

Post Roman Ceramic Accessions

Site code: ONE94

Undated

Author: Richenda Goffin



Museum of London Archaeology
© **Museum of London Archaeology**
Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle Wharf
Road, London N1 7ED
tel 0207 410 2200 fax 0207 410 2201 email
mola@mola.org.uk



Number 1 Poultry: Post Roman ceramic accessions Richenda Goffin (MoLAS)

Introduction

The quantification shown in the table below does not include specialist ceramics, which are included in the sections on ceramic building material and clay pipes, and includes ceramic mouldings of an architectural nature, tin-glazed tiles, medieval floor tiles, and stamped clay pipes.

Area	Quantity
Unstratified	2
Evaluation	1
Area 1	34
Area 2	1
Area 8	3
Area 9	2
Area 10	1
Area 11	8
TOTAL	52

The assemblage

Late Saxon/early Medieval

Early medieval crucible fragments form the major part of the ceramic assemblage (31 items), with 7 lamp fragments of similar date. Many of the crucibles are heavily vitrified and several fragments show evidence of copper residues. A single ceramic spindlewhorl was recovered, which may be early medieval in date.

Post-medieval

Fragments of an unusual locally-made tin-glazed figurine <6067> were found in the large late seventeenth, early 18th century group within context [16004]. This formed part of an ornately decorated shoe. Such model shoes were apparently used as gifts, sometimes being given in pairs to a husband and wife, since examples have been found with initials on them. Some examples are dated, although there is no evidence of this on the one from Poultry. The shoes date from the mid seventeenth century through to the eighteenth century (Lipski and Archer, 1984, p 409). It seems likely that this example is quite an early one, possibly dating to around 1650+, in view of the size of the ornate bow at the front and the overall shape of the heel.

A total of 7 fragments of wig-curler were also recovered.

Potential of the material

Medieval

1. Analysis of the crucible fragments will contribute to the study of early medieval industrial activities at Poultry, and should be considered along with related artefacts of other material types such as copper, lead and iron. Poultry presents a rare opportunity for an integrated discussion of the artefacts in direct relation to stratigraphic evidence for early-medieval workshops and hearths. The finds and land-use data can be compared with documentary evidence, which indicates the presence of smiths in properties at the western end of Poultry around 1190. By the mid-thirteenth century the area was occupied by ironmongers, and a property nearby sold knives. It is thought that some manufacturing may have occurred in the properties fronting Poultry, although it appears that larger workshops and furnaces were generally away from the main thoroughfare.

In addition to iron-smithing, some manufacturing of non-ferrous objects may have been undertaken on the same properties. Analysis of the crucible fragments and the metallic residues within them should indicate which metals were being processed, and whether these included more precious metals such as silver. Analysis of the crucible fabrics will further define the dating of these phases of activity.

The majority of crucible fragments (22) were recovered from Area 1. One fragment was found in a multi-phased timber-lined hearth in a timber building 17M, situated to the south of the church of St Benet Sherehog. Other fragments were associated with buildings along Poultry (Buildings 5M-7M), one of which also had a timber-lined hearth. Hammerscale was recovered from these features, indicating that iron-smithing was taking place. Contemporary buildings fronting onto Bucklersbury may have contained similar activities.

Further crucible fragments were recovered from Area 8 <6413>, <6414>, Area 9 <887>, Area 10 <2295>, <2317> <6050> and Area 11 <6082>, <6131>.

In view of the excellent artefactual and documentary evidence for Poultry, and the existence of comparable material from the Guildhall sites (GYE92 etc) and 72-5 Cheapside (CID90), the study of the crucibles from Poultry could form the basis for an integrated report based on the scientific analysis of the residues and related metallic artefacts identified above. The work should include reference to the work already published on metallurgy, particularly in Bayley et al 1992.

2. A total of 7 fragments of medieval lamp were recovered at Poultry, two of which can be linked (context [1803] with [1877]). All of the lamps carried indications of sooting denoting usage. Four of the lamps were found in Area 1, with one from Area 10 and two from Area 11. Fabric analysis will contribute to the further definition of the dating, whilst adding to the overall knowledge of the material culture of the settlement during the early medieval period.

3. The ceramic spindlewhorl recovered from Area 11 may be tenth/eleventh century in date and may, in conjunction with other artefacts related to wool processing, weaving, and cloth production, provide further evidence of the early medieval trades and industries located at Poultry.

Post-medieval

4. The tin-glazed shoe from context [16004] should be considered as part of the larger assemblage from this context, and which included a large ceramic assemblage, high quality wine glasses, vessel glass, fragments of tin-glazed wall tiles showing biblical scenes - which were probably made in the Netherlands, and some clay pipes. It may be possible to associate the assemblage with documentary evidence, in order to identify the owners.

Updated research design

1. How closely can the crucible fragments be associated with structural evidence or are most of them coming from pits in open areas behind the building frontages away from the street? What do they tell us about the extent of the metalworking? Is there any significance in the spatial analysis of this material?

2. One crucible fragment is known to have come from a hearth in Building 17M. Can this be tied in with other artefactual evidence? What do the crucible fabrics themselves indicate about the duration of metalworking activity?

3. What evidence is there for non-local fabrics being used for crucibles? Is any Stamford ware present? What is the fabric of <2317>?

4. What metals were being heated in the crucibles? Is there any evidence for precious metals such as silver being melted, or does the evidence suggest only copper or copper alloys including lead? (participation with the Ancient Monuments Laboratory, who have worked on crucibles previously - See Bayley et al in Saxo-Normans 2).

5. What correlation is there between fabric type and the metal present in the residues? Were particular crucible types being used because they had more suitable properties for different metal types?
6. Is there sufficient evidence to indicate that non-ferrous metalworking was occurring on different properties to the iron-working, or was it all done in the same place?
7. How refractory were the crucibles and is there any evidence for crucible modification, as has been found on other sites in the City?
8. How does the evidence of non-ferrous manufacturing tie in with documentary evidence, or is there a gap in our knowledge with only smithing, ironmongering, and individual iron specialisms such as spur-making and armour-making being documented?
9. How do the ceramic lamps compare with other published examples? Lamp <6415> for example has an unusual form.
10. Is there other evidence for spinning from the site in addition to the spindlewhorl <2921>. Is there any evidence of wear on it?
11. What evidence does the finds assemblage from context [16004] collectively provide for the wealth and importance of the owners of these artefacts in the seventeenth century?

Bibliography

Bayley J et al, Metallurgy, 1991, in Aspects of Saxo-Norman London II: Finds and environmental evidence p389-405

Lipski L and M Archer, 1984, Dated English delftware