

ROMAN, MEDIEVAL AND LATER DEVELOPMENT AT 7 BISHOPSGATE, LONDON EC2: FROM A 1st-CENTURY CELLARED BUILDING TO THE 17th-CENTURY PROPERTIES OF THE MERCHANT TAYLORS' COMPANY

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SUMMARY

Excavations at 7 Bishopsgate revealed Roman remains from the 1st to 4th centuries AD, including evidence of a post-Boudican defensive work, cellared buildings, the Hadrianic fire and subsequent quarrying. The Roman building sequence included both timber-framed and masonry structures; individually important artefacts were recovered from these and part of a mosaic floor was recorded. The post-Roman sequence was represented by an extensive 'dark earth' horizon and pits filled with 'dark earth'; later cesspits, chalk-built cellars, and wells were associated with medieval development. The excavation findings are complemented by a study of the adjacent Merchant Taylors' Hall and by historical research into the Company's records.

INTRODUCTION

During the winter and early spring of 1995–96, a six-month excavation of 7–11 Bishopsgate, City of London (site code ETA89) was carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS). The work was generously sponsored by Greycoat plc and took place in advance of redevelopment of the site, which is now known

simply as 7 Bishopsgate. The excavation followed trial work which included the archaeological recording of engineers' test-pits, auger samples, and observations of the party walls of the Merchant Taylors' Hall, a Scheduled Ancient Monument which lies along the west side of the site.

The archaeological work resulted in a substantial archive, including unexpectedly large quantities of finds, particularly pottery. Prioritisation of research aims meant that less than half of the Roman pottery and only three-quarters of the post-Roman pottery was selected for analysis. Further analysis in the future might result in some refinement of the dating presented here. All of the finds and site records, as well as the research archive, resulting from the investigation have been deposited with the Museum of London's London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) and can be consulted by prior arrangement.

The basic unit of reference used during site recording, assessment, and analysis is the context number, shown within a square bracket []. Contexts have been grouped into land uses, represented by Buildings (B), Open Areas (OA),

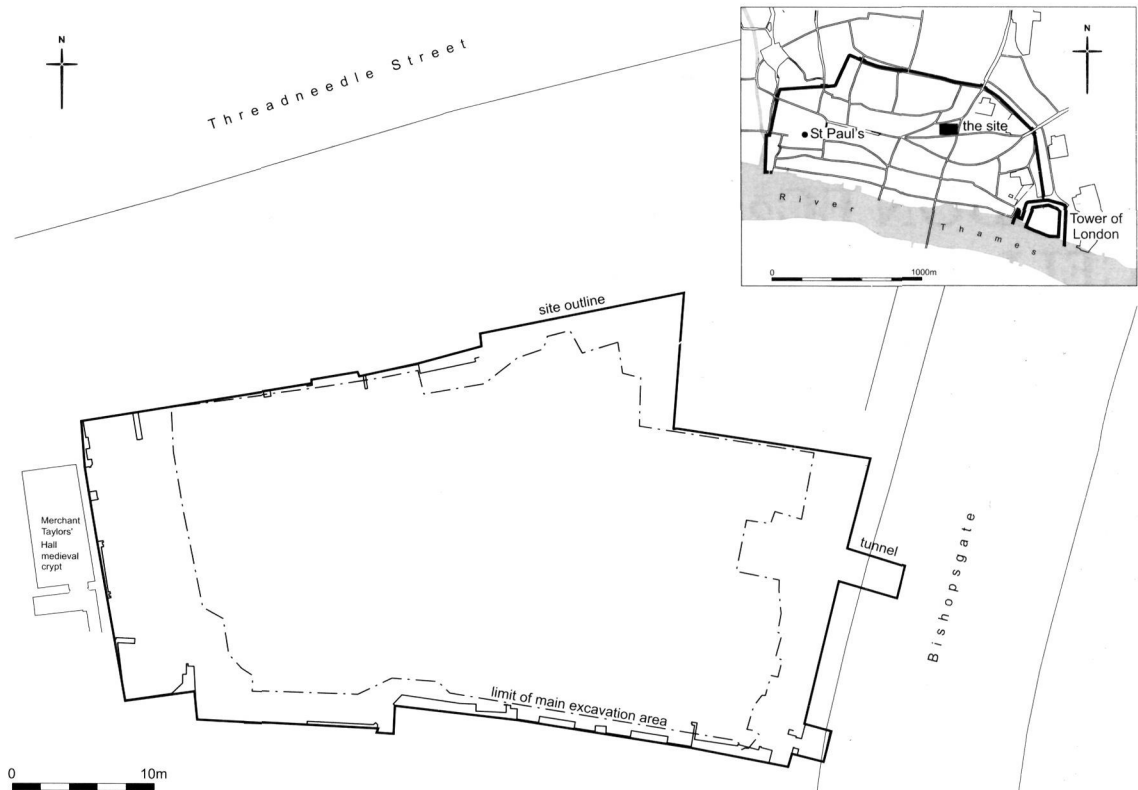


Fig 1. Site location

Structures (S), and Roads (R), with each land use assigned a unique number from 1 onwards. Relevant finds and environmental evidence is presented with its associated land use. Land uses have been allocated to chronological periods 1–10, representing defined periods of time and based on the stratigraphic and dating evidence from the site. Period divisions are defined by major changes in land use, such as an extensive fire resulting in site-wide rebuilding. Significant periods are accompanied by a figure showing the major features found and conjectured. Full expansions of the Roman pottery fabric, form, and decoration codes referred to in this paper can be found in Davies *et al* (1994) for the early periods and Symonds and Tomber (1991) for the later periods. Only those pottery sherds selected for illustration are catalogued in the report and these are uniquely referenced as <P1> onwards. Accessioned finds are shown within angled brackets < > and are uniquely numbered within the site code ETA89.

SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY (PERIODS 1–2)

The site lies between Threadneedle Street and Cornhill, on the west side of Bishopsgate, at the heart of the modern business district in the City of London (TQ 3302 8119) (Fig 1). The Roman forum and basilica, the late medieval Leaden Hall market, and the Elizabethan Royal Exchange all lay near 7 Bishopsgate. Geologically, the site is near the centre of an area of localised high ground at Cornhill, where river terrace gravel is overlain by brickearth. The truncated surface of the Period 1 brickearth was recorded at c.12m OD.

Some evidence of prehistoric activity was found (Period 2), but was severely truncated and survived only as a single, small patch of reworked brickearth that contained some burnt flint, a flint scraper and blade, and very degraded pottery fragments.

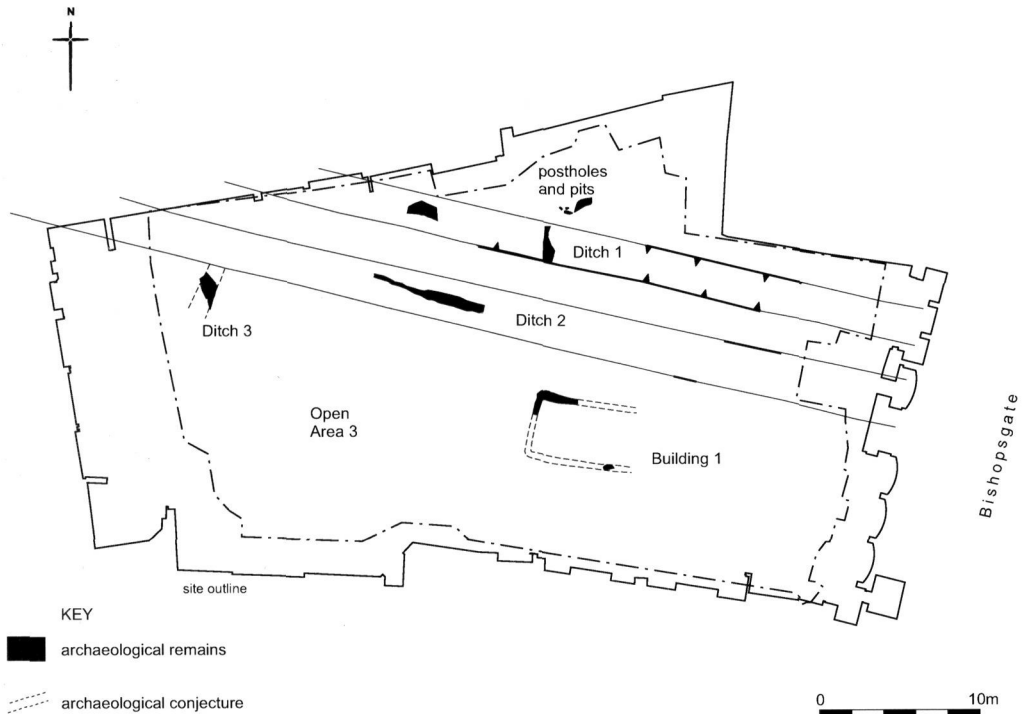


Fig 2. Principal archaeological features, Period 3 c.AD 43–70

ROMAN COLONISATION c.AD 43–70 (PERIOD 3)

The earliest surviving man-made features recorded on the site included the remains of two large parallel ditches in Open Area 3 (Fig 2). The ditches were aligned WNW–ESE and were only 2m apart, extending beyond the eastern and western site limits, a distance of over 50m. The ditches were each originally about 1.4m deep and 2.5m wide, and were V-shaped in profile, with sides tending towards the vertical where they reached a narrow, flat base (a shape sometimes described as an ankle-breaker). The ditches were aligned parallel to, and located immediately south of, a late 1st-century road, which they predated. A smaller ditch ran south-west from the double ditch near the western edge of the site.

Similar double ditches were recorded in 2000 during excavations at Plantation Place (FER97) c.300m to the south-east, where they cut through burnt demolition debris associated with the Boudican revolt of AD 60–61 (pers comm Trevor Bringham; Treveil *et al* in prep). The Plantation

Place double ditch was backed by a turf-fronted mudbrick rampart with levelling courses of timber planking and has been interpreted as the north-eastern corner of a defensive perimeter (*fossa fastigata*). The ditches at Plantation Place and 7 Bishopsgate may be related parts of a wider system of temporary defences that enclosed the heart of the settlement, centred on Cornhill, in the immediate aftermath of the Boudican revolt. A larger, east–west aligned, late 1st-century boundary ditch was located at Baltic Exchange (BAX95) during excavations in 1995 (Howe 2002) but can be identified as a later settlement boundary which would have passed to the north of 7 Bishopsgate.

To the south of the ditches, a few postholes and beam slots made up three sides of a small rectangular building (Building 1) truncated below its contemporary ground level. The long axis of the structure was aligned approximately with the ditches. Other early Roman activity included a bowl furnace and various pits and postholes. Elsewhere on the site the earliest archaeological deposits were disturbed or reworked brickearth, identical to that which filled the three ditches.

CONSOLIDATION AND DEVELOPMENT c.AD 70–125 (PERIOD 4)

The parallel ditches were open for a very short time before their backfill and the establishment of a road (Road 1) immediately to their north (Fig 3). The road was c.4m wide and was also aligned WNW–ESE, parallel with the main east–west road which lay to the south, along the south side of the forum. On the south side of Road 1 an associated timber box-drain cut through the backfill of the northernmost defensive ditch. A drain along the north side of the road was constructed in masonry, with tile-coursed side walls standing on a rough ragstone foundation above a wooden base. In the main area of excavation the road gravels had been completely removed by medieval quarrying, but they survived at the eastern perimeter of the site where their surface lay at 13.2m OD. This height is a useful indicator of the contemporary Roman ground level, and the ground floor level of contemporary buildings would have been at, or above, this level, although there was no extant evidence because of truncation caused by modern basemending.

Scattered and truncated evidence of buildings and occupation was recorded across the site south of Road 1. The most impressive of these was a domestic cellar¹ measuring 5.2m north–south by 4.9m east–west (Building 3). A largely intact stairway provided access to the south-east corner of the cellar from the south (Figs 4–5). The stairs, which were carved out of the natural brickearth and moulded in brickearth below the level where natural gravels are encountered, were 3m long, 2.3m wide and 2.5m deep with 13 steps – a similar rake and riser height to modern British building regulations. At the bottom of the stairs was a worn *opus signinum* floor 2.7m below the contemporary ground surface. On the west side of the threshold was a hole to take the pivot (*cardo*) of a door. The floor covered the eastern half of the cellar and was divided from the western half by a beam slot 3.3m long, 360mm wide and 130mm deep. The beam is thought to have supported open studs, which in turn would originally have supported floor joists at ground level. The *opus signinum* cellar floor sat upon a bedding layer of brickearth 400mm deep, perhaps intended to provide the concrete with a degree of protection from water penetration through the

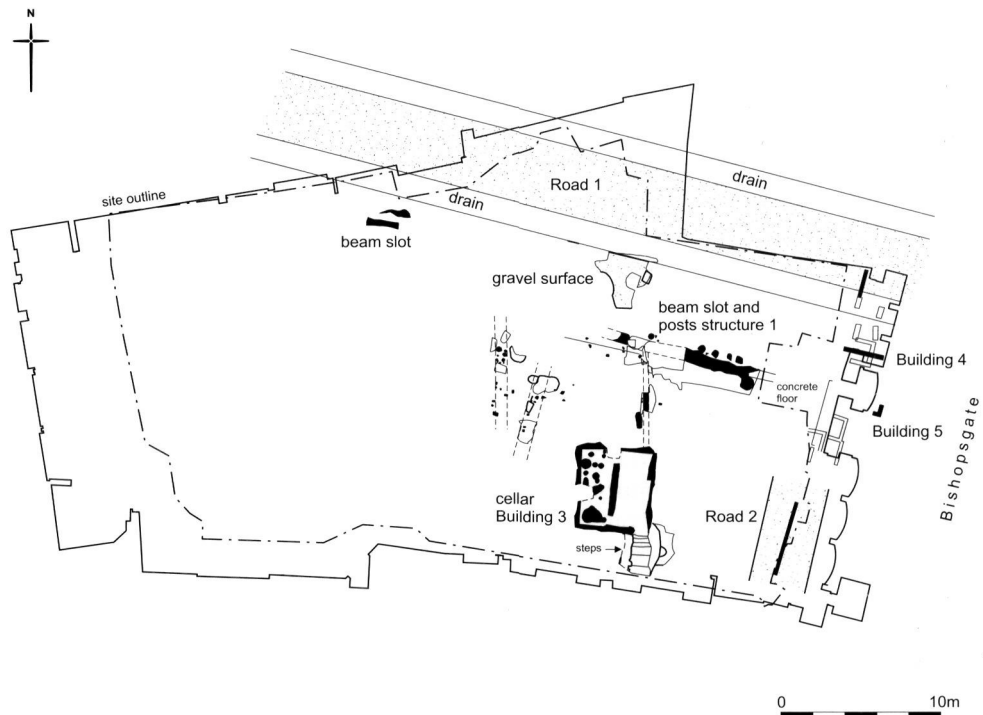


Fig 3. Principal archaeological features, Period 4 c.AD 70–125



Fig 4. View of the Building 3 cellar during excavation, with the stairway entrance visible in the foreground

gravels. The west half of the cellar floor was simply formed from exposed natural gravels. A series of depressions cut into this floor may have held storage jars or barrels, and may have been intended to help in keeping the stored contents cooled by the surrounding ground.

The cellar walls were made of close studs 150mm thick, spaced 400–500mm apart. The studs were driven into the natural gravels at the bottom of a trench, 400mm wide and 400mm deep, which ran along the base of the cellar sides. The studs supported a lattice of wattle covered with brickearth daub and finished with plain white plaster.

A wall trench running north from the cellar and aligned with its east wall was the only surviving evidence of the above-ground layout of Building 3. The alignment of the building differed from that of Road 1, but it is unclear whether this was significant. Interestingly, the alignment of Building 3 was shared by a much later Roman cellar to the west (Building 10 of Period 7). Perhaps their alignment had been influenced by a major, long-lived building or other feature

which lay to the south, beyond the limit of excavation.

Building 3 was burnt down in the Hadrianic fire, a conflagration that destroyed the majority of the city *c.*AD 125. Large quantities of deformed glass vessels were found amongst the burnt remains backfilling the cellar. At least 16 vessels were identified, all in forms which were containers. The group includes one jar, one possible flask or jug, and at least six bottles, all of which date from the late 1st/early 2nd century. There were also 490 sherds of pottery in the cellar backfill, most of it from two contemporary contexts [1374] and [1234]. The pottery, much of it burnt at high temperatures, included kitchen and tablewares appropriate for either a domestic residence or modest-scale catering. Both the glass and pottery may have been stored in a kitchen at ground level, above the cellar.

The pottery assemblage is dominated by Verulamium region white wares (VRW), Highgate Wood (HWB, HWC), Alice Holt Surrey (AHSU), and early Roman micaceous sandy grey wares

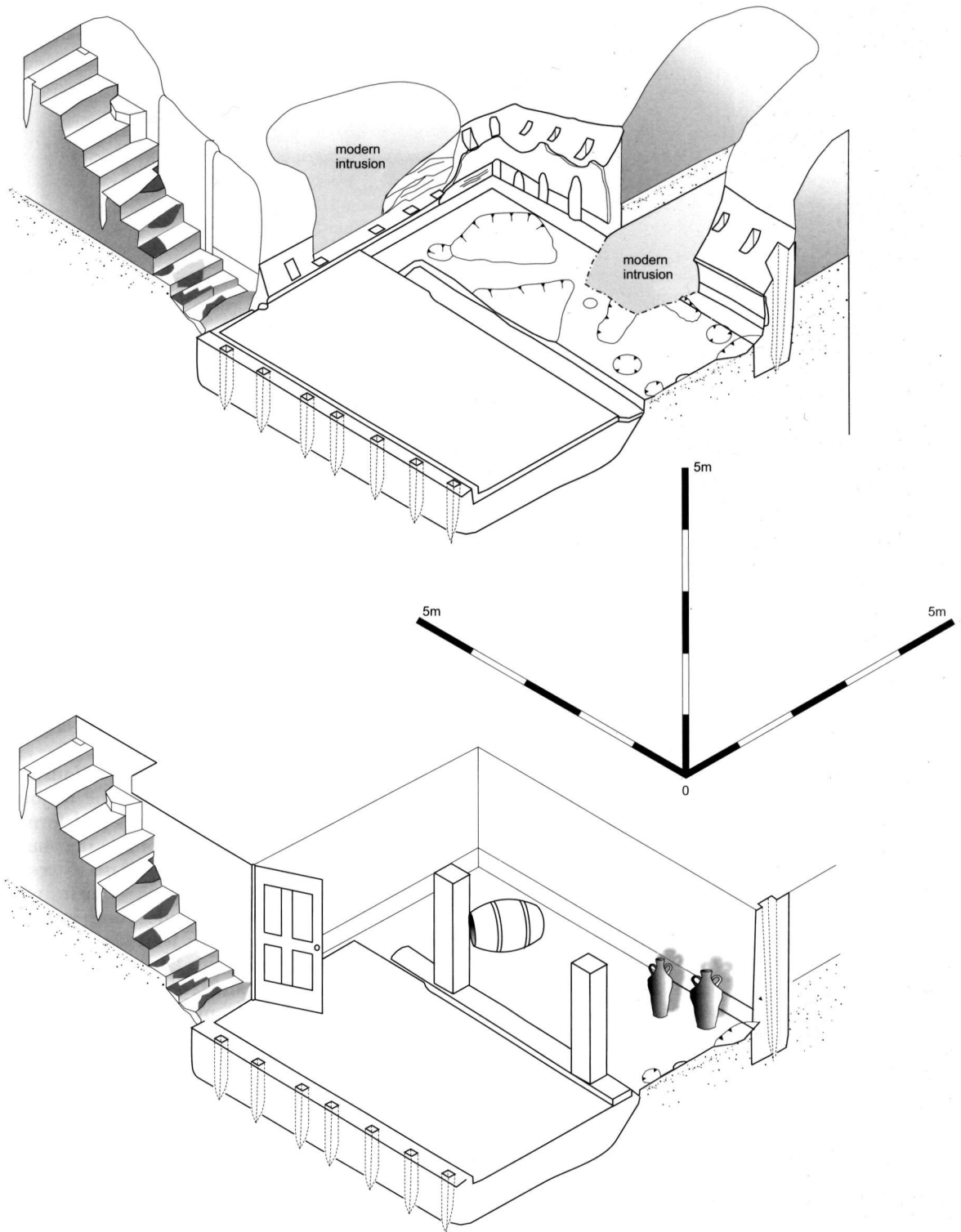


Fig 5. Building 3 cellar: top as found; bottom as reconstructed

(ERMS). The VRW flagons are ring-necked and all have the flared neck and triangular lip characteristic of the period AD 60–120. The VRW mortaria bear the potters' stamps of ALBINVS (generally dated c.AD 65–95) and OASTRIVS (c.AD 55–75). The AHSU, ERMS, and HWB grey- and grog-tempered wares are long-lived forms (bead-rimmed and necked jars, round-bodied bowls) typical of the period c.AD 60–100/120; HWC poppy beakers and HWC (extra sand) everted-rim jars with acute lattice decoration are, however, later and probably Hadrianic. There is some residual South Gaulish samian ware, but most of the samian is from Les Martres-de-Veyre (AD 100–120/130), with one sherd of a Central Gaulish (?Lezoux) Curle 23 bowl (AD 120+). The assemblage also includes small quantities of black-burnished ware 2 bowls (AD 120+), and a sherd from a Cologne beaker (AD 120+). Overall, the group can be dated to the early Hadrianic period (c.AD 120–30).

Several metal items were also present in the Building 3 cellar. One of the more unusual is a fragmentary sheet of copper alloy with a domed boss <948>, which appears to be a cheek-piece from a helmet. This is not the only early Roman military item from the site. A second helmet fragment, a copper-alloy crest-box holder <512>, and an apron mount <742> came from Open Area 6 in Period 5, while a lobate cuirass hinge was found in a 12th- or 13th-century context. With the exception of a copper-alloy key <591> and a fragmentary lock bolt <590>, the other metal objects from the cellar are more enigmatic. Three copper-alloy objects, which are all forms of collar, could well be related. One (not illustrated) appears to be a large ferrule with external mouldings around its circumference, a feature seen on the second <860>, which is a heavy cast cylinder 39mm in length, with a small flange at each end (see Fig 9). The final piece <859> is more decorative with two baluster mouldings and an internal tube, wider at one end than the other and 49mm in length (see Fig 9). These pieces may be structural, but could also be part of an unidentified piece of furniture (Wardle 1999).

Period 4 structures survived best along the eastern border of the site, where there was less truncation. Much of this area was unavailable for excavation as it formed a berm which supported the base of a building façade retained in the redevelopment. The excavated part of the eastern area included the partial remains of a

timber-framed building with a series of internal floors and occupation levels (Building 4). Building 4 was aligned with the road system and the only dating evidence is from an occupation layer containing pottery of AD 50–100 (a votive vessel from context [1679] of the foundations remains undated). To the south, near the eastern edge of the site, was a concrete-floored building with wattle and daub walls and earthfast posts (Building 5). Quarter-round mouldings completed the base of the walls. Building 5 appears to have been occupied for a considerable time as it was refloored in concrete and extended some 6m eastwards, beneath modern Bishopsgate. A north-south aligned access road, alley or yard (Road 2) was contemporary with the building, although its later gravels sealed the building's demolished remains.

Elsewhere on the site, truncation had reduced Period 4 structures to their lower foundation levels. Beam slots and posts aligned east-west and lying to the south of Road 1 were almost certainly part of a building (Structure 1). Another whole pot was recovered from context [1515] within the fabric of the structure. Two other complete pots, from deposits [874] and [941], may also have been votive although truncation meant that it was less clear whether they were directly associated with buildings.

FROM THE HADRIANIC TO ANTONINE FIRES c.AD 125–200 (PERIODS 5–6)

Post-fire quarrying (Period 5)

After the Hadrianic fire, most of the site was given over to the quarrying of brickearth and gravel (Open Area 6). The quarry backfills were mainly green-tinged dirty brickearth (similar to the final fills of the Building 3 cellar) with interposed blackish deposits, one of which contained seeds from plants of semi-aquatic and wasteland habitats including rush (*Juncus* sp), cinquefoil/strawberry (*Potentilla/Fragaria* sp), and sedge (Cyperaceae). This evidence may indicate that the partly backfilled quarries were left open long enough for a marsh-like habitat to form.

The quarry that cut through the Road 1 drain was entirely filled with a blackish deposit, suggesting the dumping of refuse. The rubbish thrown into the quarry backfill included pottery, bone-hairpins, sewing needles, a small bell,

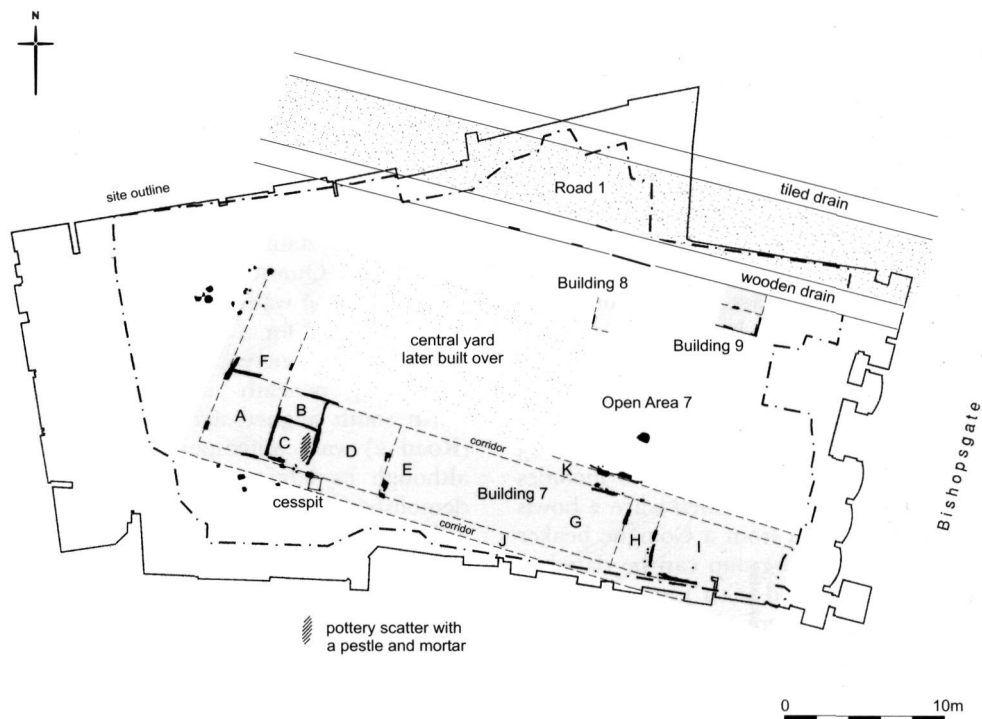


Fig 6. *Principal archaeological features, Period 6 c.AD 140–200*

spoons, a fragment of a stone palette, marble, oil lamps, a fragment of a quern made of imported Niedermendig lava, part of a possible window grille, some knives, copper-alloy nails, fastenings and mounts, metalworking waste, lead droplets and some military equipment, including the metal apron terminal and a forked crest-box holder of Imperial-Gallic (infantry) type (discussed above). This fairly heterogeneous group of material may have been derived from the clearance of debris following the Hadrianic fire.

The majority of pottery from the quarry fills is dated AD 120–160 but there are some large groups dated by one or two sherds to later than the AD 140s or 150s. It is thought that the quarries were exhausted and backfilled within a relatively short time and that these few sherds are giving a misleading date, either because they are intrusive or because the pottery types, fabrics and forms need reviewing. Some of the more unusual pottery included a marbled ware bowl (of unique form, possibly from London, MARB 4), a Verulamium region white ware jar with unusual rim decoration (VRW 2 NCD), a grey ware bowl with incised rim decoration from the same area (VRG 4 NCD), an East Gaulish

samian decorated bowl with ovolo frieze replaced with motifs (SAMEG 4DR37), a black-burnished 1 everted-rim jar with acute lattice (BB1 2FAL) and two with burnished decoration (BB1 2F BUD), as well as a 'BB'-type with burnished decoration (BBS 2 BUD), a colour-coated bowl (CC 4), a north Kent shell-tempered flagon (NKSH 1), an Alice Holt/Surrey carinated jar with 'figure 7' rim (AHSU 2C), two with combed decoration (AHSU 2 COMB) and a flat rimmed jar (AHSU 2Z), a Highgate 'C' sand-tempered carinated beaker with tall upright rim (HWC 3G), a fine reduced short everted-rimmed beaker (FINE 3E), a lid sealed jar (FINE 2Y), and a beaker with sand and quartz decoration (FINE 3 RCDI) (Grey 1997). Only a proportion of the quarry-fill pottery has been examined and the entire group is a potentially fruitful resource for further study.

Timber-framed buildings and a yard (Period 6)

The backfilled Period 5 quarries were overlain by a number of timber-framed buildings and a



Fig 7. Excavating a whole pot <37> discovered beneath a Building 7 wall

single large building complex surrounding a courtyard and lying to the south of Road 1 (Fig 6). The survival of the structural remains was variable, but where they had subsided into large quarry pits there was excellent evidence, particularly as a fire had swept through the area in about AD 200, catching the occupiers unawares and destroying the properties and their contents, the remains of which were buried.

The best-preserved Period 6 remains had slumped into quarries across the southern half of the site, where part of a well-preserved building (Building 7) extended beyond the limits of the excavation to the south, east, and west. It probably formed a single complex, along with more fragmentary remains to the north (Buildings 8 and 9). Building 7 had been constructed over the fragmentary remains of Building 6, which had been deliberately demolished. The main part of Building 7 took the form of a series of rooms along an axis with the same alignment as Road 1. Corridors ran along the south and north sides of the rooms, which may have been residential or service quarters within a large building. The

rooms varied between 5m and 2.5m square and were divided by colour-washed, plastered wattle and daub walls founded on both groundbeams and earthfast posts; this is an unusual construction technique not often noted before.² The substantial nature of these foundations may imply that Building 7 was more than one storey high. Within the foundation deposits were bricks marked with procuratorial stamps, perhaps derived from public buildings destroyed in the Hadrianic fire. Purbeck marble mouldings and wall inlays were also found in foundation deposits and reused as a form of skirting, and isolated fragments of oolitic limestone and ragstone were found in make-up dumps for the building.

Beneath one wall of Building 7 (context [592]) was a small pot (<37>, Fig 7), probably intended as a votive offering or good luck charm. Despite retaining its lid, the contents included only fragments of burnt wood and seeds from the surrounding soil (Gray 1997), similar to other possible votive pots from the site; however its contents may have been more significant to the depositors than is immediately apparent.

A wood lined cesspit was found in the southern corridor of Building 7. The corridor had been truncated below its floor level at this point, but further to the east a tessellated pavement survived at 13.00m OD. The cesspit lay near to a small room (Room C) that contained a collection of burnt and broken table and kitchenwares <Po1> – <Po6>, amongst which were a Purbeck marble mortar <407> and pestle <406> (Figs 8–9, cf Beavis 1970), and 29 smashed but near-complete pots (Table 1). The latter comprised 16 samian cups and 8 bowls (placc settings?) and evidently fell from a shelf or cupboard during the fire. Whilst this may be good *prima facie* evidence that Room C was a kitchen, no evidence of hearths or ovens was found within it.

The samian has a *terminus ante quem* (TAQ) for manufacture of c.AD 175, based on the potters' stamps (Dickinson 1999; Durand-Lefebvre 1963), and this on its own might indicate that Building 7 was destroyed shortly afterwards. However, the



Fig 8. Excavating the broken and burnt pots found in Room C of Building 7, with a stone pestle <406> and mortar <407> visible in the foreground

building was altered at least once, and lay over the remains of at least one other post-Hadrianic building (Building 6), suggesting that it may have continued in use until some time later. The black burnished wares in the assemblage are all late 2nd-century examples and the tankard <Po4> is similar to one from a 3rd-century context in Southwark (Richardson 1999). This small group of pottery can be dated c.AD 160–180/200. Taking the evidence as a whole, a date as late as AD 200 for the assemblage – and therefore for the Building 7 fire – is possible, but would imply that the samian was at least 25 years old when it was lost.

The burnt plank floor of Room C yielded abundant charred seeds from waste ground and grassland, including mallow (*Malva* sp) and clover (*Trifolium* sp) seeds, a moderate amount of waterlogged sedge and fig (*Ficus carica*) seeds, and a small number of charred grain fragments. It is possible that these remains are representative of the preparation and consumption of plant foods. The charred seeds, for example, may be sieving waste. However it is equally possible that the mallow, clover, and sedge were from straw used as a disposable floor covering.

This evidence may be compared with Room I, to the east, which may have been a stable. Room I contained a similar charred layer, but with an assemblage of charred grain, seeds, and chaff more characteristic of food preparation. A small number of charred grass (Poaceae) seeds were present along with a moderate amount of wheat grains and abundant stem fragments – possibly of straw (Gray 1997). However, the results of soil micromorphology and chemical analysis indicate that the same deposit had characteristics of a dung-rich byre floor deposit, which when cemented by phosphate is termed a stable crust. This conclusion is based upon similarities between the deposit and the micro-fabric and chemical characteristics of the Moely-gar animal stable at Butser Ancient Farm. The layer contained 4085 ppm of phosphate, at least twice the amount measured elsewhere at Bishopsgate, and phosphate is a coprolitic component (Macphail 1997). Room I had white-painted plastered walls, which may suggest a utilitarian usage. Wooden planking was also detected in part of the Room I floor deposit, and may argue against its interpretation as a stable crust, as the latter would normally be found in association with an earth floor. Direct access from Room I to the cobbled yard (Open Area 7) to the north may have been prevented by the

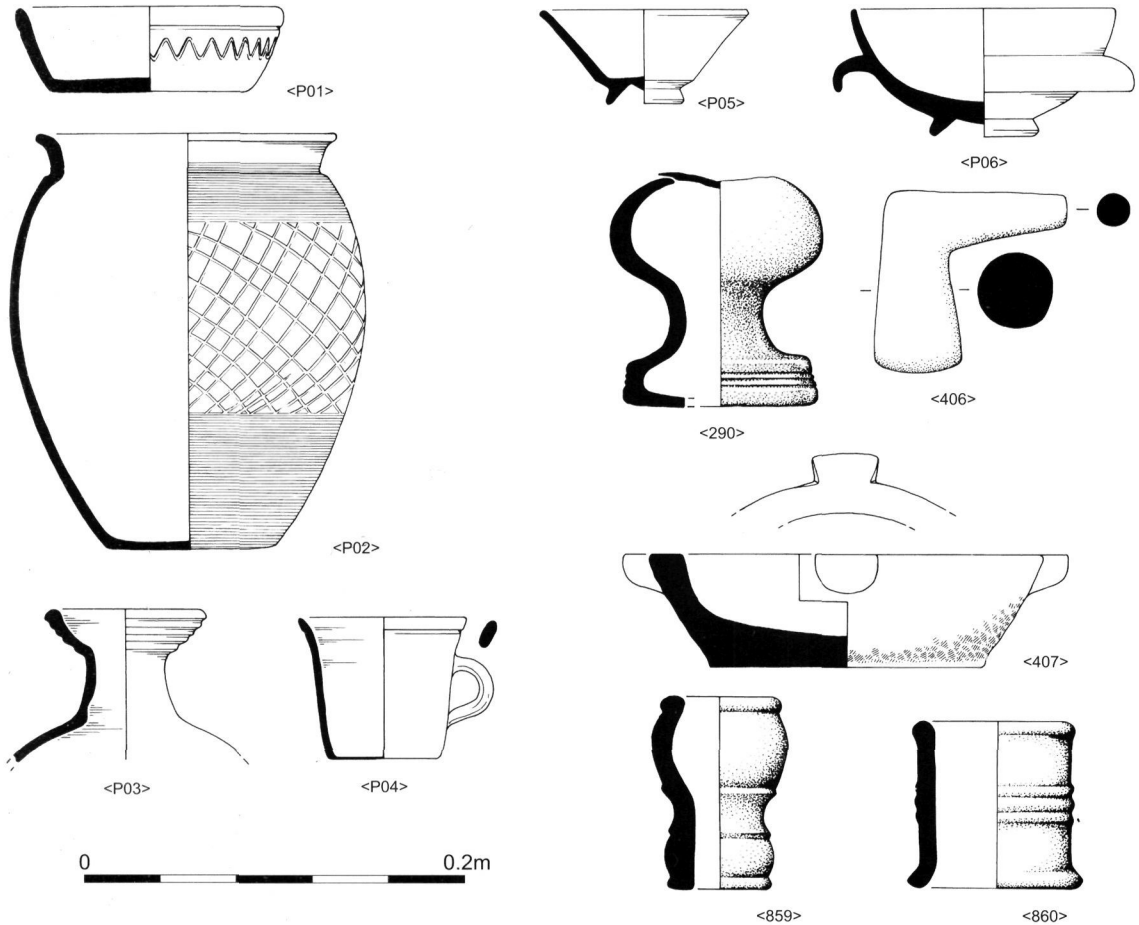


Fig 9. A selection of some of the key finds from the Bishopsgate excavations. From Building 7: pottery from Room C: <P01> plain rimmed BB2 plate; <P02> BB1 with orthogonal or right-angled lattice decoration; <P03> oxidised flagon (fabric source unknown); <P04> handled beaker tankard of typical South-West British design; <P05> Dragendorff 33 cup; <P06> Dragendorff 38 flanged bowl; other finds from Room C: Purbeck marble mortar <407> and pestle <406>; from Room B: a copper-alloy doorknob <290>. From Building 3: copper-alloy mounts <859> and <860> (Scale 1:4)

Table 1. The 29 near-complete pots from Building 7 Room C (see Fig 9)

Estimated No. of Vessels	Fabric	Form	Comments
1	BB2	Plate	Wavy Line decoration <P01>
1	BB1	Everted-rimmed jar	Open Acute Lattice decoration <P02>
1	BBS	Jar	Acute Lattice decoration
1	OXID	Cup-mouthed ring-necked flagon	Fabric source unknown <P03>
1	FINE	Beaker	Tankard <P04>
16	SAMEG	Cup Dragendorff form 33	Stamps: magnu, magnu f, regalis f, ma.t.r.tiani <P05> (Ludovici 1927)
8	SAMEG	Bowl Dragendorff form 38	Stamps: sac[irv]e (2 examples) and maccirram <P06>



Fig 10. Balsarium <196> in the form of the bust of a youth with Ethiopian features rising from a calyx, recovered from fire debris sealing Building 7

corridor (Room K) but truncation in the area adjacent to Room I meant that the evidence did not survive.

Two copper-alloy *balsamaria*, or incense burners, one in the shape of a male bust and the other a globular flask, were found in the burnt

debris overlying Room C of Building 7; these were the most important individual artefacts from the excavation. *Balsamarium* <196> (Fig 10) is in the form of an African youth rising from calyx leaves, and could be interpreted as Bacchic (Batty 1973). However, recent research may indicate that these objects were household items used for bathing, serving as oil containers or distributors (Nenova-Merdjanova 1997).

A copper-alloy doorknob <290> was found near the threshold of Room B, amongst many nails and metal fittings (Fig 9). There has been some doubt over its identification because it is hollow, but given the location of its discovery its interpretation as a doorknob seems reasonable. Along the north side of the courtyard, part of a triple vase was recovered from the burnt demolition debris sealing Building 9. Triple vases are considered to have had ritual use, though it is unclear whether this was usually within a household setting or in a religious building or shrine (Kaye 1914).

Almost no roof tile was found in the demolition debris of Buildings 7–9, which also contained only one flue tile. The buildings could have been roofed with thatch and the flue tile may be intrusive, but most late Roman buildings had tiled roofs and some heating, and the absence of tile may be the result of the debris having been sorted through and the tile salvaged for reuse in antiquity.

LATE ROMAN MASONRY BUILDINGS AND A MOSAIC c.AD 200–400 (PERIOD 7)

The later Roman structural evidence from 7 Bishopsgate was heavily truncated (Fig 11). Isolated surviving remains included a fragment of mosaic, two parallel robbed wall foundations, a truncated cellar, and a robbed pad foundation. Only one definably late Roman pit was identified.

Near the southern edge of the site, a second cellared building was located (Building 10), cutting through burnt demolition debris associated with Building 7. The building lay nearly 20m south of Road 1 and was set on a different alignment from it – but one which it shared with the much earlier cellared building found just to its east (Building 3, Fig 3). The Building 10 cellar measured 4.2m east–west and was in excess of 5.6m north–south, extending beyond the southern limit of excavation. The associated ground level had not survived truncation and is unknown, but

the cellar was at least 1.18m deep. The floor of the cellar lay at 11.3m OD, 1.3m higher than the floor of the Building 3 cellar. Earthfast posts and groundbeams supported wooden retaining walls along the sides of the cellar, the floor of which was made from relatively clean brickearth. The north side of the cellar had a rough stone and concrete rubble wall. A hearth was set in the middle of the floor. Plastered masonry walls survived on either side of entrance stairs on the east side of the cellar, and a stone with a socket hole recovered from the backfill may have been from an impressive doorway. The masonry entrance suggests the cellar was originally associated with a stone building. The cellar backfill contained pottery dated to c.AD 250–400.

A 4th-century mosaic floor, lying to the west of the cellar and sharing its alignment, may have been part of the same building. A tile tesserae border surrounded a curved chain guilloche design in tesserae of chalk, shale, and red and yellow reused ceramic tile, around a unique dentillated design (Fig 12). The form of the mosaic design suggests that it came from an apsidal room (pers comm Dr David Neal).

Parts of two parallel trenches lay to the east and west of the Building 10 cellar but were set on a different alignment, perpendicular to Road 1. The trenches, which may have been associated with the robbing of a late Roman masonry building, contained occasional postholes. It was not clear from the surviving stratification whether the robbed structure pre- or post-dated the Building 10 cellar and mosaic structure, but their differing alignments argue against any direct structural association. The alignment of the late Roman robbing does indicate that Road 1 had probably survived the Antonine fire in some form. A robbed pad foundation, to the west of the westernmost robbing cut, was the only other surviving late Roman structural evidence at the site.

‘DARK EARTH’ OR GARDEN SOIL c.AD 400–1400 (PERIOD 8)

Where not truncated by later intrusions a dark grey silt, or ‘dark earth’, overlay the latest definably Roman remains (Fig 13). The majority of the Roman registered finds and coins, and a large amount of Roman pottery, was recovered from this deposit, which also contained finds up to the 13th century in date. Identical grey silts

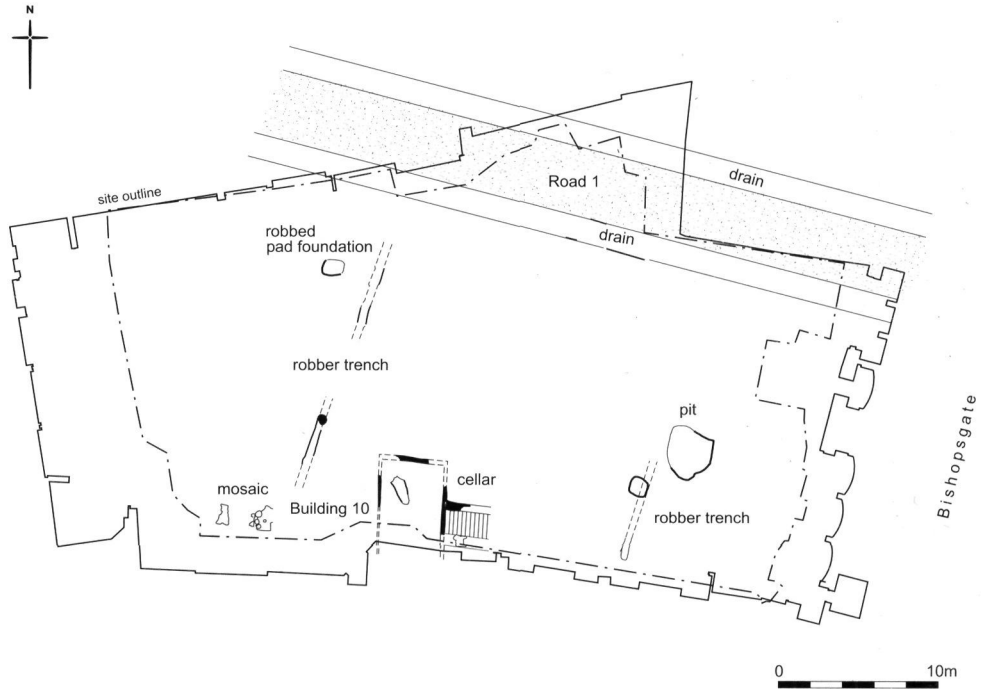


Fig 11. Principal archaeological features, Period 7 c.AD 200–400



Fig 12. In situ fragment of 4th-century mosaic (0.5m scale)

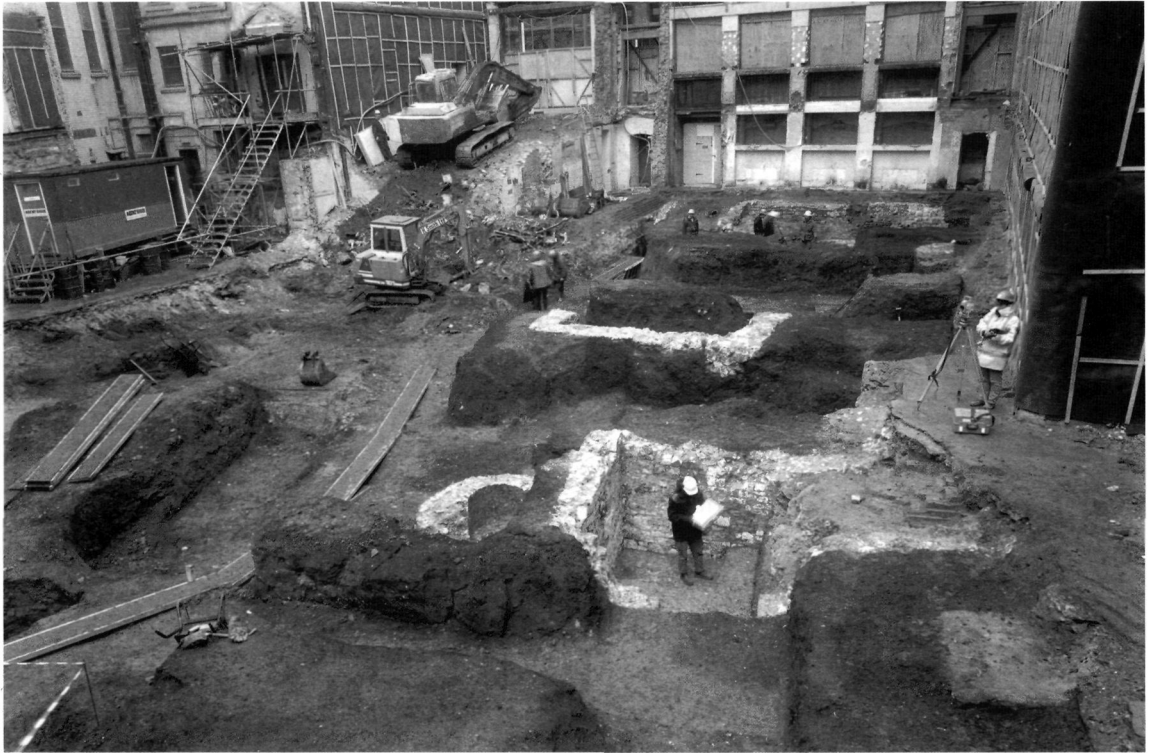


Fig 13. A general view of the site looking east. Later medieval chalk features can be seen here cutting through the 'dark earth'

filled a whole series of cut features, many of them intercutting; the fills included finds dated as late as the 14th century.

Much has been made of London's 'dark earth'. Perring (1991, 78–81) suggests that it marks the 'desertion' of much of the occupied area of the Roman town, and that the soil was produced from the dumping of compost, street sweepings, and nightsoil to form gardens. He considers the material to have been dumped because tip lines were observed within it at both Newgate and Milk Street. Perring notes that 'late 2nd-century dark earth' has been found beneath late Roman floor levels on some sites, but the majority of the 'dark earth' is a heterogeneous deposit containing finds of the 3rd and 4th centuries, which he suggests is the result of subsequent mixing. Perring notes that some 'dark earth' deposits may be as late as the 16th century. The Walbrook valley is cited as the area least affected by the 'contraction' of the city. Yule, examining much the same evidence (Yule 1990; 1992), proposes that the 'dark earth' was produced by the biological reworking of archaeological strata, with a characteristic truncation horizon below.

Both the Perring and Yule interpretations are predicated on the assumption that the dark colour of 'dark earth' is due to a high organic content analogous to modern topsoil. However, garden or agricultural soils commonly suffer from a deficit of organic inputs as more is removed through cropping, weeding, and tidying up (clipping hedges *etc*) than is added through manuring and composting. Historic woodlands in the London region, such as Oxleas and Epping Forest, have shallow topsoils, and it is unclear why thick deposits of dark grey silts should have formed in the city.

An alternative explanation is that 'dark earth' fills a series of intrusions, such as trenches dug to deposit nightsoil mixed with ash, and that the intrusions merged over time as an area of land was worked over. This interpretation would better explain the truncation horizon noted by Yule and the tip lines noted by Perring. It may also help to explain why there is less evidence of apparent 'contraction' in the Walbrook valley, where there was a greater build-up of archaeological deposits to be reworked, and why some similar deposits may contain finds from the 16th

century. 'Dark earth' found beneath Roman floor levels may have been formed by a secondary process where minerals were transported down the soil profile by the action of water and worms. The acidic soil water penetrated through rotting lime-mortar based floors, carrying ash-derived carbon to darken the underlying sediment. Smith (1987) and many others have also argued that later Roman buildings are under-represented in the archaeological record because they have been the subject of greater truncation, and this should be considered in any analysis of the evidence.

To test the 'dark earth' hypotheses, two areas of the site, each measuring 2m by 3m, were selected for intense sampling. The sample areas overlay the burnt demolition debris of Building 7, dated to AD 200. The areas had no observable intrusive pits and were divided into 1m squares and 100mm spits, with the soil sieved through a 5mm mesh. The finds and residues were then compared, and a sequence sought to show diachronous change through the soil column or to isolate previously unrecognised features which may post-date the formation of the silt. Biological reworking of earlier deposits should have left evidence of differences in composition and finds distribution, but there was no discernible pattern to the spread of major residues (gravel, building

material, shell, slag/metal, bone, pot, mortar and chalk) (Gerber-Parfitt 1997).

The data suggest that the 'dark earth' exhibits no upwardly ascending order of dated material for the Roman period. Of twelve squares immediately overlying the AD 200 fire debris, seven contained finds that were later than AD 340, two later than AD 200, and three contained no dated material at all. This implies a more thorough reworking of the deposit after AD 350 than the biological hypothesis would allow for. There were three medieval sherds higher in the column, from which we may determine that medieval disturbance reached down at least this far.

The levels at which the eastern block of 'dark earth' samples were taken could be compared to the adjacent, though physically separated, 4th-century mosaic. The surface of the 'dark earth' fell between 12.99m OD and 13.15m OD and consequently the base of the samples was at 12.69m OD–12.85m OD. The majority of the 'dark earth' was below the level of the mosaic, whose surface lay at 13.08m OD.

A sub-sample of 'dark earth' was subjected to soil micromorphology and chemical analysis. An increased number of voids and worm burrows was noted at the base of the 'dark earth' (eastern

Table 2. Dated finds from 'dark earth' spits by 100mm deep 1m squares

Square	E8/N190	E8/N191	E8/N192	E9/N190	E9/N191	E9/N192
Top	p1050–1150	0	0	0	0	0, c355–365
Middle	p350–400 c340–375	0	0, c270–365 c270?–360	p350–400 c340–347	p350–400 c355–365 c347–350	0
Bottom	0, c379–402	0	p350–400	0, c340–350	c340–350	c355–365 p350–400
Square	E33/N183	E33/N184	E33/N185	E34/N183	E34/N184	E34/N185
Top	No sample	0	0	No sample	0	p1050–1150 c270–273
Middle	p350–400	p300–400	0	p350–400 c287?–293?	p300–400 c270–285 c365?–375?	p1000–1150 p270–400
Bottom	p200–250	0	0	p350–400	p200–400	p350–400 c293?–325

1m squares are represented by their south-west co-ordinate, E8/N190 = 8m East/190m North.
 p300 = pottery date of AD 300; p365? = pottery date probably AD 365
 c270 = coin date of AD 270; c293? = coin date probably AD 293
 0 = no records of pottery

samples), which was characterised as 'typical' 'dark earth': highly humic, with enhanced levels of magnetic susceptibility and phosphate (Macphail 1997). At higher levels of the eastern samples and in the western sample there was more phosphate and even crystalline phosphate (vivianite $\text{Fe}_3 [\text{PO}_4]_2 \cdot 8\text{H}_2\text{O}$) characteristic of saturated soils and soils with both faeces and urine added. A small sample from beneath the mosaic was also analysed and it was noted that the soil was 'strongly worked by soil fauna'. The suggestion that earthworms had burrowed through the poorly preserved parts of the mosaic was supported by a very dark humic soil filling their burrows whilst the surrounding soil was described as 'pale dark earth'.

All of the evidence – artefactual, chemical, soil micromorphology, residues, and relative depths of deposits – is consistent with the interpretation that the 'dark earth' at 7 Bishopsgate was principally a product of the reworking of later Roman deposits in the Middle Ages. This conclusion supports the contention that reworking was a result of the disposal of wood ash and excreta from earth closets in casual pits or trenches. The high organic content of this waste would have encouraged a secondary process where increased populations of soil fauna penetrated below the levels dug over and carried darker humic material below the level even of apparently solid structures such as the 4th-century mosaic at Bishopsgate. Subsequent water penetration is thought to have carried more microscopic ash particles down the soil profile.

MEDIEVAL BISHOPSGATE AND THE BEGINNING OF THE MODERN ERA TO c.1700 (PERIOD 9)

All of the post-Roman archaeological structures at 7 Bishopsgate were truncated below the contemporary ground level, and no associated floors, yards, or building superstructures survived. A similar dark soil to that described as 'dark earth' filled a series of deep, post-Roman cut features which included wells, quarries, rubbish pits, and cesspits. Finds from these features included a Roman emerald and gold chain < 529 >, a possibly Viking soapstone bowl (Egan 1997), and pottery from the Saxon period to the 14th and 15th centuries.

Investigation of the party wall with the Merchant Taylors' Hall along the western side of the site revealed the outer side of the crypt that

had once supported the chapel³ (Building 12, Fig 14). A series of chalk blocks above the rough stonework marked the transition to foundations bearing the superstructure, which extended beyond the crypt to the south. The superstructure was a plain ragstone wall without openings, windows or doors, or any ornamentation. The top of the foundations lay at 15.0m OD, indicating a ground level 1.5m above the general level of modern truncation across the site.

Although medieval remains on the site only survived to a level far below their contemporary ground levels, some of the recorded evidence is remarkable. In addition to intercutting cesspits dated to the 10th to 12th centuries, a large quarry or cesspit dug into natural gravels, in use during the later 13th or early 14th century, was probably originally over 5m deep and featured wooden cross-bracing. Evidence was also found of square timber wells built from horizontal planks and corner posts. These wells penetrated the natural gravels to below 10.0m OD, apparently sufficient for the extraction of useful amounts of ground water. The disuse of one of the wells dated to sometime after 1140.

The surviving archaeological evidence at 7 Bishopsgate can be compared with documentary sources, which begin in c.1230 when Martin the baker (*pistor*) of Cornhill granted to Holy Trinity Priory a 3s quitrent from land in the parish of St Martin Outwich held of him by Isabel widow of Richard Radyng. According to the Holy Trinity list of successive payers of this quitrent, the Bishopsgate Street property was held by Hugh Mareschall, Ralph Merssh, Henry Merk, the canons of St Mary Southwark, and Peter le Hodere between the 1230s and 1280s. Subsequent payers of this quitrent include occupants recorded in other sources, most notably John and Walter Tottenham and John Chircheman (Hodgett 1971, nos 771–2). It was John Chircheman who granted this property, abutting Bishopsgate Street to the east and the church of St Martin Outwich to the north, to the Merchant Taylors' Company in July 1405, along with premises which fronted north on Broad (Threadneedle) Street to the west of the church (Ancient MS Book 5 'Benefactors' Gifts, 1578'). Chircheman was a major City merchant and collaborator with Geoffrey Chaucer, Comptroller of Customs (Schofield 1984, 104).

The Merchant Taylors' Company's records document the descent of the Bishopsgate Street property before it passed via Chircheman to the Company. The earliest, dated 10 May 1283, is a

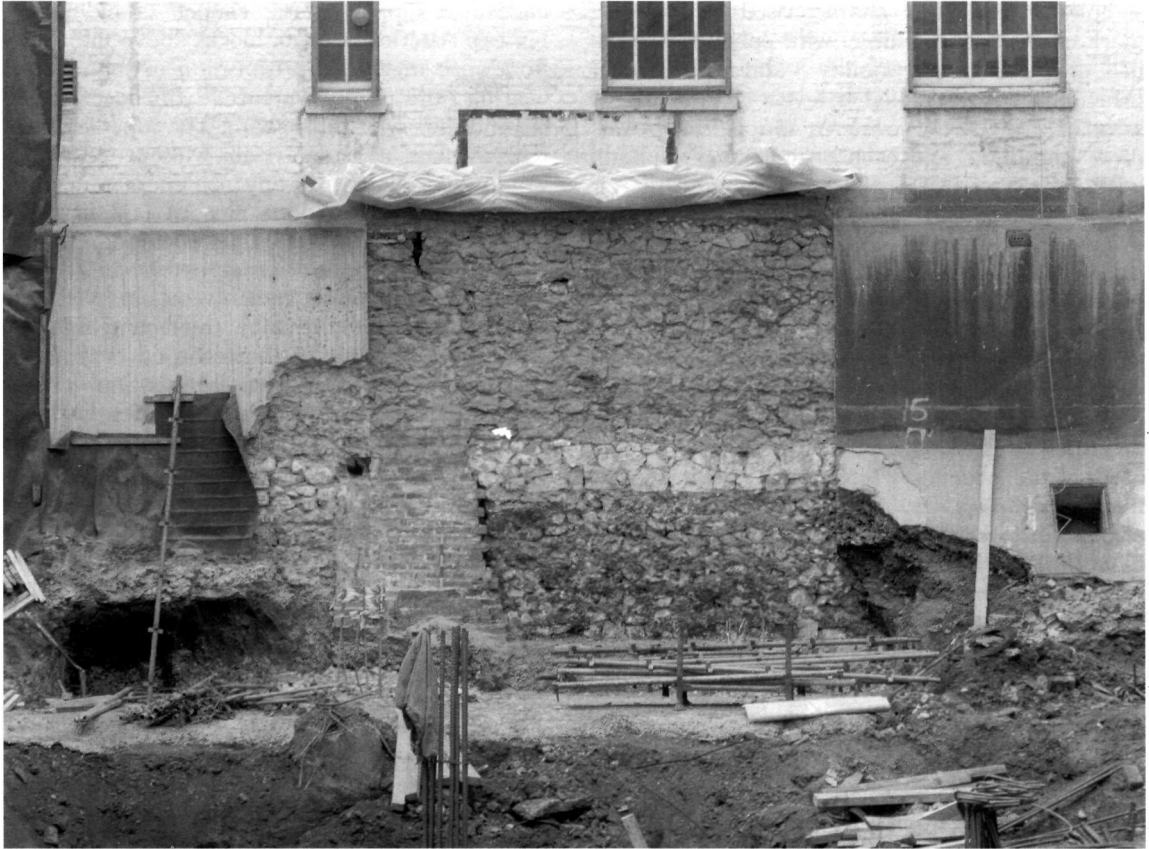


Fig 14. The east wall of the Merchant Taylors' Hall. Note the large chalk blocks which form part of the wall foundation above the level of the crypt and which coincide with the top of a modern sloping berm (with coal hole). Modern basements had removed archaeological deposits to below the bottom of this berm

grant by Richard Horn to Ralf de Alegate of part of a garden between Ralf's garden to the west, other property of Richard's to the east, Ralf's garden to the south, and the tenement of the church of St Martin to the north, an area which measured 60ft north–south and 36ft east–west. The same grant was confirmed between late 1285 and May 1286, when the neighbour to the south was Simon de Coventre. On 30 March 1328 Edmund Crepyn granted to John de Totenham a house and plot with gates into Broad (Threadneedle) and Bishopsgate Streets. This was abutted to the south by Henry de Coventre, to the east and west by Edmund's property, and to the north by William de Oteswych. Four years later, on 12 September 1332 John granted a 60s quitrent from the same property (now described as lying between the property once of Sir Henry de Coventre to the south and the tenement of John de Yakesle to

the west, the tenements of William de Oteswych and Broad Street to the north and that of Edmund and Bishopsgate Street to the east). The 60ft dimension of the plot is close to the combined length of two later medieval cellars along the Bishopsgate frontage (20m = 65ft, see Fig 15). The other dimension, at 36ft, is a lot smaller than the east–west dimension of the site (150ft) and we are clearly dealing with a smaller parcel of land here, but a property that at times extended beyond the site to Broad (Threadneedle) Street. The corner of Broad (Threadneedle) and Bishopsgate Streets had been occupied by the parish church of St Martin Outwich since 1217 (Schofield 1994) and the site lay south of tenements fringing it.

A large quarry/cesspit near the southern boundary of the site (not illustrated) was dug into natural gravels and was perhaps originally over 5m deep and more than 3m N–S (\times 2.5m E–W).

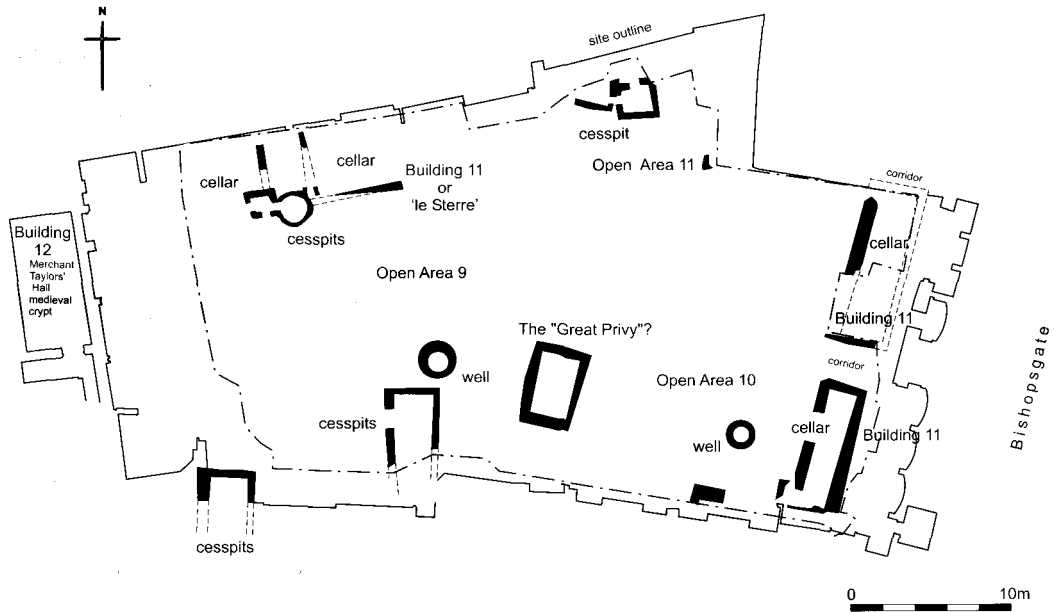


Fig 15. Principal archaeological features, Period 9, 14th to 17th centuries

It had wooden cross bracing; the bottom fill was undifferentiated dark soil but the top 1m was formed from a series of fine laminar soil and brickearth deposits as alternate nightsoil dumps were capped with a less offensive material. The laminar backfills of the pit were extensively sampled and the plant remains predictably included henbane (*Hyoscamus niger*), deadnettle (Lamiaceae family), charred wheat, fig (*Ficus carica*), and weed seeds from the sedge and carrot (Apiaceae) families. The pit contained a very large group of pottery, dated to the last quarter of the 13th century, broadly contemporary with Ralf's tenancy. The pottery included a variety of London and Kingston wares (which predominated), with some Mill Green, south Hertfordshire/Limpsfield grey wares, and green-glazed Saintonge. They were mostly kitchenwares with a large number of jugs and some cooking pots, storage and serving vessels.

In 1388 Chircheman gave a part of his garden to the Fraternity, which corresponds to the area of the little kitchen, scullery or pantry of the Merchant Taylors' Hall. The gift of 1405 included 4 messuages and 17 shops and other tenements in the parish of St Martin Outwich and the wards of Broad Street and Bishopsgate, on the south and west sides of the church and now 'for the most part new builded and made dwelling houses' (Ancient MS Book 5 'Bene-

factors' Gifts, 1578', f 1). This grant describes the properties on Bishopsgate Street as comprising:

one messuage called the *Sterre on the hope* and one messuage within and 9 shops annexed by the king's highway of Bishopsgatestrete between the foresaid church of St Martin's and the churchyard thereof on the north part, and the tenement of Robert Whityngham citizen and taylor of London on the south part, and they abut upon the tenement of the Fraternity aforesaid on the west part (Ancient MS Book 9 'The Wills Book', p 4).

— or in other words large houses, gardens, passage-ways, (forecourts?), and shops (compare with the 17th-century leasehold plan, Fig 17).

The archiving of the Merchant Taylors' leasehold agreements and accounts has preserved important information on who lived where (Dyson 1996), and on activities that may be identifiable in the archaeological record (eg digging wells or cesspits) as well as those that are more ephemeral (eg making pergolas for vines). Surviving archaeological remains from the medieval period included shop cellars on the Bishopsgate frontage and domestic cellars on the north side of the site, the latter including a carved doorjamb and steps. The excavation also uncovered evidence of the successive 'great privies' or cesspits mentioned in the accounts: 'For ferming of the grete prevey and beryng of

the same and casting up of another prevey, 13s 4d' ('Reparations at Sterre' in 1444-45, Accounts III). One of the 'privies' contained pottery associated with its construction, dated 1270-1400, and pottery from its disuse and backfill, dated 1380-1500 (the great privy that was closed), whilst its neighbour had a cessy backfill dated 1500-1600 (its successor 'cast up', Fig 16). The contents of this enormous cesspit are discussed more fully in a forthcoming paper on the Merchant Taylors (Sankey 2003). The pit contained a great variety of pot types and imports, with Dutch and north German wares predominating and cooking as well as serving vessels present. A Spanish vessel from the fills may have contained mercury for medical purposes.

The privy also contained abundant water-logged seeds, wood fragments, and smaller numbers of charred grape seeds and chaff. A sample contained large numbers of puparia, fish bones, and moderate numbers of beetle fragments. Large fragments of cloth and a possible leather fragment were also present, and may have been trade waste.

The basic form of building and occupation identified from the historical records appears to be a large mansion (the 'great messuage' and/or 'le Sterre') which combined shops on the Bishopsgate frontage, a gatehouse, passageways, and (2?) forecourts with a garden to the rear which may be related to leasehold plans of the late 17th century (Building 11). Major City magnates who may have sublet could lease the property as a whole, or it could be leased as a series of smaller holdings direct from the Company. The property was partially rebuilt in or after 1570 following a successful petition by Thomas Random to remit rent of £60 in return for an estimated £400 cost of constructing a new tenement on the south side of the great gate or entry leading into the messuage. It may be that the backfilling of the southerly of the two shop cellars occurred at this date. The cellar backfill contained pottery dated 1480-1550 and was contemporary with the Great Privy to the west.

The main leaseholders during these years included some of the increasingly powerful merchants and political leaders within the City of London. These included Thomas Rowe,



Fig 16. Excavation of the 'Great Privy'

merchant taylor and son-in-law of the wealthy Sir John Gresham. Between 1557 and 1570, when he died, Gresham was variously alderman, master of the Merchant Taylors, sheriff, president of St Thomas's Hospital, and Lord Mayor, and was knighted in 1569. Following his death his son-in-law and widow continued to occupy parts of the property.

Other leaseholders belonged to the national ruling élite and no doubt valued the Merchant Taylors' connections with the Court. Thus Lord Wriothesley first Earl of Southampton held the smaller of the two main tenancies from 1546–47, in his last year as Lord Chancellor; this was in addition to other properties, for example his house in Ely Place. The relationship between City and aristocracy is perhaps demonstrated by the marriage of Alderman Halliday's widow Susan, granddaughter of Thomas Rowe and a resident, to the Earl of Warwick. The earl and countess lost their tenancy when the lease was transferred to merchant taylor Sir William Acton in part payment of a debt.

On the whole, pottery and food waste failed

to bear out the residents' high status but a few Penn floor tile fragments, a tin-glazed polychrome floor tile, part of a mullion (all in secondary contexts), and a moulded door jamb (*in situ*, north cellar Building 11) are more suggestive of the wealthy character of the site in the late medieval and Tudor periods.⁴

On the north side of Open Area 9 (shown as a garden in 1688; Fig 17) there was a smaller cesspit noteworthy for its odd construction. It was a chalk structure, with a smallish square box foundation punctuated by thin arched openings, of a form previously interpreted as a soakaway (Schofield *et al* 1990, 175) but which was demonstrated to have been used for collecting liquids (cess) on this site. The 'curious arches' (*ibid*, fig 58) led to channels which led vertically down the outside of the structure. The cesspit was associated with the adjacent, divided cellar which featured a ragstone threshold and moulded doorjamb. The cellar, which is described above, is not securely dated.

In the early 1640s the properties making up the area of the site were acquired by Abraham

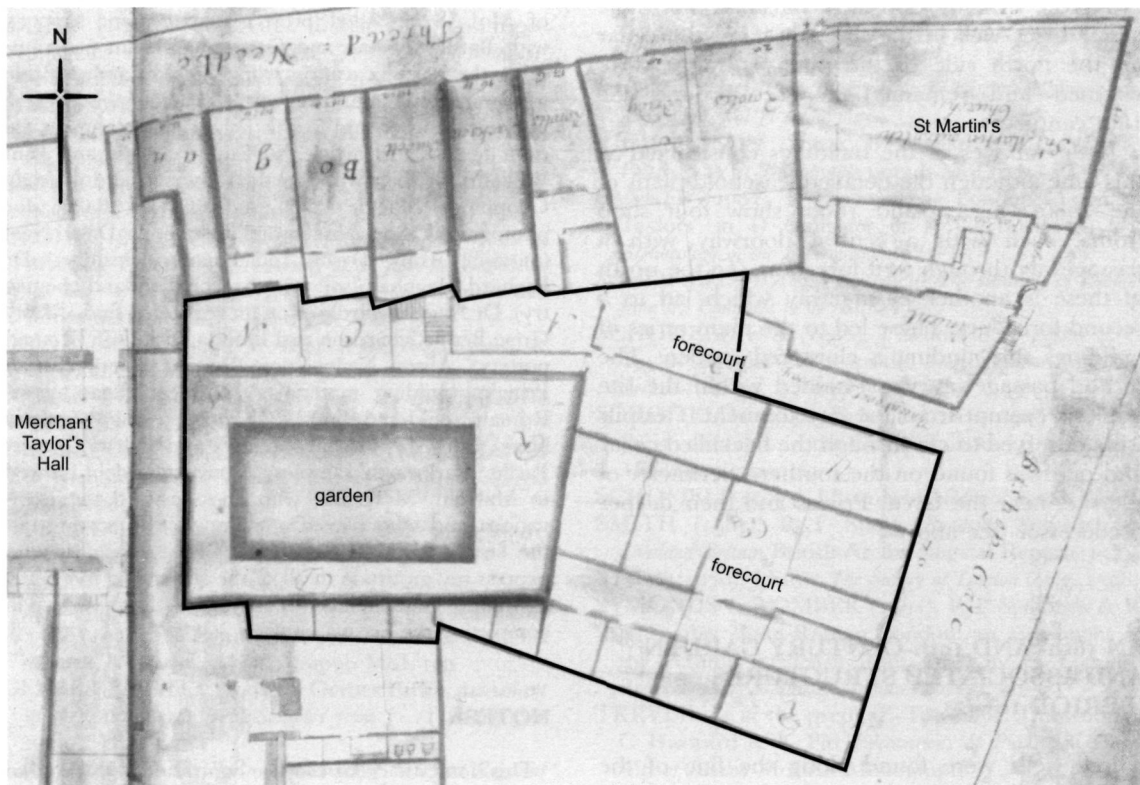


Fig 17. Merchant Taylors' Company leaseholds in 1688

Reynardson, a merchant taylor who was made alderman in 1640 and sheriff for 1640–41, the same year he was master of the Merchant Taylors' Company. Having acquired the leaseholds he then secured permission from the freeholders court (of which he was a member) to demolish and rebuild as one large tenement, and this is acknowledged in the accounts by the amalgamation of rents. For their own reasons the Company abstracted a vault and a well from the lease/s. Reynardson managed to be reimbursed for £600, for part of the works, in the usual form of a rent-free period.

Evidence for the demolition of the old buildings comes from the backfill of a stone well in the rear garden (Open Area 9) (Fig 17) which contained pottery dated to 1600–1650. Other contents of the well included a lead counterweight, the most common sort of candlestick of the time, and a syringe thought to be for the self administration of mercury for venereal disease (pers comm Dr Geoff Egan). In contrast with these lowly finds, a polychrome floor tile in blue, yellow and orange on a white background, and clearly from a superior floor, was also recovered. From the evidence of their backfills, both the major brick well in the forecourt and the cellar on the north side of the main entrance were retained and remained in use through the 18th century.

Little survives of the buildings constructed at this time although the detailed leasehold plans of the 1680s (Fig 17) and 1690s show four shop fronts, each with a central doorway with a passageway through to a forecourt. To the north of these is another passageway which led to a second forecourt. These led to the main series of buildings surrounding a cloistered garden. The second passageway was retained within the site but was exempt from the development. Cesspits were observed to cut through the backfilled cellar and one was found on the southern perimeter of the site, near the Great Privies and their deeper predecessor (see above).

AN 18th- AND 19th-CENTURY GARDEN AND ASSOCIATED STRUCTURES (PERIOD 10)

Three wells were found along the line of the garden wall, which was retained until the last century. All of the wells were built using

unmortared standard bricks. Two new wells were constructed within standing buildings, presumably in the cellars of shop fronts. Together with a few remnants of wall footings and a curious curved foundation which may have been part of a cesspit or the support for a bow window which overlooked the garden to the north, these were the latest extant archaeological remains found on the site (not illustrated).

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NOTES

¹ This domestic cellar may be contrasted with those of a cultic significance (even within domestic buildings) discussed in Perring 1989.

² Similar earthfast 'piles' were seen at Watling Court, also supporting a timber-framed building (Building F), though that was only seen where the walls crossed brickearth quarries (Perring *et al* 1991, 68). In contrast Building 7's equivalent 'piles' were observed only where cutting natural brickearth and are presumed to have been driven through quarry backfill but to have been obscured by the general mixed dirty nature of those fills.

³ Dated to the 14th century by the RCHM(E) (1929). The accounts of 1493 clearly indicate that the chapel, and chapel chamber, were amongst the complex of buildings on the east side of the hall ('...Repairing of the hall ende, estwardes the Chapell, the Chapell Chambre, the botery, the pantry' *etc.*, transcribed in Clode 1875, 80) and locate it above the crypt.

⁴ The buildings on the west side of Bishopsgate and Gracechurch Streets, south of St Martin's Outwich, were described in 1598 as '...ye divers fair houses for merchants' Stowe 1970, 157.

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UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

The account books of the Company have been partially transcribed into modern handwriting, and both the original and the transcriptions are microfilmed and available in the London Guildhall Library. The transcribed series have been used here and they run in a series Volumes I to VIII (they use Latin and Arabic numerals) from Volume I, 1398, to Volume VIII, 1545. Volume IX begins in 1545 and X in 1550 and then the series peters out as it becomes selective

over the information transcribed. Page numbers referred to are page numbers of the transcribed volumes and folio numbers refer to the original text. Neither are always legible, folio numbers repeat and sometimes there is a double system of page numbers. Accounting years are referenced when appropriate.

Other Company records, such as gifts or wills, are also available at the Guildhall Library, listed as Ancient Manuscript Book (volume number).

Specialist assessment and publication reports are kept by the Museum of London.