

# EXCAVATIONS AT 11 IRONMONGER LANE, LONDON EC4

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## SUMMARY

*In 1995 excavation and recording took place in the basement of 11 Ironmonger Lane, London, EC4, on the site of a previously excavated Roman town house dating to the 3rd century AD. A number of features of both Roman and medieval date were revealed, including a Roman quarry pit which contained a large and important group of pottery dated to the mid or later 2nd century; a wall from the Roman town house; a later 4th-century Roman building, probably of timber; and two medieval rubbish pits. The results of this work are considered in relation to those of the earlier 1949 and 1983 excavations.*

## INTRODUCTION (Figs 1, 2)

In the summer of 1995 archaeologists from the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) undertook an archaeological watching brief and excavation at 11 Ironmonger Lane, City of London, EC4 (TQ 3253 8126; Museum of London Site Code IRL95). The site is bounded by Gresham Street to the north, Old Jewry to the east, Cheapside to the south and Ironmonger Lane itself to the west (Fig 2). It is currently occupied by an office building which is largely of modern date but has retained an 18th-century frontage. The archaeological work was carried out in the base of a new lift shaft excavated in the basement during the refurbishment of the building. The area available for excavation was thus fairly small: 5m by 3m.

In 1949 an archaeological excavation by Adrian Oswald revealed the remains of a Roman town house, medieval buildings, and medieval burials (Guildhall Museum site 219). Parts of the mosaic flooring of the Roman town house were

also discovered and, in one place, preserved *in situ* for display in the basement. In 1983 the preserved portion of the mosaic was lifted for conservation and the stratigraphy beneath it was excavated by Patrick Allen (Museum of London Site Code BOA83) revealing a series of earlier metalled surfaces. These two excavations have been published (Dawe & Oswald 1952; Shepherd 1987, 34–8), and the results of both are briefly summarised below.

## GEOLOGY

The geology and topography of the site and surrounding area have already been examined and published in some detail by Shepherd (1987, 16–23). The site overlies London Clay capped by river terrace gravels which, when untruncated, are typically found at a height of c.9.5m OD. However, on most parts of the site the gravels have been truncated, c.8.8m OD being the lowest depth recorded during the 1995 excavation. The site occupies a relatively flat, low lying, natural terrace to the north of the River Thames. A tributary of the River Walbrook perhaps flowed close to the southern boundary of the site in the Roman period; traces of a possible water course were found there during the 1949 excavations (Dawe & Oswald 1952, 114).

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following historical information is taken from Dawe & Oswald (1952, 15–108) and Keene & Harding (1990, 134–58). From the early part of the 12th century the land between the

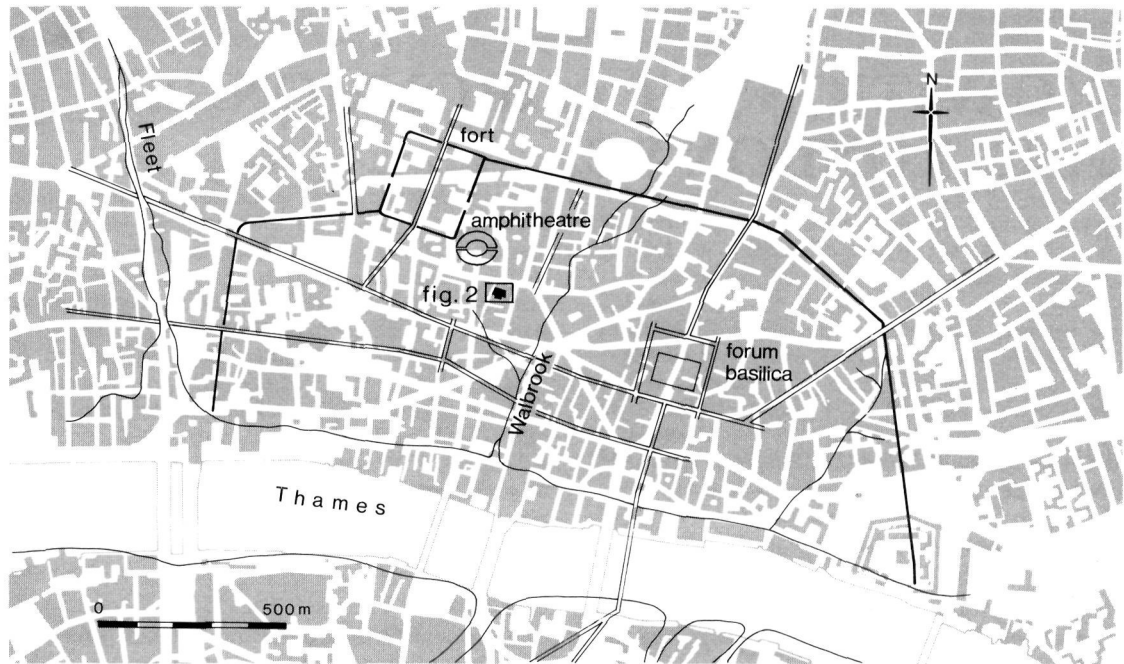


Fig 1. Plan of central London showing the location of the site within the Roman city

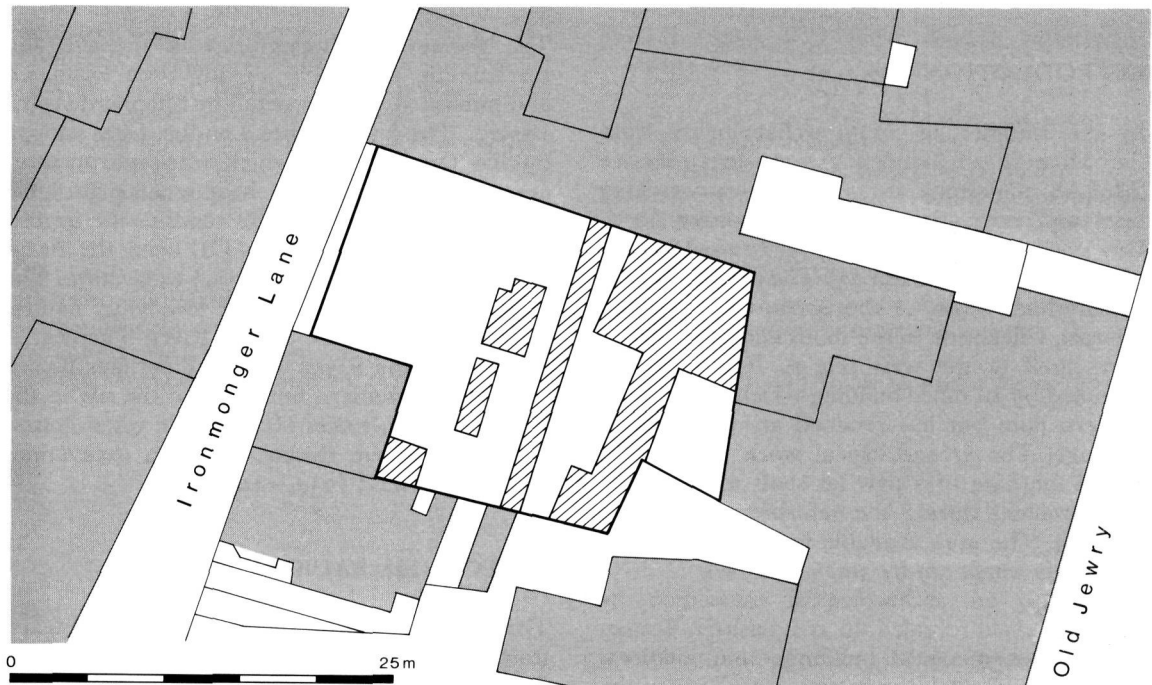


Fig 2. Location map of site in relation to the modern streets and showing areas excavated from 1949 onwards

northern parts of Ironmonger Lane and Old Jewry, bordered to the south by the churchyards of St Martin Pomeroy and St Olave Old Jewry, was occupied by town houses and land belonging to a succession of wealthy Jews in the parish of St Martin. The earliest documentary reference to Jews in the vicinity of the site comes from a land schedule dated to c.1130. It is possible that at this date the site was part of the property of a Jew called Lusbert or, more likely, shared its eastern boundary with his property. By 1275 the site was occupied by the house and gardens of Hagin the Jew who served as arch-presbyter of all the Jews in England. The first reference to the church of St Olave is in 1181; the smaller church of St Martin Pomeroy is referred to in 1175 when it was given to the prior and convent of St Bartholomew, Smithfield. The northern parts of the churchyards of both of these churches extended up to the southern part of the site. The first record of the name Ironmonger Lane occurs in 1215, but archaeologically the lane is inferred to have existed by c.1050 (Schofield *et al* 1990, 152).

After the expulsion of the Jews in 1290 their properties between Old Jewry and Ironmonger Lane were seized by the Crown and granted to a number of individuals before being given as a whole to Piers Gaveston, Earl of Cornwall, becoming known as the 'wardrobe of the Earl of Cornwall' and used by him as a town depot or store. The Earl was executed in 1312, and his widow Margaret, later wife of the Earl of Gloucester, retained the wardrobe until 1342. On her death Edward, the Black Prince, acquired the property which duly became part of the Prince's wardrobe. The buildings on the site and surrounding it may have been extensively rebuilt at this stage. The prince may have used this as his principal town house from 1359 onwards. After the Black Prince's death in 1376 the wardrobe passed to his widow Joan, and subsequently for life to Richard II's queen, Anne, who died in 1394.

The property continued to be called the 'Prince's Wardrobe' for another century and a half, but it was now used in part as a town house for the monarch's more important servants. By 1404 parts of it were used by the Mercers' Company for meetings. In 1549 the buildings, still referred to as the Prince's Wardrobe, were sold to Sir Anthony Cope. By 1554 the buildings were sold to Hugh Pope, who ran a tavern there, possibly on the site itself, before they were

demolished in the 1560s to make way for new town houses. These houses, together with the churches of St Martin and St Olave, were destroyed by the Great Fire of 1666.

In 1668–9 a house with three storeys and a cellar was built at 11 Ironmonger Lane by John Davenport. This was demolished in 1768 and replaced by a new house built by Thomas Fletcher. During the 1830s the property was bought by Samuel Mullen and became Mullen's Hotel. When this venture failed the building was converted to offices in 1898 and renamed Selborne House. In October 1944 the rear of the property was destroyed by a flying bomb, though the 18th-century frontage survived. It was the rebuilding of the rear of the property and the extension of its basement in 1949 that gave archaeologists an opportunity to examine the earlier history of the site.

### THE 1949 EXCAVATION (Fig 3)

This excavation appears to have been conducted largely as a watching brief on work undertaken by contractors on the basements of the offices destroyed in the war, though parts of the work did amount to controlled archaeological excavation. The published report of the excavation (Dawe & Oswald 1952, 111–29) is summarised here.

#### The new basement

During the ground reduction by contractors for a new basement on the eastern half of the site, chalk walls with vaulted arch foundations were found, along with disturbed human burials. The arched foundations descended to a depth of more than 14ft (4.25m) below street level.

#### Foundation trenches

Three north–south internal wall foundation trenches were then excavated by contractors.

#### Trench 1

Trench 1 was excavated in the already basemented area to the west. Immediately beneath the slab was Roman stratigraphy. The earliest

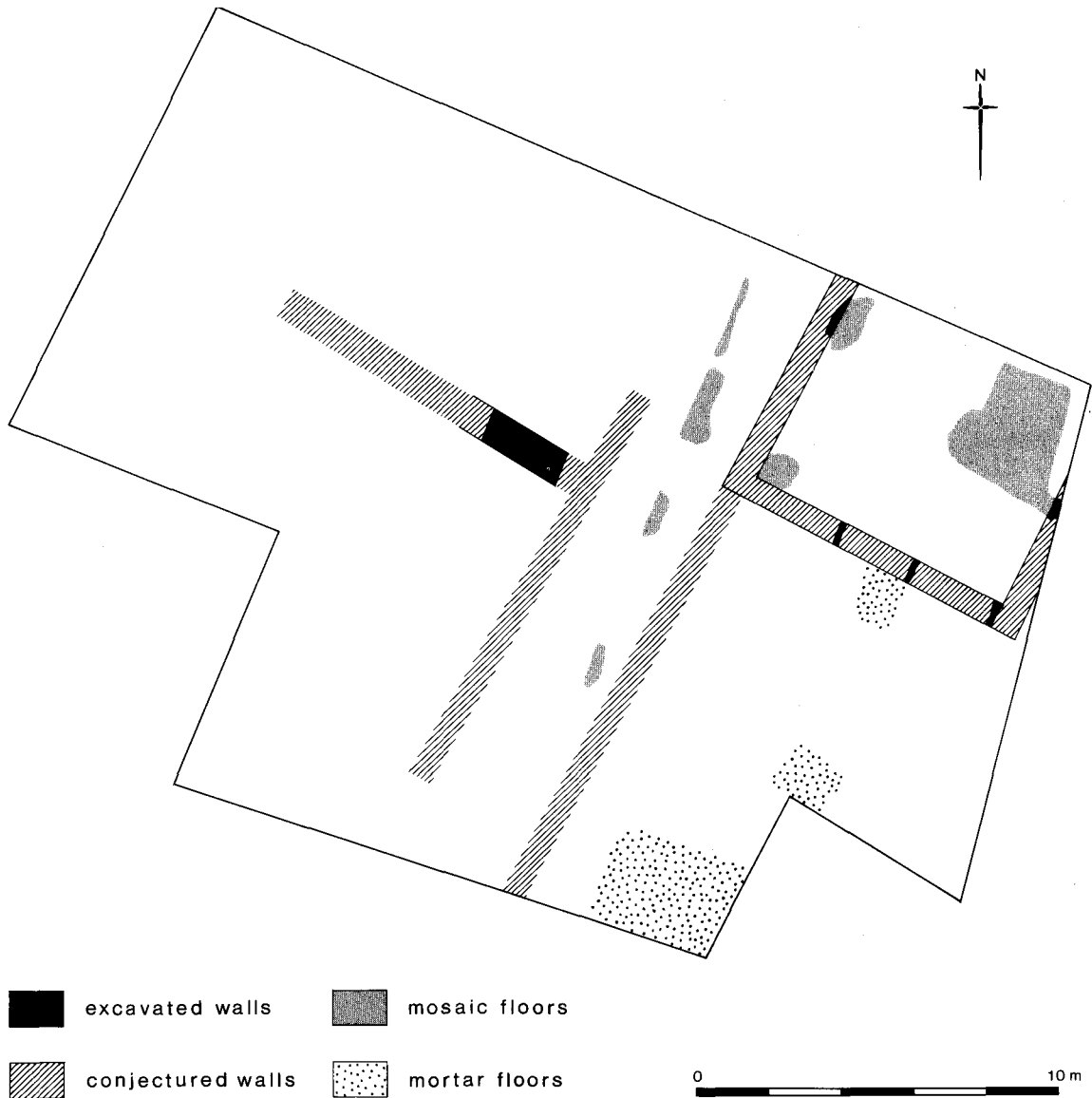


Fig 3. The structural remains of the 3rd-century town house as found in 1949, 1983 and 1995

features recorded were a number of shallow pits cutting the natural gravels at *c.*9.4m OD. These were sealed by grey silt and partially by a series of thin charcoal layers, one of which to the south contained pottery dated to AD 40–60. These layers were in turn cut by a large pit which contained Roman Castor ware dated to the first half of the 3rd century. Above this were two phases of flooring. The Castor ware pit was sealed by a pink mortar floor which extended

over much of the trench and was covered in part by the second floor, a rough tessellated pavement composed of red and grey *tesserae* at approximately 10m OD. The mortar floor was cut by modern walls and medieval burials.

#### Trench 2

This was dug in the previously unbasemented area to the east of Trench 1 after the initial

basement excavation described above, and the area of excavation was extended for more careful examination by the archaeologists. The natural gravels were sealed by a deposit of grey soil overlaid by a rammed gravel surface which produced pottery with a date range of AD 120–160. This was sealed by a further deposit of grey soil above which was laid a mosaic floor at c.10m OD. The floor, part of which still survives *in situ*, is in four colours (red, yellow, blue and white) in a geometric design consisting of flowers within roundels contained by lozenges. The mosaic was dated to later than c.AD 220 by Adrian Oswald on the basis of its probable contemporaneity with either of the two floor levels which sealed the Castor ware pit found in Trench 1. Portions of the ragstone retaining wall for the mosaic were also found, although heavily robbed. In the southern part of this trench were further Roman mortar floors related to the mosaic floor. They were greatly disturbed by medieval burials and wall foundations. The medieval walls included a large chalk foundation forming part of the eastern boundary wall of the site which featured a number of post-medieval brick additions. The vaulted arch foundations formed part of the south-east corner of the site, were probably of 14th-century or later date and possibly part of a 15th-century aisle added to the church of St Olave. Two further fragments of the north–south aligned medieval chalk foundations were found in the area of the preserved mosaic. These were probably later than 1300, in that one wall included fragments of 14th-century pottery in its matrix and sealed a pit which contained a pottery jug of late 13th or early 14th-century date. They were almost certainly part of the Earl of Cornwall's or Prince's wardrobe rather than any earlier medieval house.

### Trench 3

Trench 3, to the east of Trenches 1 and 2, produced a quantity of 1st and 2nd-century pottery, but no Roman features were recorded.

### Underpinning work

To the west, a series of underpinning holes was dug by the contractor. The southernmost of these produced late Roman pottery in a layer of black silt that appeared to have been part of a stream bed. A number of fragments of glass mosaic,

considered by Oswald to be of possible medieval date, were found in the other underpinning pits, the excavation of which does not appear to have been closely monitored by the archaeologists.

### THE 1983 EXCAVATION (Fig 3)

By 1983 the condition of the preserved portion of the mosaic floor had deteriorated to such an extent that it was decided to lift the mosaic and re-lay it on concrete above the underlying river terrace gravels. This provided an opportunity to excavate the stratigraphy beneath the floor, though the area available, 1.5m by 2m, was limited. The following section summarises the published account of this work (Shepherd 1987, 34–8).

Natural gravels were recorded between 9.15m and 9.17m OD, a slightly truncated level in view of the values recorded elsewhere on the site. These were cut by a probable quarry pit which was only partially excavated and not bottomed.

Above the quarry pit was a layer of grey pebbly sand and silt with compact gravel lenses at its base which appeared to represent a disturbed external surface. This surface was later repaired with a less extensive layer of compact orange gravel at 9.53m OD. Above this was a rubbish deposit consisting of dark grey silt and charcoal. This was sealed by another gravel layer sloping down to the south, followed by a layer of redeposited compact brickearth forming a surface with a level of 9.60m–9.63m OD. Replacing this was a thin compact layer of dark brown gravel above a probable bedding layer of tan brickearth. This surface lay at between 9.67m and 9.75m OD. These roughly metallated external surfaces were dated by pottery to the late 1st and early 2nd centuries.

A thick layer of humic silt accumulated above the latest surface, possibly suggesting a period of disuse. On this was laid a compact buff-yellow pebbly concrete slab 40–100mm thick to form the bedding for the mosaic described above. The *tesserae* were set in a thin layer of *opus signinum* which was attached to the underlying bed by a thin layer of yellow mortar. The mosaic was subsequently relaid close to its original level.

### THE 1995 EXCAVATION (Figs 3–9)

#### Phase 1: Open Area 1

The earliest deposits recorded were the naturally deposited river terrace gravels. Along the western

and northern edges of the trench these survived to a maximum level of  $\approx 9.4\text{m OD}$ , which may represent their largely untruncated surface, though in much of the trench they were truncated down to a level of  $\approx 8.8\text{m OD}$ .

### Phase 2: Open Area 1 (Figs 4, 9)

The natural sands and gravels were truncated by the northern end of a large quarry pit which occupied virtually the entire base of the trench. The eastern, western, and northern edges of this feature were nearly vertical and roughly coincided with the edges of the excavation, the southern edge lying beyond the limit of excavation. The pit had a flat base at  $\approx 8.8\text{m OD}$ . It was backfilled to a maximum level of  $\approx 10\text{m OD}$  with a dark grey brown sandy silt which contained frequent lenses of sand, gravel, brickearth, burnt clay, lumps of mortar and *opus signinum*, with occasional fragments of very decayed timber. There was

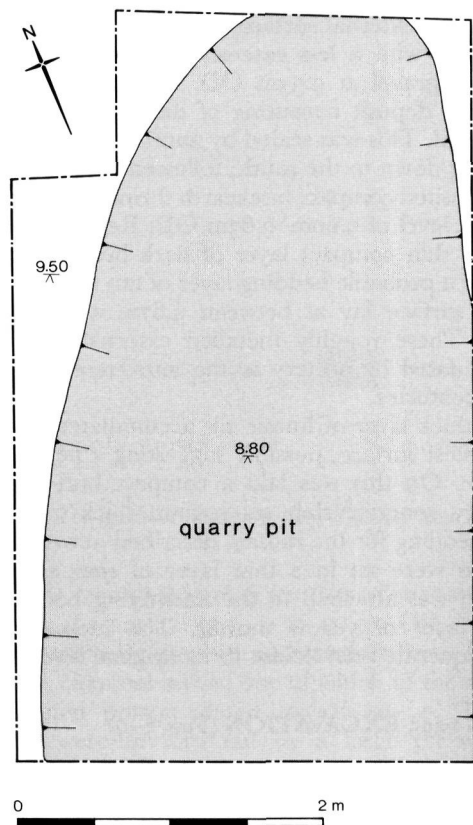


Fig 4. Phase 2

little slumping of the edges and the fill was very mixed, suggesting that the pit had been backfilled fairly rapidly.

The backfill produced a large amount of domestic refuse and demolition rubble. This contained a large and important group of pottery dated to AD 140–180, composed of 659 sherds which contained a large residual element and may in fact have been no later than AD 160. This assemblage is being published in detail elsewhere (Symonds in prep). The more noteworthy vessels in the group include nine pieces of stamped samian ware, one with a lead rivet and a graffito on samian ware, and three stamps on mortaria. The samian also includes two unusual versions of Dr15/17 plates from La Graufesenque and Montans, both rarely found in Britain. Vessels of Verulamium Region ware included an unusually shaped top of a form 1J amphorae, a miniature dolium, and a funnel. There was a tripod bowl in Local Mica-dusted ware which included two of the legs. This context also produced a fragment of a bone hairpin and a complete bone needle with a wide spatulate head pierced with a single circular hole. The circular hole in the head of the latter bone object is unusual for the Roman period; Roman needles more usually have oblong or figure-of-eight eyes. Six fragments of Roman glass were also recovered, including a natural greenish-blue pillar moulded bowl, dated to the late 1st or 2nd century and a fragment of the base of a natural greenish-blue bottle with concentric moulding of a similar date (Wardle 1995). The building material assemblage dates from the 1st through to the early 3rd century. It includes fragments of flue tile from a hypocaust heating system, one of which was decorated with a knife scored lattice and was probably of 1st-century date. One brick bears a knife-cut cross-shaped tally mark. A number of fragments of painted wall plaster included a very unusually decorated piece with slightly raised white streaks above a grey background, possibly an attempt to imitate marble. The assemblage also included what was probably part of a lamp chimney made of pottery rather than tile fabric, circular with vents cut into the side. Finally from this context was one small fragment of slate, probably for roofing. Slate was a rare building material in Roman London, and generally only appears at the very end of the Roman occupation (Betts 1995). No metal objects were recovered from this context, with the exception of the lead rivet noted above,

or from any of the later contexts, despite the occasional use of a metal detector during the excavation.

All this suggests that the pit was dug for the extraction of sand and gravel for a nearby building project, and was then used for the disposal of building material and other rubbish from the demolition of a nearby building or buildings. The presence of burnt clay, timber and wall plaster, in the fill of the pit may suggest the destruction of a number of fairly substantial clay and timber structures in the mid 2nd century or slightly later.

### Phase 3: Open Area 1 (Figs 5, 9)

The quarry pit was sealed by two mid-brown silt layers which may have been imported to the site to level up the ground surface to *c.*10.5m OD in preparation for the construction of a wall in Phase 3a, but are more likely to represent a period of disuse or garden activity in the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries. The layers may be the equivalent of the dark grey-brown humic silt

identified immediately below the mosaic floor in 1983. Both had slumped into the earlier quarry pit. The lowest produced a medium sized group of 2nd-century pottery dated AD 120–200, with some attributes in common with the group produced by the Phase 2 quarry. The same layer also produced some daub, probably from a clay and timber building. The upper layer contained a medium sized group of 3rd-century pottery dated AD 180–300, which included a higher proportion of Central Gaulish samian ware and some Thameside Kent (Black-burnished ware) (Symonds & Stephenson 1995). It also produced two fragments of Roman glass: a natural greenish-blue Aryballos handle and body of late 1st or 2nd-century date. The finds assemblage also included a bone needle with a flat, squared head and an elongated figure-of-eight eye made by drilling two adjacent circular holes; and a bone hairpin with a conical head and the point missing. The building material, of 1st to mid 2nd-century types, included seven *tesserae*, one fragment of flue tile with a deep wavy combing made with a wide comb, and one small fragment of plain white wall plaster.

The upper of these two layers was cut by a small pit, with two fills. The upper fill produced a small quantity of residual pottery dated AD 50–100.

### Phase 3a: Building 1 (Figs 5, 6, 9)

The small pit of Phase 3 was cut by a substantial east–west aligned wall foundation, *c.*1m wide and 1.2m deep, which extended beyond the eastern limit of excavation and was truncated by the foundations of the basement wall at the western limit of excavation. The wall foundation was composed of loose mortar and flint nodules with some ragstone. Little of the wall survived above the level of the foundations, only a single course of unworked ragstone fragments set in a hard mortar being found. This included two reused brick floor tiles in an unusual laminated variant of fabric type 2459A at *c.*10.5m OD. No floor surfaces associated with the wall on either side survived truncation by a number of cut features described in Phase 4. The wall foundation produced a small amount of residual pottery dated AD 70–100. Given the date of the pottery group from the upper layer in Phase 3, this foundation can have been constructed no earlier than the 3rd century. It was almost certainly part

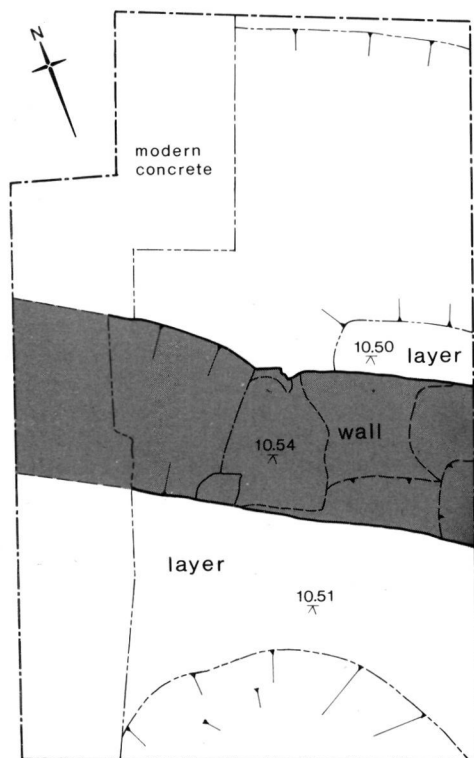


Fig 5. Phases 3 and 3a



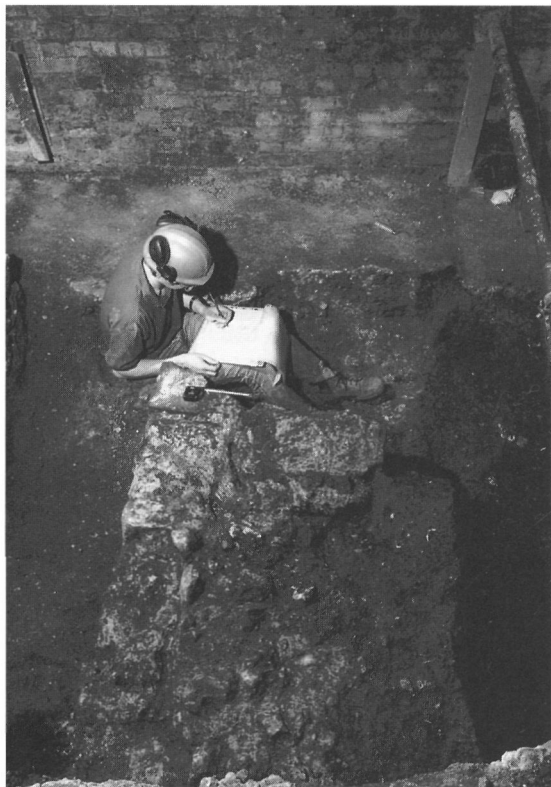


Fig 6. The wall of the Roman town house under excavation in 1995

of the Roman town house, and was sufficiently large to be a load-bearing wall.

#### Phase 4: Open Area 2

Against the north face of the wall was a north-south robber trench which, though heavily truncated, suggested that a later, much smaller, wall had been removed and quarried for building material. The fill of this trench produced a small quantity of residual pottery dated AD 50–100. The foundations of the wall were then partially robbed by a similar, undated, trench at the western limit of excavation which truncated the first robber trench.

These two trenches were truncated by a large rectangular pit. The fill of this produced pottery dated AD 250–400. A similar pit partially truncated the wall to the east and the fill of this produced a small amount of pottery dated AD 270–400. Both features were then cut by a third rectangular pit to the south of the wall. The fill

of this was dated to AD 350–400 and produced a fragment of Roman glass: the brown rim of a jar of 1st or 2nd-century date. The purpose of these pits is uncertain, but as in each case the amount of pottery and building material recovered was small it is unlikely they were used for rubbish disposal.

Both the pits and the robber trenches represent the demolition and disuse of the Phase 3a wall, and possibly of the town house as a whole, in the 4th century. The pottery from the latest pit fill suggests that this occurred in the second half of the 4th century rather than earlier.

#### Phase 5: Building 2 (Figs 7, 9)

The latest Phase 4 pit was cut by a posthole, which was in turn sealed by a compact sandy-mortar silt floor at 10.6m OD. This floor partially sealed the Phase 3a wall and was probably internal. The fill of the posthole produced a small amount of pottery dated AD 350–400. The

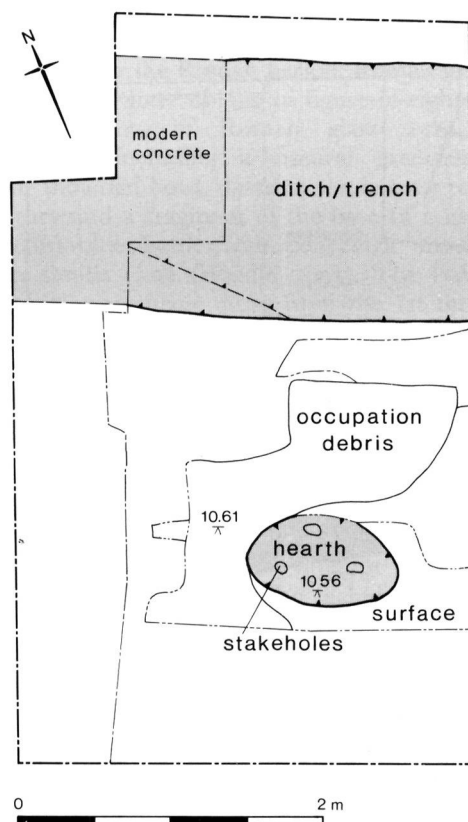


Fig 7. Phase 5



floor surface produced three sherds of Roman pottery dated AD 120–250 and two sherds of medieval pottery dated 1150–1250. The medieval pottery is perhaps intrusive: the base of a medieval rubbish pit (Phase 7) was positioned directly above this surface and material from it may have contaminated the earlier context. The Roman pottery is probably residual.

The floor was stratigraphically contemporary with a make-up layer which produced pottery dated AD 50–400 and with a second surface of compact gravel which also partially sealed the Phase 3a wall and extended to the north. This surface was also at approximately 10.6m OD and may have been an external yard surface.

Both surfaces were cut by postholes, one of which produced residual pottery dated AD 120–250 from the fill. Both postholes and surfaces were sealed by a thin layer of occupation debris which contained pottery dated AD 240–400 and was sealed by a patch of silty ash which may represent the remains of a short-lived hearth. Three stakeholes were identified as cutting it, perhaps for stakes to hold a cooking pot over the fire. A length of badly decayed timber was also identified lying above the conjectured hearth, pottery associated with which was dated to AD 250–400.

To the north the gravel surface was cut by an east–west aligned ditch or trench which followed the line of the Phase 3a wall and similarly extended beyond the eastern limit of excavation, but was truncated to the west. The alignment of this ditch or trench suggests either that part of the wall was still visible above ground level, which was not the case in the area investigated, or that the building constructed above it, and described in this phase, continued the wall line and influenced the alignment of the cut. Given the change from a probably internal surface to a probably external one above the wall, the latter seems more likely. The fill produced a small amount of Roman pottery dated AD 270–400, indicating a 4th-century date, and a fragment of Roman glass — a handle with horizontal ribs from a bottle of late 1st or 2nd-century date. During the excavation the ditch appeared to have been cut by a pit, though the edges of this were indistinct and appeared in part to coincide with those of the ditch, so that the feature may simply have been an upper fill of the ditch. The fill of the pit produced pottery dated AD 250–400.

The contexts outlined above probably represent the construction of a timber building

above the demolished or partially demolished remains of the wall. In view of the date of the pottery from the earliest posthole, and Phase 4, this can have been constructed no earlier than the second half of the 4th century. The temporary hearth may suggest a period of squatter occupation toward the end of the timber building's life.

### **Phase 6: Open Area 3 (Fig 9)**

Both the ditch and the remains of the probable timber building of Phase 5 were cut by a number of small sub-rectangular and sub-circular pits, the fills of which included a limited amount of 3rd- and 4th-century pottery. The amount of pottery found was small and likely to be residual. The activity must have occurred in an open area in the later 4th century or possibly even the early 5th century.

### **Phase 6a: Open Area 3 (Fig 9)**

These pits were sealed by a thick silt layer which raised the ground surface to above c.11.5m OD (the uppermost level of archaeological survival beneath the basement slab). This silt layer produced a few sherds of pottery dated AD 250–400. It could in part represent the 'ploughed through', poorly differentiated upper fills of the pits described in Phase 6.

### **Phase 7: Open Area 3 (Figs 8, 9)**

The Phase 6a silt layer was cut by a large rubbish pit with steep sides, cut from above 11.5m OD and with a flat base at 10.6m OD, which, as noted in Phase 5, was directly above the internal floor surface there. The backfill produced a quantity of pottery dated to 1080–1150, including Coarse London-type ware, Early Surrey ware, Early Medieval Shelly ware and Stamford ware. This context also produced a small amount of residual Roman pottery dated AD 250–400.

This pit was probably cut by a second large rubbish pit to the north. The interface between the two cuts was poorly defined and the relationship between them difficult to determine, but the backfill of this second pit contained a large quantity of later medieval pottery dated 1270–1300. This assemblage includes one com-

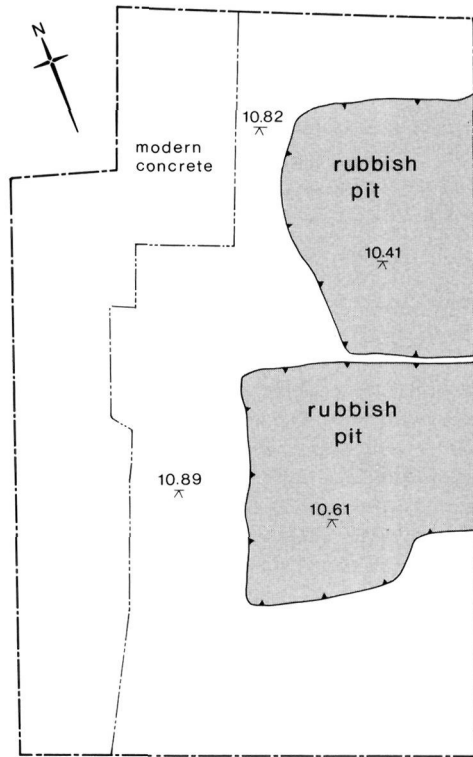


Fig 8. Phase 7

plete London-type ware bottle or measure, a polychrome, highly decorated conical London-type ware jug decorated with lines of applied pellets and green glazed applied roller stamped strips, a range of South Hertfordshire cooking pots including the complete profile of one example and the rim of a very large diameter South Hertfordshire storage jar. Other vessels represented included South Hertfordshire jugs, a London-type ware baluster jug, and a Kingston-type ware jug and cooking pot. The pit also produced a number of fragments of peg tile with splash glaze and two round nail holes. It also contained some residual Roman pottery dated AD 270–400.

The Phase 6 silt layer was also cut by a small east–west aligned wall foundation or robber trench which was recorded only in section. This was probably the wall of a small building or garden of 11th-century or later date, and may have been in contemporary use with either or both of the two rubbish pits, particularly the southern one which respected the north face of the wall.

### Phase 8: Building 3 (Fig 9)

A number of post medieval features were recorded in section. The latest Phase 7 rubbish pit was also cut to the north by the brick floor of a cellar of 17th or 18th-century date. The make-up layers of this produced a small amount of both residual medieval and Roman pottery. The floor was in turn cut by a post medieval pit which may have robbed the south wall of the cellar or postdated the robbing. This pit was cut by a trench which appeared to be associated with an east–west aligned 19th-century wall foundation belonging to the present building.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The stratigraphic sequence excavated in 1995 both confirms and amplifies the early history of 11 Ironmonger Lane as outlined by the previous excavations. It cannot, however, provide any new information about the earliest Roman activity because of the intrusion of the Phase 2 quarry pit at the base of the sequence in the mid 2nd century or slightly later. The 1983 excavation had suggested that the earliest phase of activity was the quarrying of sand and gravel for local building work in the later 1st and early 2nd centuries. Several quarry pits, dated to the later 1st century, were also excavated nearby at 24–5 Ironmonger Lane and St Margaret's Rectory (Norton 1982, 172; Shepherd 1987, 52), but there is no evidence at present that any other part of the present site was given over to quarrying at this date. The shallow pits recorded by Oswald at the base of the sequence in Trench 1 are unlikely to have been quarries, and may even represent foundation trenches for clay and timber buildings. The 1949 excavation suggested, and the 1983 excavation confirmed, that in the north-east corner of the site at least the quarry was followed in the late 1st and early 2nd centuries by the laying of four successive external surfaces. Unfortunately the area excavated in 1983 was too small to determine whether these represented a road or yard, and no further trace of them has been found. The external surfaces were probably associated with clay and timber buildings, although with the possible exception of the shallow cuts recorded by Oswald no *in-situ* evidence has been found for these at 11 Ironmonger Lane. The fill of the Phase 2 quarry almost certainly indicates the demolition of one

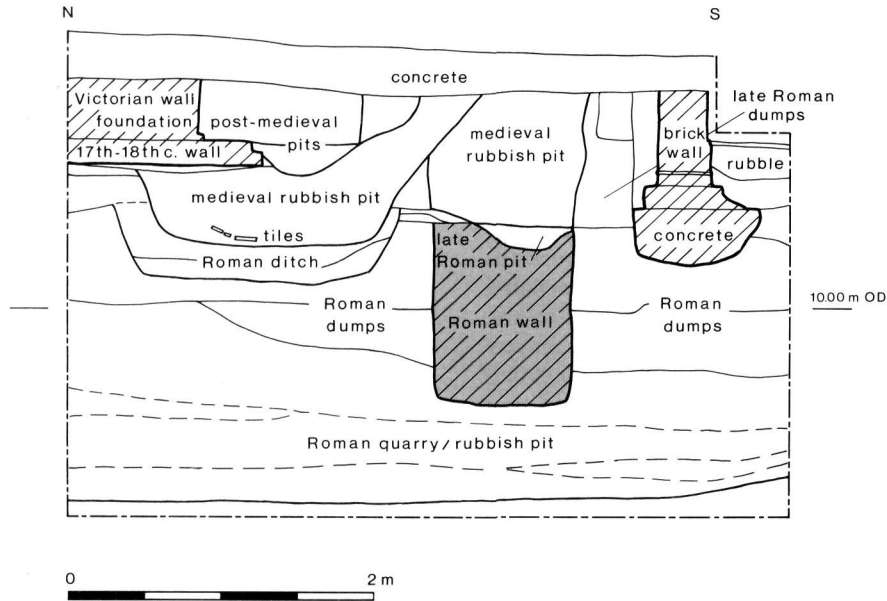


Fig 9. The west-facing section of the 1995 trench, showing the major archaeological features excavated

or more such buildings on, or close to, the site in the mid or slightly later 2nd century. Five successive phases of clay and timber building have been found immediately to the south at St Margaret's Rectory (Shepherd 1987, 52), and other examples of similar structures nearby come from 24-5 Ironmonger Lane and 36-7 King Street (Norton 1991, 57-63; Rowsome 1987, 46-50). The impression given by the excavation of these structures is of closely packed domestic and commercial buildings.

The excavation of a large quarry pit in Phase 2 is perhaps an indication of the later 2nd-century decline of the Roman city, a phenomenon already widely noted and discussed, in an area previously occupied by businesses and dwellings (Marsden 1983, 107-17). The pit certainly postdated the Hadrianic fire of c.AD 125-130 which destroyed most of the city and appears to have signalled the start of the decline, although the site itself has produced no convincing evidence of this fire or indeed the earlier, Boudiccan fire (even taking into account the charcoal layers recorded in 1949 in Trench 1). Quarries are not usually dug in the middle of thriving communities. Nevertheless the quarrying does represent fairly vigorous activity for a recognisable local purpose: the pit was excavated for sand and gravel as building material, and then backfilled with demolition material and

domestic refuse, in a relatively short space of time – perhaps no more than a week. It would not have remained open as an eyesore, and the nature of its backfill implies the clearance and demolition of part or all of an unwanted (possibly derelict) previous building or buildings so that the space could be used for other purposes, possibly for more spaciouly laid out structures.

More reliable indications of decline are probably the sealing of this quarry pit by the 'dark earth' layers of Phase 3, dated to the later 2nd and 3rd centuries, and of the external surfaces excavated in 1983 by a layer of dark humic silt of a late 2nd-century date recorded elsewhere in the City. At 24-5 Ironmonger Lane the earlier buildings were sealed by similar 'dark earth' deposits bounded by a ragstone retaining wall; no further evidence for Roman buildings was found although an earlier road continued in use (Norton 1991, 63). A similar deposit above the clay and timber buildings was also located at the top of the sequence at St Margaret's Rectory (Shepherd 1987, 52). The significance of these deposits is uncertain; they may imply that large parts of the Roman city were now given over to agricultural or horticultural use as market gardens, or simply represent the residue of a neglected ground surface. Both the small pit of Phase 3 and the Castor ware pit excavated in 1949 may suggest a low level of activity and

limited rubbish disposal in a garden or similar open area during the 3rd century.

The Roman town house was constructed at some point in the 3rd century, as is confirmed by the dating evidence from the upper Phase 3 layer and the Castor ware pit. The 1949 excavations indicated at least two phases of flooring within part of the house. The remains excavated were those of a small room (containing the polychrome mosaic) with a flanking corridor to the west (containing the rough tessellated pavement) and further undefined rooms to the south denoted by the isolated patches of mortar floor found there. More evidence of this building may have been discovered during the demolition of St Olave's in 1888 when F.W. Reader noted a red tessellated pavement 20ft (7m) long and 3ft (1m) wide at a distance of 16ft (4.80m) below the present street level, together with a wall running parallel to Old Jewry 12ft (3.60m) below street level and standing 12ft high and 3ft wide, also a deposit of black mud containing Roman pottery and other artefacts (VCH 1909, 124). The location of these remains was poorly defined; they may have lain beneath either St Margaret's Rectory or the adjacent 27–32 Old Jewry. The red tessellated pavement may or may not have been part of the same house, and the wall could easily have been medieval rather than Roman in origin.

The 1949 excavation suggested a Roman town house with an L-shaped or courtyard-style plan. The flanking corridor is an important feature with respect to the groundplan of the house, as it may indicate the position of the eastern side of the courtyard or the western side of the house as a whole. The wall of Phase 3a adds a little to our knowledge of the building and allows some further, limited, speculation about the groundplan. This east–west wall was not noted during the 1949 excavations to the east, and in view of the location of one fragment of the red and grey *tesserae* pavement recorded immediately to the east in Trench 1 (see Fig 3), is unlikely ever to have extended that far. This reinforces Oswald's suggestion that the pavement lay within a north–south corridor, and indicates that the wall must have terminated almost immediately beyond the eastern limit of the 1995 excavation with a T-junction, a north return, or a south return. If the wall ended in a T-junction or a north return it could have been recorded in Trench 1 of the 1949 excavation, although it may of course already have been destroyed by medieval or

modern truncation. A southern return would take the wall through an area largely unexcavated in 1949, beneath the level of the basements and away from the foundation trenches. This may therefore place the wall at the inner corner of the north and east wings of the house. However, the corridor as delineated by the 1949 tessellated pavement extended well to the north and south of the wall line (see Fig 3), perhaps implying a T-junction where the wall represented part of a room projecting west from either a simple rectangular house, the west wing of the house, or the east wing and into a courtyard. One of the first two options is more likely in view of the deposit of 'black mud' containing late Roman pottery which was found in 1949 in an underpinning pit to the west of the corridor and which suggested the presence of a watercourse there. Little is known about this feature, however, and the 1995 work has shown that the underpinning holes of 1949 were relatively small and narrow excavations. The deposit may have been part of a cut feature filled in prior to the construction of the house, or may postdate its destruction. The possibility that a much smaller wall projected northward from the surviving wall, as suggested by the Phase 4 robber trench, could apply equally to any of the options set out above.

Whatever the actual groundplan of the 3rd-century town house, its construction fits currently held views on the pattern of settlement within the later Roman city, and particularly the Walbrook valley. After the construction of the city wall between AD 180 and 210, the earlier pattern of occupation characterised by densely packed clay and timber buildings, frequently commercial in character, appears to have been replaced by a preference for fewer and more isolated stone structures which were largely private houses (Perring & Roskams 1991, 120). The remains of such town houses have been found elsewhere in the City, most notably at Billingsgate where a small private bathhouse was incorporated within the courtyard, and also at Mansion House, Lime Street and Watling Street, as well as beneath the church of All Hallows Barking, close to the Tower of London (Marsden 1983, 149–51).

The 1995 excavation at Ironmonger Lane allows for a more detailed consideration of the date of destruction of the town house, and of the activity which replaced it, than was previously possible. It confirms, albeit to a limited extent, Oswald's suggestion that the former occurred in

the late 4th or early 5th century (Dawe & Oswald 1952, 117–8), for the features excavated in Phase 4 to Phase 6a also suggest that the end of the town house came in the late 4th century, or at the latest the early 5th. With the exception of the possibly intrusive medieval pottery found on the internal surface in Phase 5, none of the pottery from these features was dated later than AD 400, and a number of groups could be no earlier than AD 350. The town house can therefore have survived little more than a century, and possibly less. The building which replaced all or part of it in Phase 5 was clearly a much more modest affair than its predecessor; probably in timber and reusing part of the stone wall foundations, and perhaps a lean-to within or against the shell of the earlier house. The features excavated in Phase 5 may represent the insertion of a large entrance, possibly for a barn-like structure, in one or more rooms of the still standing house. Sufficient effort was put into the construction for both internal and external surfaces to have been laid down, and for a possible drainage ditch to the north to have been dug later. However, the purpose of this building is unknown, neither the occupation debris nor the possible fire debris producing any conclusive evidence, and both may in any case have resulted from transient squatter activity after the building's disuse. A possible 4th-century building represented by a sill-beam slot and insubstantial brickearth floors was found nearby at 36–7 King Street in 1985 (Rowson 1987, 50).

The timber building appears to have had a very short life span, the pits of Phase 6 again being probably no later than early 5th century in date. These may have been dug in a yard, garden or wasteland. The 'dark earth' deposit which sealed them in Phase 6a was similar to that described in Phase 3. In many areas of the City the 'dark earth' which began to accumulate in the late 2nd century continued to do so without interruption until the end of Roman occupation in the early 5th century (Marsden 1983, 25).

The two rubbish pits of Phase 7 provide no evidence for the reoccupation of the site before the late 11th century at the earliest, and if the three intrusive medieval sherds in Phase 5 were added to the earlier pit fill the date must be pushed forward to no earlier than the mid 12th century. This at least would accord well with the available documentary evidence. However, a sunken timber building and a deep cesspit of late

9th- or 10th-century date have been found at 24–5 Ironmonger Lane (Schofield *et al* 1990, 150–52), and it is possible that 11 Ironmonger Lane was likewise occupied substantially earlier than the later 11th century.

Both rubbish pits appear to have been dug in a garden area immediately to the north of the churchyards of St Martin Pomeroy and St Olave. The Phase 7 chalk wall or robber trench may even represent part of the property boundary between churchyards and garden. It is also possible that both rubbish pits fell within the period of Jewish occupation of town houses in the locality. This is indeed highly likely in the case of the earlier pit, though the later may well have belonged to the years immediately after the expulsion of the Jews in 1290, possibly when the site formed part of the Earl of Cornwall's wardrobe. There is nothing about either of the pottery assemblages from the pits that is distinctively Jewish; both are typical of their period. The latter group of pottery was much larger and the decorated wares suggest a relatively high economic status for the household which owned it. The medieval Jew was often richer than his Christian counterpart, and it is probable that the town houses here were built of stone rather than the more usual wattle and daub. Two stone houses belonging to Moses, the Jew of Canterbury, in the parish of St Olave during the reign of Henry III (1216–1272), are mentioned by John Stow (Kingsford 1908, 280). But there is also little doubt that at least as high a level of prosperity would have been in evidence at the Earl of Cornwall's wardrobe.

It would seem that virtually all the medieval features in the northern part of the site beyond the two churchyards and recorded in 1949 fall within the later period of the wardrobes of the Earl of Cornwall and the Black Prince. The same conclusion probably also applies to the walls associated with the church of St Olave, although a number of the burials found in both churchyards may well have been earlier.

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