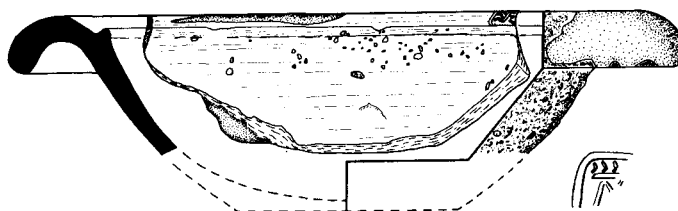


A GREEN GLAZED ROMAN MORTARIUM FROM THE CITY OF LONDON

JOHN MALONEY

Excavation in the basement of 2-3, Lombard Court, Gracechurch Street during February-April, 1976, located two early medieval pits which had been cut through 1st—early 2nd century Roman levels and the underlying brickearth subsoil into the gravels below. The borehole record indicates that there are other large pits over much of the rest of the site (0.22 hectares), the purpose of which is unknown. However, it seems that the two pits that were investigated were not rubbish pits, because the backfill material closely resembled the Roman made ground through which the pits were cut, but that they were for the extraction of brickearth and gravel.



GREEN GLAZED ROMAN MORTARIUM (A) AND STAMP (B)

The pit at the northern end of the basement area was 6.05 deep (the bottom was at 8.15m above O.D. approximately) and at least 7.00m in diameter, and amongst the 12th century and residual Roman pottery recovered was found a substantial fragment of a mortarium of Brockley Hill form and fabric¹ having a fragmentary potter's stamp which was probably that of Marinus², and dating to the late 1st—early 2nd century. The sherd has green glaze (indicated by stippling) on the upper surface of the rim and on part of the fractured edge of the body, and its external surface is covered by glaze containing a high proportion of impurities. The core instead of being the typical oxidised buff colour is black for the most part and has laminated close to the internal surface. On that part of the fractured edge where the green glaze occurs, the glaze has found its way into the fabric via the laminated core.

The 'reduced' core indicates that the sherd has been refired, and the deposit of glaze on the fractured edge shows that the glaze was deposited after the mortarium had been broken.

Clive Orton and Christopher Green (Dept. of Urban Archaeology, Museum of London) are of the opinion that the sherd has been reused in the production of green glazed pottery, the sherd being seated on its rim (in which position it is quite stable) with the internal surface shielded — hence the glaze on the rim is untainted by impurities. Conversely, the external surface is covered by a rough glaze and would evidently have been more directly involved in the process of firing. If this sherd has been used as kiln furniture it is unlikely to be far removed from the kiln, and it therefore raises an interesting point as to the location of the kiln site. Forthcoming contractors' excavations on the Lombard Court site will be observed by the author and the green glaze on the mortarium sherd will be scientifically analysed for comparison with similar Roman and medieval glazes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

1. S.A. Castle 'Roman pottery from Brockley Hill, Middlesex, 1966 and 1972 — 4' *Trans. London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.* 27 (1976) 214 Fig. 6 MS 41.
2. S.S. Frere *Verulamium Excavations I* (Oxford 1972) 13. Rep. Res. Com. Soc. Antiq. No. 28, 373.