

A MEDIEVAL DEPOSIT FROM 244-246 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, SOUTHWARK (TQ3234 7967) LONDON

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SUMMARY:

Emergency excavations in the parish of St. George the Martyr, on the west side of Borough High Street, Southwark, just south of Lant Street (TQ 3234 7967) revealed below eighteenth- and nineteenth century levels what appeared to be a shallow, silt-filled ditch containing a medieval deposit, mainly of pottery which had been deposited at one moment in time, though its constituents may have been accumulated over a longer period. The date-range of the pottery depends on suggested associations at other sites of similar vessels and may tentatively be put inside the period 1275-1325, with the possibility—if the group consists of contemporaneous pieces—of a date centring on 1300 or just after.

THE SITE

The site (see Summary) lay under the rubble of recently demolished shops (see Fig. 1 and Maps A and B). The first area excavated was in the cellar of No. 240 Borough High Street and the second was between the cellars of Nos. 244 and 246 directly where there had been an alley which led from the street. The areas investigated had to be set back 7 ft. (c. 2.1 m.) from the street.

NATURE OF DEPOSITS UNDER NO. 240 AND NOS. 244 AND 246:

The deposits in the cellar of No. 240 are listed below in downward order:

- (1) Concrete cellar floor 6 in. (152 mm.) thick.
- (2) Decomposed floor joists with coal dust, china and an 1863 penny in poor condition.
- (3) Clean sandy gravel directly under (2).

The deposits found between the cellars of Nos. 244 and 246 Borough High Street were more complex. They were found under an alley flanked at cellar level by mixed-bond brick footings some 3 ft. 6 in. (c. 1.07 m.) apart. Dark grey silt (Fig. 1, Section C-D) lay between the walls. In this silt had been laid a sewer pipe some 11 in. (c. 280 mm.) in diameter. The trench for this was about 15 in. (c. 380 mm.) wide.

The north footings of No. 244 rested on decomposed sleeper beams resting on the grey silt (Fig. 1, Section A-B) which covered the medieval deposit. A clay pipe (Fig. 3) of c. 1710-40 was found embedded in one of the bricks of the footings.

The deposits and features below the footings are as follows:

- (1) The width and direction of the alley was the same as a sloping-sided "ditch" which had been cut into natural sandy, red-flecked gravels (similar to the Flood Plain Terrace gravels under No. 240). The base of the ditch was only about one foot (c. 300 mm.) above Ordnance Datum.
- (2) The *medieval deposit* was a small (c. 1 ft. or c. 300 mm. high) heap of light and dark sand. The deposit lay on the slope of the ditch and it was possible to suggest that the medieval deposit was the result of dumping from a cart carrying scourings from a ditch or drain. The medieval deposit was covered by the dark "silt" referred to earlier.

244 BOROUGH HIGH STREET SOUTHWARK TQ32347967

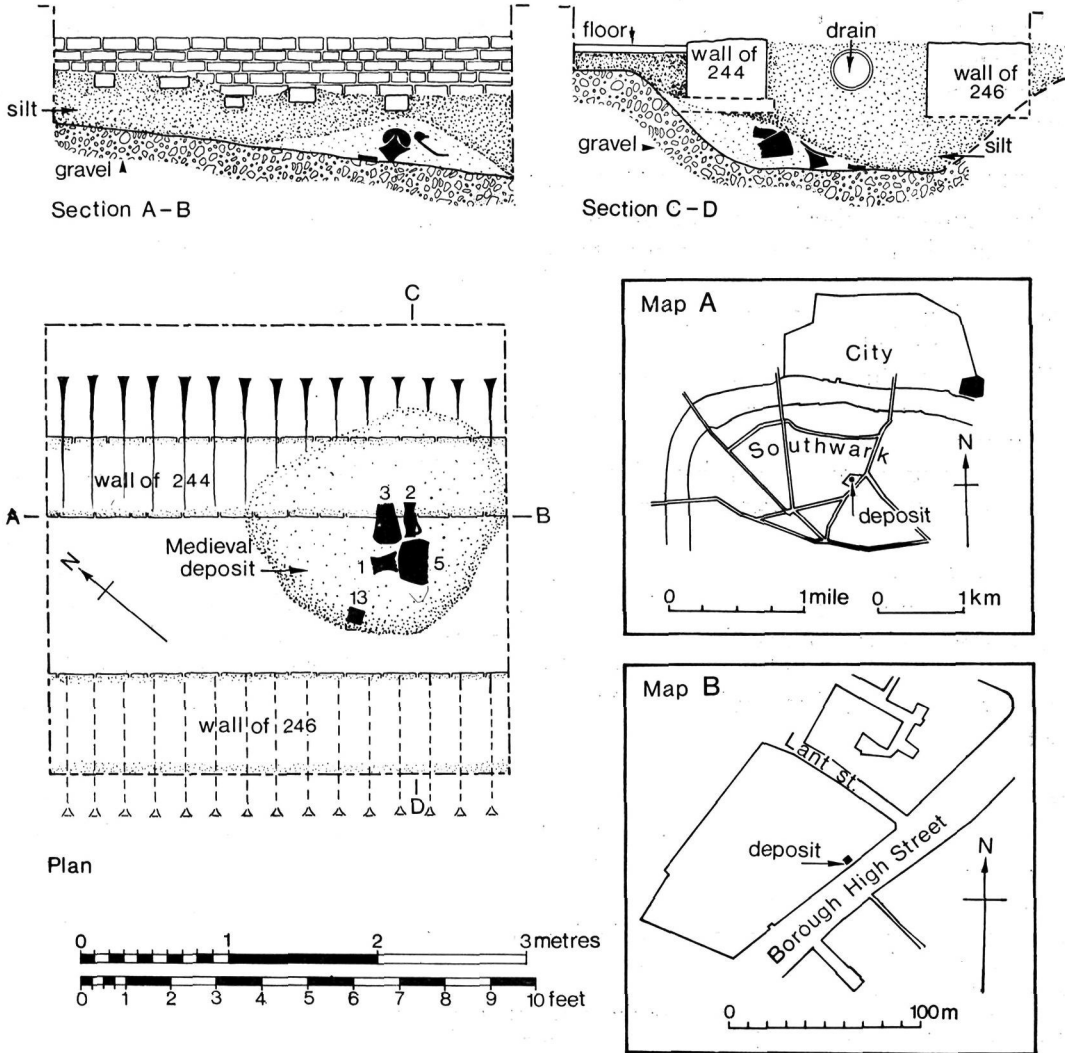


Fig. 1. Site plans and sections

INTERPRETATION OF THE MEDIEVAL DEPOSIT :

Before the contents of this small (c. 0.4 cu. ft. or 0.28 cu. m.) deposit are described in detail, it is necessary to define terms. An *association* of objects is said to have been ascertained if the excavator can show or prove that *the objects were deposited together at the same time*.

This deposit, perhaps a small cartload, does indeed contain "associated" objects in the sense used above. But this does not prove that the objects are synchronous. Thus the closely packed pots in the medieval deposit might have been got out of a ditch or well where they

had been dumped piecemeal over an indefinite period. The details below of the contents and nature of the medieval deposits and the stylistic datings of the pots may suggest the possibility that most of the vessels might be contemporary with each other.

Southwark, a relatively low-lying area, has been criss-crossed by various drains and ditches as excavations have shown. These may be exemplified by one located at Newcomen Street¹ and another at 207–211 Borough High Street.² Both ran east–west and were filled with medieval and later sherds. These ditches do not throw much light on the ditch which contained the deposit.

CONTENTS AND NATURE OF THE MEDIEVAL DEPOSIT :

The deposit contained an assemblage of medieval jugs and cooking pots (Figs. 2 and 3) which tended to cluster near the top of the sandy heap (see Fig. 1, Sections A–B and C–D for arrangement of larger pieces. The vessels were close and had collapsed inwards, the biconical “jug” (MD.2) and the figured “jug” (MD.3) showing most damage, being affected by weathering and spalling.

The “baluster jug” (MD.1) in the lowest part of the heap had its girth telescoped into its base and the fragments lying around it. On the outside of this vessel was a greenish organic encrustation.

The different environments that affected the surfaces of vessels MD.1 and MD.3 should be noted in discussions regarding the synchrony of the wares.

OTHER FINDS :

The remaining finds were isolated fragments from a total of five “jugs”, seven cooking pots, a bowl and an unidentified vessel, one floor tile, six pieces of roofing tile, two pieces of iron, bones of sheep and oxen and a small piece of human skull that seemed to be slightly mineralized. A detailed report by Prof. M. H. Day is with the bone in the Cuming Museum, Southwark.

THE FINDS (Figs. 2–3):

The abbreviation MD stands for medieval deposit. Objects are illustrated unless stated otherwise:

MD.1:

Baluster jug, lower part (the upper part of the drawing has been supplied from a complete example from St. Martin-le-Grand).³ It should be noted that the vessel has a slight foot as is the case with many London examples of balusters.

The fine fabric of the vessel has a grey core, the outer surface tending to be red and the interior surface brown. White slip streaked on the outside to about 2 in. (50 mm.) of the base, was partly covered with patchy olive green glaze terminating 5 in. (c. 127 mm.) from the base. There are greenish organic deposits on the outside, especially under the belly. (Cuming Mus. Nos. 64/8/15924 + 15930 + 15866 + 15953).

The time range for such vessels is c. 1280 to perhaps the decade after 1320.

This baluster jug would have held, on computation from the reconstruction, about 3.9 litres or 6.8 pints. Such a figure by itself is not of much use, but since potters could be extremely skilled at producing a vessel of determinate capacity, it is suggested that some attention be given to the capacities of complete vessels in museums. As a contribution to such a study, we include here a list of capacities (to the brim) of baluster vessels in London museums. Acknowledgements are due to the staffs of these museums for courteous facilities. A litre is 1.76 pints.

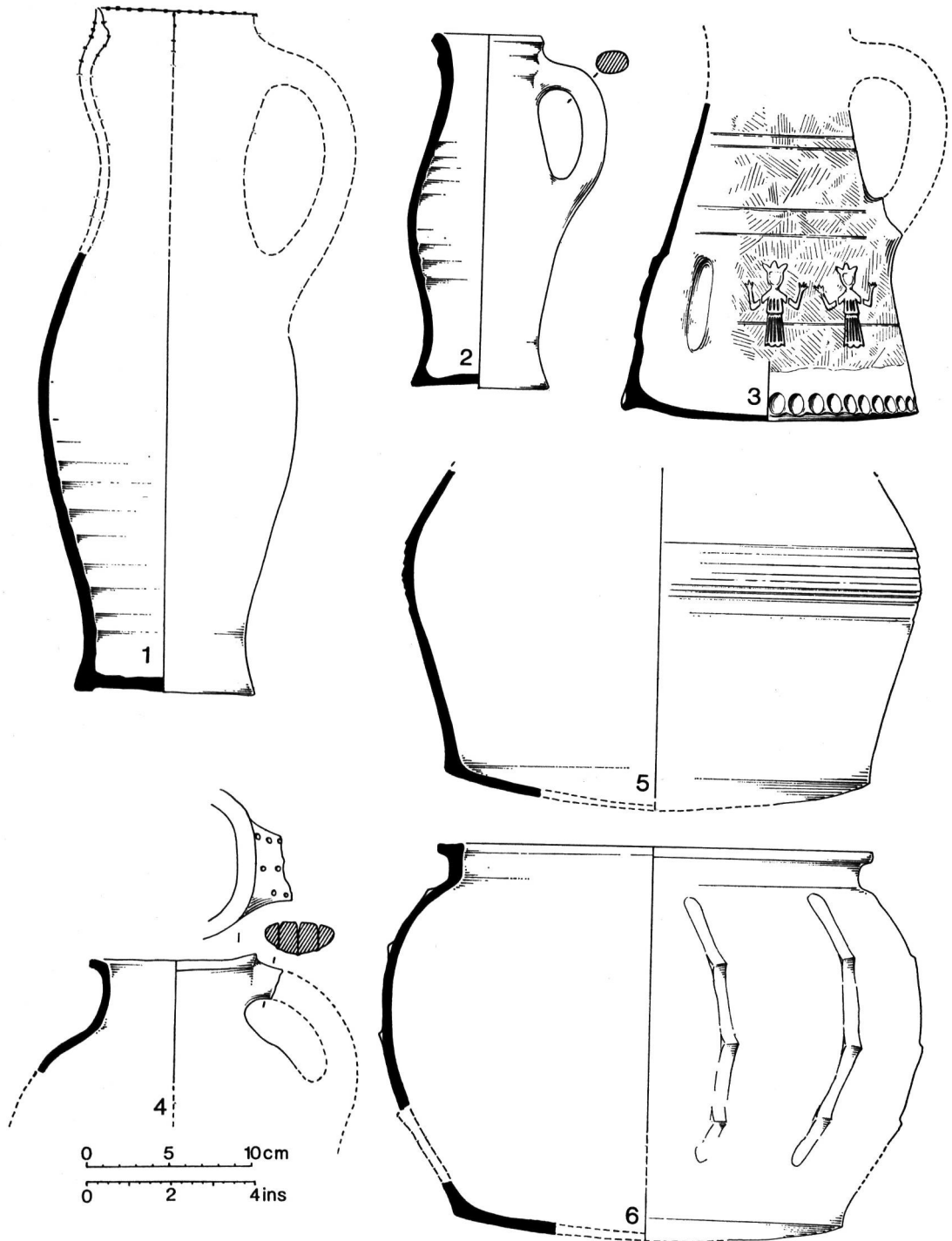


Fig. 2. 244 Borough High Street, Southwark; Medieval pottery ($\frac{1}{4}$)

BRITISH MUSEUM COLLECTIONS:

B8	3.25 litres	Unprovenanced
B8A	3.50 litres	Farringdon St. Railway Stn., 1875
B9	3.63 litres	Cannon Street

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM COLLECTION:

2016-1901	3.42 litres	Cannon Street ⁴
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GUILDHALL MUSEUM COLLECTIONS:

M.IX.1 (5568)	3.24 litres	City of London
M.IX.2 (5569)	3.20 litres	Bartholomew Lane
M.IX.10 (5577)	3.60 litres	Basinghall Street
M.IX.12 (5579)	3.62 litres	Old Broad Street
No number	3.28 litres	Unprovenanced
E.R. 417A	4.20 litres	Gresham Street, 1959
E.R. 146 (21186)	2.98 litres	Gateway House, 1954
E.R. 524	3.42 litres	Midland Bank, Gracechurch Street
1930.108 (12396)	3.51 litres	Blossoms Inn
M.IX.11 (5578)	3.00 litres	Basinghall Street

MD.2:

Biconical jug (the lip is conjectural). The fine reddish fabric has splashes of lead glaze appearing as brown on the upper front and on one side. The lower end of the rod handle was applied to a perforation in the body wall. A handle of a similar vessel, represented as MD.12A, with smaller cross-section (11 mm.) was also found in the deposit. (Cuming Mus. No. 64/8/15929).

The date range is inside the period c. 1200-1320.

The volume calculated by computer from the drawing is 0.75 litre or 1.32 pints (or 45.8 cu. in.). These figures should be allowed an error of $\pm 5\%$. These volumes come to two-thirds of an imperial quart. Since the "reputed quart", which is the size of a present-day wine bottle, comes to 46.24 cu. in., the capacity of this vessel, 45.8 cu. in., is worthy of comment. Before 1527 the Tower or London wine gallon was 172.8 cu. in., producing a small quart of 43.2 cu. in. The problem is discussed in some detail by B. E. Moody.⁵

Such figures are not of much value in isolation and more data should be accumulated before any conclusions are attempted about intended measures. The capacities of similar biconical vessels in the Guildhall Museum are listed below:

GUILDHALL MUSEUM COLLECTIONS:

E.R. III	1.60 litres	40-66 Queen Victoria Street
M.IX.22 (5589)	1.22 litres	Fore Street
M.IX.78 (5645)	0.85 litres	St. Martin-le-Grand
1930.109 (12397)	0.80 litres	Blossoms Inn Yard ⁶
M.IX.76 (5643)	0.40 litres	St. Martin-le-Grand
17,753	0.39 litres	
M.IX.79 (5646)	0.22 litres	Liverpool Street
M.IX.75 (5642)	0.19 litres	Steelyard

It would be a bold soul who can recognise the above figures as being proportions of the wine gallon of, say, the reign of Henry III. Further examples are needed for promoting the study of an important aspect of pottery description and classification, namely vessel capacity.

It should be mentioned that though the above examples are from the City, other biconical vessels of this kind have been found in the London region. R. E. M. Wheeler published one from the foreshore of "Old England" at Brentford.⁷

MD.3:

Figured jug: lower portion. The fine red fabric is streaked with white slip; the outside is covered by clear glaze with green specks and occasional reddish-brown patches. There are lightly-brushed diagonal grooves at various levels. Traces of the base of a handle can be discerned. There are finger impressions round the base.

There is a “sagging” bottom, and evidence of knife-trimming. Below two horizontal girth grooves are spaced eight embossed, crowned (or hooded?) human figures (see Fig. 3A). These blurred figures are all damaged. (Cuming Mus. No. 64/8/15868).

No precise analogy can be found for the decorations which should not be too readily described as referring to “praying” or “dancing” figures. Figures on jugs and similar vessels form a long-lived complex tradition with connections across both the Channel and the North Sea. If the uplifted arms were to be regarded as a significant feature, then the nearest analogies would be two figured jugs from Nottingham. One⁸ has s-shaped arms while the other (in the Champion Collection, our Fig. 3B) has paw-like hands uplifted and a head with trilobate top.⁹ Such figures are considered to date to *c.* 1300–50.

Other figures on pots found in this country (*e.g.* Audlem,¹⁰ Coventry,¹¹ Cardiff, Kingston-on-Thames¹²) show only partial similarities, though one would like to call attention to examples in Scandinavia¹³ where the tradition of such figures can be noted.

It is possible to broaden the discussion a little by bringing in examples of tiles with crowned figures having upraised arms. These might include a tile from Chinnor, Oxon.¹⁴ (our Fig. 3C) and “Penn”-type tiles¹⁵ such as that from Union Court, Broad Street, City (our Fig. 3D)¹⁶ and tiles from Thame Park Abbey, Oxon.¹⁷ (our Fig. 3E), Chastleton, Oxon., and others from Warwickshire (our Fig. 3F).¹⁸ Such floor tiles may not be much earlier than the last quarter of the thirteenth century, though the Penn tiles referred to might be of the first decades of the fourteenth century.

MD.4:

Jug neck, the fabric is a hard-fired grey. The handle is stabbed. (Cuming Mus. No. 64/9/15900).

The fabric and shape of this vessel (and MD.6) are similar to the wares found in the kiln dump at Titsey in Surrey.¹⁹ Future consideration of the date of this fragment will depend on the increasing amount of work now being done on the wares of Limpsfield.

The tentative date range is 1280–1320.

MD.5:

Cooking pot: fragments from base to shoulder. The slightly sandy fabric is red with a grey core. There is a white encrustation on the inside, while the outside is coated with soot. On the base are pot lid fractures that may have been caused by extremes of temperature. There is a pattern round the belly formed by five turns of a single incised line. (Cuming Mus. Nos. 64/8/15026 + 15814 + 15945 + 15936 + 15938 + 15824). Date *c.* 1300.

MD.6:

Decorated cooking pot: profile reconstructed from fragments. The fabric is a gritty grey-black. There is a flanged square-section rim and a “sagging” base. The applied vertical strips are trailed so thinly that the peakings are not joined. (Cuming Mus. No. 64/8/15908).

Suggested dates are: *c.* 1300 and late thirteenth century–mid-fourteenth century. The approximate capacity of the vessel would be about 14.25 litres (or about 25 pints).

MD.7:

Plain cooking pot: upper portion only. The rim is similar to MD.6; the fabric is slightly redder. (Cuming Mus. No. 64/8/15901).

Date *c.* 1300.

MD.8:

Plain cooking pot: upper portion only. The gritty fabric is dark grey. The rim is more rounded in section than the squared rim of MD.6 and MD.7. (Cuming Mus. No. 64/8/15897).

MD.9:

Plain cooking pot. The fabric is dark grey to black. There are traces of brownish glaze inside with sooty encrustations over it. (Cuming Mus. No. 64/8/15927).

MD.10:

Cooking pot: almost complete sagging base. The hard grey gritty fabric is reddish with a dark-grey to black core. Inside there is a pale faintly mottled olive-grey glaze. (Cuming Mus. No. 64/8/15928).

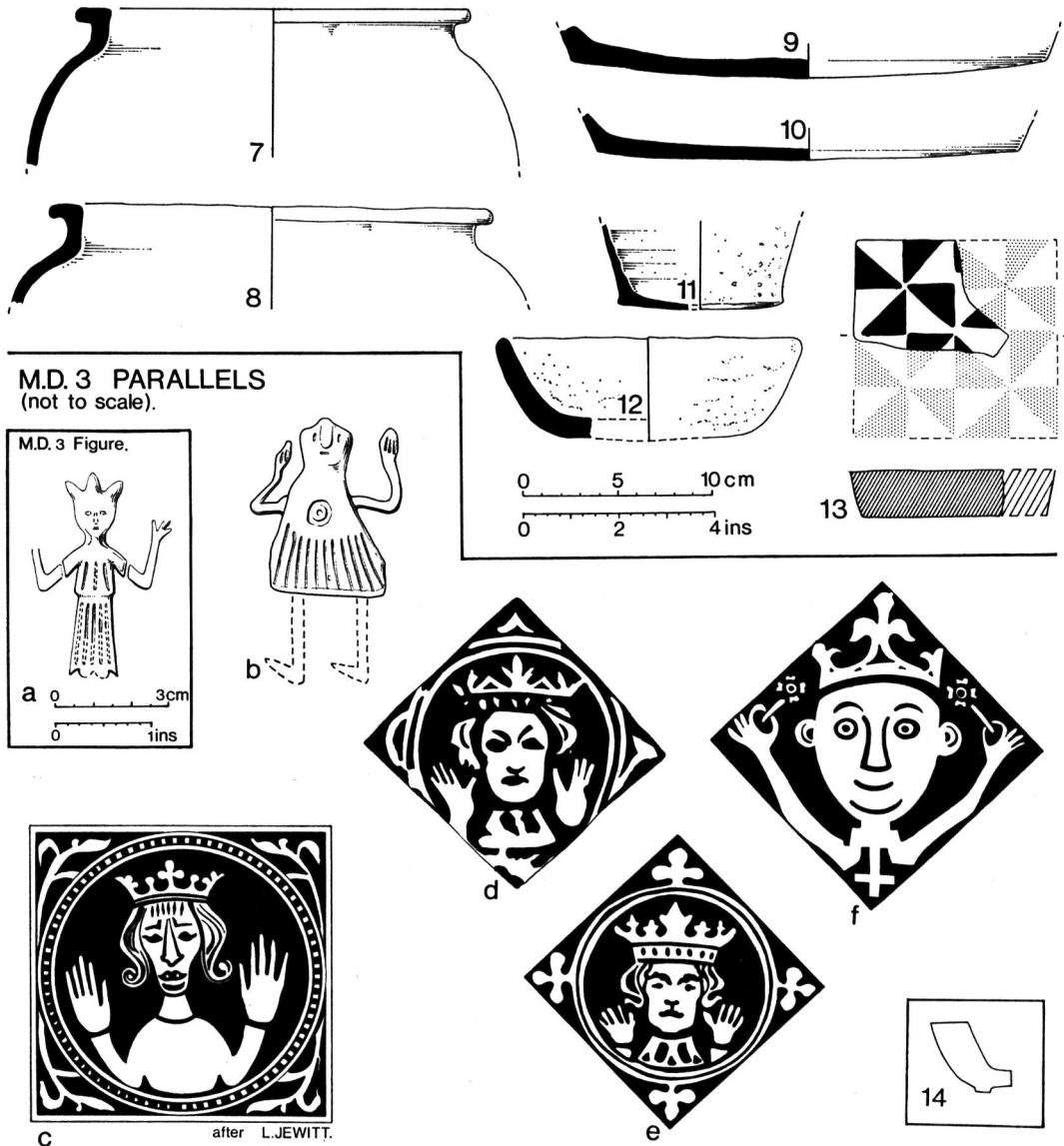


Fig. 3. 244 Borough High Street, Southwark; Medieval pottery and tile ($\frac{1}{2}$).

MD.II:

Cooking(?) pot: lower portion: flat base. The shell-gritted fabric is dark grey. (Cuming Mus. Nos. 64/8/15813+15889).

MD.I2:

Hemispherical vessel or bowl. The fabric is reddish grey. This rough vessel shows no evidence of being thrown on a wheel. (Cuming Mus. No. 64/8/15935).

The date is uncertain.

MD.I2A (not illustrated):

Rod handle in reddish fabric, similar to MD.2 but with smaller (c. 0.48 in. or 12 mm.) cross-section. (Cuming Mus. No. 64/8/15845).

MD.12B (not illustrated):

"Jug" fragment of body. The gritty white fabric is covered with clear green-mottled glaze on the outside.

SILT LAYER:

Jug, body fragment. The fine red fabric is covered with clear green-brown lead glaze over parallel vertical 0.25 in. (c. 6 mm.) wide bands of white slip 0.75 in. (c. 19 mm.) apart, appearing as yellow under the glaze.

SILT LAYER:

Cooking pot body fragment, soot on outside. Gritty red fabric.

DATING OF VESSELS:

The dating of the vessels hinges on associations that occur elsewhere,²⁰ which are linked with Saintonge polychrome jugs that have been found in deposits of c. 1270-1325 dated by castle-building activity. At Lesnes Abbey a baluster jug not unlike MD.I was associated with a Saintonge polychrome jug. A similar association occurred at the Ingledeu and Davenport site in Southwark.²¹

Cooking pots MD.5-7 can be compared on partial rim similarities with an example from Regis House, King William Street, City, found in a well in alleged association with a polychrome jug.²²

Coin evidence,²³ from hoards in jugs found many years ago should be treated with great caution, though a penny of Edward III (d. 1377) was found at Windsor Court, City, in good association with a baluster jug, a cooking pot (similar to MD.6) and a bowl similar to the small bowl MD.12.²⁴

TILES:

MD.13:

Decorated floor tile. Hard fabric, dark grey core, red nearer surface. There is the common heraldic gyronny design "printed" on top in white slip which appears yellow where covered with clear lead glaze. The base bears impression of sand and adhering grains of grit. The type is often found in City of London sites.²⁵

MD.13A-F (not illustrated):

Roofing tiles. Six pieces. Rough red fabric. The base bears sandy impressions. The approximate thickness of tiles is 0.625 in. (c. 16 mm.). Three of these pieces show evidence of round cone-shaped holes about 0.625 in. (c. 16 mm.) in diameter.

IRON FROM MEDIEVAL DEPOSIT:

Nail? Fragment of rod 2.38 in. (60 mm.) long with both ends broken 0.38 in. (c. 8 mm.) square section.

Strip? Fragment 2.1 in. (54 mm.) long with broken ends 0.98 in. (c. 25 mm.) wide and 0.1 in. (c. 2.5 mm.) thick.

CLAY TOBACCO PIPE (see 14, Fig. 3):

This was found embedded in a brick in the wall of No. 244 Borough High Street. Mr. Adrian Oswald suggests a date-range of c. 1710-40.

ANIMAL BONES:

The medieval deposit contained the lower right jaw of a sheep, with four teeth (P2 to M1) in place, and the left first phalanx (fully developed) of an ox (*Bos*).

Sheep and ox fragments from the silt layer are reported in detail in a report in the Cuming Museum. The silt layer, being any time between c. 1300 and the eighteenth century, cannot help date bones from it.

LOCATION OF FINDS:

The finds were deposited in the Cuming Museum, Southwark, under the registration number 64/8. A few pieces were stolen from warehouses in which they were stored. Should they turn up, the pieces will be coded as follows: LANT St T9/L2/PitH.

NOTES

- ¹ Kenyon, K. M., *Excavations in Southwark* being *Research Papers of the Surrey Archaeol. Soc.*, No. 5 (1959), pp. 21, 32-33, 93.
- ² Information from Harvey Sheldon
- ³ *Medieval Catalogue* of London Museum (1940), Fig. 69, No. 5, and p. 215.
- ⁴ Rackham, B., (ed. J. G. Hurst), *English Medieval Pottery* (London 1972), Pl. 16, and p. 12.
- ⁵ Moody, B. E., "The origin of the 'reputed quart' and other measures", *Glass Technology*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Sheffield, April 1960), pp. 55-68.
- ⁶ Dunning, G. C., "Medieval Finds in London", *Antiquaries J.*, XII (1932), p. 178 and Fig. 3.
- ⁷ Wheeler, R. E. M., *Antiquity*, III (1929), p. 29, Fig. 5.
- ⁸ Parker, A., "Nottingham Priory", *Trans. Thoroton Soc.*, XXXVI (1932), pp. 79-124, esp. Pl. V. Figs. 4 and 7, and p. 87.
- ⁹ Dunning, G. C., *A medieval jug found in London, decorated with human and animal figures* (Offprint of paper presented to C. F. A. Schaeffer, Paris 1971).
- ¹⁰ Webster G. and Dunning, G. C., "A medieval pottery kiln at Audlem, Cheshire", *Medieval Archaeol.*, IV (1960), pp. 109-125, esp. Fig. 40, No. 6, and p. 113.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, Figs. 45-46, pp. 121, 122.
- ¹² Information from Marion Smith, Kingston Museum.
- ¹³ Barton, K. J., "Anthropomorphic decoration on Medieval jugs: some regional variations, with special reference to Swedish examples", *Särtryck ur Res Medievaes*, pp. 43-52. Cf. Barton, K. J., "Some examples of Medieval glazed earthenware in Sweden", *Antikvariskt Arkiv*, 33 (1968), Pl. I (Nos. 12-14), p. 41 and p. 37.
- ¹⁴ *Journal Brit. Archaeol. Assoc.*, VIII (1852), Pl. 25, opp. p. 151.
- ¹⁵ Hohler, C., "Medieval Paving Tiles in Buckinghamshire", *Records of Buckinghamshire*, XIV (1941-42) pp. 1-49, and pp. 99-132, esp. Tile P18, and pp. 30 and 106.
- ¹⁶ *Guildhall Museum Catalogue* (1908), No. 61, p. 241 (Accession No. 6847).
- ¹⁷ Haberly, L., *Medieval English Pavingtiles* (1937), Pl. CXXI, p. 189.
- ¹⁸ Chatwin, P. B., "The Medieval patterned tiles of Warwickshire", *Trans. Birmingham Archaeol. Soc.*, LX (for 1936), Fig. 20(15).
- ¹⁹ Tester, P. J., and Caiger, J. E. L., "Medieval buildings in the Joyden's Wood Square Earthwork", *Archaeologia Cantiana*, Vol. LXXII for 1958 (1959), pp. 18-40 (Pottery report by G. C. Dunning, pp. 31-39). "Limpsfield" pottery has been found in great quantities at Eynsford Castle. Cf. G. Leveson-Gower, "On a Roman Villa discovered at Titsey", *Surrey Archaeol. Coll.*, IV (1869) pp. 235-36n. This is one of the earliest references which should be supplemented by more recent ones like: Prendergast, Martin D., *The coarse-ware pottery of medieval Limpsfield* (Jan. 1973).
- ²⁰ Dunning, G. C., "A group of English and imported medieval pottery from Lesnes Abbey, Kent . . ." *Antiquaries J.*, XLI (1961), pp. 1-12, esp. 4-5 and Figs. 1 and 4.
- ²¹ Kenyon (as Note 1), Fig. 27 and pp. 88-92 (Pottery report by G. C. Dunning).
- ²² Fox, C. F., Radford, C. A. R., and (Pottery) Dunning, G. C., "Kidwelly Castle, Carmarthenshire: including a survey of the Polychrome Pottery found there and elsewhere in Britain", *Archaeologia*, LXXXIII (1933), pp. 93-138, esp. Fig. 14C on p. 129, and p. 130.
- ²³ Thorn J. C. "Two Medieval pots from Friday Street", *The London Archaeologist*, Vol. 2, Pt. 3 (Summer 1973), pp. 62-63.
- ²⁴ Grimes, W. F., in Bruce-Mitford R. (ed.) *Recent Archaeological Excavations in Britain* (London 1956), Pl. XX(a) and p. 119.
- ²⁵ Ponsoby (Lord) and Ponsoby, M., "Monastic paving tiles", *Sussex Archaeol. Coll.*, LXXV (1934), Pl. VI, No. 37, and p. 60.

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