

# SOME DISCOVERIES IN THE CITY OF LONDON 1954-9

BY PETER R. V. MARSDEN

## *Chase National Bank of New York, Plough Court, Lombard Street, 1955-6*

The cellars of the pre-war office building on this site lay at about 10 ft. 6 ins. below the level of Plough Court, and as a result most of the medieval and post medieval deposits had been destroyed. The natural sub-soil was brick-earth which lay at a depth of about 20 ft. 6 ins. below Plough Court (i.e. about 35 ft. above Ordnance Datum).

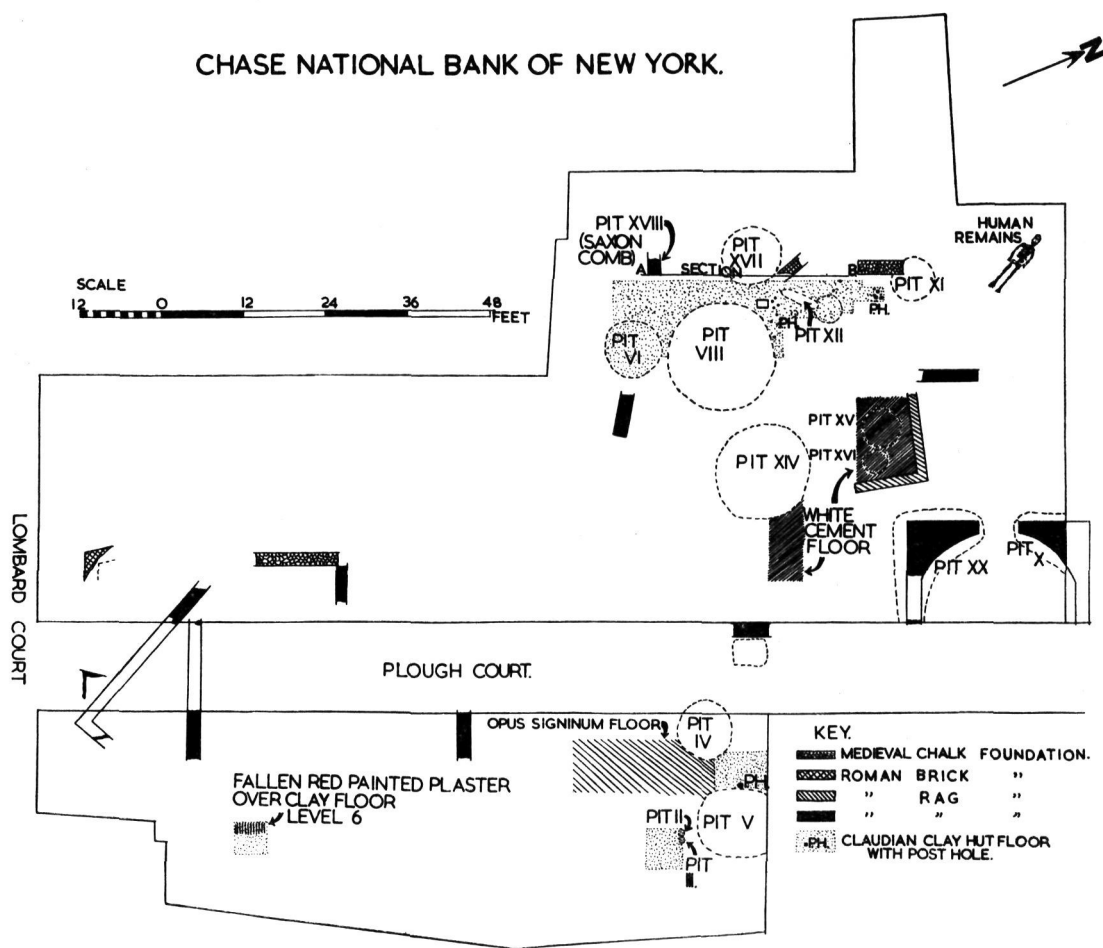


Fig. 1  
Chase National Bank of New York.

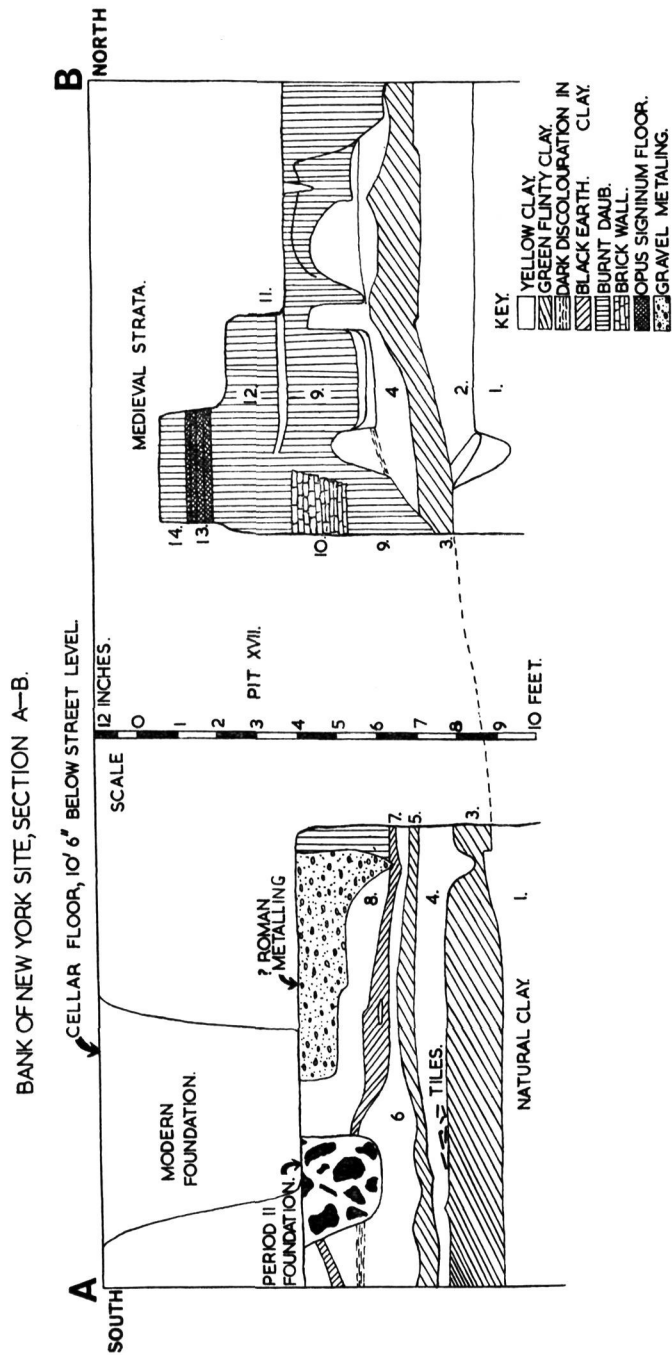


Fig 2  
Bank of New York Site, Section A-B.

## ROMAN

The earliest features seen on this site were numerous post-holes penetrating the natural brick-earth, and these clearly indicate the former presence of an early Roman timber structure (fig. 1). An area of the natural surface was carefully cleared and a number of post-holes were exposed. Unfortunately the area was not large enough for a recognisable post-hole pattern to be found. The natural surface in the archaeologically cleared area was found to be covered by a clean yellow clay deposit (fig. 2, section A-B, level 2). A few post-holes were covered by level 2, but most of them passed through this layer. The sealed post-holes indicated that the timber structure was probably constructed before level 2 was deposited. It would seem that level 2 was probably a clean clay floor laid down over the dirty weathered natural clay. Pottery sherds and a bronze coin of Claudius recovered from level 2 indicate that it was deposited about the mid first century A.D. Two fragments were of Belgic pottery with meaningless potters' stamps (fig. 3, nos. 8, 9).

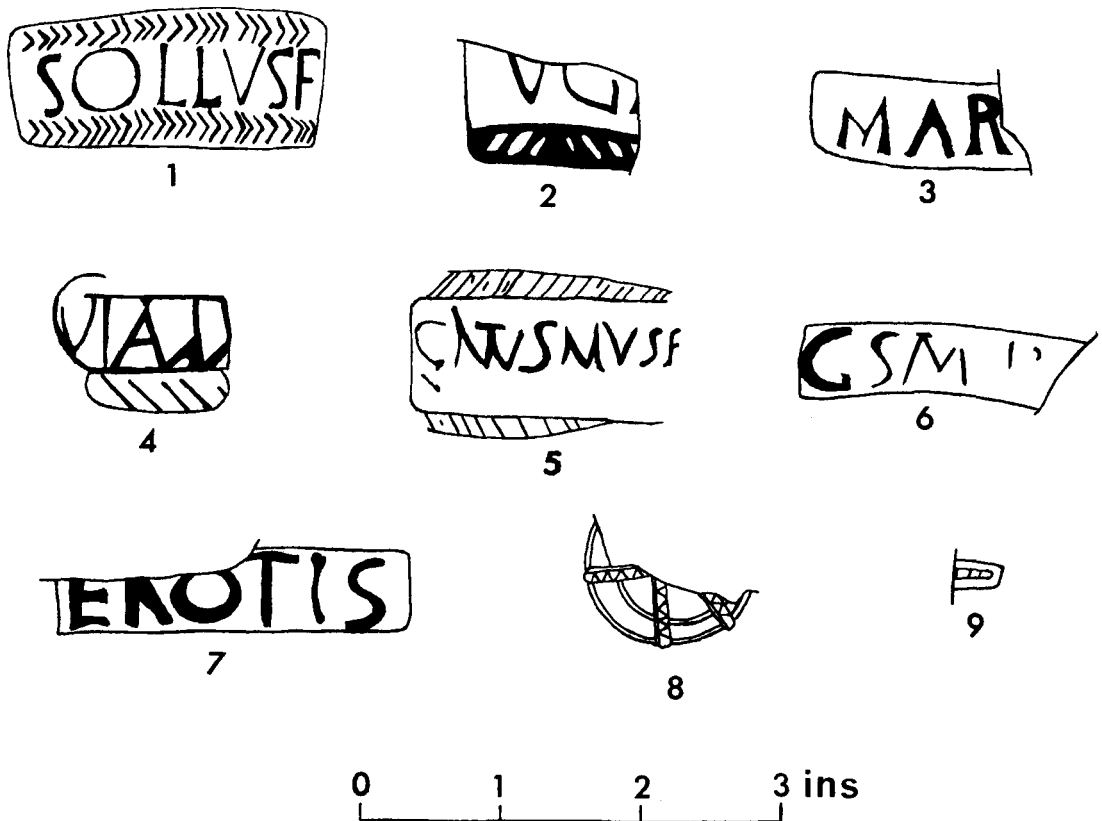


Fig. 3  
Potters' Stamps on coarse ware. See page 42.

Level 3, which overlay level 2, was a greenish flinty earth and was apparently a rubbish accumulation above the clay floor. In its upper part was found a considerable quantity of pottery of the Flavian period. Samian ware potters' stamps from this level include OF BAS (form 24/25), LOGIRNVS (form 18?), OF LVC (form 27), [O]F MODE (form 18?), ]F·MODE·F (form 27), OFPONTI (form 18). Pit VI was dug from level 3 and contained Samian ware stamps OFAQVITAN (form 18), and SILVANI OF (form 24/25).

Above level 3 were a succession of alternating clay and rubbish deposits. Level 7 contained a sherd of Samian ware of form 18 stamped PASSENI. It seems likely that these deposits may represent clay floors, and rubbish accumulations above the floors.

It is significant that no sign of the Boudiccan destruction of A.D. 60 was found on this site, especially as it was found on the adjoining site to the north in 1963 (30-32 Lombard Street). Perhaps the structure on the Bank of America site was demolished before A.D. 60.

Probably during the Flavian period an extensive Roman building with foundations of ragstone and mortar was erected on the site. Only the foundations survived, and their width was about 2 ft. These were exposed in various parts of the site, but not enough was found to recover the plan of the building which, in any case, extended beyond the limits of the site. A gap between two Roman foundations at the north end of the site may indicate the position of an entrance or doorway. The foundation trenches, pits X and XX, on either side of the gap presented a singular appearance for both were about 10 ft. deep, and the bottom 6-7 ft. of them was filled with a great quantity of rubbish. It is possible that the foundations had been dug into the fillings of the pits, but this would not explain the shape of the pits apparently resembling that of the Roman foundations. When the site of nos. 30-32 Lombard Street was rebuilt during 1963 no sign of this Roman building was found even though a careful watch was kept. It seems likely, therefore, that its north side coincided with the north boundary of the Bank of New York building. Fortunately a considerable quantity of Roman made ground on the Bank of New York site was not destroyed during the recent rebuilding, and it should be possible in the future to clarify much of the history of the site and recover part of the plans of the Roman buildings which were situated there.

The pottery recovered from pits X and XX is all dateable to the Flavian period. Samian Ware potters' stamps recovered from pit XX include AQV (form 24/25), OFAVITI (form 18), OF BAS (form 27?), CELAD·FE (form 29), LIBERTVS (form 27), LVPVS (form 18), MANOV (form 18), PASSENIVS (form 18), OFPONTEI (form 18), [T]ERTIO (form 24/25), IINIV (form 27). Stamps on coarse ware mortaria include SOLLVSF and MAR[ . . . (fig. 3, nos. 1, 3). Other objects recovered from this pit include an oyster shell filled with pale green paint, and a polished stone palette.

In the northern part of the site was found the corner of a room of a Roman building, the alignment of which was different from that of the building with the stone foundations. The walls bounding the north and east sides of the room were of ragstone and mortar and were

one foot wide. The floor of this room was of white mortar half an inch thick, and this had slightly subsided into the top of the underlying Roman first century rubbish pits XV and XVI. The depressions in the floor had been levelled with baked clay, and a few sherds of first century pottery were found lying on top of the floor. The alignment of the walls of this room indicates that it belonged to a Roman building different from that described in the previous two paragraphs. It is impossible to determine which was the earlier, however.

Scattered about the site were fragments of a distinctly different Roman building which was destroyed by fire during the early second century. Section A-B shows a mass of burnt daub (levels 9, 12, 14) in which lay a brick foundation (10), a stratum of clay (11), and a floor of *opus signinum* (13). The *opus signinum* floor overlaid a mass of burnt debris (12), and the floor itself was covered by a layer of burnt daub (14). Level 14 suggests that the building with the floor was destroyed by fire.

The brick foundation (10) stands in the middle of the burnt daub below the *opus signinum* floor and possibly belongs to an earlier Roman building. With it is the level of clay (11) which may be interpreted as a clay floor of this building. Between the clay layer and the *opus signinum* is a layer of burnt daub (12) indicating that this building had also been destroyed by fire. Burnt sherds and an almost complete cup of Samian Ware (form 42) which was stamped LATINVS were all found in level 12 and indicate that the fire had occurred during the early second century. A similar brick wall was found in the southern part of the site, and was surrounded by red burnt daub in which were found fragments of a large burnt reeded-rim bowl of the early second century. On the east side of Plough Court an extent of an *opus signinum* floor was discovered overlying a layer of burnt daub, and may have been part of the building a floor of which was found in section A-B, level 13. It is difficult to interpret these burnt layers, but the pottery evidence suggests that at least some of the destruction occurred during the Hadrianic fire of London.

#### POST ROMAN

A bone comb (pl. 1) probably of Saxon date, was found in pit XVIII, but very few other post-Roman objects were found. Several fragments of chalk foundations were discovered, and these presumably date from the Middle Ages. The workmen discovered a human skeleton in the north-west corner of the site, and it would seem that this was of post-Roman date because the black soil adhering to the bones was unlike any Roman soil seen on the site.

#### *Coutts Bank, no. 15, Lombard Street, 1958-9*

This site lies at the west corner of Lombard Street and Abchurch Lane. The modern cellar floors lay at about 12 ft. 6 ins. below the level of Lombard Street, and consequently only the deepest remains survived.

## ROMAN

It was not possible to determine whether early Roman timber structures, like those found at Plough Court, existed on this site, but a noticeable lack of pottery of the mid first century indicated that this was unlikely. It should also be noted that no sign of the Boudiccan fire of A.D. 60 was also found.

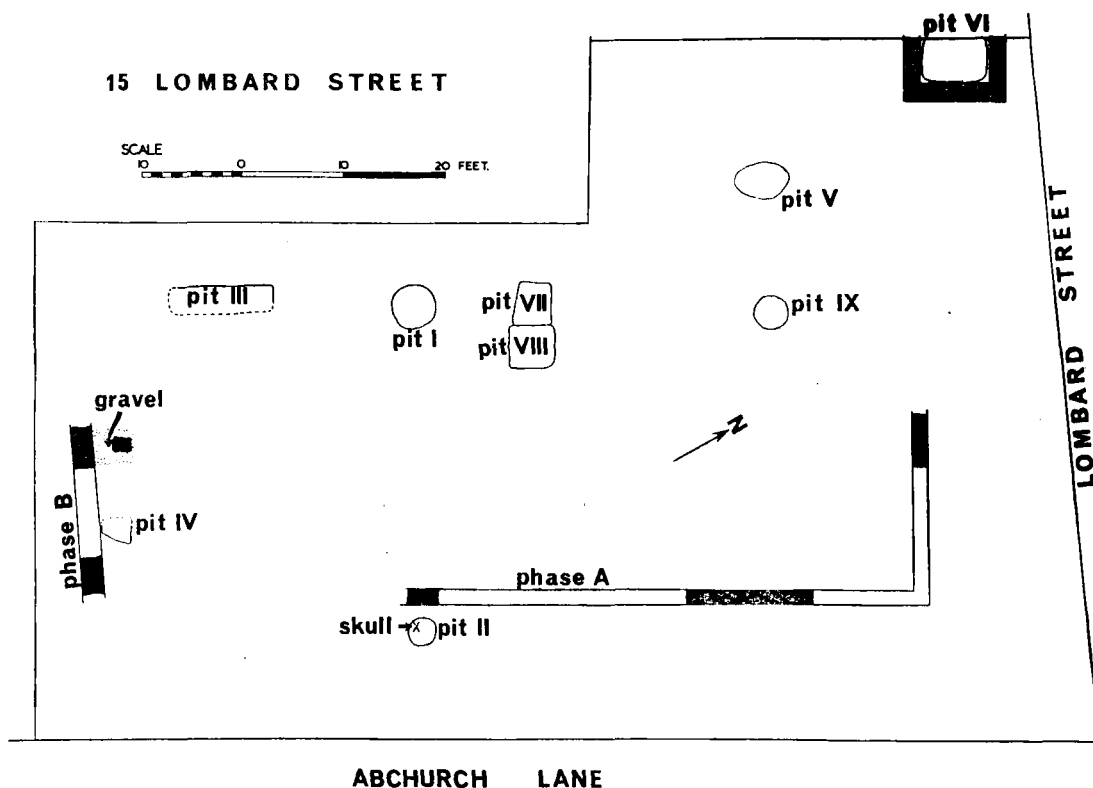


Fig. 4  
Coutts Bank, No. 15 Lombard Street, 1958-9.

The most definite Roman feature on the site was an L-shaped series of foundations of part of a building (fig. 4, phase A). They were constructed of ragstone, chalk, flint and yellow mortar. The use of chalk in Roman walls in London is unusual, but there can be no doubt as to the Roman date because part of the foundation was overlaid by a layer of burnt daub and Roman brick fragments. In this deposit were sherds dateable to the late first and early second century A.D. The building, or this part of it, was therefore demolished not later than the date of this layer. In view of the apparent lack of a rubble layer, and the presence of a burnt daub layer overlying the stone foundations, it is possible that the building had wattle and daub walls on stone foundations. In the north-west corner of the site was a small 'deep room' the walls

of which could not be dated, but as their construction was similar to the dated Roman foundations, it seems likely that the deep room was also Roman. The floor of the room appeared to be gravel at a depth of 20 ft. below street level, and 8–9 ft. below the land level of the late first and early second centuries.

In the area enclosed by the L-shaped foundation pits I and IX were found to contain sherds dateable to the late first century. The latter was lined with vertical strips of wood 1/5th in. thick, and it was probably barrel-lined. It was therefore possible that this pit was a well. Apart from the pottery pit IX also contained six balls of blue frit used in glass making and enamelling, as well as lumps of red ochre and light green paint. The layer of burnt daub which overlay the Roman foundation extended over and filled pit V. In the burnt daub pit filling were sherds of the late first and early second centuries, as well as many corroded iron nails and a piece of burnt sacking (pl. 2; see Appendix 1). The burnt daub layer which extended over most of the site everywhere contained corroded nails. Pit II only contained a considerable quantity of Roman building materials. On the east side of the L-shaped wall was found a stratum of greenish flinty earth containing several sherds of the late first century, and a human cranium. The skull was examined by Dr. K. P. Oakely of the Natural History Museum, who kindly reported that 'the state of fusion of the coronal suture shows that the individual was adult. The supra-orbital ridges of the frontal bone are sufficiently well developed to show that the individual was male. He was probably fairly long-headed'.

At the south end of the site was found a patch of gravel metalling, which lay on the line of the main Roman road which skirted the south side of the Roman forum.

#### POST ROMAN

A length of wall or foundation (fig. 4, phase B) was discovered at the south end of the site on the Roman road metalling, and therefore is probably of post Roman date. The wall or foundation was built of flint and ragstone, and was faced with pieces of knapped flint.

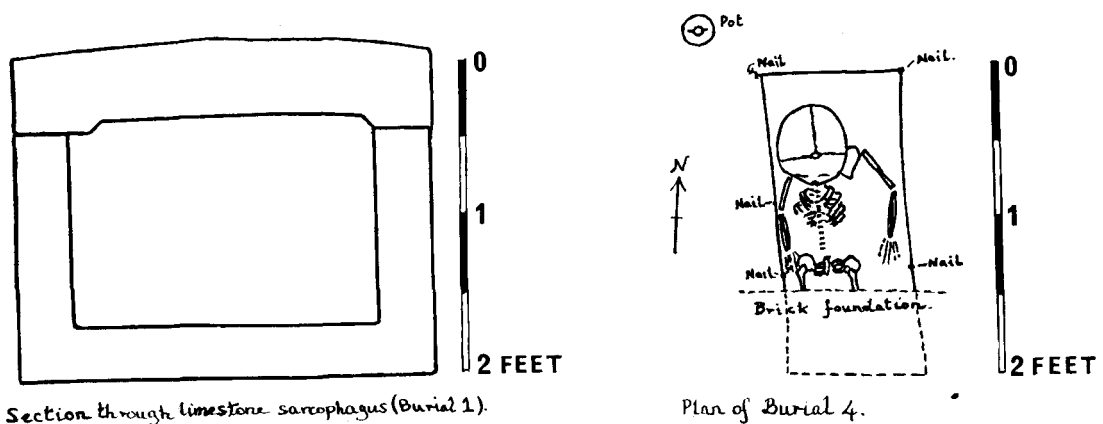
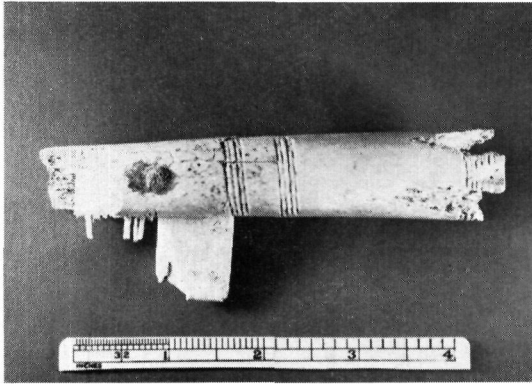


Fig. 5

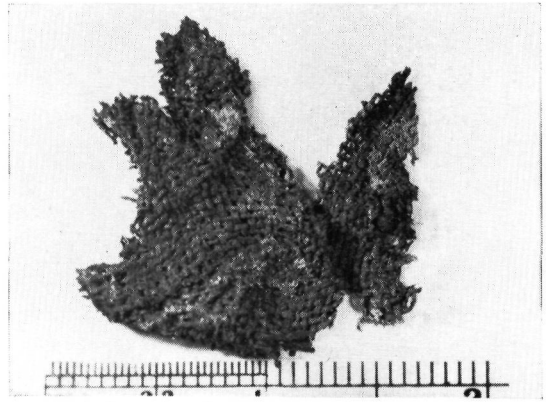
St. Clare House, Minorities, 1955. Roman Burials.

PLATE 1



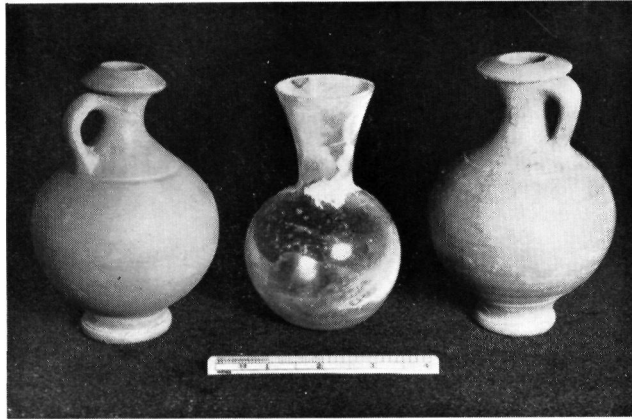
Bone comb, possibly Saxon. Plough Court Site.

PLATE 2



Piece of charred sacking, Roman. 15 Lombard Street. (Scale of inches).

PLATE 3



*Photograph: Guildhall Museum*

Grave goods from Roman burial 2. Minories site.

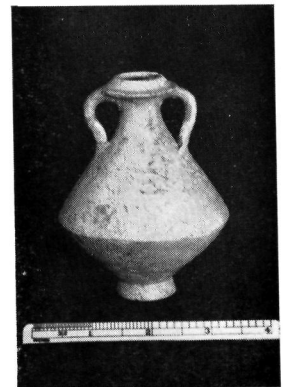
PLATE 4



*Photograph: Guildhall Museum*

Grave goods from Roman burial 3. Minories site.

PLATE 5



*Photograph: Guildhall Museum*  
Late Roman jug from child burial. Minories site.



*St. Clare House, Minories, 1955*

The St. Clare House site lay on the north side of Haydon Street and on the east side of the Minories. The site lay on part of a known Roman cemetery, and during its rebuilding in 1955 four Roman inhumation burials were discovered.

*Burial 1 (fig. 5)*

Part of an undecorated limestone sarcophagus was found by workmen, but unfortunately it had been discovered but not recorded during rebuilding before the war when its contents were removed and it was filled with concrete. It was aligned north-south and was 2 ft. 8 ins. wide and it was 2 ft. 1 in. high. The top of the lid was 15 ft. 6 ins. below the level of the Minories, and it lay 40 ft. north of Haydon Street, and 32 ft. east of the Minories. Because this must have been an inhumation burial it is reasonable to conclude that it belonged to the latter half of the Roman period.

*Burial 2 (pl. 3)*

This burial was discovered about 10 ft. east of the Minories and about 80 ft. north of Haydon Street, and it was probably an inhumation burial as was the late Roman custom. The grave furniture consisted of two single handled flagons of an orange-red ware with glossed surfaces, and a pale green glass vessel with three incised lines round the base of the neck.

*Burial 3 (pl. 4)*

This was also found by workmen, and its find spot on the site is not known. An inhumation burial was discovered and with it a dish of the fourth century with a coarse dark grey gritted ware.

*Burial 4 (fig. 5)*

This burial was excavated by the writer, and it lay 165 ft. north of Haydon Street, 17 ft. 9 ins. east of the Minories, and at a depth of 12 ft. 2 ins. from the Minories street level. It comprised the skeleton of a child lying in a rectangular wooden coffin constructed of 1/4 in. thick wooden boards. The wood had decayed to a dark brown in the surrounding dark grey earth, and the corroded iron nails were in position at each corner. No lid or base to the coffin was noticed though some nails were in such a position that they could only have fastened a lid. Unfortunately an eighteenth or nineteenth century brick foundation had been cut through the lower part of the body from the knees downwards. In burial the child's body had been laid on its back in the coffin with its arms on either side, and with the palms of the hands downwards. A deposit of lime had been placed around the body, and after a careful examination of the lime no sign of a shroud or any dress fillings could be detected. The child's head had sunk onto its chest, presumably after decay had set in. The coffin was aligned north-south, and the child's head lay at the north end. A few inches beyond the north-west corner of the

coffin lay a small double-handled carinated vase of buff ware with a pink slip. The vase had small chips broken out of its surface, and had evidently been used prior to burial (pl. 5).

*Bank of England, Cheapside, 1957*

In the north-eastern part of this site was discovered a Roman wall or foundation containing a re-used fragment of a limestone quern.

Also in the north-east part of the site 67ft. south of Cheapside and 42ft. west of Bread Street (measurements taken from old frontage lines) was found in the Roman levels at a depth of 16ft. an oval pocket 10ins. wide filled with hundreds of balls of blue frit. With the frit were one or two sherds of late first century pottery. The section across the deposit showed layers of burnt wood ash curving down to the pocket containing the frit. Part of this deposit was not dug away so that after the demolition of the new building further examination will be possible. The large number of frit balls suggests that this was the site of some industrial process connected with enamelling or glass making.

*Potters' stamps on Samian Ware from the City of London*

IIN·IBINI·M	(form 18)	Bucklersbury House, 1955
IINIBINI·M	(form 18)	Guildhall administrative block, 1954
AMBII[	(form 33)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
OFAQVITAN	(form 18)	Bank of America, Plough Court, 1956
OFAXO	(form 27)	Bucklersbury House, 1955
BANNILVS	(form 33)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
BASSIO	(form 27)	13-15 King Street, 1953
OFBASI	(form 24/25)	Bank of America, Plough Court, 1956
[B]ORILLIOF	(form 33)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
BVALIALE	(form 33)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
BVRDO	(?)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
BVRDONIOF	(form 33)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
CALA[	(form 18)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
]CALVI	(form 27)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
CELAD·FE	(form 29)	Bank of America, Plough Court, 1956
CEL·SIOF	(?)	13-15 King Street, 1956
CINNAMVS	(form 18)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
CINTVS	(form 33)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
COBNERTI·M	(form 18/31)	St. Clare House, Minories, 1956
[CO]CVRO·F	(form 18)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
CRACISM[M]	(form 18/31)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
]CRIIS	(form 27)	Bucklersbury House, 1955

OFCRESI	(form 27)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
[OF]CRESTIO	(form 29)	Bank of America, Plough Court, 1956
DIVICATVS	(form 44)	St. Clare House, Minorities, 1956
[DI]VICATVS	(form 31)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
DIVICATVS	(?)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
DOCCALI	(form 33)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
DONNĀVCI	(form 27)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
FATIM[	(form 27)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
FVSCI	(form 18/31)	1 Noble Street, 1956
OFFGER	(form 33)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
IOENALIS·F	(form 27)	Bank of America, Plough Court, 1956
LATINVS	(form 42)	Bank of America, Plough Court, 1956
LENTISCUS	(form 18)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
LIBERTVS	(form 27)	Bank of America, Plough Court, 1956
LOGIRNVS	(form 18)	Bank of America, Plough Court, 1956
LOLL·M	(form 33)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
LOLL·M	(form 27)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
OFLVC	(form 27)	Bank of America, Plough Court, 1956
LVPVS	(form 18)	Bank of America, Plough Court, 1956
MACCIVS F	(form 18)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
MARTIANI M	(form 33)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
OFMOD[	(form 18)	Bank of America, Plough Court, 1956
]MODE	(form 18)	The Travolator, Queen Victoria Street, 1958
]MOM	(form 27)	Bucklersbury House, 1955
PASSENI	(form 18)	Bank of America, Plough Court, 1956
PATII[	(form 33)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
PATERCLINIOF	(form 18)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
OPATRICI	(form 18)	Bucklersbury House, 1955
PAVLIF	(form 27)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
PONTI	(form 18)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
OF PONTI	(form 18)	Bucklersbury House, 1955
PRM·M	(form 27)	13-15 King Street, 1956
FPVDĒN	(form 33)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
REGINVS·F	(form 18)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
ROPPVS FE	(form 18)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
RVFI	(form 18)	Coutts Bank, Lombard Street, 1959
OF SEVER	(form 27)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959

SILVANI	(form 33)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
SILVA[	(form 31)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
SILVANI·OF	(form 24/25)	Bank of America, Plough Court, 1956
SOLIIMNI	(form 27)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
[T]ER·T·IO	(form 24/25)	Bank of America, Plough Court, 1959
TITVRO[	(form 33)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
VIRTVI[	(form 18)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959
]XEXIXIIXI	(form 18)	Public Cleansing Depot, 1959

N.B. A dot below a letter indicates that it is retrograde, and a bridge over two or more letters indicates a ligature.

*Coarse Ware potters' stamps from Plough Court (fig. 3)*

MORTARIA

1. SOLLVS F. Stamped once. Buff ware. Pit XX, Flavian.
2. VG[. Grey ware (burnt). Unstratified.
3. MAR[. Stamp along rim. Buff ware. Pit XX, Flavian.
4. VIA I J [A] or [A]LLAIV retrograde. Stamp impressed twice. Buff ware with cream surface. Pit X, Flavian. (cf. *Lon. Midd. Arch. Soc. Trans.* 1956, Brockley Hill. Fig. 3, M.10)
5. CNVSMVS F. Pale pink ware. Pit X, Flavian.

AMPHORAE

6. GSM[. On handle. Buff ware. Unstratified.
7. EROTIS. On peg. Pink ware with mica flecks and cream slip. Unstratified.

*Miscellaneous*

8.  $\overline{MM}$ [. Stamped three times. Soft grey Belgic ware platter with black surface. Level 2, Claudian. (cf. *Camulodunum Pl. XLVIII*, Nos 244 & 255).
9. III[. Hard grey Belgic ware. Level 2, Claudian. (cf. *Camulodunum Pl. XLVIII*, No. 252).

APPENDIX I

*Report on plain-weave cloth from Roman pit on site 15 Lombard Street.*

*by Mr. John Wild*

The find (plate 2) comprises a number of small fragments of cloth in an open plain-weave, now black in colour (charred). They amount to c. 14sq. cm. in all.

System (1) 10 threads per cm., fairly hard Z-spun.

System (2) 9—10 threads per cm., weaker Z-spun.

The yarns are of medium quality, but fairly irregularly spun. The cloth is unlikely to be a section of a garment, since the weave is too loose; perhaps sacking.