

Post Roman Lead

Site code: ONE94, CID90

Undated

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Quantification

The numbers of lead objects recovered at Poultry are shown in the table below. It is likely that a proportion of these objects are residual and/or Roman in date, particularly those from Area 12. It may not be possible to date many of the large number of fragments of undiagnostic material.

Area	Hand Retrieved	Metal Detected	Total
Unstratified	19	43	62
Evaluation	3	3	3
Area 1	17		17
Areas 3 and 4	1		1
Area 5	2	11	13
Area 8	29	82	111
Area 9	29	57	86
Area 10	39	40	79
Area 11	15	21	36
Area 7/12	14	68	82
TOTAL	168	325	493

Table X: lead objects from Poultry

Area	Quantity
Unstratified	2
Area 5	1
Area 8	1
Area 10	1
Area 11	2
TOTAL	7

Table X: Lead composite objects from Poultry

Condition

Most of the lead was fragmentary and in poor condition. The exceptions to this were a pewter hat sign <1624> which was almost intact, and one of the coffin plates <438>.

The assemblage

Late Saxon/early medieval

Few discrete objects which can be safely assigned to this period were recovered. A weight <339> was found in a twelfth-century context, and a lead handle <2897> which may be intrusive was found in a possible Late Saxon deposit. Composite copper/lead object <1914> which may be a seal was found in a context containing eleventh century pottery. A substantial quantity of possible waste fragments were recovered, some of which are of Late Saxon/early medieval date. Since much of the lead is listed as waste but of unknown date, and in view of the number of deposits which contain both Roman and Late Saxon/early medieval artefacts, it is not possible to give accurate quantities, but the total number of accessioned stratified waste fragments is 197. As well as fragments of scrap or other waste fragments, there is a possibility that some of the fragments preliminarily identified as litharge may be of post-Roman date. The identity of <2860> may be of particular importance. It is possible that it is a litharge cake, a by-product of the refinement process for precious metals such as silver. It is also possible that it is a block of vitrified and fused quartz chips, which

could have been used as a cupel for gold refinement (Bayley, 1992, 751). The object still has the remains of an internal copper residue, but it may have been used in the refinement of more precious metals. A possible lead ingot <3144> suggesting the raw material for metalworking, was recovered from a deposit from which hammerscale was recovered.

A lead alloy brooch <251> from a pitfill at 72-5 Cheapside (CID90) is of particular interest, since it is very similar to brooches found in the Cheapside hoard, believed to be the stock of a local workshop of 11th-century date (Wardle, forthcoming). The CID90 brooch was found with a bone 'motif' piece, further evidence of craft activity in the area. The site also produced a large quantity of lead waste fragments, and although many of were of Roman date, some may belong to the Late Saxon/early medieval period.

Medieval

Apart from coins/tokens, very few identifiable lead objects which could be assigned a medieval date were identified, although it is possible that some of the weights may belong to this period. It is likely once again that some of the waste is of medieval date. A lead buckle <2789> of likely medieval date was found in a deposit in Area 10 but was accompanied by Roman finds.

A fragment of a lead ampulla <35> was found in excavations at CID90.

Post-medieval

Two lead cloth seals <1736> and <1737> and a late medieval/early post medieval seal <1686> were recovered from the same context. In addition there were a further 4 unstratified lead seals which were metal detected.

Several pieces of lead were associated with coffins. In addition there were three coffin plates <1>, <437> and <438>, two of which were inscribed.

A pewter hat-shaped object <1624>, was recovered from the fill of a well. This is believed to be a shop sign for a hatter's premises, and is likely to be of late eighteenth century date.

The potential of the material

Late Saxon/early medieval

1. The lack of lead objects makes any contribution to the discussion on the use of domestic and work-related artefacts superfluous. It may be that there are objects present but they are too fragmentary to be identifiable. The few artefacts present may provide information on trading practices during this period.

2. A study of the lead fragments and the waste objects will provide a major contribution to the study of early medieval metalworking which was occurring on different parts of the site. Although work has been done on early medieval metalworking in the City, it has never been possible to associate directly with stratigraphic/land-use data and documentary evidence (Bayley et al, 1991, p389-405). Study of the waste fragments may help to establish which non-ferrous metals were being worked, and the types of finished objects which were being produced by which methods. A study of the spatial and chronological distribution of the waste may provide information on the location of workshops and open areas, and which processes were being undertaken in these places, and the evidence compared with documentary research. Other material types such as the ceramic crucible fragments and copper waste will provide further comparative evidence.

The litharge fragments will be examined and analysed with XRF to determine the major elements present, and the results compared to fragments recovered from deposits from 16-22 Coppergate (Bayley, 1992 p750). If the fragments are cupels, associated with gold refining, this would tie in well with documentary evidence. Cupels have also been found at

Scandinavian sites such as Helgo, Ribe and Hedeby (Bayley, *ibid*). Other comparative material may be available following the separate examination of possible waste fragments from the Guildhall sites (GYE92 etc), where there were crucible fragments of a similar date to the ones at Poultry.

Medieval

3. Study of the spatial and chronological distribution of the lead waste fragments may help to indicate the duration and extent of metal-working at Poultry during the medieval period. Any evidence for the change over time in the type of waste products, particularly compared to those of the early medieval period, may also help in the identification of what objects were being made at different times, and indicate how the organisation of the industry changed over time.

Post-medieval

4. The cloth seals and the seal.

5. Inscribed coffin plates will provide information in support of the skeletal evidence, along with dating evidence and data on the occupation and status of the people who were buried and their connection with the area. This will be related to documentary evidence about the burials. A comparative study can be made of the coffin plates from Poultry and those from Farringdon Street.

6. Lead fittings relating to the coffins may provide information on the construction of coffins at different dates.

7. It may be possible to relate some of the artefacts with post-medieval commercial activity in the area.

Revised research aims

Late Saxon/early medieval

1. Can the fragments of litharge/cupel be directly related to land-use and documentary evidence of workshops and other features associated with metalworking? Is there evidence of gold-refining? What evidence is there for the producers of the artefacts actually selling them on the same premises?

Post-medieval

2. Can the pewter hat shop sign <1624> be closely dated, and can documentary evidence contribute to the identification of local hatters, both manufacturers and retailers? The object has aroused much interest in the Costume Department of the Museum of London, and there may be detailed information about the 18th century retailers of the Cheapside area available.

3. Lead binding and sheeting fragments <166> <267> may provide evidence on the construction of coffins.

4. What can be learned from the information provided by the coffin plates which have dated inscriptions about the status and occupation of the burials? Can this information be related to the documentary evidence? (see plates <437> and <438>)

Bibliography

Bayley, J. et al, 1991 'Metallurgy' in Vince, A. (ed) *Aspects of Saxo-Norman London: II Finds and Environmental evidence* 389-405

Bayley, J. 1992 *Anglo-Scandinavian Non-Ferrous Metalworking from 16-22 Coppergate*