

NEW WORK ON CRIPPLEGATE FORT: EXCAVATIONS AT 25 GRESHAM STREET, 2000–2001

Jo Lyon

With contributions by Ian M Betts and Susan Pringle (ceramic building material), Lisa Gray (plant remains), Jackie Keily (registered finds), Jane Liddle (animal bone), Jacqueline Pearce (post-Roman pottery), and Robin Symonds (Roman pottery)

SUMMARY

The site of 25 Gresham Street is located in the financial centre of the modern day City of London. This area became the focus for Roman military and civil activity in the early 2nd century AD, when Cripplegate fort was built. The main significance of the site lies with the fact that it straddles the south wall of the fort. The Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) carried out excavations on the site in 2000–2001 which uncovered the foundations of the south wall of the early Roman Cripplegate fort, an interval tower, defensive ditch, and ancillary buildings. These remains form the largest portion of the southern section of the fort wall discovered to date. By the 3rd century the fort had fallen into disuse, and there was little activity in the area by the 4th century AD.

Reoccupation of the Roman city occurred during the early medieval period. The main evidence of occupation at the site was dated to between 1050 and 1150. Intensification of activity was linked with the development of metalworking and dye production in the Cripplegate area. These industries played an integral role in the development of the early economy and society in this part of London, echoed in the modern street names, eg nearby Silver Street. During the post-medieval period the area became built up with tenements, and was the site of the church of St John Zachary. The remains of this church (destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666) are now preserved under the garden area of the new development.

INTRODUCTION

The site is situated on the north side of Gresham Street and is bounded by Staining Lane on the east, Noble Street on the west, and Oat Lane on the north side. The national grid reference for the centre of site is 532243 181444 (see Fig 1). The Museum of London site code is NHG98.

The area around Gresham Street and Noble Street was virtually destroyed during the Blitz. Post-War reconstruction of the City provided an unprecedented opportunity for the study of its archaeology. The Roman and Medieval London Excavation Council (RMLEC), led by W F Grimes (then Keeper and Secretary of the London Museum), conducted a series of archaeological investigations throughout the area. During the course of these excavations, Grimes discovered that the Roman city wall had been preceded by a fort, in the north-west area of the settlement (Grimes 1968, 17–28). Investigations carried out on the site of 25 Gresham Street during the 1950s located the remains of three courses of the south wall of the fort, in a small trench (WFG10; Grimes 1968, 23). It was not possible to define the exact alignment of the wall from this limited evidence.

The Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) carried out an evaluation of the site in 1998, which indicated a potential for survival of archaeological remains from the Roman, medieval, and post-medieval periods. Due to

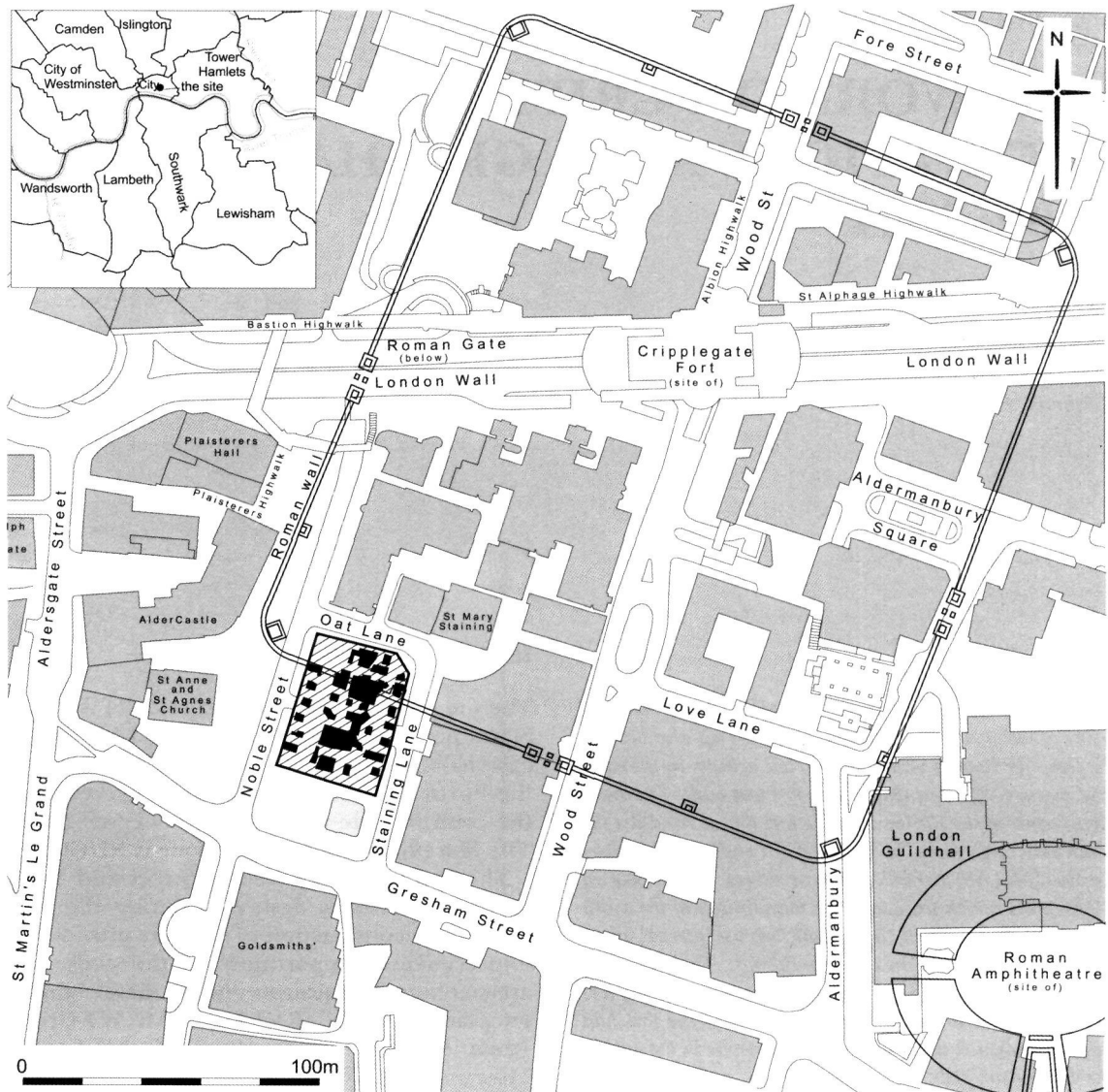


Fig 1. Site location showing the outline of the Roman fort

problems with access into relevant areas during the evaluation, the presence or absence of the fort wall could not be confirmed. As a result a contingency was built into the foundation design for the proposed redevelopment, which made provision for the preservation of the fort wall. A second phase of evaluation was undertaken in 2000, immediately prior to the main excavation, which confirmed that large segments of the foundations of the south wall of the fort survived on the site. No trace of Grimes's earlier trenches (WFG10) were discovered at this time.

The discovery of the fort wall enabled the piling design to be finalised to ensure preservation *in situ* of the fort wall and interval tower. The resulting mitigation strategy for the site was complicated and limited the excavation to a series of pile holes, lift pits, and ground beams. Excavation took place in a number of phases between 2000 and 2001. This report describes the results of the investigations at the 25 Gresham Street site, and puts them in context with the findings of the RMLEC carried out during the 1950s, and those of more recent

archaeological sites in the vicinity. The findings from 25 Gresham Street are also discussed in the recent monograph on Cripplegate Fort (Howe & Lakin 2004), and the monograph detailing work conducted by W F Grimes and A Williams on Cripplegate Fort during the post-War years (Shepherd in prep). The site archive is available for consultation in the LAARC¹ by arrangement.²

NATURAL TOPOGRAPHY AND PREHISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

The underlying solid geology of the City of London consists of London Clay. Overlying this are Pleistocene drift deposits laid down by the Thames in a series of terraces. In the area of Cripplegate river gravel terraces are overlain by brickearth deposits, which are of considerable thickness in places. On the site itself brickearth was found to be up to 4m thick, whilst on other sites in the area brickearth was recorded up to 2.8m thick (Howe & Lakin 2004, 10). Deposits of truncated natural brickearth were recorded on site at an average level of 12.27m OD; natural gravels were located at 8.27m OD. By comparison modern street level in Gresham Street to the south of the site is at 16.3m OD. The recorded level of truncated natural on neighbouring sites compares closely with that on the site.

No pre-Roman features were identified on site; however, a fragment of residual prehistoric pottery (dating 4,000 BC–AD 43) was recovered from the primary backfill of the fort ditch. A small number of residual worked and burnt flints was also discovered on site. Prehistoric activity has been identified on surrounding archaeological sites, with a number of struck and burnt flints being found, for instance, at 3 Noble Street (NST94), 31–45 Gresham Street (GAH95), and 90–91 and 100 Wood Street (WOO97). On the last site a prehistoric north–south aligned ditch was found, along with other more ephemeral features (Howe & Lakin 2004, 11).

THE ROMAN SEQUENCE

Pre-fort activity c.50–120 (Period 1)

At the beginning of the Roman period the site was situated on the fringe of the new settlement. Grimes indicated in his interim publication (Grimes 1968, 32–7) that clay and timber buildings were established in the area later occupied

by the fort. Indeed evidence for such buildings has since been identified on many sites in the area (eg 3 Noble Street, 31–45 Gresham Street, and 90–91 and 100 Wood Street). During Period 1 natural brickearth was sealed by a layer of redeposited brickearth, forming Open Area 2 (Fig 2). This deposit extended across the whole site, and contained pottery dating to AD 60–100.

Fragments of four clay and timber buildings (Buildings 1–4, Fig 2), which appear to pre-date the fort, were identified at the site. Beamslots, indicating wall lines, had not survived and so the orientation of the buildings could not be determined. The buildings consisted of internal brickearth floors and occupation debris. The floors in Building 1 contained the base of a glass phial (<73>) and a small amount of Highgate Wood ware C pottery, dating to c.AD 70–160. In Building 2 the floor layers contained pottery dated to c.AD 70–120, and a fragment of burnt ceramic, probably from a hearth. A fourth structure (Building 4, Fig 2) was situated further to the south and consisted of a brickearth floor, laid on a thin layer of gravel, with a series of associated postholes. Building 4 is dated c.AD 50–100 by the presence of South Gaulish samian ware, early Roman micaceous sandy ware, and early Roman sandy ware B. A series of small, shallow pits (Open Area 3, Fig 2) was associated with the early Roman buildings. The pits contained sherds of pottery, including Verulamium region coarse white-slipped ware and a jar and lid in Highgate Wood ware C, dating to c.AD 70–120. The pottery assemblage from Open Area 3 also included two rare amphora types: a Lipari amphora and a Fishbourne form 148.3 amphora in a similar fabric to an example from earlier excavations at 3 Noble Street (Seeley 2004); the former was from the Aeolian Islands near Sicily, and the latter probably originated from North Africa.

Due to the paucity of remains it was not possible to establish the form or function of the buildings, although they probably had a residential and industrial purpose similar to pre-fort buildings excavated on sites at 3 Noble Street, 31–45 Gresham Street, and 90–91 and 100 Wood Street, which had evidence of hearths (Howe & Lakin 2004, 23–4). The buildings on these sites were similar to those with a residential and industrial function in the centre of the early Roman city, further to the south-east (Perring & Roskams 1991, 3–18; Hill & Rowsome in prep). They must have been demolished immediately prior to the construction of Cripplegate fort.

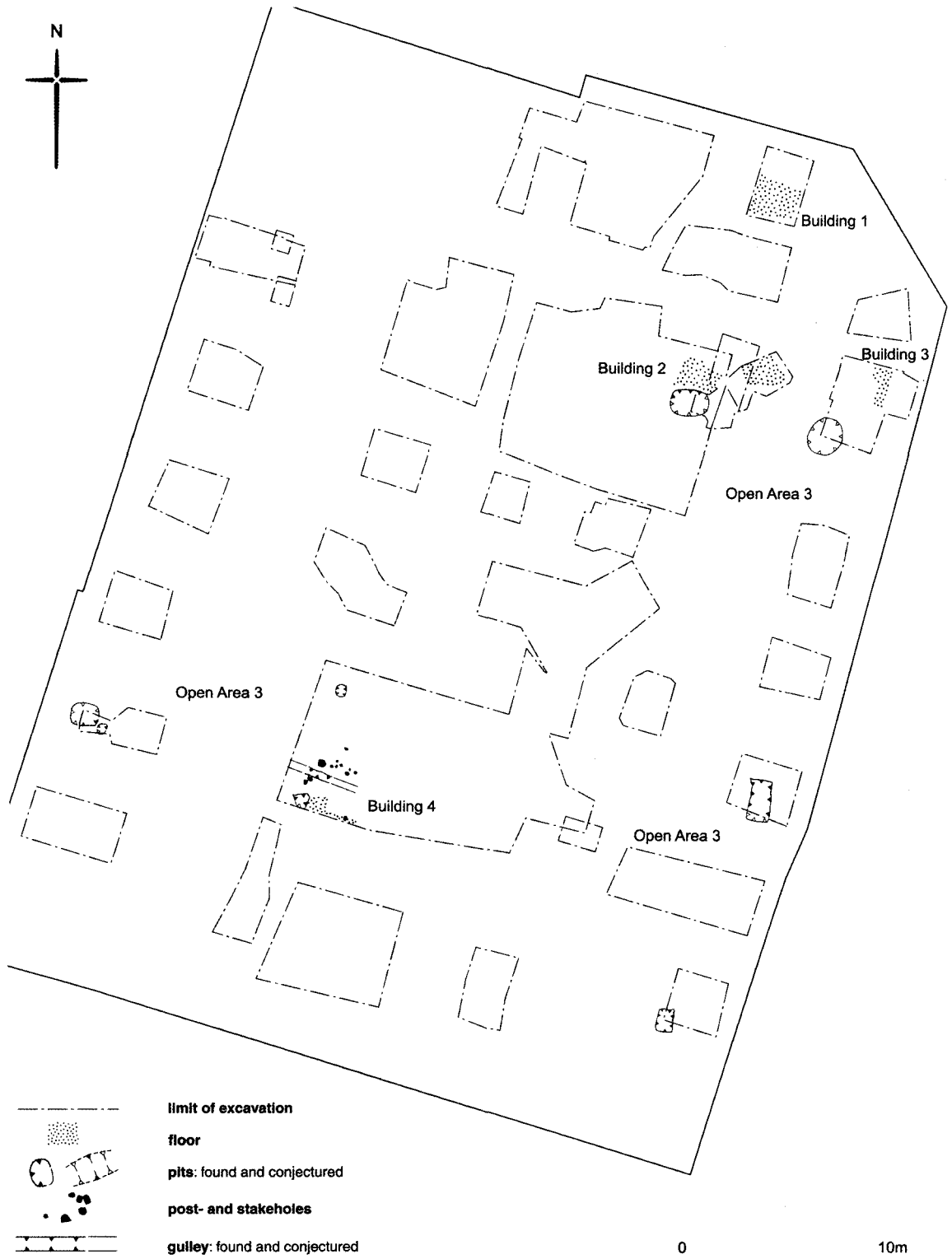


Fig 2. Pre-fort activity; early Roman buildings (Buildings 1–4) and Open Area 3 c.AD 50–120 (Period 1)

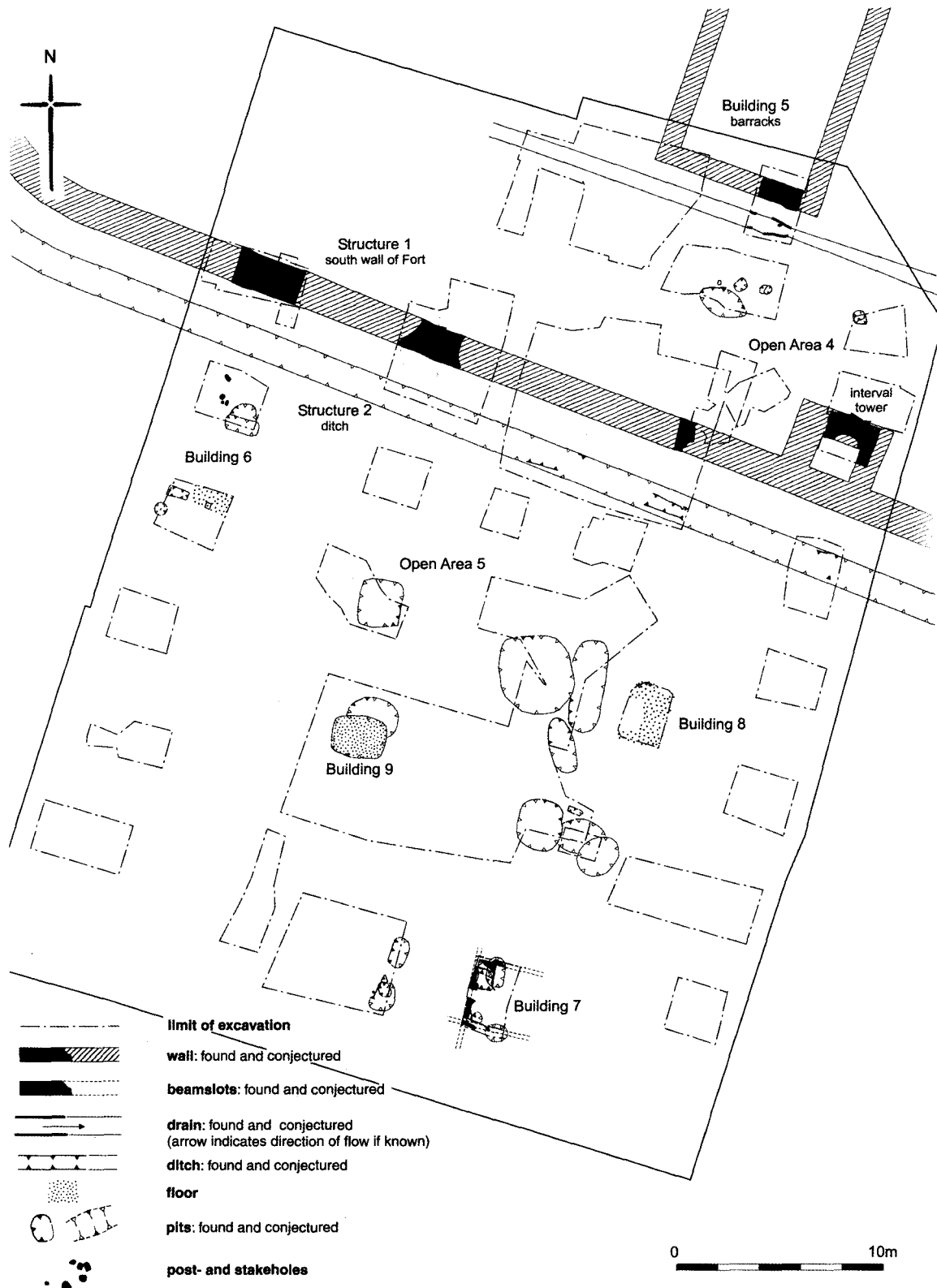


Fig 3. South wall of Cripplegate fort, ancillary structures and external contemporary features c.AD 120–200 (Period 2)

Cripplegate fort, c.AD 120–200 (Period 2)

The construction of Cripplegate fort took place c.AD 120–160. This date has been refined as a result of recent work (Howe & Lakin 2004, 39–40), as it was previously believed that the fort was constructed before AD 120 (Grimes 1968, 38). The dating of the fort has relied largely on finds assemblages from small fragments of internal

buildings and roads, excavated on neighbouring sites. No new dating evidence for the fort was obtained from the site of 25 Gresham Street; this was mainly due to deep truncation caused by modern basements on the site.

The line of the south wall of the fort crosses the northern part of the site. Initial evaluation (both by Grimes and MoLAS) was unable to establish the level of survival of the fort wall and



Fig 4. Foundations of south wall of Cripplegate fort (Structure 1), looking east (0.50m scale)

foundations. However, subsequent excavations on site confirmed that three separate fragments of the foundations of the fort wall and an interval tower (Structure 1, Fig 3) had survived. The foundations were found to be composed of packed Kentish ragstone (with occasional fragments of brown sandstone) and tile, bonded together with grey/green puddled clay (Fig 4).

The discovery of these *in-situ* fragments confirmed the exact location of the south wall, which is further to the north than had been anticipated. This discrepancy occurred because the line of the wall was originally projected using the south-west corner of the fort in Noble Street, the alignment of the north wall of the fort, and a small section of the south wall discovered running across Staining Lane (WFG11, Grimes 1968, 23). More recently, evidence for the location of the south wall was suggested by the discovery of an east–west aligned robber trench at 90–91 and 100 Wood Street in 1997 (Howe & Lakin 2004, 36).

In addition to the discovery of the south wall foundations, the remains of an interval tower

(Structure 1, Fig 5) were identified. Grimes had predicted the existence of this tower but had thought that it would be further to the east. The discovery of the tower confirms that it was situated approximately half way between the south-west corner of the fort and the gatehouse located in the area of Wood Street. The Kentish ragstone foundations of the south wall and interval tower were preserved *in situ* below the new development.

Other features relating to the fort included the fort ditch (Structure 2, Figs 3 and 6), discovered in two different locations and situated approximately 1m from the southern face of the fort wall. A fragment of one of the internal fort buildings (Building 5, Fig 3) was discovered at the northern extent of the site. This consisted of an east–west orientated, robbed-out Kentish ragstone and clay-packed wall foundation (similar to the fort wall foundation). Examples of structures like this have been discovered on sites at 3 Noble Street, 31–45 Gresham Street, and 90–91 and 100 Wood Street. The external wall of Building 5 was part of a much larger structure,



Fig 5. Foundations of interval tower (Structure 1), looking north-east (0.50m scale)



Fig 6. Section through external fort ditch (Structure 2), looking west (0.50m scale)

first identified on the adjacent site at 3 Noble Street. This building is identified as Building 12 in the Cripplegate monograph (Howe & Lakin 2004, 31–5), but has been numbered independently as Building 5 for the purpose of this study. The building would have been one of a series of large rectangular barrack blocks. The discovery of the south wall of Building 5 has allowed the overall dimensions of the barrack to be more accurately predicted, at 50m long and 8–10m wide. The internal area of Building 5 was not seen. Excavation of the northern portion of this building at 3 Noble Street, however, revealed internal floor deposits, a partition, and a hearth (Howe & Lakin 2004, 31). A gully was identified running parallel to the south of Building 5; this was part of the fort's drainage system. In addition to the fort wall, ditch, and barrack, it was expected that fragments of the intramural road (*via sagularis*) and clay bank might survive. It is possible that the compact, dirty gravel dump in Open Area 4 (Fig 3) was part of the road, or the bank. This deposit contained fragments of brick and Kentish ragstone rubble, which could

be debris related to construction work inside the fort.

Occupation activities thought to be contemporary with the fort were identified outside its south wall. These remains, which were extremely sparse, included parts of three clay and timber buildings. Buildings 6 and 8 (Fig 3) were situated in close proximity to the fort wall; both consisted of internal brickearth floors and occupation debris. The deposits in Building 6 contained a turquoise glass melon bead (<137>), and are dated to *c.*AD 120–160 by a rim sherd of a black burnished-style ware everted-rimmed jar, a body sherd of a colour-coated beaker (which may be Colchester colour-coated ware), and sherds of an unusual fine micaceous reduced ware bowl with compass-inscribed decoration (<P1>, Fig 7). The floors in Building 8 contained pottery including Central Gaulish samian, and jars and bowls in black burnished wares 1 and 2, dating the building to *c.*AD 120–160. Building 9 (Fig 3), which was slightly further south, consisted of the remains of brickearth floors, levelling, and trample, which had slumped into an earlier quarry pit, dating

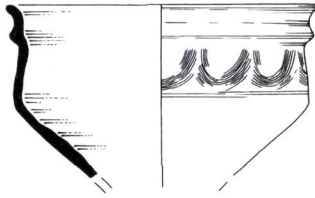


Fig 7. Unusual reduced ware bowl <P1> [910] (Scale 1:4)

to AD 150–200. At the southern extent of the site was Building 7 (Fig 3), consisting of a series of beamslots, make-up layers, and a hearth. A copper-alloy coin (<11>) and bowls, dishes and jars in black burnished wares 1 and 2 dated the building *c.*AD 120–160. Building 7 may have had an industrial purpose as samples taken from the hearth had a high iron-working slag content.

It is likely that the buildings in Period 2 were similar in form and function to the pre-fort buildings of Period 1. They are also likely to have been similar to buildings from nearby sites; a 1st-century building at 3 Noble Street also contained a hearth with slag fragments. Given that there was not a large amount of industrial waste associated with Building 7, it is probable that small scale smithing or repair work took place rather than mass production. This is corroborated by the nature of the finds contained in the pits in Open Area 5 (Fig 3), associated with Buildings 6–9. The pits associated with Building 7 contained a range of domestic finds, such as glass fragments, including part of the rim of a small cast bowl in marbled polychrome glass (<69>, Fig 8), fragments of a burnt oxidised ware bowl, and a Matres-de-Veyre samian fabric 2 Curle form 11 bowl with deep flange (<P2>, Fig 9). The faunal assemblage from these pits was exclusively cattle remains. The cluster of rubbish pits and wells in the centre of site (Fig 3) was dated AD 120–140 by various forms in black burnished wares 1 and 2, along with several dishes, bowls, and cups

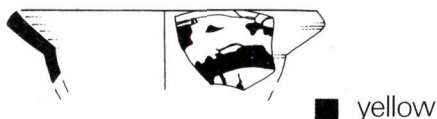


Fig 8. Cast glass bowl <69> (Scale 1:2)

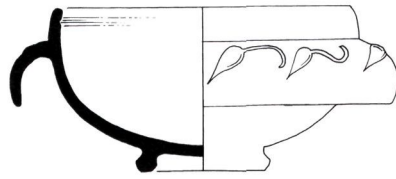


Fig 9. Samian bowl <P2> [265] (Scale 1:4)

in samian ware from Les Matres-de-Veyre and Lezoux. These pits also contained numerous fragments of mudbrick walling from clay and timber buildings, a fragment of combed box flue from a hypocausted building, and a faunal assemblage including marine and freshwater fish species.

It is probable that some of the buildings discussed above are actually part of the same structure; it was not possible to confirm this due to the small size of the trenches excavated. None of the Period 2 buildings or pits contained finds that could be described as military, a pattern that has also been observed on neighbouring sites. The pottery assemblage from Period 2 is very similar to that from 3 Noble Street, in that it contained very little pottery dating to the second half of the 2nd century (Howe & Lakin 2004, 39). This suggests that occupation of the Period 2 clay and timber buildings had ceased by AD 160.

Disuse of the fort *c.*AD 200–400 (Period 3)

The construction of the Northern House basement on the site in the 1950s destroyed all late Roman horizontal stratigraphy. Evidence from the site (Fig 10), when placed alongside more substantial evidence from surrounding sites, suggests that the fort fell into disuse by the mid-3rd century AD.

Of the fort features excavated on the site, only the fort ditch contained dating material, including a near complete Highgate Wood ware C

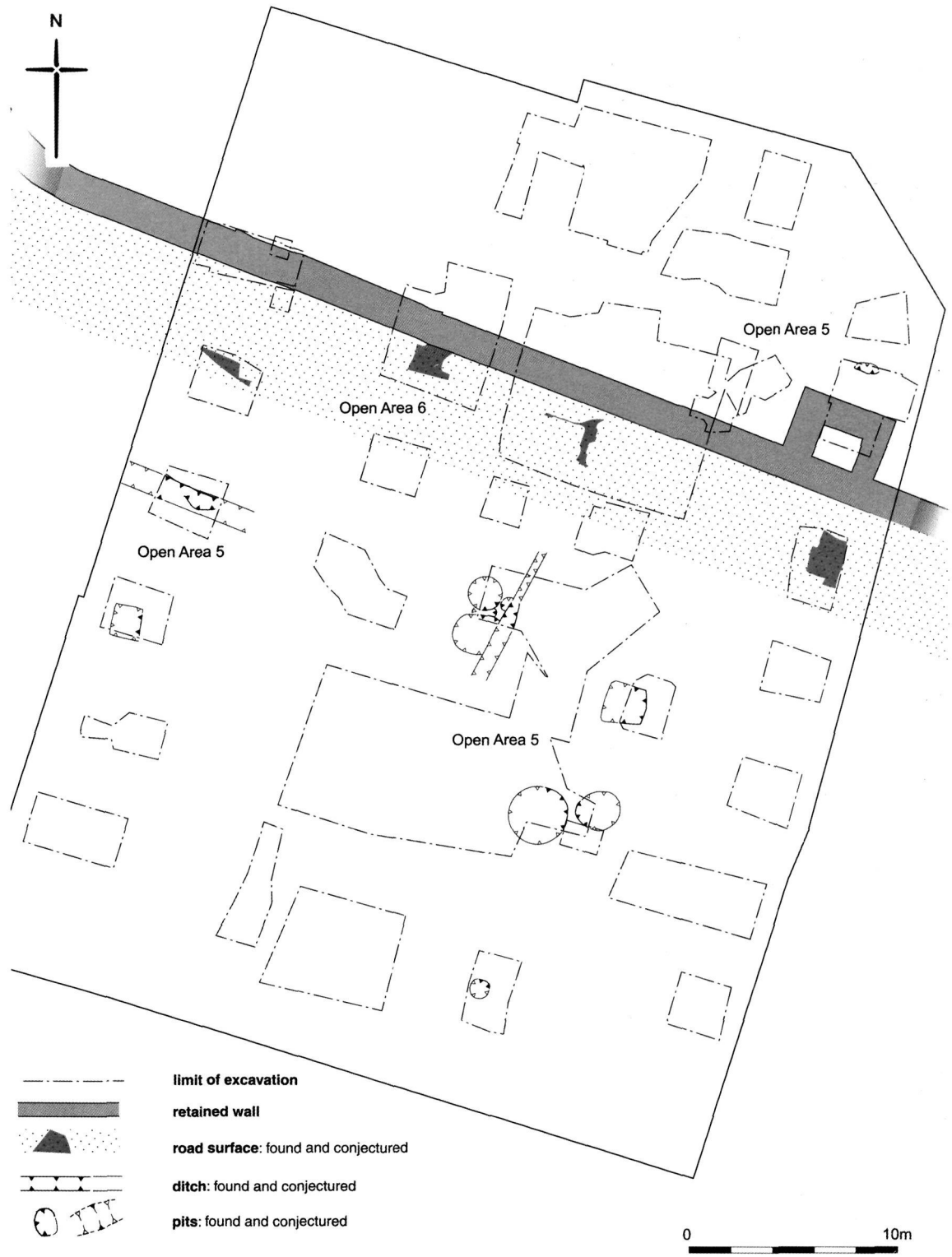


Fig 10. Disuse of the fort, c.AD 200–400 (Period 3)



Fig 11. Jar in Highgate Wood ware C with decorated shoulder <P3> [475] (Scale 1:1)

round-bodied jar with decorated shoulder (<P3>, Fig 11), suggesting that the ditch was backfilled in the mid–late 2nd century AD. The backfilled fort ditch was also excavated by the RMLEC on sites at 70a–71 Aldermanbury (WFG14) and the Guildhall Library (formerly Guildhall car park), Aldermanbury (GM4), and contained pottery dating to the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries AD (Grimes 1968, 39; Marsden 1968, 9).

The backfilling of the ditch does not necessarily indicate disuse of the fort, and was probably linked with the building of the city wall. It is known that construction of the Roman city wall took place between AD 190 and 225, at which time the north and west walls of the fort were thickened and incorporated into the city wall

(Perring 1991, 92). The external ditch for the fort's south wall would have become redundant, and it is likely that it was backfilled at this point. It is not known whether the fort also ceased to function and was entirely demolished at this time, or whether the south and east walls continued to stand. Evidence for the disuse of the fort obtained from other sites suggests that the internal buildings of the fort went out of use by the 3rd century AD. For instance, on sites at 3 Noble street and 90–91 and 100 Wood Street, barrack blocks were demolished and the internal area sealed by a layer of demolition material dating AD 150–250 (Howe & Lakin 2004, 45–7). On the site, the south wall of Building 5 (Building 12 at 3 Noble Street) had

been largely robbed out. The backfill of the robber trench contained a high proportion of plaster and mortar, and was dated 1000–1150 by a small amount of medieval pottery. Building 11 at 90–91 and 100 Wood Street also had robbed out foundations backfilled with plaster and mortar debris from the demolition of its interior, but contained large amounts of pottery dating to AD 160–300 (Howe & Lakin 2004, 42). This suggests that there may have been a delay between the demolition of the barracks, and the robbing of the foundations. It is clear that the original layout of the fort did persist into the later Roman period, due to the fact that some of the internal roads were remetalled after the internal buildings were demolished.

The site has produced evidence that suggests the south wall of the fort may have continued to stand after the construction of the city wall. There is no evidence of any Roman robbing of the south fort wall foundations on the site. This may mean that the interior of the fort was redeveloped while the wall was left intact. Or it could simply mean that robbing of the foundations of the fort did not take place immediately after the demolition of the upstanding wall, on this site. It was not until the early medieval period that cut features first began to encroach upon the line of the wall; prior to this there is nothing to suggest that the wall was not still a physical boundary in the landscape. This possibility is given further credence by the manner in which the landscape external to the south wall of the fort was remodelled during the 2nd/3rd century AD. Directly after the fort ditch was backfilled, the area to the south of the wall was cleared and a metallated surface laid (Open Area 6, Fig 10). This metallating respected the line of the wall and sloped up towards it, suggesting that the wall may still have been standing at this time. The gravel surface, 5–6m wide north–south, extended east–west across the full extent of the site. It contained roofing tile and brick in a variety of fabrics, suggesting that it was partially made up of demolition material from a number of buildings, possibly derived from the destruction of internal fort structures. The latest pottery present in the assemblage from Open Area 6 was a small sherd of East Gaulish samian, dated *c.*AD 150–300, and what may have been a sherd of a Colchester white ware vessel dated AD 200–300. This corresponds with the date at which the ditch was backfilled, and when demolition of internal buildings probably began. Open Area 6 contained arguably the

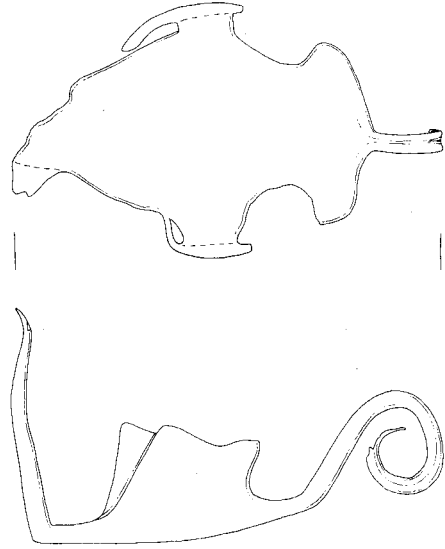


Fig 12. Iron hipposandal <41> (Scale 1:4)

most interesting Roman finds from the site: the remains of two iron hipposandals, including a near complete example (<41>, Fig 12), belonging to Manning's type 1 (Manning 1985, 63 and fig 16, no. 1). These were a form of horseshoe used on unshod animals on metallated surfaces, and it is extremely rare to find examples from archaeologically excavated contexts.

It is possible that Open Area 6 represented an external road built during or after the construction of the city wall, and was associated with the partial redevelopment of the fort road system at this time. It is difficult to relate later Roman activity on nearby sites to that on the 25 Gresham Street site; the metallated surface in Open Area 6 has no parallel elsewhere. The metallating was truncated at an unknown date, and sealed by an undated dark silty deposit (Open Area 7), not unlike late Roman 'dark earth'. There were no Roman pits cut through the layer of metallating, and so it is possible that this road or yard represents some kind of exclusion zone around the south wall of the fort.

Late Roman pits and linear features were found to the north and south of Open Area 6, in Open Area 5 (the pit internal to the fort wall (see below) would have been physically separated from the other features at this time) (Fig 10). These features had a date range of *c.*AD 200–300. In the western part of the site an east–west orientated ditch ran approximately parallel

to the gravel surface in Open Area 6, and may have been associated with it. The backfill of two large pits in the centre of Open Area 5 contained a range of finds including a copper-alloy finger ring (<93>, Fig 13) with stone intaglio. The ring looks like a late development of Henig type III

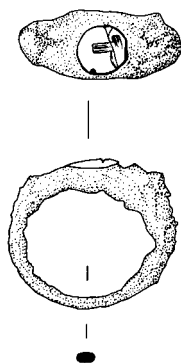


Fig 13. Copper-alloy ring with intaglio <93> (Scale 1:1)

towards the forms characteristic of late Antonine times and beyond. The cornelian, with which it is set, is cut with a single stroke of the lap wheel and was clearly designed when worn to look like an engraved signet. It compares well with an 'intaglio' from South Shields (Henig 1978, no. 421). Another example of a base of an iron hipposandal (<102>) was also recovered from a pit in Open Area 5. A pit within the confines of the former fort (Fig 10) contained fragments of brown ferruginous sandstone; this is known to have been used as a plinth at the base of the city wall, and could have been discarded during its construction.

There was no evidence of post-fort or later Roman buildings on the site. There was evidence of a post-fort building on the neighbouring site 90–91 and 100 Wood Street, however, situated in the internal area of the fort, and built on barrack demolition layers. The building dates to AD 250–400 and does not respect the original internal layout of the fort, providing further evidence that the fort had fallen into disuse by this time (Howe & Lakin 2004, 43).

A fairly large assemblage of residual late Roman pottery was found in early medieval features on the site. The assemblage consists mainly of 3rd-century pottery types, such as Alice Holt/Farnham ware, later black burnished ware forms,

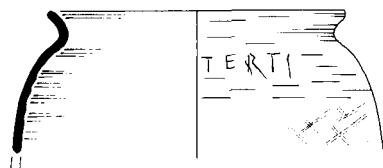


Fig 14. Jar in black burnished ware 2 with graffito TERTI <P4> [140] (Scale 1:4; graffito 1:1)

Oxfordshire and Nene Valley colour-coated wares, and East Gaulish samian. The assemblage includes sherds of a bowl in black burnished ware 2 (<P4>, Fig 14) marked with a graffito which reads TERTI.

Roman discussion

The evidence from the site indicates that the area was occupied by buildings in the latter part of the 1st century AD, prior to the building of the fort. This confirms the pattern known from nearby sites, and shows that the settlement expanded quickly once it had been re-established after the Boudican revolt. The buildings excavated on the site appear to conform to the general nature of buildings in the area in the 1st century AD — domestic houses with an industrial component. There is no evidence that these buildings were military in nature, and they were not situated in areas which respected or anticipated the layout of the later fort. There was no evidence on the site that the fort was preceded by an earlier military installation, such as a timber fort, as has been suggested (Perring 1991, 39–40).

The 1st-century buildings on the site were swept away prior to construction of the fort; dating evidence from surrounding sites indicates that fort construction took place between AD 120 and 160. The discovery of the remains of the south wall of the fort demonstrated that the construction technique of the fort foundations was fairly crude, consisting of trench-built layers of unshaped ragstone bonded with puddled clay. The fort ditch was recorded in three different locations on the site, approximately 1m from the

face of the south wall. No evidence of a second external ditch was identified, as was the case at Alder Castle and Falcon House, 1–6 Aldersgate Street, where there was evidence that the fort may have had a double ditch on its west side (Butler 2001, 45). The discovery of the south wall of Building 5, in conjunction with evidence provided by nearby sites, has allowed the full dimensions of this barrack block to be more accurately estimated, giving a measurement of 50m long and 8–10m wide. Evidence of occupation contemporary with the fort was discovered outside the south wall. The buildings in Period 2 were similar to those in Period 1 in that they were clay and timber built, and not of particularly high status. The presence of the fort on site is not reflected in the finds assemblages; very few *in situ* military type finds have been retrieved from sites in the Cripplegate area in general.

The site did not provide any new evidence for the date at which the fort may have fallen into disuse. Evidence from nearby sites suggests that the upper limit for disuse of the internal fort buildings is *c.*AD 250, and so the fort probably fell into disuse by the mid-3rd century AD. Evidence from the site did show that the foundations of the south wall of the fort were not encroached upon until the early medieval period. Also, a gravel surface was laid down over the backfilled fort ditch during the 3rd century AD that respected the line of the wall. This may suggest that the wall remained standing in some form, perhaps in a partially robbed or ruinous state, after the construction of the city wall. The defensive features of the fort would certainly have no longer been necessary once the city wall had been built, and this must account for the backfilling of the fort ditch. There is evidence that the south-east corner of the fort was still partially standing in the medieval period (Marsden 1968, 7). On the site, there is also evidence that the foundations of Building 5 were not robbed until the early medieval period. A stair turret recently identified on the city wall, close to the turret on the south-west corner of Cripplegate fort (Alder Castle and Falcon House, 1–6 Aldersgate Street), has been interpreted as a possible replacement for the south-west corner turret, which may have been demolished during the building of the city wall (Butler 2001, 50). By extension, it is possible that the demolition of the south wall could have taken place simultaneously; however, the evidence does seem to indicate that robbing

and demolition of the stonework of the fort was not systematic, and did not occur as a wholesale event.

THE MEDIEVAL SEQUENCE

Early medieval, *c.*400–1200 (Period 4)

After the departure of the Romans at the beginning of the 5th century AD, the Cripplegate area was apparently not occupied again until the late Saxon period. Reoccupation of the Roman city began in the late 9th century, on the riverfront. By the 10th century settlement had expanded towards Cheapside, and development of the medieval street system of Cripplegate had begun (Milne 2001, 122–5). It is documented that Wood Street was already in existence by the 10th century (Harben 1918). The church of St John Zachary, just to the south of the site, is first mentioned in 1120, as the church of St John the Baptist.

The initial redevelopment of the Cripplegate area is represented on the site by a concentrated burst of activity between *c.*1050 and 1080, as shown by the ceramic evidence. This trend is also reflected on neighbouring sites; the archaeology of the area is characterised by sunken and cellared buildings and deep, lined pits and wells (Fig 15). It is likely that the wattle/timber-lined pits and wells on the site were originally associated with buildings fronting onto Staining Lane, which have since been removed by deep basements. The foundations of the fort barrack block, Building 5, may also have been robbed in this period as the backfill of the robber trench contained pottery dating to *c.*1050–1150.

The remains of an early medieval sunken-building (Building 10, Fig 15) were identified on the site, contemporaneous with most of the pits dated to this period. These pits were situated in Open Area 8 (Fig 15), which extended across the whole site during Period 4. During the late 10th and early 11th centuries, pits began to encroach onto the line of the fort wall, perhaps indicating that it was no longer a visible or important feature in the landscape (Fig 16). Building 10 seems to have utilised the fort wall foundations as part of its structure, which may mean that parts of the wall were at least still partially visible in the early medieval period. The practice of reusing Roman walls in early medieval buildings is also known from other sites in the City, for instance at 1 Poultry (ONE94), where a

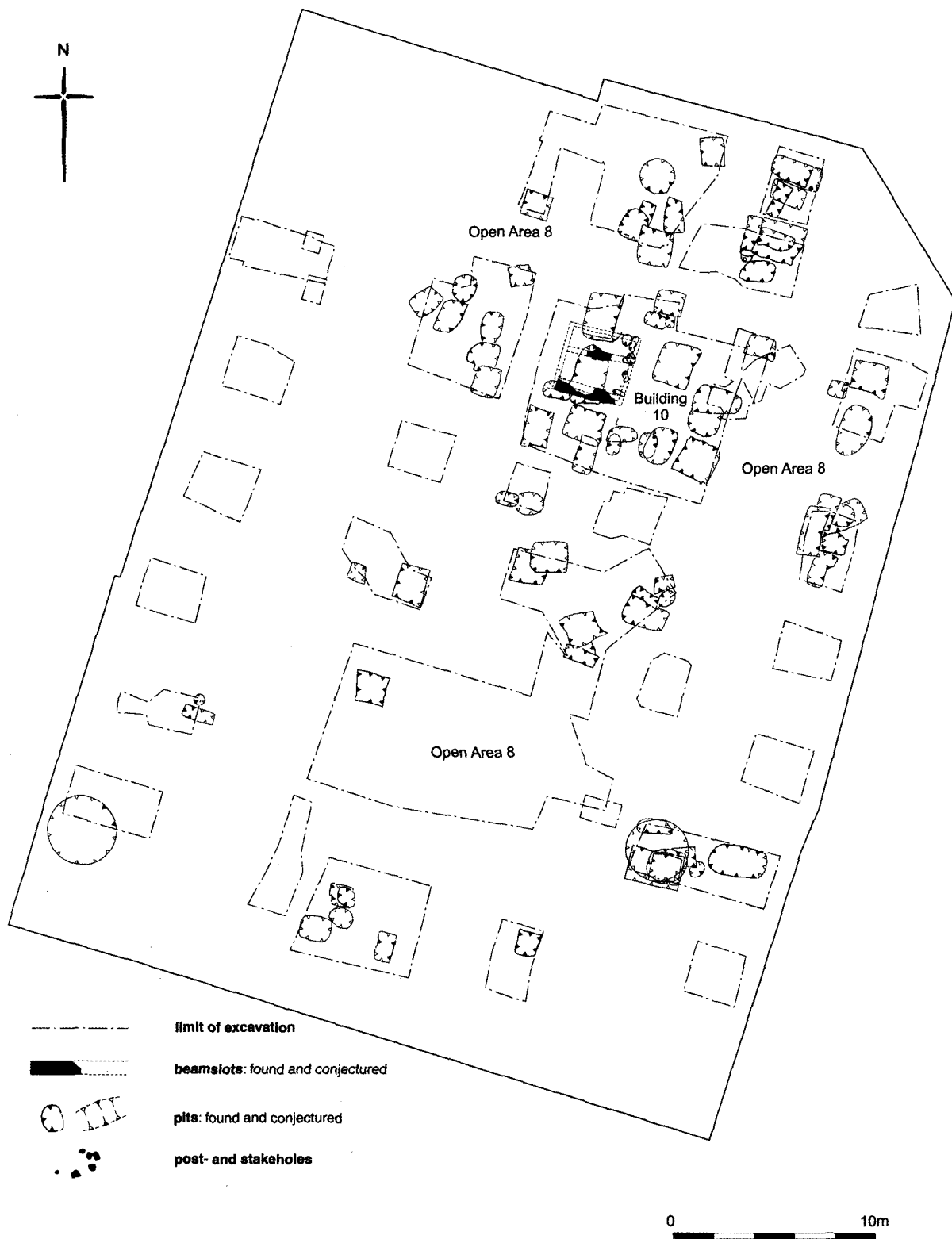


Fig 15. Early medieval, c.400–1200 (Period 4)

10th-century sunken-floored building was built against the west wall of a Roman building (Burch & Trevail in prep). Building 10 contained no evidence of floor surfaces such as have been discovered in other early medieval buildings, for example on sites at 3 Noble Street and 90–91 and 100 Wood Street (Howe & Lakin 2004, 64–7); the remains of Building 10 were quite ephemeral by comparison. The base of the building was at the same level as the base of the fort wall foundation, and measured at least 3.4m north–south and 3m east–west. The only surviving internal elements were the partial remains of one beamslot, and the impression of one insubstantial post setting. The area was cleared when the building went out of use, followed by dumping of large amounts of destruction debris. These dumps had a high wood content and were full of voids, presumably left by the dumped rotted posts. It is probable that this material relates to the wooden superstructure of the building, used to backfill the cellar when it fell into disuse. The backfill of the building was dated to c.1050–1150 by sherds of cooking

pots/jars in early medieval chalk-tempered ware and early medieval shell-tempered ware. This suggests that the building had a domestic function, similar to other early medieval buildings on neighbouring sites. Building 10 also appears to be on a similar alignment to other early medieval buildings recorded in the area (Howe & Lakin 2004, 65, fig 52).

The backfill of Building 10 was cut by pits of similar date, suggesting that the building was in use for only a short time. The pits in Open Area 8 were concentrated mainly in the north-east portion of the site, where they occurred in clusters and were mostly rectangular in shape. Many of the pits were lined with wattle or timber planking, and at least one was lined with clay. It is likely that they were used as cesspits, wells, and maybe even for storage (Fig 17). Some were in excess of 5m deep from the contemporary medieval land surface, dug to the base of the brickearth and into the underlying gravel. Not all of the exceptionally deep pits were lined, despite this it is likely that many served as wells in the



Fig 16. Truncated fragment of south wall of Roman fort, showing early medieval timber-lined pits in foreground, looking north (0.50m scale)



Fig 17. Section through early medieval lined pits, looking north

backyard area of tenements. The pitting did not seem to follow any particular pattern, so it has not been possible to reconstruct the boundaries of tenements by inference from the location of pit clusters. All the pits were orientated with the surrounding road system, however, indicating that they may originally have been associated with roadside buildings.

Pits with medium sized pottery assemblages (30–100 sherds) are dated to *c.*1050–1080 by the presence of early medieval handmade coarsewares and the absence of London-type wares, first used in the City *c.*1080 (Vince & Jenner 1991, 268). Sherds of London-type ware were found in some pits, including an unusual form of bowl or skillet in coarse London-type ware. The most common ceramic forms from Open Area 8 are cooking pots or jars, including a near complete cooking pot in London-area greyware (<P5>, Fig 18). Pitchers, used for serving wine or ale at table, are the other main form represented on the site. Part of a probable spouted pitcher in early Surrey ware (<P6>, Fig 18) has unusual, stamped decoration on the shoulder. There is little pottery that originated outside the London area,

although a spouted pitcher in Ipswich-Thetford-type ware was found. There is also relatively little continental pottery, although the rim and handle from a spouted pitcher in red-painted ware was found in one trench — red-painted wares are largely associated with the wine trade from the Rhineland.

Very few bowls and dishes used for food preparation and serving were found in Open Area 8; there were also relatively few food remains. The animal bone assemblage was composed mainly of sheep/goat remains, with a lesser amount of cattle and a small quantity of pig. The body part emphasis is on mandibles and lower limbs, the lesser meat-bearing bones, indicating that this is butchery waste. Other sites in the Cripplegate area have produced similar assemblages (Ainsley 2004). On this site it is possible that the predominance of sheep/goat remains indicates that the bones came from specialist butchers' waste (O'Connor 1993, 65). Food waste, as well as butchery waste, was found in pits near to Building 10 (Fig 15). These assemblages contained fish remains, mainly herring, cod, and eel. There was evidence that beef, mutton and

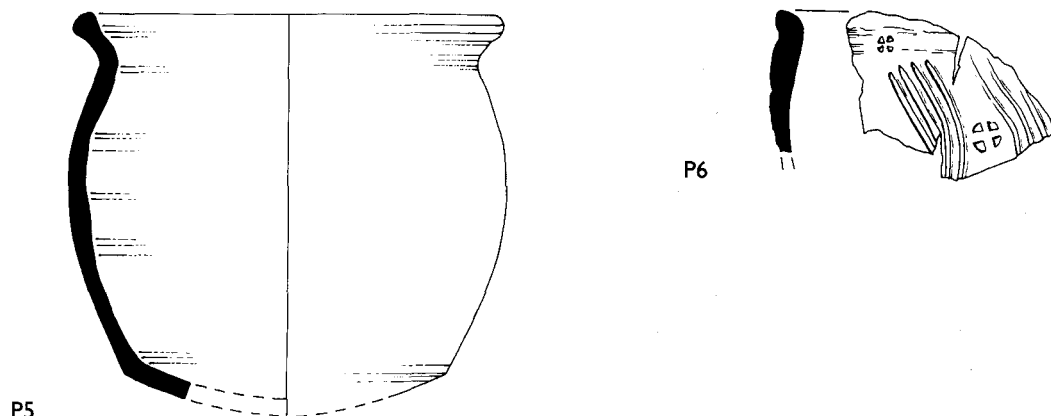


Fig 18. Cooking pot in London-area greyware <P5> [276] and spouted pitcher in early Surrey ware <P6> [322] (Scale 1:4)

some pork was consumed, along with chicken, goose, and duck. The only high status foodstuffs present were roe deer and veal; these could also have been associated with vellum production, for book binding (Serjeantson 1980, 129). Lack of high status foodstuffs was also reflected in the plant remains. Samples mainly produced evidence of cereals such as bread wheat and oat, fruit seeds such as blackberry/raspberry, cherry stones, and mineralised pear and apple remains.

In addition to domestic activity, there was evidence for metalworking and dye preparation. Metalworking crucibles were found in Open Area 8, in Periods 4 and 5, mostly in early medieval coarse whiteware, the main crucible fabric used in London between c.1050 and 1150. Crucibles found in Period 5 are largely residual, redeposited by constant pit-digging in the same area. In Period 4, sherds from two rounded crucibles were found in wattle-lined pits in the central area of site (Fig 15). The fabric is vitrified, as a result of having been heated to a high temperature. Neither crucible is large, and they were probably used in the production of copper-alloy dress accessories. One example from Period 5 appears not to have been used in metalworking at all. It is sooted and fire-cracked, with high levels of calcium and phosphorus present internally, and may have been used in the preparation of bone for cupellation, rather than in melting copper. There is also a rounded crucible in London-type ware (<P7>, Fig 19), heavily burnt and sooted, with an internal deposit resembling limescale; again, it may not have been used in

metalworking. The Cripplegate area is known to have been a centre of metallurgy, and over 150 crucible fragments were found on neighbouring sites 3 Noble Street and 90–91 and 100 Wood Street (Howe & Lakin 2004, 77). Nearby sites have also produced evidence for silver working, but this was not present on the site. It was not possible to identify areas of the site in which metalworking was concentrated.

Vessels used in the production of dye from madder were found in the north of site (Fig 15). This process involved boiling up the roots of dyers' madder (*Rubia tinctorum*) in order to create a purplish red liquid that was then used to colour textiles (Walton 1992, 200). Standard

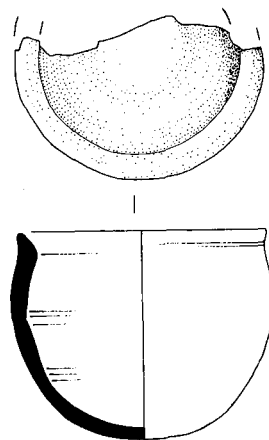


Fig 19. Crucible in London-type ware <P7> [356] (Scale 1:4)

cooking pots and jars were principally used in the process; these typically became stained dark purple over the inside and base as a result. Madder-stained pottery was found in both lined and unlined pits on the site, some of which were extremely deep and may originally have been wells. The evidence for madder-boiling is concentrated in this period; activity began to wane in Period 5. Evidence for madder production has been found on many other sites nearby, suggesting that the Gresham Street/Noble Street area was a focus for this activity. Another comparable concentration of madder-stained vessels was found at 1 Poultry (ONE94; Whittingham pers comm). This activity appears to be limited to the 10th–12th centuries in the City, perhaps suggesting that dyeing subsequently became more of a commercial enterprise, rather than a domestic handicraft (Crowfoot *et al* 1992, 20). The number of madder-stained vessels found on the site may indicate the presence of small scale, domestic, textile-related industry. The pits containing madder-stained vessels were concentrated in the north-east portion of the site, perhaps indicating that dye production was localised in this area.

Medieval development, c.1200–1350 (Period 5)

By the beginning of the 13th century, evidence of activity on the site had decreased dramatically (Fig 20). Evidence from nearby sites indicates that the sunken/cellared buildings, typical of the Cripplegate area in the early medieval period, were replaced with more substantial masonry and timber buildings (*eg* 3 Noble Street). Many of the City's Guild and merchant houses were also under construction by this time: Haberdasher's Hall, Beaumont's Inn, Shelley House, Brewer's Hall, and Neville's Inn. There is evidence that the frontage of Silver Street became lined with the houses of wealthy merchants (Howe & Lakin 2004, 78). It is possible that a similar pattern of development took place on this site, with the street frontages of Staining Lane and Noble Street lined with larger houses during the 13th century.

The intense pitting activities, which had previously characterised the landscape of the north-east area of the site, all but ceased in Period 5. Most of the pits in this period (Open Area 8, Fig 20) were dug in the same area as the earlier phases of pitting, causing the pottery assemblages to become very mixed. This was particularly true of the extensively recut sequence of pits in the

south of the site. Such intense localised activity indicates that space may have become restricted by this time. Several pits were dated by pottery to the second half of the 12th or early 13th century. Some pits are dated after *c.*1170 by the presence of South Hertfordshire-type greyware, and/or London-type ware decorated in the North French or Rouen styles. Other pits are dated to *c.*1140 or later by shelly-sandy ware and/or London-type ware early rounded jugs. Coarse London-type ware was common during the 12th century, as seen in the Period 4 assemblage, but was going out of production by the beginning of the 13th century. The pits cut by a later building (Building 12) contained a medium sized assemblage of pottery dated to *c.*1240–1270; one pit in this sequence had the best-preserved wattle lining recorded on the site. London-type wares predominate, with sherds from four cooking pots or jars in South Hertfordshire-type greyware and one in early Surrey ware. Part of a large Rouen-style baluster or rounded jug (<P8>, Fig 21) is clear-glazed, with vertical strips of alternately red and white slip. A second London-type ware jug has criss-cross *sgraffito* combing around the neck, which alone is white-slipped under a green glaze (<P9>, Fig 21). This selective use of white slip is extremely unusual; jugs were either slipped entirely or not at all. The *sgraffito* technique is also found on another London-type ware baluster jug from the same group (<P10>, Fig 21), completely white-slipped under a clear glaze. Part of a green-glazed jug in the highly decorated style has a series of curvilinear, applied plant tendrils around the body, with applied stamped discs representing flowers (<P11>, Fig 21). Jugs with this more elaborate development of the North French style are first found in London *c.*1240–1250 (see Pearce *et al* 1985, 19, *cf* fig 40, no 135; fig 41, no 138; fig 55, no 209). As this pottery came from the higher end of the local market, it is possible that the contents of pits cut by Building 12 were discarded by a relatively wealthy household.

A complicated sequence of wattle-lined pits was excavated in the centre of the site in Open Area 8 (Fig 20). The later pits appear to have been dug through the centre of earlier ones, resulting in a 'Russian doll' effect, or it is possible that one large pit was successively cleared out and relined, gradually becoming smaller. Such extensive recutting resulted in disturbance of the earlier features, demonstrated by the fact that there are numerous sherd links between

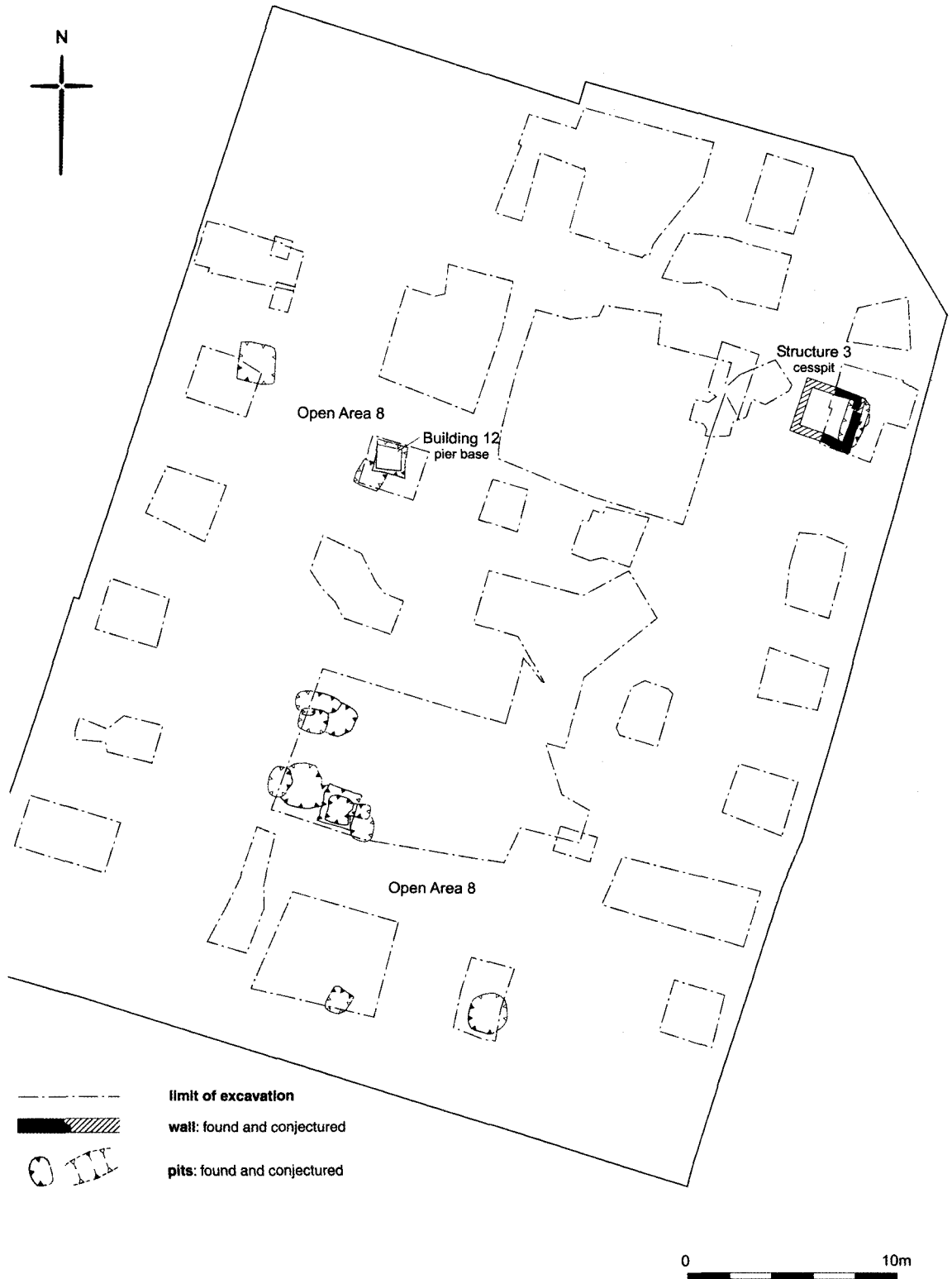


Fig 20. Medieval development, c. 1200–1350 (Period 5)

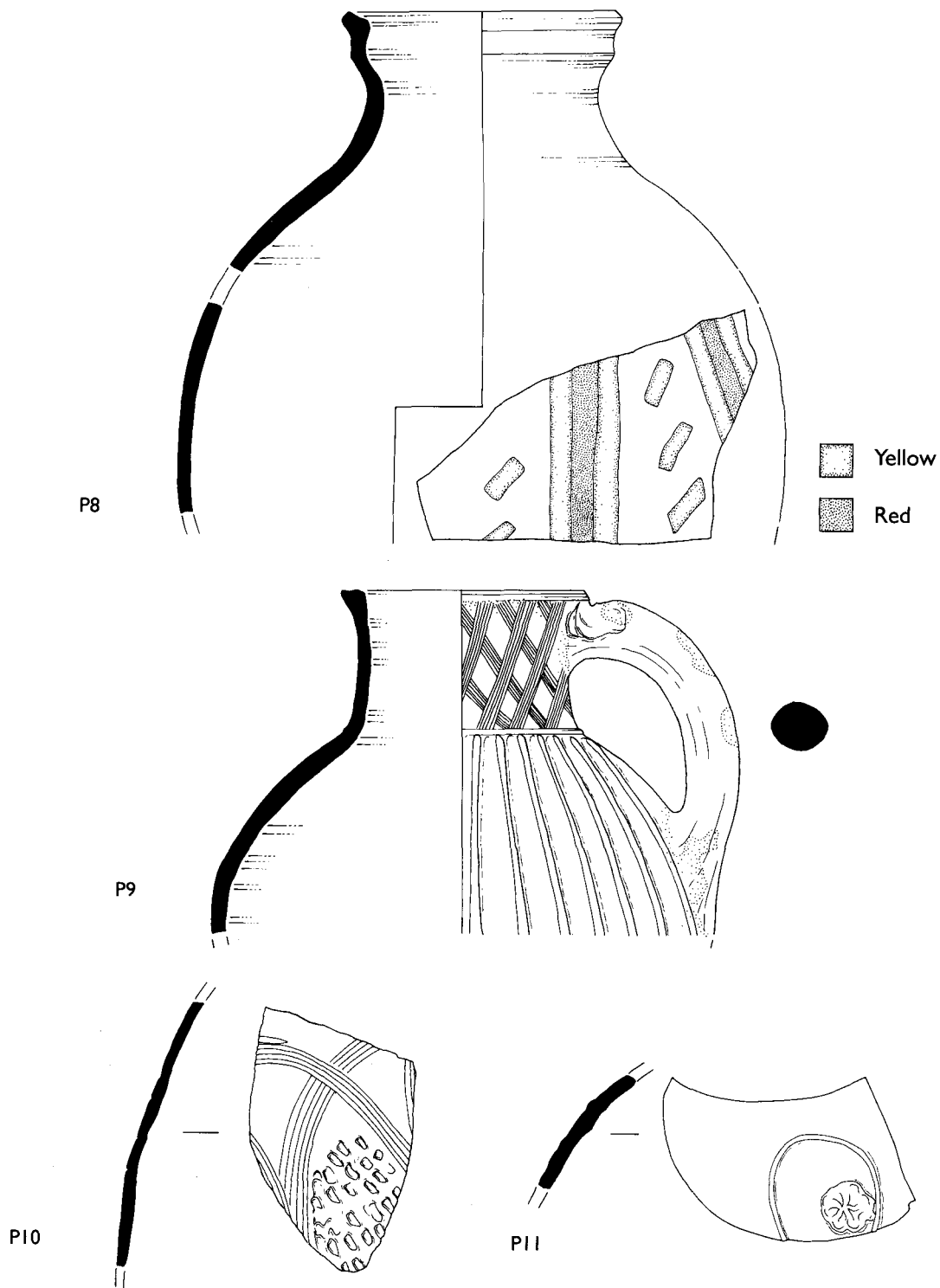


Fig 21. Pottery from pits in Open Area 8, Period 5: Rouen-style baluster jug in London-type ware <P8> [356]; jug in London-type ware with criss-cross sgraffito <P9> [356]; baluster jug in London-type ware with sgraffito <P10> [356]; green-glazed highly decorated jug in London-type ware in the highly decorated style <P11> [356] (Scale 1:4)

vessels from separate pits in the group. The ceramic assemblage is dated to *c.*1290–1350 by sherds in London-type ware, Kingston-type ware, and South Hertfordshire-type greyware. Sherds from tall, tulip-necked baluster jugs in London-type ware come from a form probably used for storing and serving wine. The assemblage also includes more decorative vessels, such as jugs in Kingston-type ware and Mill Green ware

with white slip decoration. Other pottery in the group consists mostly of cooking vessels, including the substantial remains of a cauldron (<P12>, Fig 22); there are also cooking vessels in London-type ware, including pipkins (<P13>, Fig 22). The only other form identified in South Hertfordshire-type greyware is a rounded jug (<P14>, Fig 22). The sequence of pits also contained the remains of a large roof finial in coarse

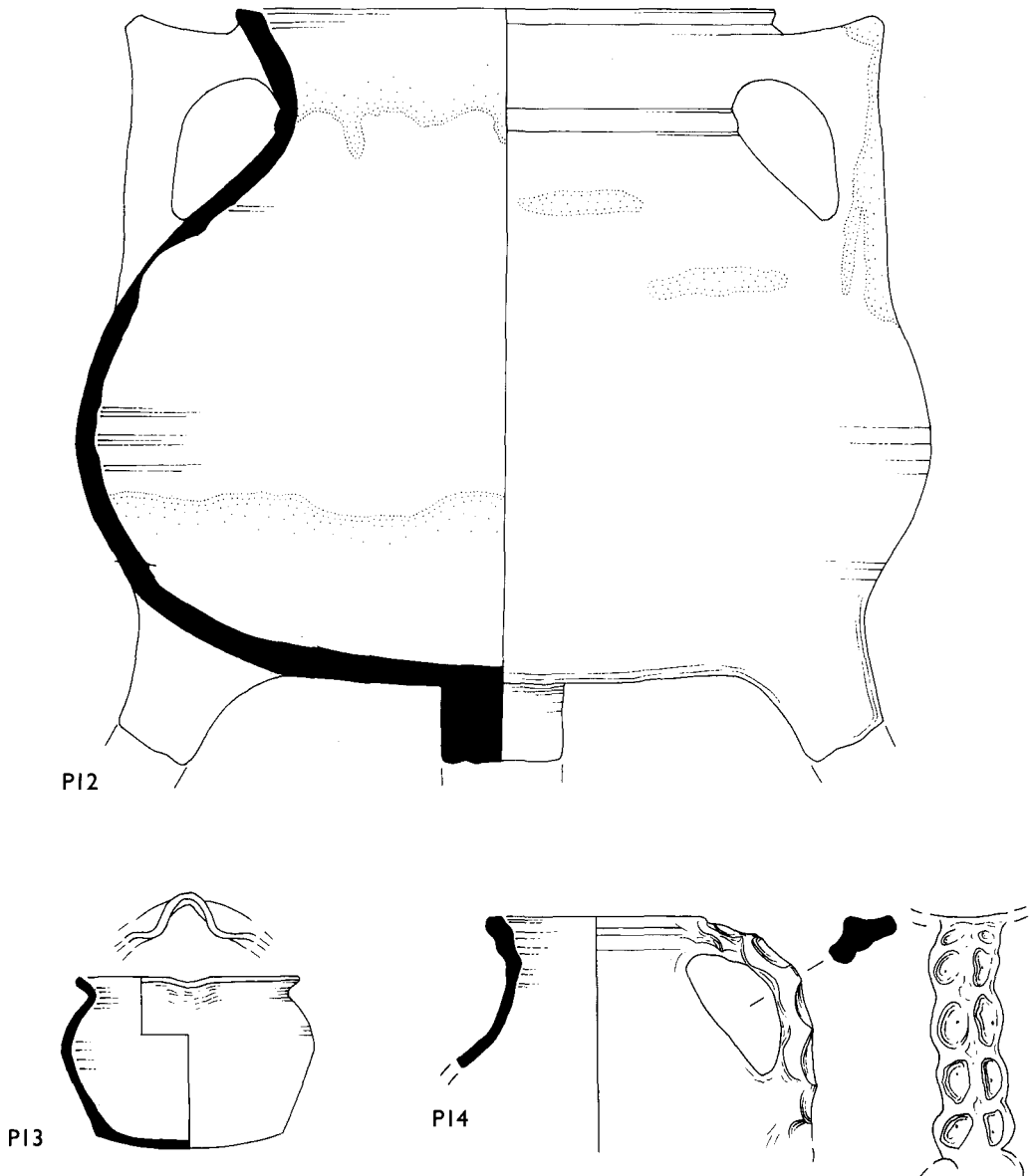


Fig 22. Pottery from Open Area 8, Period 5: cauldron in Kingston-type ware <P12> [758]; pipkin in London-type ware <P13> [758]; rounded jug in South Hertfordshire-type greyware <P14> [758] (Scale 1:4)

London-type ware. Most of the roof tile found in Period 5 consisted of the common, London-made peg and curved ridge tiles. The presence of a decorated finial suggests a high status building in the vicinity.

The wealth of the occupants of the site may have increased since Period 4, as suggested by the ceramic finds, perhaps as a result of the metalworking and textile-related industries focused in the area during the early medieval period. There is no evidence for madder-staining on the site by Period 5, and the metalworking crucibles were all residual from Period 4. These processes may no longer have been taking place in the same location, or may have continued on a reduced scale. Although good quality, decorative pottery may suggest increased wealth, the record of faunal and floral remains is similar in composition to that of Period 4, with little evidence for high status foodstuffs. Moreover, there is scant evidence for higher status stone buildings, with one possible exception. Building 12 (Fig 20) consisted of a single, extremely robust, chalk pier base, constructed of Kentish ragstone and chalk, and bonded with a gravelly mortar. The pier was approximately 5m in depth, from contemporary land surface, trapezoidal in shape and was clearly

constructed to carry the weight of a substantial structure. Curiously, the pier was built inside an earlier wattle-lined pit/well, which could account for its unusual shape. The earlier pit was dated to c.1240–1270 by a medium sized assemblage of pottery, so the pier must have been built after this time. No other piers were discovered on the site, although similar piled foundations were found on 3 Noble Street, to the north. These piles truncated pits still in use in c.1150, which means they could have been built up to 90 years earlier than Building 12. The remains on 3 Noble Street have been interpreted as those of a large masonry building, perhaps an early medieval hall (Howe & Lakin 2004, 68). As street frontages began to be built up with masonry buildings in the late medieval period, wood-lined cesspits were often superseded by chalk-built ones. A chalk-built cesspit (Structure 3, Fig 20) was discovered at the eastern extent of the site, close to Staining Lane. The latest pottery in the cesspit dates to c.1270–1350.

Later medieval development, c.1350–1600 (Period 6)

By Period 6 activity in Open Area 8 was confined

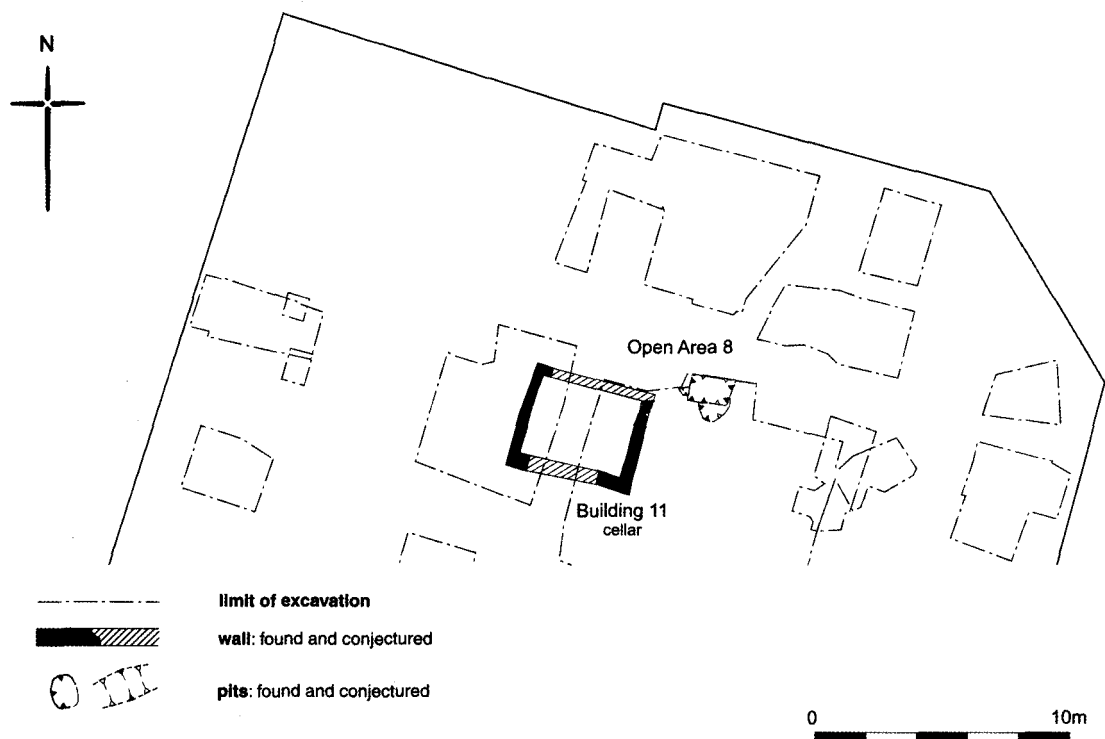


Fig 23. Later medieval development, c.1350–1600 (Period 6)



Fig 24. Section through inter-cutting late medieval pits, looking north-east (0.50m scale)

to one small area in the north of the site, where a sequence of unlined pits is dated to c.1350–1400 (Figs 23–24). The pottery is typical of late 14th-century assemblages across London. Jugs and cooking pots in coarse Surrey-Hampshire border ware are the most common types present. The jugs include rounded and baluster forms. In

addition to Surrey-Hampshire border ware, the pit assemblage includes a near-complete rounded drinking jug in Cheam whiteware, first used in the capital c.1350. The assemblage also includes a virtually complete bone bodkin or tool (<63>, Fig 25).

A large Kentish ragstone- and chalk-built cellar



Fig 25. Bone thread picker <63> (Scale 1:1)



Fig 26. Medieval glass vessels from a backfilled cellar (Building 11): flasks <17> and <29> and printed beaker <27> (Scale 1:1)

(Building 11, Fig 23) was discovered in the north-west area of the site. The building was probably constructed after the nearby pits went out of use. The date at which Building 11 was in use is unknown; pottery from the backfill suggests that it fell out of use between 1480 and 1550. A range of cooking pots and jugs was found in Cheam whiteware and Surrey-Hampshire border ware, used for food preparation, cooking, and serving. Examples of London-area redwares in the assemblage include cauldrons and/or pipkins and a rounded jug. The backfill also contained a small assemblage of medieval glass vessels: flasks

<17> and <29> (Fig 26), a urinal <20>, and a printed beaker <27> (Fig 26).

The pottery from the pits in Period 6 is relatively plain and utilitarian; there is no imported pottery or industrial wares. This is a pattern seen across London at this date, and may be linked to the impact of the Black Death on ceramic production. There is nothing to suggest that the rubbish from the backfilled cellar (Building 11) was discarded by a wealthy household, although the sample is not large. The few imported wares in the deposit include the base of a cauldron or tripod pipkin in Dutch red earthenware, and

part of a large dish in Merida-type micaceous ware. Building 11 must have been a building of some size, possibly multi-storeyed and fronting onto one of the surrounding streets. Other sites in the area have yielded evidence of large cellared buildings, which housed wealthy occupants (Howe & Lakin 2004, 78).

Medieval discussion

The reoccupation of the Cripplegate area in the 11th century was characterised by an intense burst of activity dating to *c.*1050–1080, consisting almost exclusively of wattle- and timber-lined pits and wells, which were probably associated with properties fronting onto the surrounding street system. The remains of one truncated early medieval sunken building (Building 10) were discovered, which seems to have utilised part of the south wall of the Roman fort in its structure. This is significant, since it implies that the wall may still have been visible at this time. Complicated sequences of early medieval pits were found across the entire site in Period 4, the backfills of which contained debris from domestic and industrial processes. The absence of high status pottery and food remains may suggest that the occupants of the area were not especially wealthy. The remains of madder-stained vessels and metalworking crucibles show that dye-production and metalworking were being carried out.

By the end of the 12th century pitting activities had ceased almost completely, possibly because the site had become built up with houses. More decorative ceramics were discovered in the Period 5 pit groups, showing that the wealth of the occupants had increased, perhaps as a result of the earlier dye-making and metalworking industries in the vicinity. By Period 6 there was further evidence of the site's development, in the form of a large stone-built cellar and the virtual absence of pitting. The finds assemblages from these features are not indicative of particularly high status, although the sample is too small to be fully representative.

THE POST-MEDIEVAL SEQUENCE

Post-medieval development, *c.*1600–1900 (Period 7)

By this period the street layout of the Cripplegate area was fully developed, as depicted on the

Agas woodcut map of 1559, which shows that the surrounding area was mainly occupied by tenements. Lobel's map of 1520 shows that the church of St John Zacharie remained the principal building in the vicinity of the site. The map also shows that buildings existed around the perimeter of the site, and on either side of Lilipot Lane, which bisected the site. In the early 1600s there was at least one inn on the site, 'The Chequer', which lay behind the church. Camden House, known to have been a substantial building, also lay to the east of the church; part of it was converted into a tavern in 1652. The Cripplegate area was devastated by the Great Fire in 1666, and all buildings on the site were destroyed. It was quickly redeveloped after the fire, and by the 18th century the streets were again lined with tenements. The area remained unaltered until the 19th century, at which point warehouses replaced the tenements. These survived until the World War II, when they were destroyed in the Blitz.

A number of post-medieval cesspits (Structures 4, 7, and 9–15, Fig 27), a deep well (Structure 7, Fig 27), and other building foundations were found on the site. A large brick-built culvert running east–west across the site (Structure 6, Fig 27), on the approximate line of Lilipot Lane, is shown on historical maps of the area and could be associated with the old road. A similar feature was found on 90–91 and 100 Wood Street, and could be part of the same feature. Few of the many cesspits recorded on site yielded finds; however, a closely-dated assemblage came from a late post-medieval brick- and chalk-built cesspit (Structure 12, Fig 27). The pottery was probably discarded *c.*1807–1820, and includes various teawares and sherds of high quality English porcelain. Most interestingly, the cesspit also contained a 'Queen Anne' cannon-barrelled pocket pistol, dating to the late 18th century (<85>, Fig 28). The frame and barrel are copper alloy and the wooden stock is made of walnut. Most of the stock and butt are missing, but they may have been decorated with silver inlay. The side plates are engraved 'BARBAR' and 'LONDON' with scrolls and flags. Louis Barbar emigrated from France *c.*1688 and established himself in Soho (Blackmore 1986, 46). His sons continued the family business before setting up on their own, and his grandsons also worked as gunmakers. The pistol may have been made either by his son James, who worked at Portugal Street and Dover Street and died in 1773, or by

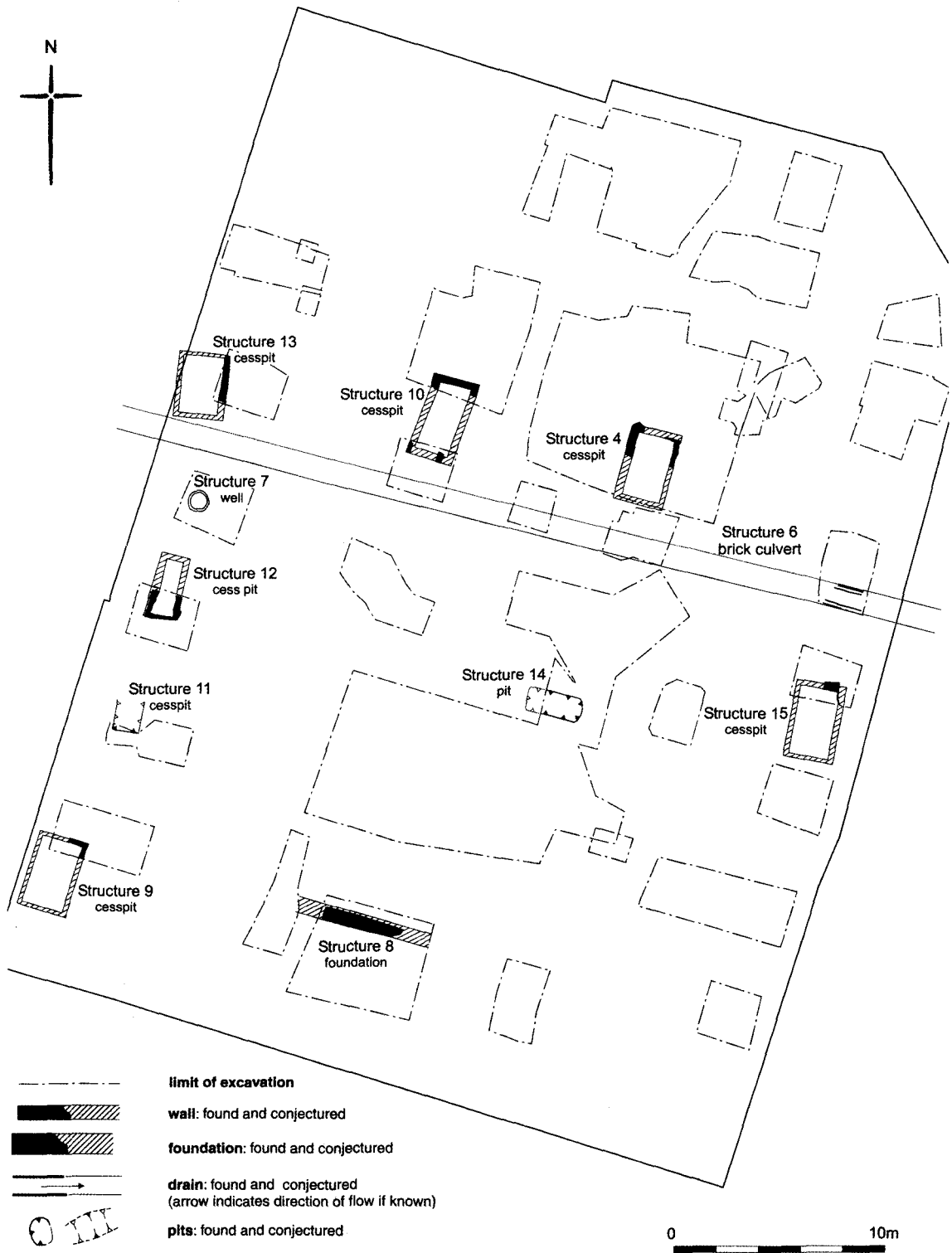


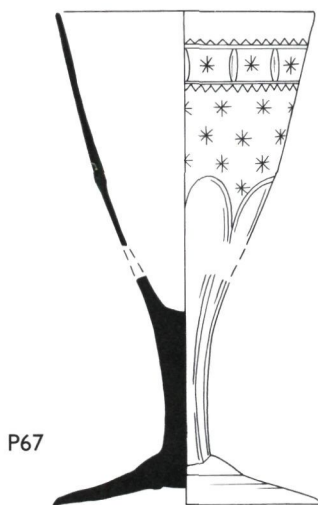
Fig 27. Post-medieval development, c.1600–1900 (Period 7)



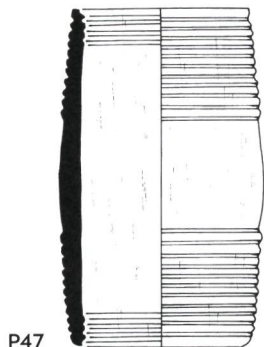
Fig 28. 'Queen Anne' copper-alloy pistol <85> from cesspit (Structure 12) (Scale 1:2)



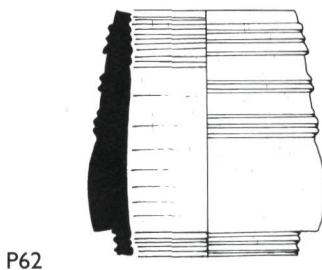
P49



P67



P47



P62

Fig 29. Late 18th-/early 19th-century stemmed drinking glasses <49> and <67> (Scale 1:2), and bone cotton barrels <47> and <62> (Scale 1:1), from cesspit (Structure 12)

James's son, also James, who was apprenticed to his father in 1747. Other finds included two late 18th- to early 19th-century stemmed drinking glasses (<49> and <67>, Fig 29), and two bone objects (<47> and <62>, Fig 29), possibly cotton barrels.

Post-medieval discussion

The features in Period 7 must have been associated with the tenements on the site at this time. The houses were probably mostly residential, although taverns are also known to have occupied the

site (for example, The Chequer Inn). The finds assemblages are domestic in nature, and seem to have come from relatively well-to-do households. The pistol is an extremely rare find on an archaeological site; it is especially unusual in that it appears to have been discarded while still in good condition. Victorian warehouses are known to have occupied the site until just before World War II; the only possible evidence for this was a brick foundation (Structure 8, Fig 27) in the southern part of the site.

CONCLUSIONS

The site at 25 Gresham Street conforms to the general picture of the Cripplegate area in both the Roman and medieval periods, adding to the body of information already provided by previous sites.

The presence of early Roman clay and timber buildings confirms that the site was occupied by residential type buildings prior to the construction of the fort, and not by an earlier military installation (such as a timber fort). The fort is known to have been constructed between AD 120 and 160 (Howe & Lakin 2004, 39–40), and although the site produced no new evidence that might help to refine this date further, the fort-related features identified on the site have allowed a number of other issues to be resolved. Most significantly, the discovery of fragments of the south wall of the fort, its interval tower, the external fort ditch, and fragments of an internal barrack block on the site has allowed the location of the southern extent of the fort to be more firmly defined.

The evidence from nearby sites suggests that the fort went out of use by the mid-3rd century AD (Howe & Lakin 2004, 45–7), and that this was probably related to the construction of the city wall (AD 190–225). It is not known for certain if the fort walls were demolished or remained standing, although evidence from the area suggests that demolition probably occurred. The 3rd-century AD gravel surface found at 25 Gresham Street, which respected the line of the south fort wall, could indicate that it was still standing in some form after the construction of the city wall.

The medieval evidence from the site adds significantly to the previous understanding of the Cripplegate area, suggesting that it was an important centre for dye production and metallurgy in the early medieval period. The

Cripplegate area was reoccupied in the mid-11th century. The archaeological evidence from the site which dates to this period was characterised by extensive pitting activities, and a medieval sunken building. The pits all contained debris relating to domestic and industrial processes; most significantly evidence for copper-alloy metal working and the production of madder dye was discovered. These industries no doubt greatly influenced the economy of the Cripplegate area and probably contributed to the increased wealth of the occupants, eventually culminating in the area becoming fully developed with merchant's houses and taverns in the post-medieval period.

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NOTES

- 1 The London Archaeological and Archive Research Centre, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London, N1 7ED.
 2 Tabulated data/detail from the site not published in this article can be found under the site code of NHG98 in the LAARC.

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