 ESUR, [44] 1050-1150 EMS, EMSH, LOGR and LSS, [51] 970-1150 EMS, [56] 1000-1150 EMSS, [58] 1000-1150 EMSS, [60] 1050-1150 ESUR, EMS, [61] 1150-1350 ESUR, LCOAR, LOGR, LOND, and [63] 1250-1350 EMS, ESUR, KING, THET. The dating of some of the latter contexts may need refining.

Thames Water Shafts (PLY87)

The site sequence from PLY87 included important evidence of the establishment and use of Cheapside/Poultry, and of the medieval course of the culverted Walbrook stream. Small quantities of early medieval pottery were recovered from 8 contexts within this sequence. Of these, 2 fragments were of particular interest, a fragment of EMCH with purple dye residue from context [126], and one EMCW crucible fragment from context [145].

Selected other (less important) sequences

DLR Bank Station Ticket Hall (DOC87)

The site sequence from the eastern end of the DLR Bank Station excavations (DOC87) also produced important evidence for the establishment and use of part of the late Saxon road system - in this case Lombard St - which converged on the Walbrook crossing at Poultry. The analysis of the small quantity of early medieval pottery recovered from contexts within this sequence is important to the study of the date and development of the late Saxon topography of the area, and directly relevant to Poultry research aims.

The pottery consists of small, mainly single fabric groups from contexts [8] 900-1050 LSS, [20] 1200-1250 LOND NFR, [21] 950-1250 EMS, REDP, [23] 1050-1150 EMSH, [27] 1050-

1150 EMSh, [31] 900-1050 LSS, [32] 1050-1150 EMSh, [33] 900-1050 LSS, and [48] 900-1050 LSS.

Medieval

Number 1 Poultry

Much of the medieval sequence at Poultry had been truncated by Victorian basementing, with the exception of the sequence associated with the church of St Benet Sherehog (Area 1) and the streets beneath Pancras Lane and Bucklersbury (Area 2). Consequently there are few groups worthy of close scrutiny from features such as the fills of cesspits or drains which are directly relatable to the structural sequence. For the most part the medieval groups of pottery consist of small sherds. Fifteen different fabric types were identified for pottery of twelfth to fifteenth century date. These were all locally or regionally produced, with some few imported wares. Some medium-sized thirteenth-century groups with residual early medieval ceramics were recovered, in particular from contexts [1604], [1664], [1665], [1666], [1708], [1740] and [1974]. Some unusual forms were identified, such as a fragment of a likely puzzle jug, and an aquamanile fragment.

Assemblages from key sequences

Assemblages of medieval pottery were recovered from a number of key sequences and other less key sequences, but it is not proposed that they be included in the Poultry analysis and publication work.

Post-medieval

Number 1 Poultry

Much of the post-medieval sequence at Poultry was truncated by later activity, although assemblages from some cut features and from the post-Fire cemetery sequence did survive. Ten main fabric groups were identified for the period 1500-1900. Of these six were imported wares, mainly from the Rhineland. A wide range of form types was represented, from specialist vessels such as chamber pots and chargers to bowls, dishes and jars. A particularly good group of mid-to-late seventeenth-century pottery was recovered from a cesspit in the north-west corner of Area 11. This contained a wide range of ceramics with a high percentage of imports, including several Westerwald tankards and jugs, and many Frechen *bartmanner*.

Assemblages from key sequences

Assemblages of post-medieval pottery were recovered from a number of key sequences and other sequences, but it is not proposed that they be included in the Poultry analysis and publication work.

Potential of the data (includes original research aims)

Late Saxon/early medieval

1. In the first instance, the analysis and publication of the pottery assemblages will be informed by research aims which are both site specific and, where material from other key sequences is examined, directly relatable to Poultry. The ceramic chronology will enable us to establish the earliest identified Late Saxon activity at Poultry, and its relationship with the remnants of the Roman settlement after the Alfredian reoccupation. The chronology will contribute to dating the sequence of late Saxon sunken floored buildings, and to establishing the duration and type of activities postdating the disuse of the *Via Decumana*.
2. The distribution and spatial analysis of the ceramics in relation to the structural evidence of the buildings may provide information for the extent of the Late Saxon settlement and more particularly, the function of individual rooms. This may be applicable to the sequence of

buildings both on the Poultry frontage, and the north-western part of the site where properties occupied both sides of Bucklersbury.

3. Crucible fragments recovered from Late Saxon/early medieval deposits will provide important information on the first appearance of metalworking on site. At least 29 fragments were found, a substantial proportion of them coming from the area to the south of St Benet Sherehog, in particular from Building 17M. Further spatial analysis may supply evidence for individual workshops, supplemented with evidence from other finds types such as waste fragments of lead and copper alloy. Further analytical work on the crucible types themselves will provide more information on the metalworking process (see Post-Roman ceramic accessions assessment) .

Burnt and partially-vitrified sherds which may have been used for industrial activities but are not crucibles should be separated out and examined further. Some may be sent for further analysis to establish if they were used in metal-working.

4. Ceramics from the wattle-lined cesspits and the well fill postdating the ditch cutting the disused *Via Decumana* and dividing open areas OA2M and OA3M, will not only provide dating evidence for this important phase of activity, but will also help to date other types of well-preserved artefacts from these deposits.

5. A consideration of the pottery and other artefactual and environmental evidence from the pit groups from all areas of the site may provide important information about their nature and deposition. Many of these were substantial features which were concentrated in large spaces such as Open areas OA7 and OA8, and may not be specifically related to individual properties. A study of the ceramics and other artefacts may indicate if the pits were associated with domestic or industrial activities. Comparisons between pits may reveal differences in dating and function. Such well-defined features were sometimes emptied and re-used, and apart from changes in the fills themselves, the pottery will be the chief artefactual indicator that this has occurred.

6. Open area 8M to the southwest of Bucklersbury may have been used as a market area during the early medieval period. Pottery associated with structures adjacent to the area, such as the frontage of Buildings 21M and 22M, may provide evidence of the activities which took place within the buildings at this time. Structural evidence suggests that other buildings (such as B23M) may have been subdivided into shops. The artefactual evidence may indicate whether these buildings were used for retail activities or perhaps as booths and cookshops which might be consistent with the presence of a market, and it may prove possible to compare the pottery assemblages from Poultry with that from the possible market area at Guildhall Yard.

7. Pottery from pitting to the west of the cobbled area (O/A 9M) comes from a stratigraphically earlier phase than the first foundation of the church of St Benet Sherehog, and a comparative study of the pottery from these phases may reveal differences in the assemblages.

8. Dating of the ceramics will contribute to establishing the different phases of the construction of the church of St Benet Sherehog and its associated features.

9. Deposits surviving in vessels may provide evidence of activities other than food preparation and cooking. Many vessels were recorded as showing the remains of purple staining which is usually associated with madder (*Rubia tinctorum L*), a vegetable dye for cloth and other objects. The fabrics used at Poultry are usually LSS, and EMS (900-1100). The distribution of these sherds may provide some indication of concentrations of non-domestic activity such as cloth preparation during the Late Saxon/early medieval period. Fragments have been found in contexts [2738], [2527], [3126],[6029], [6070], [6080], [6083], [6096], [7031], [8011], mainly on the western side of the site.

Similarly stained sherds from other City sites have been identified as being used for madder processing, when powdered madder root is added to water and heated (Pritchard 1991, page

168). The range of forms represented, and their dating (up to the twelfth century) points to the likelihood that this activity was undertaken as small-scale domestic work, perhaps associated with the dyeing of fleeces or skeins rather than complete garments (Pritchard, *ibid*). It is also possible that madder was used to colour other types of manufactured goods made from leather and antler. The importance of the use of madder as a dye is re-inforced by the fact that three madder bags were used to form the arms of the London Dyers' Company (Crowfoot et al, 1992, p20). By the later medieval period however, the cloth industry became more organised with proper dyeing establishments situated close to the Thames, and so madder-stained vessels are unlikely to be found in pottery dated to the late twelfth century onwards. Comparisons with other sites such as Guildhall, and Winchester Palace in Southwark, may prove worthwhile. Interestingly, madder-stained vessels have also been identified recently from middle Saxon excavations at the Royal Opera House.

Other types of artefact such as weaving implements should also be analysed in order to try and establish the extent and concentration of particular areas of non-domestic activity.

10. The incidence of Late Saxon/early medieval ceramics from the excavation is extensive and forms an important body of material worthy of study. The full range of early medieval fabrics found elsewhere in the City and beyond is present at Poultry and reflects the interconnected industrial and residential nature of the settlement at this time. This provides the opportunity to investigate the history of certain fabric types and study them in relation to different phases of the site sequence. In this way it may be possible to identify any changes in form typologies, and proportional changes in groups of fabrics. In some instances it may be possible to associate the material with numismatic and dendrochronological evidence, in order to refine the dating chronology already established for the City of London in *Aspects of Saxo-Norman London II: Finds and Environmental Evidence* (Vince and Jenner, 1991). This volume summarised the latest views on the dating and development of the different types of pottery reaching the City in this period, but it was acknowledged that it was subject to further research on future well-stratified deposits large enough to make comparative analysis valid.

At the moment date ranges for pottery types of this period are wide, often in the region of a hundred and sometimes two hundred years. Close analysis of large well-stratified groups coupled with other dating evidence may make it possible to discern typological trends in forms and shifts of emphasis between ceramic fabrics which we have not been able to recognise before.

Although the groups of pottery are small-medium rather than large, the well-stratified sequence of medieval building phases, and the many phases associated with the use of the medieval church of St Benet Sherehog, will provide a fruitful area for a consideration of ceramic typology and fabric development. Although opportunities to compare the assemblage with dating from dendrochronology or numismatics is limited at Poultry (only one possible Saxon coin was recovered from the excavations at Poultry, a forged silver coin of Edward the Confessor dated 1053-1056), the assemblage may be tied into other research into material from Guildhall Yard and Bull Wharf.

Research questions to be addressed include:

- A re-assessment of the identity and eventual decline of Late Saxon Shelly ware. Are there any typological developments in appearance during the course of its life c. 900-1050?
- Form typologies for fabrics such as LOGR and ESUR. Is there any discernible typological change in rim forms and/or decorations for these two fabrics?
- There seems to be more LOGR than ESUR at Poultry, and these fabrics share the same date range (1050-1150). Preliminary observations from the larger assemblages from Guildhall suggest that LOGR was particularly prevalent c1080-1100, and that ESUR became more popular in the twelfth century. Does the material from Poultry confirm these findings?

- Does the assemblage enable us to find out more about the relationship between LOGR and LCOAR, which share physical characteristics and may be part of the same production centre?

The pottery from the site will enable a close study of the imported wares, such as ANDE, REDP and BLGR, as well as North French wares. The quantity and range of the material found should be compared with the imports identified from the nearby waterfront site at Bull Wharf. The imported whitewares in particular require further study, to confirm initial identifications.

- How do the proportions of non-local wares such as Stamford and Thetford-types compare with other sites in the area, and in comparison with Bull Wharf?
- Are there any unusual or new forms found in the assemblage?

Medieval

1. As with earlier periods, the medieval ceramics will contribute to establishing the dating chronology for the stratigraphic sequence. The pottery will contribute to a dating table for this period.
2. The pottery associated with the shops along the Poultry frontage and the buildings behind them (such as B24M) will provide important evidence which can be compared to the documentary record. Building B24M had a chalk-lined cesspit containing ceramics dated 1240-1350.
3. Any crucible fragments found in the later medieval deposits at Poultry may help to confirm the documentary evidence of metal-working on many parts of the site during this period. Scientific analysis of residues on crucibles will also help to determine which metals were being processed (see ceramic assessment report). Sherds which are not crucibles but which show evidence of severe burning and semi-vitrification may be selected for further analysis to determine if they have been used for industrial activities. This information could be compared with the results of work done on the crucible fragments at Guildhall Yard, where crucibles and mould fragments were found in thirteenth and fourteenth century contexts.
4. Any unusual or new forms should be identified and discussed, and considered in relation to the site.
5. Any vessels containing residues such as the whiteware with the red pigment in context [1920] should be analysed.

Post-medieval

1. The post-medieval pottery will contribute to the dating sequence on certain parts of the site, especially the western end.
2. Post-medieval pottery from cesspits and other closed groups will provide evidence concerning the wealth and status of the occupants of the area. In the seventeenth century in particular, the inhabitants of the area included both gentry and merchants, many of whom may have had overseas connections and therefore have unusual items in their households which may include ceramics.
3. No evidence was recovered of the seventeenth century sugar refining businesses recorded as being present on the east side of the Walbrook and in Sise Lane. Fragments of redware sugar cane moulds have been found on many sites near the Thames, but none have been identified from the Poultry assemblage.
4. No specialist vessels relating to apothecaries and medicinal preparations were recovered from the ceramic assemblage, although documentary evidence indicates that apothecaries

and druggists lived in houses in the Walbrook area in the seventeenth century, although they did not necessarily practice there.

Revised research aims

Late Saxon/early medieval

1. What evidence is there from the ceramics for metal-working during this period, and how does the distribution of fragments contribute to locating workshops and associated industrial areas.
2. What does the evidence of dyes in the ceramic assemblage tell us about the nature of the cloth manufacturing that was occurring on site? What does a study of form and fabric add to the evidence? Are any other dyes or pigments present? What is the significance, if any, of their distribution patterns?
3. What does the complete Stamford sprinkler from Area 10 indicate about possible usage? What other parallels are there for this form?
4. What interesting pit assemblages of ceramics and other artefact types date to this period, and can they be related to specific properties, buildings, or open areas?

Medieval

5. Are there any crucible fragments of 13th/14th century date?

Post-Medieval

6. Can the Frechen *bartmanner* be associated with specific properties on the site, and what are the coats-of-arms on the medallions?
7. What dating do the ceramics provide for the fills of the cesspit in the brick-built cellar north of Bucklersbury, and can the ceramics be discussed in parallel to other artefact types from this feature? The glass was of a particularly fine quality, and may represent someone's personal collection. Can this be said about the ceramics? In view of the mixed date range of the pottery are different fills likely to have been represented? Was the cesspit allowed to accumulate material gradually?
8. Does the ceramic assemblage indicate evidence of the nationality of the occupiers of this property during this period, as reflected through the presence of imported types?

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