

# A FAREWELL TO ARMS: A SAXON SHIELD BURIAL AND LATER OCCUPATION AT COVENT GARDEN

*Alison Telfer and Lyn Blackmore*

*With contributions by Ian Betts (building material), Liz Goodman (conservation), Natasha Powers (human bone) and Kate Roberts (plant remains)*

## SUMMARY

*Excavation in the courtyard of the property at Cubitt's Yard, at the heart of Lundenwic, revealed two Middle Saxon burials. The first, aligned north–south, had been badly truncated by the existing Victorian building. The second, orientated west–east, was a weapon burial with a shield (the first to be discovered in Lundenwic), spear and knife, contained within the remains of a coffin. Overlying the burials was a series of building and occupation layers possibly representing two properties and at least three phases of activity. These were characterised by metalled surfaces, brickearth floors and occupation debris cut by numerous stakeholes. There were also at least two phases of oven, as well as a possible timber-lined well.*

## INTRODUCTION

The site of Cubitt's Yard, James Street, London WC2 lies between Floral Street and King Street (site code: CVC03; NGR 53031 18094). It is bounded by Bedford Chambers to the south, the rear of 8–10 Floral Street to the north, and the rear of properties fronting onto James Street to the east (Fig 1).

Cubitt's Yard is near to the highest point of a gravel terrace overlooking the Thames, just to the north of the heart of the Middle Saxon trading settlement of *Lundenwic*, which extended from Trafalgar Square to Aldwych. Remains of the settlement have been found on numerous sites in the general vicinity, the largest excavation so far being that of the

nearby Royal Opera House redevelopment (Malcolm *et al* 2003). This work has shown that, prior to the expansion of the settlement in the late 7th century, the higher ground above the Thames was used for burials, with a dispersed cemetery along the ridge in the King Street/Long Acre area (Blackmore 2002, 278–81, 294; fig 3; Malcolm *et al* 2003, 27; Leary *et al* 2004, 141; Cowie & Blackmore in prep).

Archaeological fieldwork was required in advance of the refurbishment of the existing buildings, which involved reduction in two parts of the basement, as well as the installation of a lift pit and a number of new services and inspection pits. Fieldwork was carried out between October 2003 and February 2004, comprising an excavation in the courtyard, with a simultaneous watching-brief in the basement (Fig 2).

The following paper incorporates parts of the specialist analyses, which can be consulted, together with the site archive, at the Museum of London's Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC).

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

*Alison Telfer*

### Geology and topography

#### Open Area 1

Natural brickearth was recorded at a height

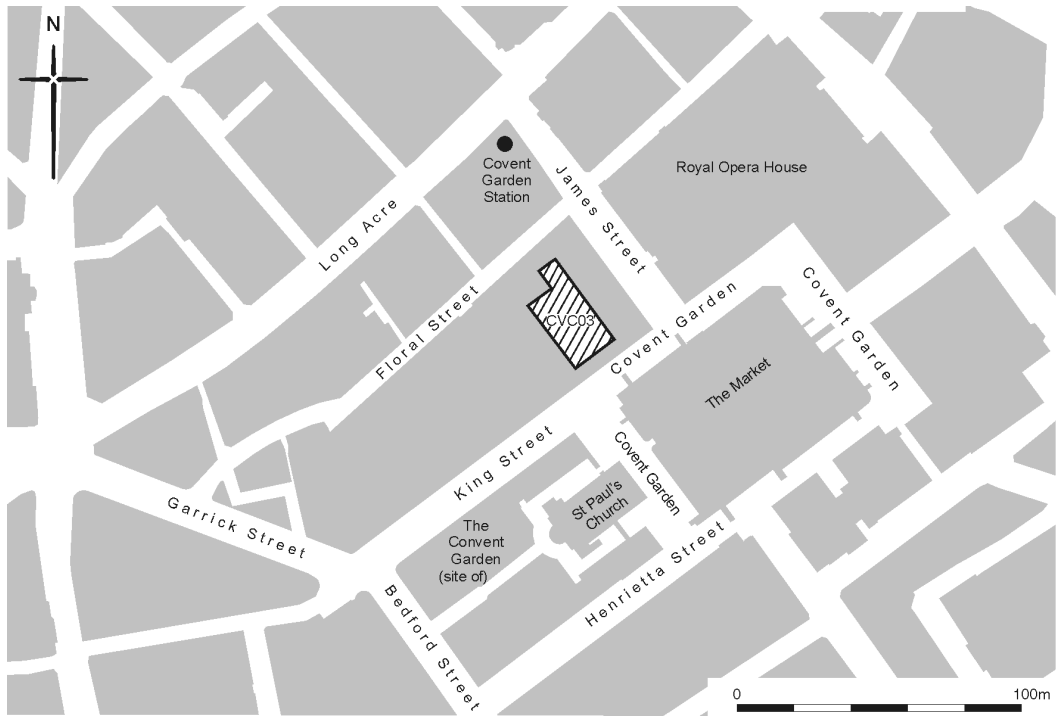


Fig 1. Site location plan

of approximately 19.75m OD in the courtyard area, while natural gravel was seen at 19.22m OD. The watching-brief in the basement confirmed that Victorian construction had truncated the natural gravel to a depth of at least 17.80m OD. The size of the area under excavation was not large enough to detect the slope in the natural terrain.

### Iron Age

#### Open Area 2

Two small abraded sherds of sand-tempered pottery, possibly dating to the Iron Age, were recovered from a thick layer of weathered brickearth [321], most likely an occupation surface. This was present at *c.*20.16m OD and represents the earliest activity on the site. Little evidence for Iron Age settlement has been found in the area (Merriman 1990, 36–7), although pottery and a worked flint were recovered from weathered brickearth at Tavistock Street (Densem 2000, 9), approximately 200m to the south-east of the site, and occasional sherds of undiagnostic

prehistoric pottery occur on most sites in the area.

### Roman

A number of fragments of Roman pottery, roof tile and brick were encountered within Saxon deposits. Their presence suggests Roman activity in the vicinity, possibly in the form of farmland outside the Roman city, rather than on the site itself.

### Middle Saxon

#### Burials

#### Open Area 3

The earliest features comprise two adult inhumations, both articulated (Fig 3). Although the skeletons were incomplete, both appeared to be supine and extended. The first, [323], was aligned north–south, but had been badly truncated by Victorian construction, leaving only the left femur, right and left humeri, and right and left



*Fig 2. Plan showing areas of fieldwork*

ulnae; their position indicated that the head would have been to the north. It was not possible to determine the age of this individual [323].

The second skeleton, [363], had been placed in a wooden coffin, with a number of weapons; remains of the coffin lid were also evident. The burial was aligned west–east, with the head at the western end. The depth of the grave cut was fairly shallow, but this was doubtless due in part to truncation and levelling over time, so the original heights of both grave cut and coffin had disappeared. There was little pathology. Dental attrition indicated that [363] was between 25 and 36 years old at death (Powers 2005, 5), although caution should be ascribed to interpretation, as dental wear varies with the coarseness of the diet and the shape of the joint between the lower jaw and the cranium (Hillson

1996, 242). Cranial features, such as a robust mandible and supra-orbital ridge, indicate that [363] was probably a male (Buikstra & Ubelaker 1994, 20). There was nothing to suggest that the burials were from different periods, despite their different orientation. Both graves cut the same layer of redeposited brickearth, so even if they were from different periods/practices, the time lapse between them could not have been substantial. Either burial could have been Christian or pagan.

Associated with the body, [363], were the remains of a shield (<1>, <2>, <19>) to the left of, and partly over, the lower body, with the boss facing downwards (Figs 3–6), a leaf-shaped spearhead (<3>) lying on the right-hand side of the body close to the skull and shoulder (Figs 4 and 7), and a knife (<4>; Figs 8 and 9) placed to the left of the pelvis. Also present was a probable coprolite, which

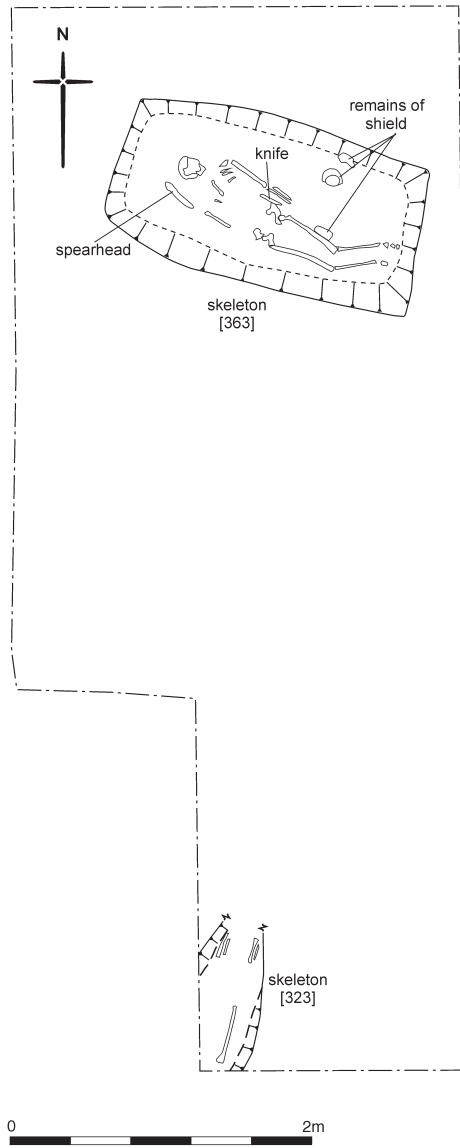


Fig 3. Plan showing position of two burials and location of weapons

suggests that the area was open ground prior to the burial. No pottery was recovered. The finds are discussed below.

#### Later occupation

Overlying the burials was a series of occupation layers, possibly representing three main phases of construction. Throughout the sequence, there was a pronounced demarc-

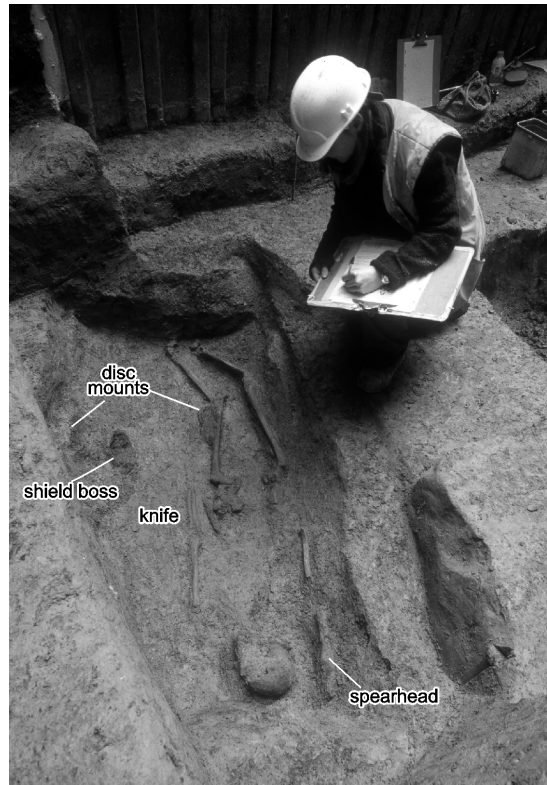


Fig 4. Photograph showing burial [363], looking east

ation between deposits to the north and those to the south. Respecting this, one phase of building could either signify the remains of two properties or else represent a single building with associated backyard area. All of the Saxon pottery was stratified in contexts assigned to the Middle Saxon period (total 36 sherds, 738gm). Chaff-tempered wares are the most common group (22 sherds, 476gm), followed by Ipswich wares (7 sherds, 175gm); a few shell-tempered and imported wares are also present; details of the different fabric types have been published elsewhere and are not repeated here (Blackmore 1988a; 1989b; 2003a; Blackmore *et al* 2004). Other finds of note are summarised at the end of this section.

#### Open Area 4

The first phase of activity after the burials consisted of a number of stake- and postholes which cut the backfill of the graves. A narrow east-west gully or ditch was also recorded.

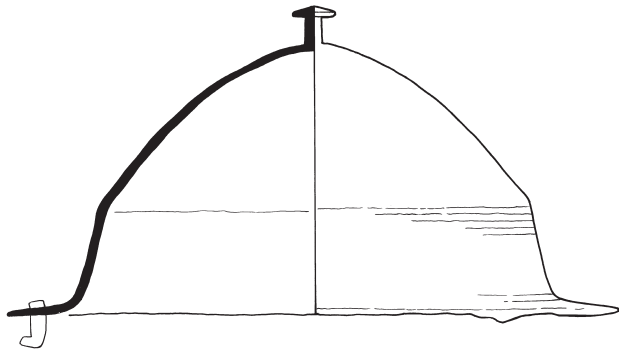


Fig 5. Type 3/6 shield boss <1> (scale 1:2)

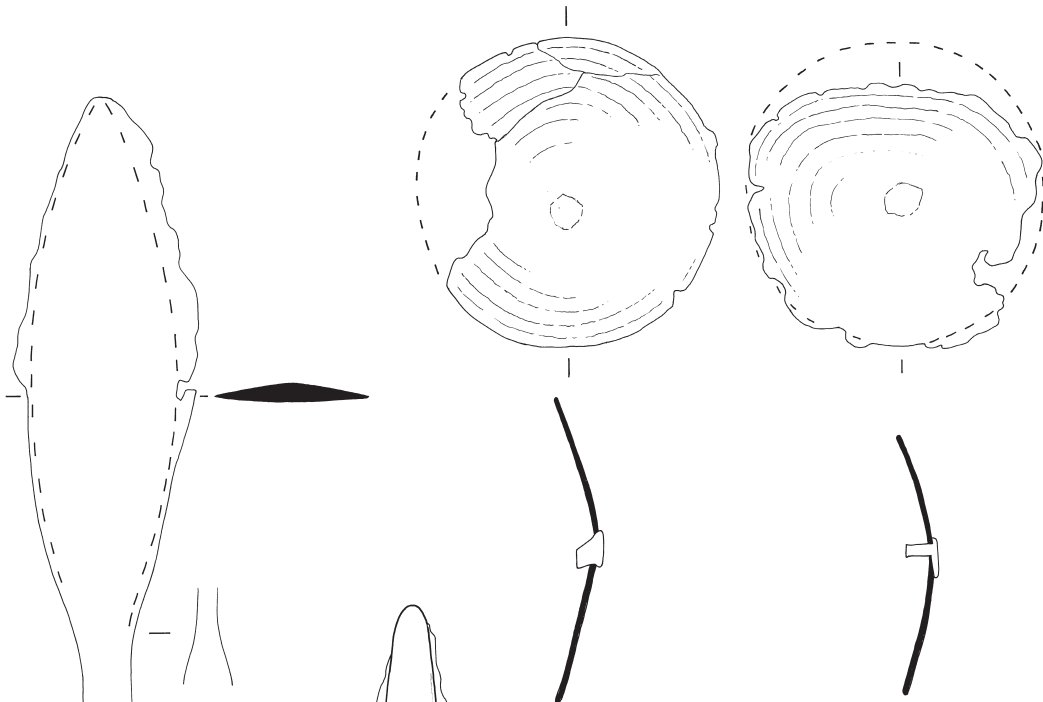


Fig 6. Disc mounts <2a>, <2b> from the shield (scale 1:2)

Fig 7. The spearhead <3> (scale 1:2)

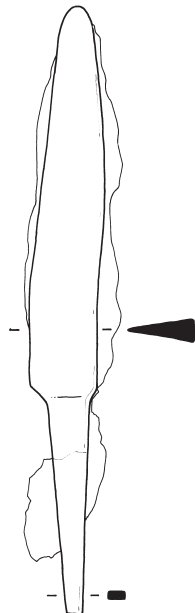
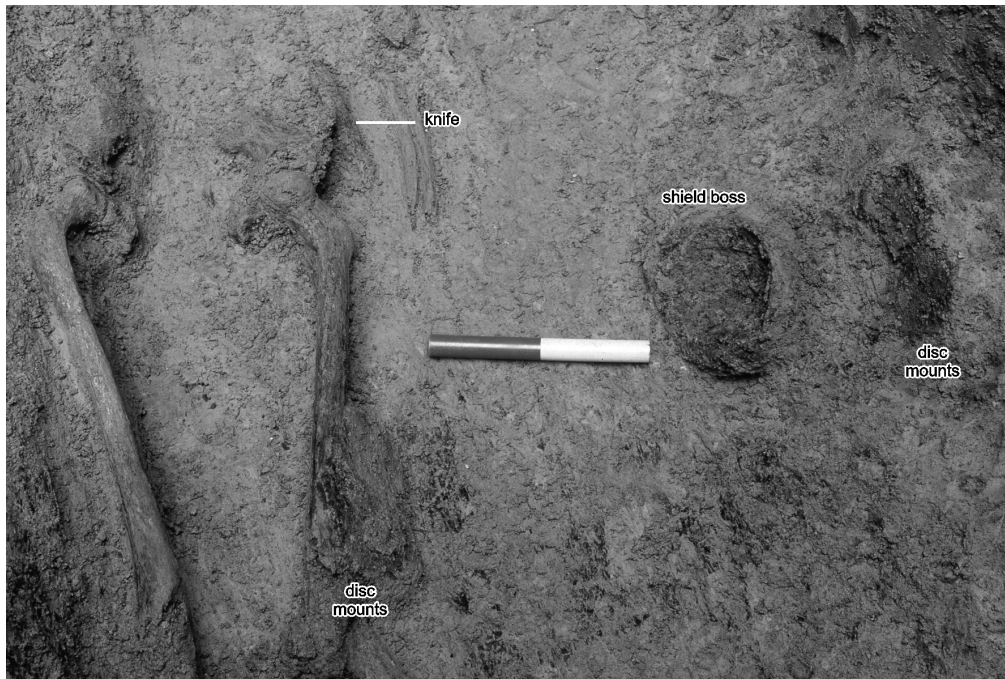


Fig 8. Knife <4> (scale 1:2)



*Fig 9. Photograph showing shield boss, disc mounts, knife, pelvis and upper legs of burial [363], looking west*



*Fig 10. Reconstruction illustration of burial [363], looking north-west (Sandra Rowntree)*

Together these probably represent a field boundary. No dating evidence was retrieved.

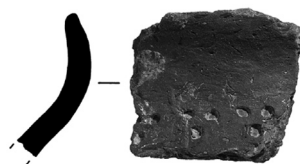
### Structure 1

Structure 1 represents traces of occupation activity, comprising burnt debris associated with a possible hearth, a posthole, and small pit or posthole (not illus). Five sherds from a chaff-tempered jar (fabric code CHFS, 83gm) and part of a loomweight ([305] <14>) were found in the fire debris. The features cut a large, green-tinged occupation surface [317], which contained part of a copper-alloy pin shaft (<11>).

### Structure 2

Four chaff-tempered sherds (fabrics CHAF; CHFS; 97gm) were associated with Structure 2, which consisted largely of numerous stakeholes and a possible pit cutting a brickearth occupation layer [301] (Fig 12). These may have represented fence lines, field plots, or even buildings.

Of particular importance is the rim of a



*Fig 11. Rim sherd in sand-and-chaff-tempered ware with stabbed decoration (scale 1:2)*

jar decorated with stabbed pendant triangles *c.*8–10mm across at intervals of 4–5mm around the neck (CHFS; [301], Fig 11). Each triangle is made up of three simple round impressions *c.*3mm in diameter (Briscoe type A 6aiii). This is the first example of stabbed decoration (other than comb-like impressions) on chaff-tempered wares from *Lundenwic*. The closest parallels in size are from St John’s, Cambridge and Spong Hill (D Briscoe, pers comm). Due to the small size of the sherd, it is not known if this pattern continued on the body or if any other form of decoration was present. The find is from



*Fig 12. Photograph showing occupation layer, stakeholes and barrel well, looking north*

one of the earliest contexts on the site; a similar phase of activity at 28–31 James Street was dated to the mid-7th century.

### Open Area 5

This phase was represented by a barrel well [242], ruts [225] possibly associated with agriculture, and spreads of gravel relating to alleyways or backyard activity (Fig 12). Another cask-lined well dated to the mid- to late 7th century was found on the adjacent site of 28–31 James Street (Leary 2004, 8, 39).

Spreads of gravel ([219], [234]) were recorded in the northern area of the site, probably representing an external yard. To the extreme south, another stony spread [316] was less well consolidated and may represent a gravelled doorsill, similar to those recorded at the Royal Opera House, where two buildings had gravelled thresholds on their southern sides (Malcolm *et al* 2003, 153). It is possible that the dwelling associated with the threshold had been destroyed by Building 1 (see below).

The associated pottery, dated to between AD 600 and 750, comprises one sherd of North French greyware (fabric NFGWA) and eleven sherds of chaff-tempered ware (CHAF): two from pit [225] and nine, probably from the same jar, from the metallated surface [219] and occupation deposit [237]. The inner surface of the latter is abraded and eroded, suggesting that the jar had contained something acidic. An antler offcut (<7>), possibly a by-product of comb manufacture, was recovered from layer [235] (associated with [219]).

### Structure 3

The second major phase of construction at the site may have encompassed two broadly

contemporary properties or else internal and external areas belonging to a single dwelling. Two building styles were recorded, comprising the remains of possible beamslots to the north (Structure 3) and a possible sunken-floored structure (Building 1) to the south.

Structure 3 (not illus) may have represented some kind of shed or animal pen, as it was fairly small in size. A very large and highly decorated bone comb (<6>, Fig 13) was recovered from the backfill of its construction cut [190] (see below).

### Building 1

A large cut [236], measuring 2.75m (N–S) by at least 3.0m E–W (full extent unknown) and surviving to a depth of 0.40m, contained a large central posthole and occupation debris; this was interpreted as a sunken-featured building (not illus). At least two phases of oven were also found ([165], [184]), one overlying the other. The first of these (S4; [184]) contained a single sherd of chaff-tempered ware (CHSF, 10gm). Fragments of daub with wattle impressions and an associated stakehole were also recorded. Similar ovens were recorded during the Royal Opera House excavations (Malcolm *et al* 2003, 155). Sunken-featured buildings are rare in *Lundenwic* (*ibid*, 157), though possible examples were recorded at Jubilee Hall (pit [59]) and Maiden Lane (Area B, feature [283]; Blackmore 1986, 209, fig 5; Cowie & Whytehead 1988, 61, 71–2, 78, figs 10, 15) and at 35 King Street, directly to the south and south-west of the site (Cowie & Blackmore in prep).

Samples from the fire debris contained charred plant remains, including charred cereal remains and the charred seeds of wild plants (Roberts 2005, 2). In addition, the

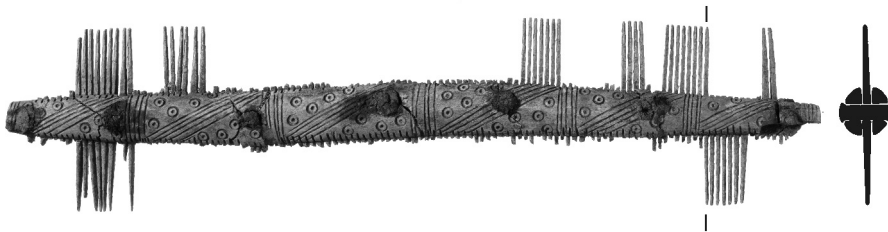


Fig 13. Bone comb with incised lattice decoration <6> (scale 1:2)



sample from the earlier oven [184] contained charred clumps of cereal straw and charcoal. The cereal remains were dominated by hulled barley (*Hordeum vulgare sensu lato*), but also present were small quantities of free-threshing wheat (*Triticum aestivum/turgidum/durum*), rye (*Secale cereale*), and oat (*Avena* spp.). The predominance of barley may have been due to barley straw being used for thatching or fodder, rather than food. As the samples came from ovens, it is possible that these plant remains were used as fuel or tinder, although they could possibly also have been used as roofing first (*ibid*).

Wild plant remains were dominated by agricultural weeds and grasses (Roberts 2005, 2). The former include clover/medick (*Trifolium/Medicago* spp.) and dock (*Rumex* spp.); the latter include fescue/rye-grass (*Festuca/Lolium* spp.), cat's tail (*Phleum* spp.), and annual meadow-grass (cf. *Poa annua*). These are also arable crop weeds and their small quantity could mean that they came in with the cereal grain. Also present were common spike-rush (*Eleocharis* cf. *palustris*) and sedges (*Carex* spp.), which grow on damp or wet land. Both are also found on agricultural land and as weeds and could similarly have been crop weeds. Other arable weeds were also represented by small

quantities of seeds. These include stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula*), which is found on heavy clay soils, knapweed/thistle (*Centaurea* spp.), and vetch/tare/vetchling (*Vicia/Lathyrus* spp.).

Three objects were associated with the sunken building. The backfill of posthole [321] contained a decorated bone mount/handle (<5>; Fig 14), while a bone thread picker (<8>; Fig 15) and a part of a composite metal object, possibly a displaced shield mount (<10>), were recovered from occupation layer [226] (see below). In addition, one small sherd from a Badorf-type ware jar (fabric BADOH, 3gm) was recovered.



Fig 14. Decorated bone mount or handle <5> (scale 1:1)

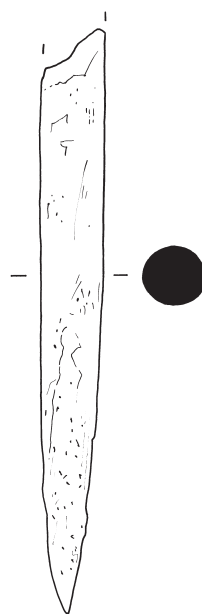


Fig 15. Bone thread picker <8> (scale 1:1)

## Building 2

A third construction phase consisted of a large brickearth floor [66] with numerous stakeholes (Fig 16), which may have represented a later and larger property (B2). A small knife was buried in the floor ([66] <17>; Fig 17), while stakehole [180] contained part of a possible strap hinge ([179] <18>; Fig 18) (see below). Part of a copper-alloy pin shaft was found in stakehole [80] (<9>).

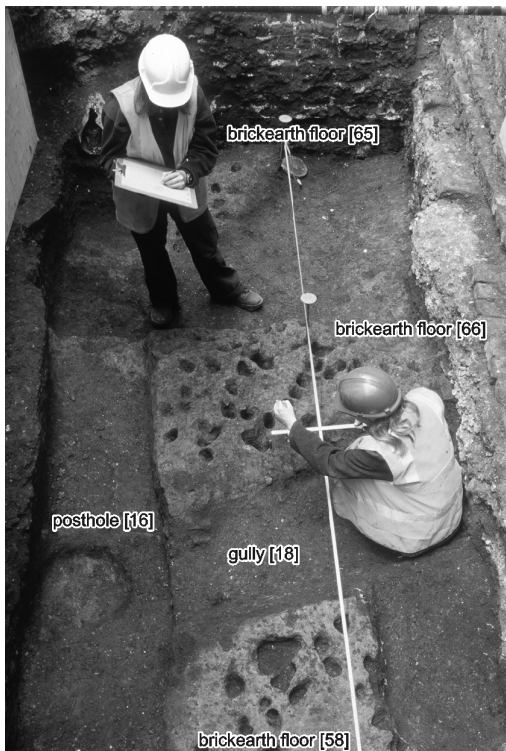


Fig 16. Photograph showing occupation layer and stakeholes, looking south

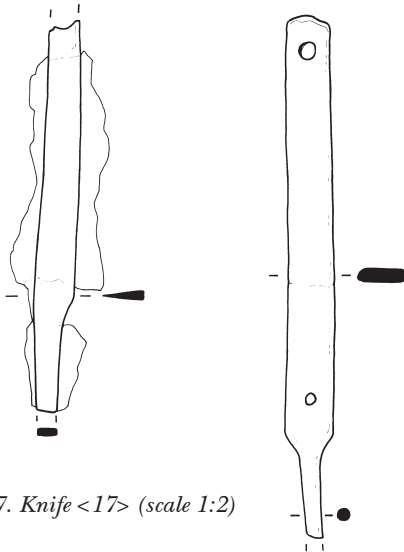


Fig 17. Knife <17> (scale 1:2)

Fig 18. Possible strap hinge <18> (scale 1:2)

## Open Area 6

The brickearth floor of Building 2 had been truncated by a pit, [24], to the south; further north it was cut by a gully, [18], and associated posthole, [16], which appeared to maintain the approximate line of the north-south demarcation noted above. This latest activity in the Saxon sequence dates to the late 8th or 9th century and may signify new property ownership. It produced the largest group of pottery (13 sherds, 275gm), which differs from the others in that the majority is of Ipswich ware (IPSF, IPSM; 7 sherds). Imported wares comprise three sherds of North French reduced ware (fabrics NFGWA, NFGWD), with one sherd of Badorf-type ware (BADOH).

Finds of note from this phase include two loomweight fragments (<12>, <13>), which were found in dumped deposits [20] and [23], along with three small fragments of iron ([20] <15>, <16a>, <16b>; see below).

## Post-Medieval

Floor level reduction in the basement revealed up to three disturbed rows of Portland stone, some of which was worked and may have been associated with the Inigo Jones development in the area during the 17th century.

## THE SAXON FINDS

Lyn Blackmore

The pottery is noted in the main text; for ease of reference other finds are discussed by material, more or less in the same order as they occur above.

## Iron and composite metalwork

The shield

Shield boss <1> (Fig 5), is approximately 50% complete. It is an intermediate of Groups 3 and 6, as defined by Dickinson and Härke (1992). Group 3 bosses were in use throughout the 6th century and continued into the 7th century (*ibid*, 15–16), gradually evolving into narrower and less carinated forms. Group 6 bosses, which appeared at

the very end of the 6th century, are smaller and lighter, with a lower cone and a diameter that does not exceed 140–150mm (*ibid*, 20–1, 24; Spain 2000, 64). The present example is larger than the Group 6 forms, but fits with the Group 3 size range (140–74mm). As on the Group 3 bosses, the apex is small, iron and disc-headed (*ibid*, 14–15), but the wall is sloping rather than upright. Although there is a marked change in angle at the junction with the dome, the overhanging carination that characterises the earlier forms is missing and the flange is more or less flat. The rivets on Group 3 bosses are usually medium to large in size, whereas those on Group 6 bosses are smaller and knob-headed (*ibid*, 15, 20). The one small rivet surviving *in situ* on <1> is of knob-headed form; given the diameter of the flange, it is likely that there were originally five rivets, as is usual for Group 3 bosses. On this basis, <1> can be classed as a Group 3/6 boss. Analysis of Kentish shield bosses (Spain 2000, 47–8, 87) suggests that these transitional forms are not a completely distinct type, but that a separate group for them would be helpful for chronological purposes.

Also present is a pair of exceptionally large convex disc mounts (diameter *c.*80mm), found face down in the grave, <2a> adjacent to the left femur and <2b> over the left knee (Figs 6 and 9). The surfaces could not be fully investigated without damaging the associated organic matter (wood and traces of fibre), but it is possible that the mounts were fixed onto even larger copper-alloy discs (T Dickinson, pers comm). Such mounts were probably decorative rivets, perhaps used to secure the leather cover of the shield (Härke 1992a, 27, group a, 52; see Fig 10). They were usually placed in opposed pairs, one on each side of, and close to, the boss (*ibid*, 27, 52–3). Mounts <2a> and <2b> appear to have been close to the edge of the board, but could have been displaced as the shield decayed.

The fragmented remains of at least one other mount of similar size (<19>, not illus) were found on the other side of the boss, towards the northern edge of the grave, and it is possible that three fragments of sheet metal found in Building 1 (<10>) are from its displaced pair. Disc mounts of the 5th and 6th centuries are flat and generally between 20mm and 45mm in diameter; the form appears to have continued into the

7th century, but convex mounts were not introduced until the 7th century; they seem mainly to occur with Group 6 bosses (*ibid*, 27, fig 18a; Spain 2000, 68). Mounts exceeding 40mm also seem to be a later trend, notably in Kent, where three sets of 80–100mm have been found; all are associated with Group 3 bosses and occur in sets of four (*ibid*; Evison 1987, 32, fig 47).

Taking the various features of the shield together, it can be dated to the late 6th or, more probably, the early 7th century. The way in which the rivets of the boss are bent shows that the thickness of the shield board was only 4–5mm. Due to the displacement of the fittings, however, it is impossible to estimate the original diameter of the board.

#### <1> Shield boss (Fig 5)

[361] Grave [362]. Iron boss, approximately 50% complete (Diam at base 160mm, total H 72mm). Slightly convex cone with oval apex (10mm by 11mm), height of spike 10mm. Sloping wall (H 25mm), flange (W 20mm) with one of five knob-headed rivets (Diam *c.*5mm, original L 17mm); the shank tapers from 4mm to 2mm square and is bent outwards at 90° at the base. There is no evidence of any tinning. Traces of mineralised wood are present in the area of the rivet.

#### <2a>, <2b> Disc mounts (Fig 6)

[361] Grave [362]. Two large iron mounts, originally circular and slightly convex (Diam 80–85mm, Th 1mm). Mount <2a> is the more poorly preserved, with an irregular outline; <2b> is near complete (85% of the circumference present). The upper part of both shanks survives, which (from X-ray) were *c.*10mm across at the junction with the mount. Fragments of replaced twill textile survive on the upper surface due to contact with the body (L Goodman, pers comm); patches of copper alloy sheet are visible on the back, and in section, of <2b>.

#### <19> Disc mount (not illus)

[361] Grave [362]. Fragments of one or two large iron mounts with copper alloy corrosion on the back and in section (more extensive than on <2b>). Extant dimensions 80mm by 70mm (irregular outline); no obvious shank. Mineralised wood from the shield and/or coffin is clearly visible.

<10> ?Disc mount (not illus)

[226] Building 1. Four fragments of sheet metal, three with a layered construction of iron and copper alloy similar to <2> and <19> (see above); two are flat (46mm by 25mm, Th 2mm; 30mm by 20mm, Th 2–4mm), while one has a curved section (L 29mm, W 13mm, Diam *c.*5mm). The fourth piece is of iron with no obvious copper alloy (17mm by 14mm, Th 5mm). These could be scrap metal or derived from the shield.

#### *The spearhead*

Spearhead <3> was found on the right-hand side of the skull, point up (Fig 4). It is of leaf-shaped form (Fig 7), with a blade that is longer than the socket shank (Swanton Series C); the lack of a solid shank between the socket and the blade and the overall length and form place it on the cusp of Swanton's types C1 and C2. The former are usually less than 200mm in length, while the latter mainly range between 200 and 350mm in length and usually have a short solid shank between the socket and the blade (Swanton 1973, 9–10; 1974, 49–55).

The validity of Swanton's groups and dating have been disputed and while he suggested that type C1 spearheads went out of use in the mid- to late 6th century (Swanton 1973, 9; 1974, 50–1), others have argued that this is too early and that they date to the 7th century (Geake 1997, 68). Group C2 is the most common form across the country and is also long-lived, possibly spanning the 5th to late 7th centuries. It is generally agreed, however, that most date to the 7th century, and they are often found in more richly furnished burials (Swanton 1973, 51–3; 1974, 10; Geake 1997, 68). Thus, spearhead <3> is likely to be of 7th-century date. No ferrule was found.

<3> Spear (Fig 7)

[361] Grave [362] (point up, to right of head). Leaf-shaped blade, total L 258mm; L of blade 140mm, W across blade 40mm, max Th 5–6mm. Cleft socket (L 140mm, Diam 190mm) with mineralised wood inside; mineralised wood, probably from the coffin, is also preserved on both sides of the blade.

#### *Knives*

Most knives from *Lundenwic* have been

classified following the system devised by Ottaway (1992, 558–72; Blackmore 2003a; in prep). The present examples both fall into Group C (Böhner 1958, type A; Evison 1987, type 1), the most common in both *Lundenwic* and York (Blackmore 2003a, 256). On this form, the rear part of the back is straight, while the front curves down to the tip. The rear part of the back can be horizontal (type C1), angled upwards (type C2), or angled downwards (type C3; Ottaway 1992, 559). The complete medium-sized knife <4> (Fig 8) was found pointing upwards by the left hip in grave [361]. No evidence for a sheath was found and the position of the knife in the grave suggests that it was either tucked into a belt, worn on the arm or placed inside the sleeve of the deceased (Evison 1987, 115). A second knife, [66] <17>, is remarkably small and slender and may have belonged to a woman or child. The handles of both knives would have been made from an organic material such as wood, bone or horn.

<4> Knife (Fig 8)

[361] Grave [362]. Complete knife of Ottaway type C1 in two joining pieces, with tang set slightly off centre, concave shoulder and angled choil (the step between the blade and the handle (Ottaway 1992, 568)); the back and the cutting edge curve in to meet at the rounded tip. Total L 162mm, W 17mm, Th 3mm. L of blade 104mm, L of whittle tang 58mm (W 11mm tapering to 5mm).

<17> Knife (Fig 17)

[66] Building 2. Near complete knife, probably of Ottaway type C3, with tang set in line with the cutting edge and angled shoulder; tip missing. Extant L 104mm, max W 12mm, Th 2.5mm; L of tang 27mm, W 9mm tapering to 5mm.

#### *Other finds*

Object <18> (Fig 18) from a posthole in Building 2 ([179]) may have been a structural fitting such as a strap hinge with U-shaped eye. These can occur in a range of shapes and sizes, but almost all have two similarly placed perforations (Ottaway 1992, 637–9, fig 267, no. 3463). The finds from Open Area 6 are equally difficult to interpret, and those accessioned as <16> may be from different objects. Object <16a> ([20]; not illus) could

be part of a binding or a chatelaine, possibly the same object as <15>, as the sections at the narrow rectangular ends are virtually identical. The flat irregular strip (<16b>) could be scrap metal.

<18> Mount or U-eyed strap hinge (Fig 18) [179] Building 2. Flat strip with one rounded end and concave shoulders to a 'tang' at the other. One of the two perforations is c.6mm in from the slightly rounded end, the other 8mm from the junction with the shoulders. L 137mm; L of strap 110mm, W 13mm, Th 4mm. W of 'tang' 4.5mm, Th 3mm. Diam of perforations 4mm and 3mm. Random mineral preserved organics are also present.

<15> (not illus)

[20] Open Area 6. Curved strip, external span 25mm; roughly square in section at one end (2.5mm by 2mm), and rectangular at the other (5mm by 2mm). Section at centre obscured by corrosion products. ?Possibly part of <16a>.

<16a> Chatelaine? (not illus)

[20] Open Area 6. Two rods with looped terminals (L 45mm and 15mm). The shank of the longer piece tapers from 4mm square to a rectangular section at the terminal (4mm by 3mm; Diam of loop 6mm). The second, slightly larger, loop (Diam 9–10mm) abuts the side of the first, with a short length of rectangular shank (4.5mm by 2.5mm).

<16b> (not illus)

[20] Open Area 6. Irregular strip (max L 50mm), thicker and slightly expanded at the apparently finished end (W 18mm, Th 5mm), tapering to the broken end (W 14mm, Th 3–5mm).

### Copper alloy

The two finds of copper alloy both appear to be pin shafts ([80] <9>, [317] <11>); they are so small that nothing more can be said of them.

### Clay

#### *Ceramic loomweights*

The three loomweight fragments from Structure 1 ([305] <14>) and Open Area 6 ([20]

<12>, [23] <13>) are all in poor condition (total weight 431gm) and it is difficult to be sure of their original form, but <13> seems to have been very small (external Diam c.100mm), while <14> was probably bun-shaped. All are in a fine brickearth fabric (group 2a as defined at Jubilee Hall/Maiden Lane and other sites; Blackmore 1988b, 111; Williams 1989, 107–8; Goffin 2003); <12> and <14> seem to have been lightly fired, but <13> was sun-baked at most (*cf ibid*, 216).

### Bone

Two of the four bone objects are so far unparalleled in London. The first is a large double-sided comb <6> (Fig 13) found in Structure 3, which in both size and decoration is the most impressive found so far in *Lundenwic*. The nearest equivalents in length are a crudely finished comb from an 8th-century context on the Royal Opera House site (L 160+mm, W 55mm; Blackmore 2003c, 310–11, fig 175, B<100>) and a 7th/early 8th-century find from the Lyceum theatre (L c.195mm, W 44mm; Riddler 2004b, 53, fig 38, no. 2). Incised lattice decoration, a fashion that may have died out in the later 8th century (*ibid*, 53; Blackmore 2005, 58), occurs on the latter, and on two smaller combs from the Royal Opera House site and James Street (Blackmore 2003c, 311, fig 96 <B114>; Riddler 2004a, 24, fig 22, no. 1). That from the Royal Opera House is decorated on one side only (Blackmore 2003c, 311, fig 96 <B114>), but the other two are, like <6>, decorated on both sides (Riddler 2004a, 24, fig 22, no. 1; Riddler 2004b, 53, fig 38, no. 2). In style, <6> is similar to Frisian and Scandinavian combs, but these tend to be single-sided, whereas the double-sided form is typically Anglo-Saxon.

Elongated combs are quite typical of the Middle Saxon period, and it has been suggested that they can be dated by their overall dimensions and by the extent of the decoration. Combs over 35mm wide are most common in the late 7th and earlier 8th centuries (Riddler 2002, 40, fig 4.8, nos 1, 2). While narrower combs are more common after AD 750 (*ibid*, nos 3, 4), large combs continued to be made into the 9th century (Blackmore 2003a, 311; Riddler 2004b, 53; Riddler 2004c, 146–8). On earlier examples

the decoration is confined to the ends of the connecting plates, while on later finds it is limited to a display side (Riddler 2004b, 53). On this basis, comb <6> should date to the early/mid-8th century.

The most intriguing find from Building 1 is the bone object <5>. In form it resembles a hammer, since it has the same transverse perforation into which a handle could have fitted (MacGregor 1985, 171–2, fig 90), but these were usually made from antler burrs and are unlikely to have been decorated. It is more likely, therefore, that <5> is a handle or pommel of some sort, especially as the head is quite worn. It can be compared to two cylindrical objects with expanded heads from the Frisian terps, one of which was secured to a narrower object by two iron pins passing horizontally through the shaft (Roes 1963, 76, pl LX1, nos 10, 13). These finds and others from Dorestad were interpreted as knobs from walking sticks; they were dated to the Carolingian period (*ibid*), although <5> could be earlier.

The other finds include part of a bone thread picker from Building 1 ([226]; Fig 15) and a piece of antler waste from Open Area 5 (<7>).

#### <6> Comb (Fig 13)

[190] Structure 3. Elongated double-sided comb, near complete and with incised geometric decoration on both connecting plates. These are divided into six rectangles by groups of five transverse lines (three at the ends). Each rectangle is bisected by groups of five oblique lines, with between one and five (apparently random) ring-and-dot motifs in the resulting triangular fields. The teeth are of equal size on both sides, 7–10mm. Seven large iron rivets, two more or less at the ends, the others between 16 and 30mm apart. Total L 215mm, W 49mm, Th 12mm.

#### <5> Handle or mount (Fig 14)

[230] Building 1. Object made of antler pedicle with slightly ovoid, flat-topped, domed head (32mm by 28mm at the base, H 28mm), decorated with a row of ring-and-dot motifs (Diam 5.5mm) between grouped horizontal lines (three above and four below). The solid shaft is also oval in section (L 29mm, 28mm by 20mm at base) and has a horizontal perforation through the long axis, 8–9mm above the base (Diam 10mm).

#### <8> Thread picker (Fig 15)

[226] Building 1. Part of shaft and pointed end of a bone thread picker; very poor condition; L 77mm, max Diam 8–9mm.

## DISCUSSION

*Alison Telfer and Lyn Blackmore*

### The burials

The numerous, though scattered, finds of burials, grave cuts, ring ditches and frequent residual human remains and grave goods from *Lundenwic* in general suggest a dispersed cemetery along the gravel terrace during the later 6th and 7th centuries. Supine burials on a west–east alignment are most common, although another north–south grave was recorded at the London Transport Museum, where mid-6th-century cremations have also been found (Carew *et al* in prep).

Many of the funerary features have been truncated by Middle Saxon (and later) occupation, but up to five burials were found on the Royal Opera House site (Malcolm *et al* 2003, 19), while six to eight were revealed during fieldwork at 51–54 Long Acre (Cowie & Blackmore in prep; Humphrey in prep). One of the latter wore a composite disc brooch of later 7th-century date.

Weapons are typically associated with male burials and the practice was widespread until *c.*AD 700, particularly in the 6th century (Härke 1992, 51; Taylor 2001). Burial [363] is the first to contain a shield, but the fourth from the main settlement to contain a spear (Leary *et al* 2004, 141–2); this equates with *c.*23% of the known burials in *Lundenwic*, and so in keeping with Härke's estimate of 22.1% for the Thames estuary (Härke 1992, Abb 7).

The closest weapon burial to Cubitt's Yard is a west–east burial at the adjacent site of 28–31 James Street, which contained a spearhead, possibly of Swanton type D1 (socket longer than blade), and a buckle dated to the mid-7th century. The spearhead, significantly less complete than that from [363], was placed (point up) to the left of the head (Leary 2004, 6–7; Riddler 2004a, 26, fig 24, no. 4). Burials with spears have also been found in Bedfordbury (Blackmore 1989a, 123–4) and at St Martin-in-the-Fields (Biddle 1984, 25; Cowie with Harding 2000,

189). Other discoveries of weapons from the area include bone sword fittings from the Royal Opera House (Blackmore 2003c, 313–14) and a sword pommel from Floral Street (Taylor 2004, 202, fig 5). The former were found in a domestic context and may have been from an heirloom; the latter was residual but could be derived from a burial. A ferrule found at 28–31 James Street may also be derived from the butt end of a spear (Leary 2004, 13; Riddler 2004a, 25).

The significance of the weapons in grave [363] is unclear. The shield may have been the mark of a warrior and/or have symbolised adult male status (Dickinson & Härke 1992, 68–9; Spain 2000, 89; Stephenson 2002, 11). In broad national terms, albeit with regional variation, Härke has found that weapons occur in *c.*47% of adult Anglo-Saxon male burials; of these, spears occur in *c.*84%, shields in *c.*45%, and swords in *c.*11% (Härke 1989b, 49, 52, tables 4.1–4.4; 1992, 97, 104). It has been calculated that shields are found together with spears in *c.*26% of weapon graves and this combination probably remained fairly consistent until the late 6th century, after which shield burials declined (Härke 1989b, 52, 55; 1992, 101–2, 109; Dickinson & Härke 1992, 63). During the 7th century, the choice and number of weapons buried together was gradually reduced, becoming more standardised and less practical as a functional ‘set’, and thus more symbolic (Härke 1989b, 55–9; 1992, 97–113).

Regional variations are also evident in the positioning of shields. In cemeteries along the Upper Thames they were mainly placed horizontally over the chest, stomach or upper legs, while in East Anglia/the Midlands a position over the chest/head was favoured; in both cases the boss should be uppermost. While it is not impossible that the shield was deliberately placed face down in the grave, the distribution of the finds suggests that it was placed vertically on the left side of the body inside the coffin, as is the case with a high proportion of Kentish shields (Dickinson & Härke 1992, 66), and had then fallen forwards over the left leg shortly after burial (Figs 9–10). This is supported by the presence of fragments of a twill fabric (presumably from clothing or a shroud) on the upper surfaces of the shield mounts.

A lack of wood fragments on these sur-

faces makes the positioning of the shield outside the coffin unlikely. In light of this, estimating the original size of the shield for the reconstruction illustration (Fig 10) posed problems, particularly as no trace of any metal rim reinforcement for the edge was found within the grave. In addition, there were remains of what appeared to be the coffin lid across the inhumation, so it was either a reasonably large coffin or the shield was within the size ranges 340–420mm (small) or 450–660mm (medium; Dickinson & Härke 1992, 45).

Knives are the most common object in Anglo-Saxon burials and often the only artefact. The position of <4> by the left hip is consistent with finds from Dover (Evison 1987, 115). Härke (1989a) has argued that there is a correlation between blade size and sex/age at death; following his study, the blade of <4> is of medium size (*c.*104mm). Knives with the same blade length have been found in burials of individuals aged 20–35, but are more common with an estimated age in the mid-30s (*ibid*, fig 2). This fits well with the osteological evidence and suggests that the male in grave [363] was over, rather than under, 30 at the time of death.

A precise date for burial [363] is problematic but the shield boss and spearhead would together suggest a date in the first half of the 7th century, and this fits with the suggested mid-7th-century date of the burial at 28–31 James Street (Leary 2004; Leary *et al* 2004, 141–2). On this basis, and given the likely age of the deceased, it is most likely that the shield was of medium size (Dickinson & Härke 1992, 45).

### Later occupation

Although the area of the excavation was small, approximately 7m (N–S) by 3m (E–W), it may be significant that no obvious rubbish pits were found, as several were recorded on the adjacent site of 28–31 James Street (Leary 2004). There is evidence to suggest that distinct areas were designated for household waste and this may be connected to a pattern observed at the Royal Opera House and 67–68 Long Acre, both of which had a clearly allocated area to the east of the dwellings for rubbish and cess pits. Craft, industry and daily life are represented by the knife, bone

thread picker from [226], and loomweight fragments from [20], [23] and [305], but the lack of evidence for industrial processes at the site may be significant in terms of the spatial patterning of activities between properties. All of the Saxon construction appeared largely to be on an east–west axis, which mirrors the layout at the Royal Opera House site.

The pottery assemblage is small and less varied than those from other nearby sites (Blackmore 2003a; Jarrett 2004, 14–19). Nonetheless, the distribution of the fabrics follows the established chronological sequence, with chaff-tempered wares in the earlier deposits (*c.*AD 600–750), and Ipswich (*c.*AD 730–850) and shell-tempered wares (*c.*AD 770/800–850) in the later levels (Blackmore 1999, 38–41; 2001; 2003a, 229–30, 234, 238). Of the other finds, the most significant are the bone comb [190] <6> and mount or handle <5>, the former being the most highly decorated found so far in *Lundenwic*. Both items would have been highly desirable when new and suggest a relative affluence, although the metalwork is much less prepossessing.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Museum of London Archaeology Service would like to thank Covent Garden Market Ltd Partnership for kindly funding the project and Jones Lang LaSalle for commissioning the work on their behalf. In particular, thanks are due to Tim Durant, Derek Guard and Nick Lawrence from T.P. Bennett Urban Planning and Rod Hattan, James Howard and Matthew Ellams from Jones Lang LaSalle.

Many thanks are also due to Keith Smith from Durkan Pudelek, Rob Whytehead from English Heritage, Emily Burton, Raoul Bull, Howard Burkhill, Neville Constantine, Simon Davis, David Mackie, Gordon Malcolm, Sandra Rowntree and Joseph Severn from MoLAS; special thanks go to Tania Dickinson for comments on the shield.

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