

The Roman painted wall plaster from No 1 Poultry

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Undated

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Introduction

A total of 1505 fragments of Roman painted wall plaster were recorded from the excavations at No 1 Poultry. The condition and quality of the material varied considerably, reflecting the intensity of occupation of this area throughout the Roman period, as well as the diversity of buildings.

Methodology

The plaster has been recorded in catalogue form and on a spreadsheet, to provide a basic record of the type and quantity of plaster present from each context. The spreadsheet gives a total of plaster by context, although it does not include small quantities of material which were recovered from bulk samples. The catalogue has been supplemented by a fuller discussion of certain plaster types where appropriate.

This investigation was seen as an opportunity to combine a study of the technical aspects of the plaster construction and decoration/pigments with the archaeological provenance of the material, in order to provide further information on the nature of the buildings and if possible their function and significance.

The material has been examined by period in the first instance, with a view to establishing an understanding of the different types of plaster present, so that their stratigraphic and spatial movement could be observed.

The plaster was sorted by the main period divisions, and examined within smaller stratigraphic groupings. Fragments from each context were sorted into broad fabric types, their main features were given a basic description, with condition and surviving decoration noted. In certain cases miscellaneous fragments which were badly preserved were not described in detail.

Two terms were used to describe the different types of rendering on which the decorations were executed. The '**arriccio**' is used for the coarse layers of mortar applied to the face of the wall, whilst the term '**intonaco**' is used to describe the fine layer which receives the background colour for the surface decoration (Mora et al, 1984, 10). The **arriccio** is described from the lower layer to the uppermost, followed by the **intonaco**. In nearly all cases the full **arriccio** could not be described, as the preliminary coarse layer had not survived intact.

Within the text itself, the decorative schemes have been described as objectively as possible, using the term 'stripe' when a narrow line less than 10mm in width is present, and the less satisfactory term 'expanse' to indicate where there is one edge of colour present, but where the width of this particular decorative element is unknown.

The overall smoothness of the plaster background is noted in the text, and evidence of brushmarks. Such details may be indicative of the amount of the preparation which a wall received through careful paint application and the level of smoothing and polishing undertaken which by implication, may reflect the overall quality of a wall decoration.

General condition was also recorded, since the degree of abrasion, fading and fragmentation may provide evidence on the history of the plaster following its removal from its original provenance. A few fragments have holes gouged out on their surfaces, which may suggest 'pecking' for the adhesion of a second phase of plaster. In some cases fragments have obviously been burnt, their mortars have turned a red colour and the surface decoration has been obscured.

Only a few fragments showed indications of the types of walls to which they had been attached, although a daub fabric with inclusions of recycled plaster was noted in one instance.

The catalogue by period

Period 2

Group 189

Subgroup 80103

Open Area 13

A single fragment of discoloured and stained plaster was found in [8769]. Two mortar layers forming the **arriccio** were identified c15mm in thickness, with a thick **intonaco** c1.5mm in thickness. The surface of the plaster is smooth, but the overall appearance has been badly affected and it is not possible to discern the decoration.

Period 3

Group 245

Subgroup 10147

Building 12

Floor make-ups associated with the pre-Boudiccan buildings of Road 1

Three hundred and three fragments of painted wall plaster were recovered from [12779] from sample 144 and 13 more from hand retrieval. They were made from broadly similar fabric types, which appear to have had the same surface treatment of a plain white background. Most of the plaster was very discoloured, and it is possible that there may have originally been some further decoration. Several fragments have been affected by black staining, both on the surface and the edges of the material, perhaps through post-depositional water-logging. One fragment was chamfered where it had been applied to accommodate an aperture such as a window or door at an angle of c45 degrees. Although the surviving decoration is apparently very simple, the actual quality of the white background is generally good. In spite of being discoloured, it is clear that the surface of most fragments is smooth and of a moderate quality, with no visible brushmarks. Some of the fragments are of comparatively large (c100mm in width), which may indicate that they had not moved far from their original location. Three small pieces of plain black, now very worn, and three fragments decorated in a background of red ochre which had small splashes of white or pale pink were made from another fabric. The latter may have originated from a dado or the lower part of a wall decoration.

The general characteristics of the **arriccio** of this broad fabric group can be summarised as consisting of two layers, the lower one containing moderate gravel pebbles up to 12mm in length, and the upper one c30mm in thickness, surviving in the form of a layer of soft but sandy mortar, with occasional gravel pebbles up to 4mm in length, and occasional inclusions of calcium carbonate up to 3mm in length. The **intonaco** is thin, in the region of 0.25mm in thickness.

A further six small fragments were recovered from [12795], from the same feature. 5 of these were decorated with a smooth black polished background, and a further single piece was plain maroon with small white or pink splashes, similar to the fragments recorded in [12779]. The plaster was of good quality.

Six fragments of plaster from 4 other deposits relating to Building 12 were identified, [12736], [12738], [12740] and [12742], (Subgroup 10148). All the fragments were made from fabric types which were the same or very similar. 5 of the fragments had a plain white surface which was smooth and of a reasonable quality, although it is possible that the surfaces have partially worn away. The sixth fragment from [12740] had a maroon background over which were random small splashes of pale pink and green. The appearance of the mortar fabric for this fragment was slightly different to the plain white fragments. It is however similar to the fragment of splashed decoration on maroon recovered from [12795] and may come from the same room.

Period 3

Group 248

Subgroup 10408
Building 12 Room A

[12720] produced 4 fragments of plaster. They were all very abraded and discoloured, and the surfaces were worn white.

Period 3
Group 270
Subgroup 10267
Building 13

Two joining fragments of plaster were found in [12648]. They were very abraded, and had plain white surfaces on a sandy but reasonable quality **arriccio**.

Period 5
Group 311
Subgroup 10248
Open Area 22

Four fragments of miscellaneous plaster with different types of red ochre decoration were recovered from [12433]. It is likely that some of the fragments may have been affected by burning.

Period 6
Group 461
Subgroup 12027
S20

[18197] contained 8 fragments of a good quality plain white plaster surface applied over an **arriccio** layer c15mm in depth. Some of the fragments had been decorated with large (up to c15mm in length) random black and red ochre splashes.

Period 6
Group 475
Subgroup 120308
Building 30 Room C

Nine small fragments of plaster were recovered from [18246], eight of which were plain white of a basic standard with a thin **arriccio** surviving. One other fragment was decorated with a background of good quality smooth red ochre.

Period 6
Group 476
Subgroups 120306, 120307
Building 30 Room D

Twenty-two fragments of plaster were recovered from the easterly room of Building 30 on the north side of the Via Decumana, from contexts [18231], [18244], [18245] and [18248]. The plaster was homogenous in fabric type, and was characterised by a shallow coarse sandy **arriccio** and discoloured brownish surface plaster which was originally likely to be plain white. One fragment from [18231] had a white background with random splashes in black up to 10mm in length and smaller white splashes.

Period 6
Group 498
Subgroup 120223
Open Area 44

A single plaster fragment from [18314], deposited in the fill of ditch [18276] may have been associated with Structure 19??. The surface of this plaster was well preserved, although the

full depth of the **arriccio** had not survived. The existing remnants of the **arriccio** were of good quality and the standard of the workmanship of the plaster treatment was also good. The surviving **arriccio** layer was c30mm in thickness, and characterised by a sandy and lime-rich mortar with sparse calcium carbonate inclusions, and sparse gravel pebbles up to 5mm in width. The decoration consisted of a smooth black background (surviving width 58mm), over which had been painted a green expanse > 21mm in width, with a white stripe 5mm in width on one of its edges.

Although fragmentary in its nature, it is possible to hypothesize about the nature of the wall decoration from which it originated, due to the popularity of certain colour schemes and basic elements which formed the repertoire of many of the schemes used by Roman wall decorators. Other parallels suggest that the fragment represents part of the green frame and black interval between coloured fields, originating from the middle zone of a wall decoration. The combination of colours, the decorative elements and the shade of green used was very similar in essentials to fragments of a scheme recovered from the waterfront reclamation dumps just over the Thames on the other side of London Bridge in North Southwark. Here the elaborate middle zone had decorated black intervals with white stripes and green bands framing red ochre panels (Goffin, forthcoming in Yule). This particular example is likely to have been of an early, pre-Flavian date, but such panel decorations are often found dating to the late first to second century in Britain (Ling, 1985, 22-23).

Period 6
Group 532
Building 32

One fragment of plain smooth red ochre was recovered from [12416]. It was abraded but still had a sandy **arriccio** c17mm in thickness with thick white **intonaco** c1mm, over which was a plain orange-red smooth background.

The fragment was found in association with Building 32, which lay on the intersection of Road 1 and Road 3.

Period 7
Group 413
Subgroup 80475
Building 52

A single fragment of plaster was found in [1431]. It was characterised by the remains of a good quality **arriccio** c 15mm in depth, and a smooth red ochre background over a fine white **intonaco** 0.5mm in thickness.

Period 7
Group 417
Subgroup 90208

Two fragments of very abraded plaster were found in [3765]. The larger piece showed evidence of a very worn decoration consisting of an expanse of red >32mm in width, bordered by a maroon stripe c10mm and another expanse of yellow >11mm. The surviving mortar backing is sandy and of good quality. The surface of the other fragment is so worn that only the white **intonaco** shows, but originally it may have been painted. The mortar is similar to the decorated fragment.

Period 7
Group 463
Subgroup 120211
Open Area 45

A small fragment of plaster with a more unusual shade of red ochre was found in [18117]. The surface had been lightly scratched with four short lines, three of which run parallel.

These marks may represent the remains of deliberate graffiti, which is not uncommon on plaster remains (Goffin, forthcoming, Regis House, and Shelley House).

Period 7

Group 463

Subgroup 120211

Open Area 45

Context [18172] contained 16 fragments of plaster with a further 117 pieces recovered from Sample 1013. Several fragments were characterised by a fabric covered with a smooth white plaster surface. One of these had a red ochre stripe c7mm in width, and a second striped fragment had a red ochre background. The sample also included 3 fragments with random red and black splashes on a pink background, from a probable dado decoration. This deposit also produced 2 fragments of a fabric which had a deep **arriccio** >c35mm in width, with impressions on the reverse of c16mm in diameter. Two mortar layers were represented, the preliminary one being c28mm in depth, and the later layer c7mm in depth. The surfaces of these fragments were very abraded.

Period 7

Group 463

Subgroup 120212

Open Area 45

Four fragments of plaster were found in [18087], with an additional two more from sample 989. These were of a good quality plain white with a fragment of a decoration of random maroon and black splashes up to c15mm in length.

Five fragments of this plaster type were also identified from [18089]. 19 fragments from sample 990 were also similar, although 2 other pieces showed evidence of a black expanse, probably part of a band.

Period 7

Group 478

Subgroup 120323

Open Area 45

[18150] contained five fragments of good quality plain white plaster. In addition there was a single fragment of plain green painted over red, of a similar type to the fragment from [18314].

A fragment of the plaster recovered from [18212] with a very abraded surface, and two layers of **arriccio** surviving, which is likely to have been made from the same fabric as the fragment from [18172] Group 463.

Period 7

Group 559

Subgroup 10291

Open Area 47

Context [12263] contained 8 fragments of plaster from make-up levels. The plaster was homogenous, and characterised by a smooth white surface, not dissimilar to the material from [12779].

Period 7

Group 561

Open Area 47

A fragment of plaster with good quality surface of smooth red ochre was found in [12830].

Period 7

Group 562

Subgroup 10252
Building 36

A single fragment of plaster was found in [12328], associated with Building 36 to the south of the Via Decumana. It was made from the remains of a sandy **arriccio** c 8mm in thickness with a surface which had a plain white background which was discoloured.

Period 7
Group 628
Subgroup 120310
Open Area 57

[18182] contained two fragments of miscellaneous discoloured plain smooth white plaster.

Period 8
Group 516
Subgroup 10069
Road 1

Eighty-eight fragments of plaster were found in [11920], the backfill of a disused drain. Most of them were stained black from the nature of their deposition, and it is possible that they were also burnt. Enough survives to indicate that they were mostly of a homogenous type of fabric, but their appearance is very brittle and close examination was not productive. Most fragments were painted in a smooth red ochre background, and it is possible that some faint remains of further decoration may be present, but the staining makes it difficult to identify. One fragment may have a black band on it. The material was originally of good quality, and may have formed part of a panel type of decoration.

Period 9
Group 624
Subgroup 80453
Open Area 55

Three fragments of plaster were recovered from [8574]. Two of these had an unusual fine daub fabric adhering to the back of the **arriccio** itself. This layer was c80mm in thickness and had impressions of timber impressions still preserved. The matrix of the daub contained fragments of recycled wall plaster. Over the daub a single layer of a sandy **arriccio** 8mm in thickness had been applied, and on top of this a white **intonaco** which had the remains of a ?grey discoloured ?band. The surface of one of the fragments was not completely flat. A third fragment with a soft and lime-rich mortar fabric was shaped as a chamfer for a door or window. The plaster is extremely worn with none of the original surface surviving.

Period 9
Group 624
Subgroup 90609
Open Area 55

Eighteen fragments of plaster from two main fabric types were identified from [3435]. Most of the fragments had a single layer of the **arriccio** surviving, which was c9mm in thickness, with a thick white **intonaco** c2.5mm in depth. 9 fragments with this fabric were characterised by a decoration of swirls in worn creamy white, yellow and pink on a red ochre and black background. Such a curvilinear decoration may originate from the lower part of a wall decoration, since such the colours and treatment are suggestive of the veining in marble veneered panelling which were frequently used to decorate the dado levels of wall decorations. A similar type of curvilinear decoration but with white and maroon predominating was recovered from Lloyds Registry (Fig x context 2283, Goffin in Bluer, forthcoming). Some of the fragments with a black expanse were crudely painted, which also suggests that this part of the decoration may have come from the bottom part of the wall towards the ground level, or perhaps some other inaccessible part of the wall. Two fragments

show evidence of a previous layer of plaster, the surface of which was originally decorated with a background of smooth red ochre.

Other fragments show indications of another decorative scheme made from a similar but different fabric. 8 fragments are covered with smooth plain red ochre, and one of these has a yellow ochre stripe 2.5mm in thickness. Another fragment shows an expanse of light green >26mm with a black area >3mm. Although only a few fragments survive, comparative evidence suggests that it is likely that the decorative scheme may have been based on a panel decoration in red with an internal yellow frame, which was bordered with a green band with a black interval.

Such a decorative scheme has been inferred as being likely from other fragments recovered from elsewhere on the site (see discussion). Simple linear decorations based on coloured fields, in particular red ochre framed by green bands with white stripes and black intervals sometimes further embellished with candelabra decorations are commonly found in Britain in the late first to second century AD (Ling, 1985, 22).

Period 9

Group 629

Subgroup 10294

Open Area 48

Four fragments of homogenous plaster were found in [12242]. They had a moderately smooth plain white surface, although brushmarks were still visible.

Period 10

Group 482

Subgroup 120326

Open Area 75

Four fragments of plaster were found in [1108] to the north-east of the site, made from miscellaneous fabric types. One fragment was decorated in plain white with medium random splashes of red ochre and black splashes, with the remnants of a red ochre line. Another fragment was decorated in a smooth red ochre background. Two other fragments were worn, and only one of these may have actually been painted.

Another fragment of splashed decoration of red and black on a white background was identified in [18081].

Period 10

Group 482

Subgroup 120327

Open Area 75

A single fragment of plaster from [18149] was made from the same or very similar mortar fabric to the red ochre fragment and splashed fragment in [1108]. It was decorated with a red ochre expanse >31mm in width, a white stripe c5mm wide and an expanse of green >23mm in width. The surface of the red background was smoothed as if it had been polished.

Period 10

Group 482

Subgroup 120327

Open Area 75

Three fragments (2 joining) were recovered from [18152] which shared the same fabric of a soft lime-rich thick **arriccio** of at least 25mm in depth. The surface of the plaster was plain white, smooth but with brushmarks still visible.

Period 10

Group 482

Subgroup 120328
Open Area 75

Twenty-three small fragments of good quality wall plaster were recovered from [18145]. They were characterised by having an exceptionally smooth polished red ochre surface. It is noticeable that the red background has received this treatment, and that the other decorative elements were applied on top of the red, with the brushmarks being still visible. Several pieces of plaster also showed evidence of a green expanse with a white stripe. The fragments are likely to have originated from a panel decoration of red ochre, framed by green bands which were separated by a white stripe. The **arriccio** or mortar backing was sandy and well constructed, but most of the first preliminary layer has not survived. The fragments may be from the same decoration as [18149] and [1108].

Twelve other fragments made from miscellaneous fabrics were also found in this context, many of which had been affected by burial conditions or had been burnt, creating considerable discolouration. Included in this group is a fragment which may be connected to the panel decoration described above, as the mortar is not dissimilar but there are no direct design links. It is a plain white fragment over which is splashed red ochre, yellow and black paint splashes, indicative of a dado decoration. Other fragments include another possible splashed decoration on white with red ochre expanse, and plain white with red stripe.

Nineteen fragments with the same fabric and red ochre design as in [18145] were identified in [18073]. Although mostly plain red, two fragments showed a yellow ochre stripe c6mm in width. A further 10 fragments of this plaster came from [18072]. [18143] also contained 6 fragments, four of which were decorated with a smooth red ochre background, including one with a green expanse and a white stripe. Two further fragments of smooth plain white were identified in addition, which were stained.

It is likely that the red ochre decoration recorded from Open Area 75 consisted of a panel decoration in red with internal yellow stripes running inside the panel itself, framed with green bands. It is not possible to attribute this material to a particular building, but it can be said that the quality of the workmanship is good, and that it was suitable perhaps for a reception area rather than a room serving a purely utilitarian function.

Period 10
Group 482
Subgroup 120328
Open Area 75

Two small miscellaneous fragments were found in [18130]. One of these had a surface of plain red ochre, not smooth, and the second fragment showed indications of a yellow and green decoration on a red ochre background. The fragments may have been made in the same fabric.

Period 10
Group 482
Subgroup 120328

A single fragment of plaster from [18126] indicated a distinctively different type of fabric. The **arriccio** was made up of two layers, the earlier one c 6mm in depth, cream and sandy, and the upper layer c9mm softer, with a pink limier mortar with small inclusions of crushed brick and tile up to 3mm in length, and small fragments of calcium carbonate up to 2mm. The **intonaco** was slightly thicker than usual, being c1mm in depth, and over this was a dark red ochre background with indications of two dark brown nearly black curvilinear motifs, too small to illustrate. The surface of the plaster was moderately smooth.

Period 10
Group 482
Subgroup ?

A further 37 fragments of plaster were recovered from [1107]. They were made from the same or a very similar fabric as the one which was identified in context [18145]. The decoration consisted of a red ochre background with evidence of the green band bordered with white stripes. In addition two fragments showing a yellow ochre stripe 7mm in width was further evidence that the red fields had internal embellishments of a narrow yellow stripe running inside the frame.

A single fragment of plain white with large black and red ochre splashes up to 18mm in length also came from this context, but the fabric is not the same as the main group.

Period 10

Group 836

Subgroup 120325

Open Area 75

Two fragments of a good quality smooth white, one of which had a red ochre stripe running down it c 11mm in width were recovered from [18079].

Period 11

Group 839

Subgroup 120404

Open Area 76

A single fragment of plaster was found in [18119]. It was made from a soft lime-rich **arriccio** c >13mm in depth, a thick white **intonaco** layer c1.5mm in depth, and was decorated with a smooth red ochre expanse c13mm in width, a white stripe 5mm in width and a black expanse >8mm in width.

Period 11

Group 839

Subgroup 120507

Open Area 76

A small block of painted wall plaster was lifted from [18161]. The surface of the plaster had been discoloured, making it hard to distinguish the original decoration and pigments. In addition, areas of the surface were very worn. Some fragments were found face down on the plaster surface itself and had become displaced. The **intonaco** had been applied over a sandy mortar layer c30mm in thickness, which also contained moderate gravel inclusions (size) and organic material, some of which was still preserved **in-situ**. Although the mortar preparatory layer was apparently insubstantial, the actual treatment of the plaster surface itself is not of poor quality, although comparatively simple in its overall design. The decoration consists of an area of red ochre, embellished with yellow ochre bands c 3-4mm in thickness. Although there is some slumping in the plaster it appears likely that one side of the red ochre area is bordered by a black band of indeterminate width, and a white band 45mm in width. After a further black stripe c9mm in width, the plaster becomes extremely discoloured, but may have been originally white. A small area indicating the remains of some pigment survives at the bottom, perhaps pale pink with a red ochre splash.

Similar associated fragments indicate that the red ochre surface had been smoothed, although brushmarks can be seen on the black band. The existing remains suggest that it may represent part of a red ochre panel decoration with internal yellow ochre frame, with intermediate bands of black and white, and perhaps the very top part of a pink splashed dado.

Period 11

Group 844

Subgroup 120406

S43

Two fragments of painted plaster came from [18057]. One was decorated in a smooth plain red ochre, over a thick white **intonaco** nearly 2mm in thickness. The other fragment had a smooth plain white surface.

Period 11

Group 846

Subgroup 120416

Open Area 77

A single fragment of the smooth (?white- to be checked) plaster was recovered from [18007]. Like many of the other fragments it seems only the upper or secondary layer of the **arriccio** has survived.

Period 11

Group 846

Subgroup 120416

Open Area 77

Two further fragments were found in [1103]. One fragment was decorated with a mid green expanse >19mm in width, a black stripe c7mm in width and a yellow ochre expanse >38mm in width. It was made from a lime-rich but durable **arriccio** c 25mm in depth. The other plaster fragment from this context had a plain white worn surface, and had been constructed of a different mortar. A single miscellaneous fragment from [1102] also had a worn surface.

Period 11

Group 852

Subgroup 120421

Open Area 77

A single fragment of good quality red ochre was recovered from [18001].

Period 11

Group 854

Subgroup 120513

Open Area 77

[18027] contained a single fragment of discoloured and stained plaster. It appeared to have a surface of plain white, and had a slight edge outwards indicating that it may come from the bottom or edge of a wall.

Period 12

Group 882

Subgroup 10333

Building 68

A single fragment of discoloured and abraded plaster was found in [12318], with a worn **intonaco**.

Period 16

Group 751

Subgroup 80607

Disuse of Building 58

Twenty six fragments of a homogenous type of plaster were found in [8312]. They were characterised by evidence of two phases of plaster. All the surfaces are discoloured a yellow brown, and there is additional dark staining. The surviving mortar base of the first phase is c10mm at its thickest, and is characterised by a soft crumbly mortar with an **intonaco** c1.5mm in thickness. It is not possible to determine the nature of the original decoration but one fragment shows evidence of a discoloured white background. The later phase of plaster is constructed of a mortar **arriccio** 7mm in depth, and an **intonaco** of c 0.5mm. The

decoration consists of a white background with a maroon expanse >c30mm, probably a band although its width cannot be determined.

Period 16

Group 751

Subgroup 80607

Disuse of Building 58

[8310] contained a further 22 fragments of the same plaster type as recovered from [8312]. The fragments also showed evidence of the same two phases of plastering. The condition of this material was also poor, the mortars were very crumbly and the surface of the fragments were very discoloured.

Period 18

Group 918

Subgroup 10133

Road 1

A single fragment of plaster was found in [12482]. The fragment was abraded and stained but originally of good quality. The decoration consisted of a green expanse >28mm in width, a white stripe c5mm in width and a red expanse >4mm in width. The fragment may have originated from a red panel decoration.

Period 18

Group 929

Subgroup 10336

Foundation, Building 72

Fragments of abraded and stained wall plaster were identified from three contexts in this feature. [11947] contained 13 miscellaneous fragments, 6 of which had a red ochre background, three of which still had substantial mortar layers. Three had further evidence of other ornamentation in yellow or off-white, very worn. Two other fragments made from a different fabric were decorated with red and black expanses.

Two further fragments from [11947] also had a red ochre background. They were also constructed from a substantial mortar backing, although not definitely the same as that from [11958] (see below). They were originally of high quality and one fragment had evidence of a foliate and/or floral decoration in green, black and cream (too abraded to illustrate).

Five fragments were recovered from [11958]. Two of these were made from a substantial mortar **arriccio** and had a smooth polished red ochre background. Three other stained pieces with less substantial mortar layers were originally white, and one of these had a further decoration of a black stripe 4mm in width.

Period 18

Group 932

Subgroup 10212

Road 3

Three fragments of plaster made from the same fabric were identified in [11574]. They were made from a good quality thick **arriccio** consisting of two layers, reminiscent of the mortar backings from [4907] and [4909]. The upper or later mortar contained moderate quantities of crushed brick and tile. The surviving decoration consisted of an expanse of red ochre, a white stripe c12mm in width and an expanse of deep green painted over the red. There is a slight curvature on one side of one fragment suggesting perhaps the approach of the return of a wall. The surface of the plaster is smooth, but not as polished as some of the other red ochre fragments such as in [11958], nor is the colour of the red so pure, as it has a brown hue. The white stripe is slightly unevenly painted, but even so the work is of good quality. These decorative elements may have originated from the middle zone of a decorative

scheme consisting of red ochre panels, bordered with green bands delineated with white stripes, or the fragments could form the peripheral framing of a more elaborate decoration.

Period 18

Group 947

Subgroup 10116

Road 2

A single fragment of smooth red ochre with evidence of a possible white stripe was recovered from [11929]. In addition a fragment of discoloured and abraded plaster with the remains of a sandy durable **arriccio** was painted with a thin black background over which there was evidence of two parallel stripes c7mm in width, with one at right angles joining them up.

Period 20

Group 757

Subgroup 80613

Building 61

[8295] contained a single fragment with the remains of a sandy **arriccio** and good quality background of smooth red ochre.

Period 20

Group 757

Subgroup 80625

Building 61

A small fragment of plaster decorated in plain white with a red ochre expanse > 15mm in width was recovered from [8163].

Period 20

Group 763

Building 61 Room E

Subgroup 80620

The plaster was recovered from trampled brickearth inside Room E of Building 61, a substantial and well-preserved building on timber baseplates. Four other rooms were identified from this building, A-D.

Two substantial fragments of wall plaster were found in [8378]. The largest fragment was made from two layers of mortar, the lower one being at least 30mm in thickness, and characterised by a sandy and lime-rich matrix with moderate inclusions of organic material, and gravel pebbles up to 9mm in length. Over this had been applied a layer of secondary mortar c20mm in depth, which contained moderate calcium carbonate up to 4mm and very occasional fragments of crushed brick and tile. The decoration over the **intonaco** consists of an area of mid green >c113mm in width, bisected by a black stripe of 3mm paralld by a faint white stripe c 6mm in width. At right angles to this was a white stripe 9mm in thickness, bordered by an expanse of a deeper and darker shade of green (Fig 3). This fragment is very similar in decoration and mortar construction to fragments recovered from [4907], which are likely to be from the same decorative scheme as the fragments with the architectural decoration.

A second fragment which has a similar if not identical secondary layer of mortar, shows an area of maroon >c68mm in width, with an expanse of cinnabar or brilliant red >20mm. Originally there may have been a white stripe separating these two colours but this is no longer visible. The area of cinnabar shows evidence of black discolouration, probably through exposure to light.

Period 20

Group 786

Subgroup 90708

Building 64 ?Room A

This plaster faced the ragstone and chalk wall which formed an internal east-west wall of the hypocausted chamber which had a tessellated pavement. It formed one of the four rooms of the bath-house complex built on the north side of the Via Decumana.

Evidence of two phases of plaster was recorded **in-situ** at the bottom of the internal masonry walls from the inner face of a doorway, facing east [3738], and from the north-facing wall [4013]. 18 fragments were recovered as a sample from [3738].

The underlying plaster from the earlier phase had been applied over an uneven **arriccio** c22mm in thickness, which was soft and lime-rich in consistency and contained pieces of crushed brick and tile up to 9mm in length. Surviving fragments indicate that the decoration was crudely achieved, and consisted in part of a broader black band 35mm in width, with mid pink and maroon colours, the design of which is indistinct.

Fragments of the later phase of [3738] consisted of the remains of a dado design, divided up at an interval of c23cm by two parallel black stripes c7mm in width. In between these divisions were mottled areas of colour of pink, dark pink, pale green and cream, likely to have been a stylized representation of the veining of marbled veneered panels. The plaster surface was poor quality and the surface rough, with no attempt at smoothing. It was applied over a thin layer of mortar c7mm in thickness, which had a lime-rich consistency and contained moderate fragments of crushed brick and tile up to 2mm in length.

Although only the remnants of the bottom of two walls survived, the quality of the **arriccio**, and the general roughness of execution of the decoration, together with its rather basic style, may suggest that the decorative scheme on the walls of this room was functional. This may reflect the actual purpose of the room itself, as one chamber of a bathhouse. The plaster is discussed more fully later in the report.

Period 20

Group 787

Subgroup 90709

Building 64 Room A

A single fragment of double phased plaster with similar mortar layers as the **in-situ** material was found in [3598]. Any decoration had faded and the only visible feature on the surface was the deep striations of brushmarks in the wet plaster.

The plaster was found associated with the hypocaust chamber, Room A in Building 64.

Period 20

Group 788

Subgroup 90715

Building 64 Room A

Dating AD 120+

Ten fragments of a homogenous fabric plaster type were recovered from [3683], from the internal face of wall [3763] in the hypocausted chamber. The wall also had a quarter moulding of **opus signinum** and a tessellated floor.

The surface treatment and the mortar fabric bears a similarity to the type of plaster from 2 phases recorded **in-situ** from [3738] - is this the same room?. The **arriccio** which is soft and lime-rich is c15mm thick and contains moderate inclusions of crushed brick and tile up to c5mm in length. Over a thin skim of the **intonaco** coarse brushmarks are clearly visible. One of the decorative elements from this wall consisted of an area of blue, which was slightly curved, against a background of watery red ochre (Fig 5). This may have originated from part of the dado decoration. Other fragments shows expanses of maroon and mid green with white areas in between forming stripes of differing widths. These may have originated from part of the middle zone of a wall scheme (Figs 6-7). See discussion.

Period 20
Group 803
Subgroup 90811
Building 65

These plaster fragments which were homogenous in their nature were recovered from dumped makeups, from a structure predating Building 65.

Sixteen fragments of wall plaster were found in [4696], which were very abraded on their surfaces. The fragments were decorated with a dark maroon background with a pink stripe c17mm in width, and random small splashes of black, pink and white up to 6mm in length. Such decoration is characteristic of the lower part of a wall decoration, which often featured decorative panels of simulated contrasting marble veneers. Most of the mortar backing had not survived, but the secondary layer of the **arriccio** was c16mm in depth, and was characterised by sparse small inclusions of crushed brick and tile.

Fragments with a very similar type of decoration were found in [4907] OA68.

Period 20
Group 825
Subgroup 90763
Building 64 Room D

A single fragment broken into two of the upper layer of a plaster wall application was found in [4540]. The surface was worn but seems to be plain white.

Period 21
Group 765
Subgroup 30327
Open Area 68
Context 4907

Plaster from this deposit came from a structural cut, possibly a beam slot. It may represent the robbing of the 80613 building (??).

A small quantity of plaster was recovered from [4907] which was reassembled into a block from 12 fragments showing part of an architecturally-based scheme.

The mortar **arriccio** was constructed of two layers. The lower one was at least c 35mm in thickness, and was characterised by a sandy matrix with occasional gravel pebble inclusions up to 10mm in length and occasional voids left by organic material. The upper layer was c30mm in thickness, contained frequent quartz and lime, and occasional gravel pebbles up to 6mm in length. The **intonaco** layer was c0.5mm thick. A more detailed description of the mortar construction will be available after further analysis has been undertaken.

The fragments represent the right-hand member of a symmetrical structure, with a projecting entablature seen from the left. The decoration shows part of an architectural scheme painted in perspective in which fluted columns in shades of cream and pink with Corinthian capitals decorated with cream and maroon acanthus leaves support the projecting entablature (Plate 1). This is made up of a pink architrave crowned with an ornate moulding, and a green frieze decorated with hanging swags in a darker green and cream. Above this are the remains of a purple cornice with cream highlights. The light on the columns falls on the left side, perhaps reflecting the real source of light in the room. It seems likely that the entablature was painted to be seen from a low viewpoint, in spite of the fact that the underside of the architrave is not visible (R Ling pers comm). A few other fragments from this context survive showing very worn parallel lines painted in similar colours, resembling column fluting, but no other definite architectural elements survive.

In addition to the above, a total of 88 fragments of painted wall plaster were found in [4907].

The context also contained fragments of painted plaster which were similar to those found associated with [4696], Period 20 Group 803, from a structure predating Building 65. These included 7 fragments decorated with a maroon background with small splashed decoration in white and pink, separated by a watery white stripe 7mm in width which is likely to have originated from a dado decoration. The fragments were better preserved than the plaster recovered from [4696], with more substantial remnants of the actual mortar remaining on some of the fragments. In addition to the secondary layer of the **arriccio**, the first layer of mortar which was c13mm in thickness (surviving) was characterised by a matrix which contained moderate quantities of organic material and occasional gravel pebbles up to 10mm.

In addition to the dado-type plaster described above, there were a number of fragments which bore a strong decorative and physical resemblance to the fragment of deep green with black and white stripes seen in [8378]. Seventeen fragments from this context are based on this green background colour, which are likely to be connected with the architectural motif, the intercolumnation of which is the same green colour. Three joining fragments of this possibly related type show shades of green with white stripes, and a band of a brighter green which has a slightly raised edge, perhaps indicating the corner of a wall (Fig 8). Three additional fragments have the bright green expanse, but show evidence of some crude overpainting in a red ochre. One fragment has possible indications of a keying-in pickmark on the surface, which suggests that it may be the first phase of a wall which has subsequently been replastered. This fragment shows the addition of an expanse of another area, showing faint diagonal shades of yellow, pink and white, separated from the green by a white stripe c7mm in width (Fig 9). It is possible that this fragment may show a junction with a possible panel of simulated marble.

Sixteen other fragments with this fabric from [4907] were characterised by the application of a background area of polished cinnabar. Nearly all the fragments were discoloured a mottled black-brown colour. Two joining fragments show a linear design in shades of cream and yellow ochre, next to an area of bright red, over which there are the degraded remains of a red ochre and yellow motif (Fig 10). It is possible that the linear part of this decoration may represent the abraded remains of an architecturally based design, as the lines may represent the fluting from a column set against a red background. The scale is not dissimilar to that of the better preserved architecturally based fragments. Two other fragments show part of a link between the cinnabar and an expanse of plain red ochre, divided by a yellow?white stripe c7mm in width.

A single fragment of plaster with plain Egyptian blue was found in [4907]. Although the full **arriccio** did not survive, it appears to be made from the same fabric as the architectural scheme.

The other plaster fragments from this group were fragmentary with very abraded surfaces, and were mainly red ochre and cream in colour. One fragment, the surface of which was very worn, showed what is probably a bright red cinnabar background with foliate decoration in green and cream (too abraded to illustrate).

The plaster recovered from this deposit shows a skilled level of painting and mastery of shading and perspective. In addition to the high standard of the decoration, further evidence of quality is shown in the presence of cinnabar, not merely to make up decorative detail, but apparently to provide blocks of colour.

This plaster is discussed more fully later in the report.

Period 21
Group 765
Subgroup 30327
Open Area 68

A total of 142 additional plaster fragments were found in [4909], including many small and abraded fragments. Four joining pieces demonstrate a link with the green decoration found in [4907], which had a mainly green background (see Fig 8). This plaster shows the same combination of green and the black and white stripe as above, but with a chamfered edge suggesting a break in the wall for a window or door (Fig 11). The overall framing colour is the brighter green which also reflects the colour of the intervals between the columns on the fragments from [4907]. Some possible keying-in marks are visible on the green area, (not shown on illustration) which once again may indicate that a second phase of plaster was subsequently applied. In addition, a further fragment of the two-toned green shows a linear element which may be part of a fluted column (Fig 12). A total of fourteen fragments showing this kind of decoration were identified from this context, and 8 more with the same substantial mortar which were too faded to describe. Five of the fragments also resemble the faded remains of fluted column fragments. 2 pieces with a cinnabar background were identified, one showing a white stripe 6mm in thickness and a red ochre expanse (Fig 13), similar to fragments present in [4907]. In addition there was a single fragment which had a maroon background with small pink and white splashes, seen in [4907] and [4696].

The remainder of the fragments from this context consisted of a variety of small worn pieces which were based on plain white backgrounds with stripes/bands in red and yellow ochre. In one case the red ochre band is 12mm in width. The mortars on the fragments are not homogenous, but some of them are made of a thin **arriccio** which is flat on the reverse, suggesting that they may have formed the second phase of plastering over an already existing scheme. Other fragments show evidence of clay walling on the reverse. The mortars have a high proportion of lime and the surface plaster is crudely applied. In many cases the **intonaco** is c 1mm thick. There is an example of a thick red ochre deposit applied over a white layer, and one fragment of two phases of remortaring and replastering.

Period 21

Group 790

Subgroup 90719

Building 64

Room A

Forty three fragments of painted wall plaster were recovered from [3643]. The plaster fragments were recovered from a consolidation layer forming the foundation for the new external west wall of Room A, Building 64, phase 2.

Many of the fragments were made from the same or a very similar fabric to that which made up the backing for the architectural scheme recovered from [4907]. Several pieces had substantial evidence of the **arriccio** still surviving (one up to c125mm in thickness), although their actual surfaces were extremely worn and faded. Some fragments had mortar adhering to their surface, indicating that they had been redeposited, although it is possible that it is the remains of the bottom of a second phase of decoration.

Eleven fragments had originally been painted a plain mid green and one was further painted with yellow and cream, which was very faded. Two other pieces showed indications of being painted with some skill, as there is evidence of overpainting and shading in various shades of pink, cream and red. It is likely that these are part of an architectural scheme, but the scale is too large for any precise identifications to be made. Four fragments are based on a pink background. One fragment is painted with shades of red ochre (maroon) which could have also originally formed part of the detail of an architectural setting, since it has a very similar colour scheme to the small block from [4907]. The remaining 16 fragments were very abraded, but 2 of them showed the faded remains of a linear design which may originally have also have been architectural.

In addition two fragments from [3643] had the substantial remains of mortar (53mm in thickness) on the reverse. The external surfaces are crudely painted with a wide red ochre band c92mm wide over a white background. In spite of being roughly painted, the red ochre appears to have a secondary application of blue pigment applied over the top of it, as the residue of granules of blue pigment can clearly still be seen. One fragment curves

outwards slightly suggesting that it is an extreme edge, which may explain why it was so badly finished, as it may have been an area which was hard to reach.

Period 21

Group 790

Subgroup 90719

Building 64

Room A

Twelve fragments were recovered from [3641]. Nearly all the fragments had very abraded surfaces. One fragment showed faint evidence of a pale red/pink with cream and a curved maroon semi-circular shape painted on the cream area, which may form part of an architectural detail. Two other pieces have pink and cream overpainting. Other fragments are covered with plain green or blue, and a third has a red ochre background with green over the top. It appears that these fragments are made from a similar if not the same fabric as those fragments decorated with an architectural decoration from [4907].

Period 21

Group 790

Subgroup 90719

Building 64

Room A

Forty seven fragments of plaster came from [3596]. Many of the pieces were constructed of substantial mortar layers and showed similarities in colours and backgrounds as the main block of architectural plaster or other fragments recovered from [4909] and [4907]. One fragment was covered with a plain blue background, and one green. 6 small fragments had a mid pink background with the faded remains of further decorative elements in green, cream and maroon. One fragment had mortar remains on the surface suggesting it had been redeposited.

Period 21

Group 795

Subgroup 90726

Building 64

Room E

Two small fragments were found in [3712]. One was unfaced, and one showed a surface covered with Egyptian blue. These fragments also originate from make-up deposits associated with the mortar floor of Room E, Building 64.

Period 21

Group 795

Subgroup 90727

Building 64

Room E

Sixty nine small fragments were found in [3700], a make-up deposit associated with the mortar floor of Room E. Many of the pieces were in poor condition with not much of the **arriccio** surviving. The mortar layer was lime-rich and soft and contained occasional fragments of crushed brick and tile up to 5mm in length. Many of the fragments were decorated with plain Egyptian blue. In addition a rather pleasant green/blue is used, as a thin layer of blue has been applied over the green pigment, although only small granules now survive. One fragment with this background has the remains of a red ochre decorative element painted over it. In addition 7 fragments have a white background and the faded remains of splashes and/or faint stripes in pink and black.

Period 21

Group 805

Subgroup 80701

Building 66

These plaster fragments were recovered from [8356], the chalk rubble foundations forming the rebuilding of Building 65, which originally contained the mosaic floor.

Thirteen fragments of plaster were found, 11 of which were made from the same fabric and had the same decorative treatment. They consisted of a plain brilliant red background of cinnabar or brilliant red. The surface was moderately smooth but not polished to a deep reflective shine. The red ground had been applied over a white **intonaco** c1mm in thickness. There is no evidence of any further decoration, although there may be the faint ghost of a stripe which had been painted over the background c5mm on one fragment. Another piece was partially discoloured black.

Period 21

Group 794

Subgroup 90720

Building 64 Phase 2

Apsidal north wall modification of Room B to form Room E

One box of ?mortar (no **intonaco**) from **in-situ** wall.

Period 22

Group 820

Subgroup 90748

Building 64

Room A

These miscellaneous fragments were found together with other types of building material debris in the fill of the hypocausted chamber of Room A Building 64.

Eight fragments were recovered from [3491], which resemble in terms of fabric the **in-situ** plaster recovered from the 2 phases of Room A Building 64, as well as some of the fragments in [3683]. One fragment, (possibly two), showed evidence of two phases of plastering. The first or earliest layer contained occasional small fragments of crushed brick and tile up to 3mm in length in a lime-rich matrix. The overall decoration over the second layer which was sandier and more substantial was very abraded but consisted of a crudely painted red ochre band of indeterminate width. Another fragment made apparently from a single phase of plastering was roughly painted in a simple band of maroon red with expanses of another shade of red ochre and green on white. Three additional fragments from a similar but different fabric type were chamfered in shape, indicating an aperture such as a window. The decoration on this plaster consisted of a white background with a red ochre band 38mm in width, and a faded ?grey band.

Period 22

Group 856

Subgroup 120508

Open Area 77

Two fragments of plaster came from [18108]. They were both made from the same and were discoloured, being a pink-brown variegated colour.

Period 22

Group 857

Subgroup 120510

Open Area 77

[18085] contained 2 miscellaneous fragments, one of which was an abraded fragment covered with a bright red background which may almost be bright enough to be cinnabar. The other fragment of plaster was discoloured and may have originally had a white

background. It was made from a good quality mortar, and was decorated with two black expanses (?bands) at least 23mm in width at right angles to each other.

Period 22
Group 933
Subgroup 10342
Open Area 79

A fragment with red ochre background was deposited in [11712].

Period 32
Group 1005
Subgroup 90905
OA105

[3464] contained three plaster fragments, two of which were made from the same fabric and were white with a ?black expanse 17mm in width. The third fragment had been crudely brushed when wet and was extremely discoloured, and is similar in fabric to the second phase of plaster from Building 64 from [3738].

Period 32
Group 1005
Subgroup 90907
OA105

Two fragments which were of poor quality were recovered from [3471]. One fragment may be made from the same mortar as in [3643] and was painted with a maroon expanse >43mm in width. The second fragment did not share the same fabric. It was white with a black stripe c 6mm in width and possibly had maroon splashes.

Period 32
Group 1005
Subgroup 90905
OA105

[3205] had 4 plaster fragments of miscellaneous fabric types. One fragment had a background of plain Egyptian blue and was reused or redeposited since it has mortar adhering to its outer surface. Another fragment was decorated in red ochre (maroon), whilst the third fragment was plain white. The fourth showed a grey/black expanse on white >12mm in width. All four fragments contained pieces of crushed brick and tile in the mortars, although they were not made from the same fabrics.

Period 34
Group 1024
Subgroup 90916
Open Area 111

Three miscellaneous fragments decorated in plain white were recovered from [3096].

Period 35
Group 1207
Subgroup 91335
Building 106

A single fragment of abraded plaster was found in [2590]. The decoration was plain pale red ochre and the mortar **arriccio** was c28mm in thickness.

Period 35
Group 1256
Subgroup 80916

Building 115

A fragment of distinctive plaster was found in [7434]. It was made from a substantial **arriccio** c30mm in depth, and a thick **intonaco** layer >1mm in thickness. Over this was applied a background of brilliant red or cinnabar which had then been polished. Where is this building?

Period 36

Group 1435

Subgroup 10767

Open Area 144

A small fragment of plaster with a plain red ochre background and sandy **arriccio** was recovered from [11463].

Period 39

Group 1615

Subgroup 1246

Building 174

One fragment of plaster with a very worn surface was found in [1640]. It was decorated in plain white with an expanse of red ochre > 25mm in width.

Period 40

Group 1646

Subgroup 10853

Building 174

One fragment of miscellaneous abraded plaster covered with plain yellow ochre was found in [11032].

Discussion

The plaster from the excavations at No 1 Poultry was wide ranging in terms of the quality of technical construction and decoration. The discussion below provides a general overview of the plaster with individual discussion on certain types where appropriate.

Much of the material, especially in the earlier phases of the site, appears to have been characterised by decorative schemes based on a simple white background, sometimes embellished with a linear decoration in red ochre. This was often accompanied by fragments of white with random red and black splashes which were likely to have originated from the lower parts of the wall decoration forming the dado. In spite of this simplicity, the plaster was usually of good quality, with well-made **arriccio** layers, and white plaster surfaces had usually been smoothed with no background brushmarks visible. Such plaster was perfectly serviceable for a multiplicity of modest rooms.

In addition to the above, there were several examples of plaster types from Period 5 onwards which were decorated with a smooth red ochre background, which were likely to have originated from red panel decorations. Most of the plaster of this type was recovered from Open Areas or other features which could not be directly associated with the original buildings that the plaster originated came from. Fragments from Period 9 Group 624, Open Area 55, for example had a smooth plain red ochre background, with one fragment showing a further decoration of an internal frame within the field of a narrow yellow ochre stripe. Another fragment made from the same fabric had expanses of light green and black. When these fragments are considered together, and compared with other parallels, the evidence suggests that the decoration of this plaster type is likely to have consisted of a middle zone made up of red fields with inner yellow ochre frames, framed with a green band and separated from other panels by a black interval. Such decorative schemes would have perhaps been suitable for reception areas of a property.

Further examples of this type of decoration were identified in Period 10 Group 482, Subgroups 120327, 120328, Open Area 75, Group 482 Subgroup 18143, and context [1107] ?Subgroup. The small block of painted plaster recovered from Period 11 Open Area 76 also appears to be a red panel decoration with internal yellow ochre frames, associated with bands of black and probably white with the remnants of a dado, but this description is provisional, since the material is in poor condition. Other fragments with these decorative elements were found in Period 18 Groups 918 and 932.

An additional distinctive fragment from Period 6 Group 498 can be linked to such panel decorations by implication. A fragment showing a linear pattern in black bordered by a green expanse with a white stripe c5mm in width recovered from the fill of a ditch in Open Area 44 is likely to have been formed a linking fragment, probably associated with a coloured panel decoration, which may have been red. This fragment has parallels with a much larger group of plaster recovered on the waterfront dumps on the south side of the Thames at Winchester Palace in North Southwark. Here red panel decorations forming the middle zone of a wall scheme were framed by green bands delineated with white stripes, and further separated by black intervals which were ornately decorated with elaborate candelabra decorations (Goffin, forthcoming). This exceptional group is likely to have been of an early, pre-Flavian date (Yule, forthcoming). However the basic formula of red fields framed by green bands with white stripes and black intervals with or without further ornamentation is very commonly found in Britain and other parts of the North-western provinces from late first to second century contexts, and is in particular associated with the Flavian and Trajanic period (69-117 AD) (Davey and Ling, 1981, 33). Examples of this type of decoration have been recovered from London sites, such as 15-23 Southwark Street (Goffin, 1992, 162-63) and Courages Brewery, both south of the Thames in North Southwark, and recent excavations in the City such as Lloyds Registry (Group 9) (both Goffin, forthcoming).

The first appearance of plaster which is of a distinctly different character is recorded in Period 20, Group 763. The was material recovered from a trampled brickearth deposit inside Room E of Building 61, but where it originally came from is unclear. (What is the date for the construction of this building?) The decoration of this plaster is very similar to fragments recovered in [4907], which also contained the main architectural scheme plaster, and the colours used are similar if not the same. The design consists of an area of mid-green bisected by a black (sometimes very dark green) stripe next to a parallel white stripe. At right angles to this was another broader white stripe bordered by an expanse of a deep green. In addition there is a fragment of plain cinnabar from the same deposit.

Plaster with a similar fabric, although perhaps not the same, was also found in Period 20 [4696], from a dumped makeup layer associated with a structure predating Building 65. The decoration is likely to have formed part of a dado design, consisting of a dark maroon background with pink stripe, and random small splashes of black, pink and white pigment up to 6mm in length. No linking fragments with other decorative elements were identified. Fragments with a similar decoration were found in [4907].

Other plaster with similar mortar and the faded remains of decoration which was probably related to the better preserved architectural fragments was identified from several contexts in Period 21 Group 790. The material was recovered from consolidation layers forming the foundation for the new external west wall of Room A, Building 64, Phase 2. Individual fragments are unfortunately too worn to provide further information on particular decorative elements, although several may have been of an architectural nature.

At the present time it is not possible to establish where the plaster from [4907] and [4909] originally came from, although further work and dating evidence may provide more informed suggestion. The dating of the plaster thus remains problematic, as although there are parallels from Britain for the first two centuries AD for such architectural schemes, they can also be dated to the third and even the early fourth century (R Ling, pers comm).

The architectural scheme itself provides a valuable addition to the few examples of such work which have so far been recovered from excavations in London, and beyond that from other areas of the province. A close geographical parallel can be found nearby at 6-12 Fenchurch

Street, although this group of material has the advantage of being well dated and much more substantial in its nature. The plaster recovered was associated with a clay and timber building destroyed in the Hadrianic fire of the early second century, and came from a room which had a floor made from **opus signinum** (Rhodes, 1987, 169-172). Several discrete areas of plaster were recovered and reconstructed. Together they formed part of an elaborate architectural perspective decoration which would have made up a horizontally tripartite scheme. This was based on a series of slender fluted columns making up a colonnade with heavily moulded projecting pedestals supporting further columns. Behind the main group of columns are areas of blue, broken up by areas of red ochre. Other related fragments survived from a higher part of the decoration, and they can be more directly related to the plaster from No 1 Poultry. Three groups of plaster show the details of the capitals of these columns and their relationship with the entablature. One fragment in particular shows part of an entablature painted at an angle illusionistically as though it is projecting outwards towards the viewer. It is surmounted by a pink cornice highlighted in cream, above which is an area of blue. A further fragment is painted above the pediment with a fantastic floral decoration.

The plaster from [4907] bears some superficial similarities to this composition, since it consists of an illusionistic portrayal of an architectural scheme based on a columnar structure with ornamentation.

In spite of the small quantity of plaster which survives it is apparent that there are many differences both in scale and treatment with the plaster from Fenchurch Street. The fragments from Poultry are on a comparatively large scale, the width of the capitals reaching c100mm. It is not possible to determine the height of the columns, but they may have been in the region of c 700mm high. Another striking factor is the degree of detail and ornamentation which is apparent in the realistic portrayal of depth and shading, created by light and dark highlights in maroon and cream. The treatment of the acanthus leaves on the Corinthian capitals is particularly skilled. This contrasts with the plaster from Fenchurch Street, which, although employing a similar effect of **trompe d'oeil**, has very slender columns which are painted in a less naturalistic manner.

The second closest parallel in terms of proximity to the plaster from No 1 Poultry can be found just over the river in North Southwark on the site of a suite of rooms likely to have formed a bathhouse (Yule, forthcoming). A large block of wall plaster was reconstructed which originated from the upper part of a vaulted room, occupying a lunette which was probably constructed in the first half of the second century AD. The decoration of the first of two phases of plaster was technically of a superior nature, and included highly burnished areas of cinnabar and yellow ochre and an elaborate architectural decoration (Mackenna and Ling, 1991, 159-171, Goffin, forthcoming). The scheme is based on a projecting pavilion with the figure of a cupid framed by slender columns forming a colonnade in the background. Swags or garlands are suspended from the ceiling of the central pavilion. It is likely that the main decorative zone of the middle part of the wall reflects the basic themes of the lunette but on a larger scale. The closest parallels for this plaster can be found not in Britain but in Rome and nearby Ostia (Mackenna and Ling, 1991, 166-169). On art historical grounds the scheme is believed to date to the second quarter or middle years of the second century (MacKenna and Ling, 1991, 168).

The smaller and less well-stratified decoration from Poultry again shows significant differences from the Southwark material, not least in terms of technical quality. Both schemes show the use of the rare and expensive pigment cinnabar, although in the case of the Poultry plaster it is not clear whether or how this combined with the architectural elements present, and how much this colour dominated. Apart from the presence of this brilliant red, the colours used on the Poultry fragments, consisting of pinks, reds, creams, and pale green, are comparatively restrained, although the green between the columns is bright and of a deep shade. Such colours contrast with the dramatic yellow and red which dominate the plaster from the Southwark lunette. In addition the plaster from Winchester Palace has a number of characteristics which show that the decorative scheme is moving away from the purely realistic portrayal of architectural forms into a type of painting which is more stylised and more emphatic in its use of blocks of alternating colours (McKenna and Ling, 1991, 168).

A less spectacular but perhaps closer comparison can be made between the plaster from Poultry and that recovered from a villa site from Wigginton, Oxfordshire. The plaster was recovered from the filling of a hypocaust, dating apparently to the fourth century (Davey and Ling, 1981, 194). Two reconstructed fragments show the corner of an architectural decoration in perspective, with fluted columns with Ionic capitals and part of the architrave. The area between the columns is painted with blue frit, whilst the remainder of the decoration is accomplished in shades of light and dark brown and yellows (Davey and Ling, 1981, 194). The scale of the painting may be comparable to that of the Poultry material, and the light too falls on the left of the surviving fragments, although in this case it also comes from below. The range of colours used is also not dissimilar, although there is no cinnabar present.

A further parallel can be seen in a fragment of plaster recovered from a building to the south side of the Forum at Winchester, Hampshire, dating to the late second or early third century (Davey and Ling, 1981, 196). This also shows part of an architectural scheme of a yellow, white, green and grey black entablature painted on a red ground.

One of the best preserved and most notable examples of architectural wall painting in Britain comes from the Painted House at Dover. Here **in-situ** plaster showing several examples of architectural schemes in perspective was preserved in a number of rooms which are likely to date to the second half of the second or early third century (Philp, 1989). The basic decorative scheme which reoccurred in several rooms consisted of a projecting podium surmounted by a series of framed panels separated by pilasters (Davey and Ling, 1981, 111). In front of each of these panels above the podium a series of different objects is shown. The main colours used for these schemes are red, yellow and purple, with the panels themselves white. This contrasts with the painting of the architectural elements of the Poultry plaster which is achieved in a much looser style, with a different range of colours.

In view of the number of fragments of the same fabric which have a deep green decoration divided by parallel black and white stripes, it is possible that discrete blocks of colour were directly associated with the architectural elements in some way, and that cinnabar too was also used in this way. One of the fragments from [4909] shows a combination of the green background with narrow black and white stripes, and a further linear element in different shades of red ochre and dark brown, which may actually represent the fluting of a column. An additional fragment from [4907] suggests that a fragment with a background of cinnabar may also have been associated with a possible columnar element. It is further decorated with the abraded remains of further elements in yellow and dark red ochre.

A quantity of plaster was recovered which could be more closely attributed to a particular building, that is the bathhouse complex of Building 64. The piles beneath the main walls of this building have been dated dendrochronologically to the 280s AD, and the complex is likely to have been in use in the late third century, probably into the 4th century.

Two phases of **in-situ** plaster were identified from the bottom part of the walls in Room A (double-check) Building 64. The technical construction of both types of mortar preparation was not of a superior quality, although the fact that fragments of crushed brick and tile had been added to the fabric of the first phase may show an awareness of the main function of that particular room. As part of a bathhouse, the walls would have been vulnerable to water penetration and condensation, and the addition of crushed ceramic building material was well known to improve the hydraulic properties of a mortar. In his instructions for the construction of baths, Vitruvius advises that the underside of any vaulting, facing the floor 'should first be plastered with pounded tile mixed with lime, and then covered with polished stucco in relief or smooth' (Chapter X, 159).

The surviving fragments from the second phase of the lower parts of the walls of the room indicate that there was a rough application of plaster coloured with random swirls of green, pink and cream in a variety of shades. These areas of colour were broken up by two parallel black stripes, which were probably intended to delineate the areas of coloured blocks, as a loose portrayal of marble veneered panelling. Other colours which may have been associated with this type of decoration include red with blue. Only a few other fragments were recovered which may supply some information on the middle part of the decorative

scheme. Fragments from [3683] show evidence of a linear decoration in green and two shades of red ochre on a white background. A small quantity of plaster from one of the demolition deposits [3491] over the hypocaust was also decorated in this way. Additional fragments from this context were made from a different mortar type, perhaps originating from the middle zone of another wall from within Room A. Here the decoration was again based on a plain white background which was painted with simple polychrome bands and expanses. Plaster recovered from make-up deposits of Room E of Building 64 was also of a type which was comparable to that found **in-situ** and featured the use of Egyptian blue.

Decorative schemes consisting of middle zones formed of two dimensional polychrome linear designs on a white background were simple to produce but could be bright and effective.

Both the overall quality of the workmanship of the plaster application, and the colours and decorative style of this plaster can be compared to a much larger group of plaster recovered from the bathhouse at Winchester Palace in North Southwark, on the other side of the Thames, (Goffin, in Yule, forthcoming). The material was found in demolition layers over a probable caldarium, with an adjoining chamber which contained a plunge bath (Building 14, Yule, forthcoming). The dating of this building is uncertain, but it can be said to be post 150 AD and that it was demolished in the late 3rd or early 4th centuries (Chapter 5, in Yule, forthcoming).

Although several designs and fabrics were represented in this demolition material, no doubt reflecting different walls of more than one room, and possibly ceiling material, there are certain similarities with the plaster associated with Building 64. At least one fabric type from Winchester Palace was characterised by a crudely applied **intonaco**, with background brushmarks clearly visible. This bathhouse fabric had a decorative scheme which consisted of a plain white background with coloured bands in red, yellow and ?grey-blue, with foliate motifs. The lower part of the scheme was likely to have been based on a lime green background with pink swirls with maroon veining, probably broken up by maroon bands to form individual panels. Such plaster bears some resemblance to the fragments of red and green linear decoration with white, as well as the chamfered fragments showing a red ochre and ?dark grey band on a white background described above. The elements of the dado decoration, as far as they can be ascertained, were also not unlike.

Method of application

It is probable that much of the plaster recovered from the excavations was decorated using the true fresco technique, like many other Roman mural decorations, that is by painting directly onto a fresh plaster surface which was still moist. By this method, the pigment which had been applied to the damp lime plaster became fixed through a chemical reaction. As the plaster began to dry, the slaked lime solution (calcium hydroxide) migrated towards the surface, reacting with carbon dioxide in the air to form calcium carbonate (Mora, Mora, and Philipot, 1984, 12). After further evaporation the pigments would become fixed. The degree to which other painting techniques were used is a matter of discussion. There is some evidence for the limited use of tempera, that is the application of pigments to a dry surface, using an organic medium as a binding agent (Ling, 1991, 201-2). A few pigments, most notably different types of black, were described by Vitruvius as requiring the addition of a binding medium such as size but were still applied in a fresco technique (Ling, 1991, 209). Some pigments may also have been applied after being mixed in limewater and applied to a dry surface, a technique called 'fresco secco' (Davey and Ling, 1981, 57).

Pigments

Visual examination of the pigments indicated that the range of colours was dominated by those which occurred naturally such as red ochre, white, black and to a lesser extent yellow ochre. The colour most frequently used apart from white was red which could be modified to produce different shades such as maroon, pink, pale red or dark red. Black was often used for linear motifs such as stripes, bands or blocks which were likely to have made up intervals between coloured fields. This pigment was often made from soot or charcoal, but could also be produced from the burning of resin (Vitruvius, Chapter 10, 218). Less commonly found

was the vivid green found colouring areas of background in the architectural scheme from (4907). This is much brighter than the usual paler and more muted green. It is likely to have been green earth, a pigment containing the mineral glauconite or celadonite (Ling, 1991, 208). It is hoped that pigment analysis will be able to confirm the pigment identifications used in the architectural scheme.

In addition to these colours, blue pigment was identified from several deposits. Egyptian blue or blue frit was more expensive than the naturally occurring ochres, since it had to be artificially produced from a compound of copper calcium silicate which was baked in an oven (Ling, 1991, 208). The exact colour depended on the proportions of the different ingredients, the temperature they were fired at, and the length of time the mixture was left in the oven. It also depended in part on the size of the blue crystals which had been produced, as large ones gave a deeper colour (Pain, **New Scientist**, p45). The granular nature of the pigment could create problems with its adhesion to the wall and survival in archaeological deposits is on some occasions difficult to detect. It is sometimes only possible to identify it microscopically as small remnants. Most of the examples identified from the site were found in association with Building 64. In two instances the blue pigment was applied over a different colour; red or maroon in the case of the Group 790 material in Building 64 Room A, and over a green background in Group 795 Building 64 Room E.

Although less common than many of the other pigments, Egyptian blue is being increasingly identified on sites in London. In many cases it is used in small quantities on minor decorative details such as those which embellish candelabra decorations, but it has also been recognised as being used as a background colour. Recent excavations which have had plaster decorated with Egyptian blue include the Baltic Exchange, Shelley House, Regis House (Goffin, forthcoming). Such blue was also used on different decorative elements recovered from the architectural perspective decoration recovered from 6-12 Fenchurch Street (Rhodes, 1987, 171) and in small quantities on some of the plaster from Angel Court, Walbrook (Liversidge, 1977, 76). A further identification of this pigment was recognised from Building 16 of the Courage Brewery excavations in North Southwark, where it was used as a background colour (Goffin in Cowan, forthcoming).

The presence of cinnabar or bright red (mercuric sulphide) was recorded in five instances from the excavation overall. This pigment was very expensive since it had to be imported from Spain, and is therefore not commonly found. It has been estimated that it cost about 6 times the price of the best quality red ochre which came from Sinope (Ling, 1985, 55). Its value is also reflected in the different arrangements for its supply, as the pigment was obtained by the patron rather than the actual painter carrying out the work.

Apart from the expense of buying such a high quality pigment, its use was also limited, since it reacted adversely to certain conditions. Vitruvius warns his readers that cinnabar should be used only in certain rooms which are not open to the brightness of sun and moonlight since it can turn 'to an ugly and mottled colour' (Vitruvius, Chapter IX, 216). In order to maintain the brightness and purity of the bright red he recommends the application of a protective coat of wax, which is heated and rubbed into the surface of the wall.

Several fragments of cinnabar recovered from the excavations at Poultry do appear to have been adversely affected in this way. The fragment from Building 61, Room E, from a trampled brickearth surface is certainly discoloured, as are many of the fragments from Open Area 68, which have a dark mottled appearance. One piece out of the eleven recovered from the chalk foundation forming the rebuilding of Building 65 was also partially discoloured in this way (Building 66). An additional fragment, recovered from the Period 35 Building 115 was apparently unaffected.

The presence of cinnabar is suggestive of a decorative scheme of some quality, commissioned by a patron who had means. It is not commonly found on British excavations, but has been identified from at least 27 sites, including a number from London (Graham Morgan, pers comm). Perhaps the most noticeable example of the use of cinnabar in some quantity, which could be safely attributed to a particular building was found the high quality wall decoration recovered from the bath-house complex at Winchester Palace in Southwark,

which is likely to date to the second century AD (MacKenna and Ling, 1991, 166). Here areas of cinnabar forming blocks of colour were burnished into a surface which had been already covered with a background of yellow ochre which had been initially polished, which had been applied to the second of two fine layers of the **intonaco**. Further examples of plain cinnabar from one of the other rooms of this complex indicate that it had been applied onto a plain white **intonaco** surface.

Conclusions

The assemblage of fragments of painted wall plaster from No 1 Poultry reflects the intensive nature of the settlement of Roman occupation on the site. As a result, the amount of plaster which can be safely associated with particular buildings or rooms is comparatively small. Despite these limitations, the site provides valuable evidence of the popularity of certain decorative elements of wall schemes, as well as plaster of exceptional quality in the material recovered from Open Area 68. The architectural scheme with its related elements, and the use of expensive pigments such as cinnabar are a testament to a building of considerable wealth. Such plaster provides an important contribution to the number of elaborately decorated wall scheme remains which have now been recovered from London and Southwark.

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