

FROM SAXON *LUNDENWIC* TO VICTORIAN ROOKERY: EXCAVATIONS AT THE CITY LIT, KEELEY STREET, LONDON, WC2

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SUMMARY

Redevelopment of the City Literary Institute premises in the London Borough of Camden during 2003 revealed evidence of Middle Saxon (c.AD 650–850) occupation, including external surfaces, fence lines, rubbish pits, a wattle-lined well and one sunken-floored building. Some time after AD 730 a large ditch aligned east–west was dug across the northern portion of the site. This ditch is interpreted as a defensive feature encircling 8th- or 9th-century Lundenwic. By 1658 Humphrey Weld had built a large house on the site with formal gardens to the rear. This house was demolished before 1746 and replaced by terraced housing, which by the mid-19th century had become a notorious slum known as the Wild Court rookery. During 1855 the properties on the site were refurbished to convert them into ‘healthy homes’. This conversion involved the sealing up of a number of cesspits. The contents of these pits contained food waste and domestic rubbish providing an insight to the daily lives of the residents of Wild Court. There was evidence of gold refining using an archaic technology, implying that it was an illicit activity.

INTRODUCTION

The archaeological investigation of the site of the former City Literary Institute, Keeley Street, London WC2 was carried out by the

Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS). The site is now occupied by the new college premises. The site is bounded to the north-west by Wild Court, to the north-east by 65 Kingsway, to the south-east by Keeley Street, and to the south-west by Wild Street (NGR 530540 181232; Figs 1–2). The graphical conventions used in this article are illustrated in Fig 3.

Archaeological work began with four evaluation trenches in September 2000 (Bowsher 2000) and was supplemented by the monitoring of two geotechnical test pits (Telfer 2000). Two areas were selected for open area excavation during July to August 2003 (Watson 2004). This selection was determined by the presence of archaeological remains within the footprint of the new foundations. One large rectangular trench (Area 1) was located within the centre of the site, and was physically divided into two trenches by a substantial modern wall foundation. The second trench (Area 2) was located up against the north-eastern boundary of the site (Fig 2). Watching-brief observations were carried out during November 2003 to monitor ground works. The site archive is held by the Museum of London Archaeological Archive Research Centre (site code KEL00). Complete lists



Fig 1. Site location plan, showing the local topography, the approximate extent of Lundenwic and the following numbered sites: 1. Bruce House (BRU92); 2. City Lit (KEL00); 3. Kingsway Hall (KWH96); 4. Maiden Lane (MAI85); 5. Royal Opera House (ROP95)

of the post-Roman pottery codes, including details and date ranges, are available from the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) as part of the

research archive and are also posted on: www.museumoflondonarchaeology.org.uk/.../post92mol_rom_fab_form.pdf (accessed 2011).

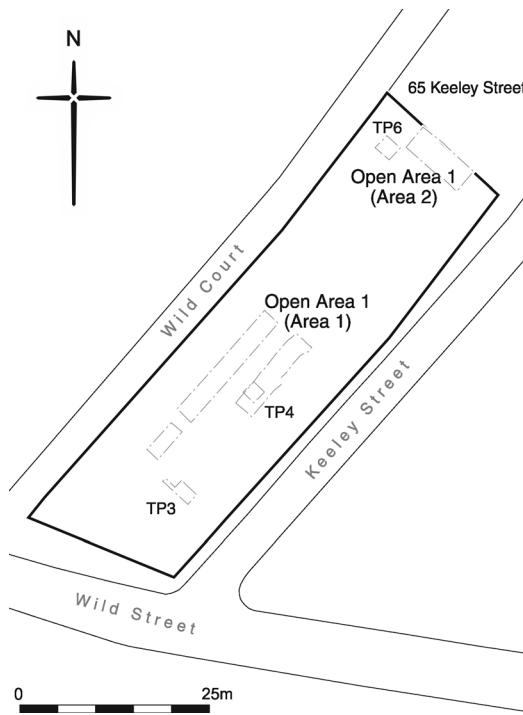


Fig 2. Trench location

PERIODS 1–3: NATURAL GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY AND PRE-SAXON ACTIVITY

The topography of the site consists of a pronounced ground slope running from west to east. This slope forms part of the undulating topography, which extends from Holborn southwards to the Strand (Fig 1).

The drift geology of the area consists of Pleistocene terrace gravel (top 18.79m OD) overlain by truncated brickearth (top 18.85–9.55m OD) with traces of subsoil horizons above (Period 1, Open Area 1; Fig 2). In many places the brickearth land-surface had been truncated by the excavation of 18th-century cellars. Prehistoric activity on site was represented by a single residual sherd of pottery, possibly of Late Bronze Age date (c.1000–700 BC), recovered from redeposited subsoil of Saxon date (Period 2, not illus). At Kingsway Hall, to the north of the site, the subsoil horizon contained struck flints and sherds of prehistoric pottery ranging in date from the Middle Bronze Age to the Middle Iron Age (c.1500–100 BC) (Holder *et al* 2000, 155).

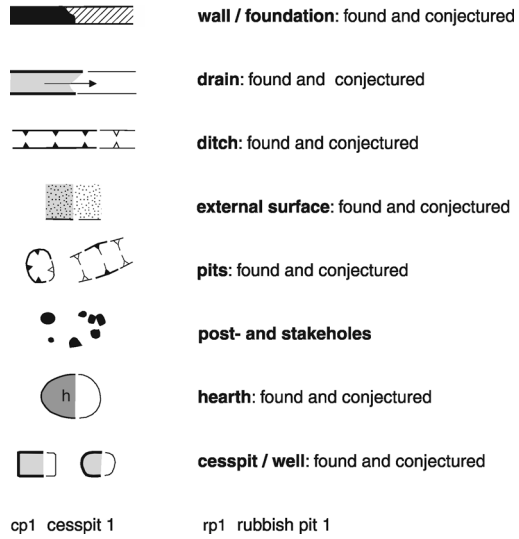


Fig 3. Drawing conventions used in plans

A single rubbish pit is possibly of Roman date (AD 50–400) (Period 3, Open Area 2; Fig 4). However, the single Roman sherd (un-sourced local coarseware) and a fragment of green glass found in this pit may be residual, implying that this feature may actually be of Saxon date. Evidence of Roman activity within the locality is limited, but it is evidenced on this site by finds of residual Roman pottery and ceramic building material within the lower fills of the large Saxon ditch (Period 4, Open Area 7). In addition, some Roman ceramic building material was brought to the site during the Saxon period for reuse. Nearby at Kingsway Hall, a Roman field ditch was found (Holder *et al* 2000, 155; Fig 1, Site 3).

PERIOD 4: MIDDLE SAXON SETTLEMENT (c.AD 650–850)

Initial Saxon activity consisted of either external dumping or the disturbance of subsoil horizons (Open Area 3, not illus). Associated pottery consists of one sherd of chaff-tempered ware; this form of pottery was most common in *Lundenwic* before c.AD 730 (Blackmore 2004). The initial activity was superseded by a range of activities including the external dumping of brickearth, domestic rubbish and daub. While the presence of a rubbish pit and an external hearth base (Hearth 1; Fig 4) imply the site was now being

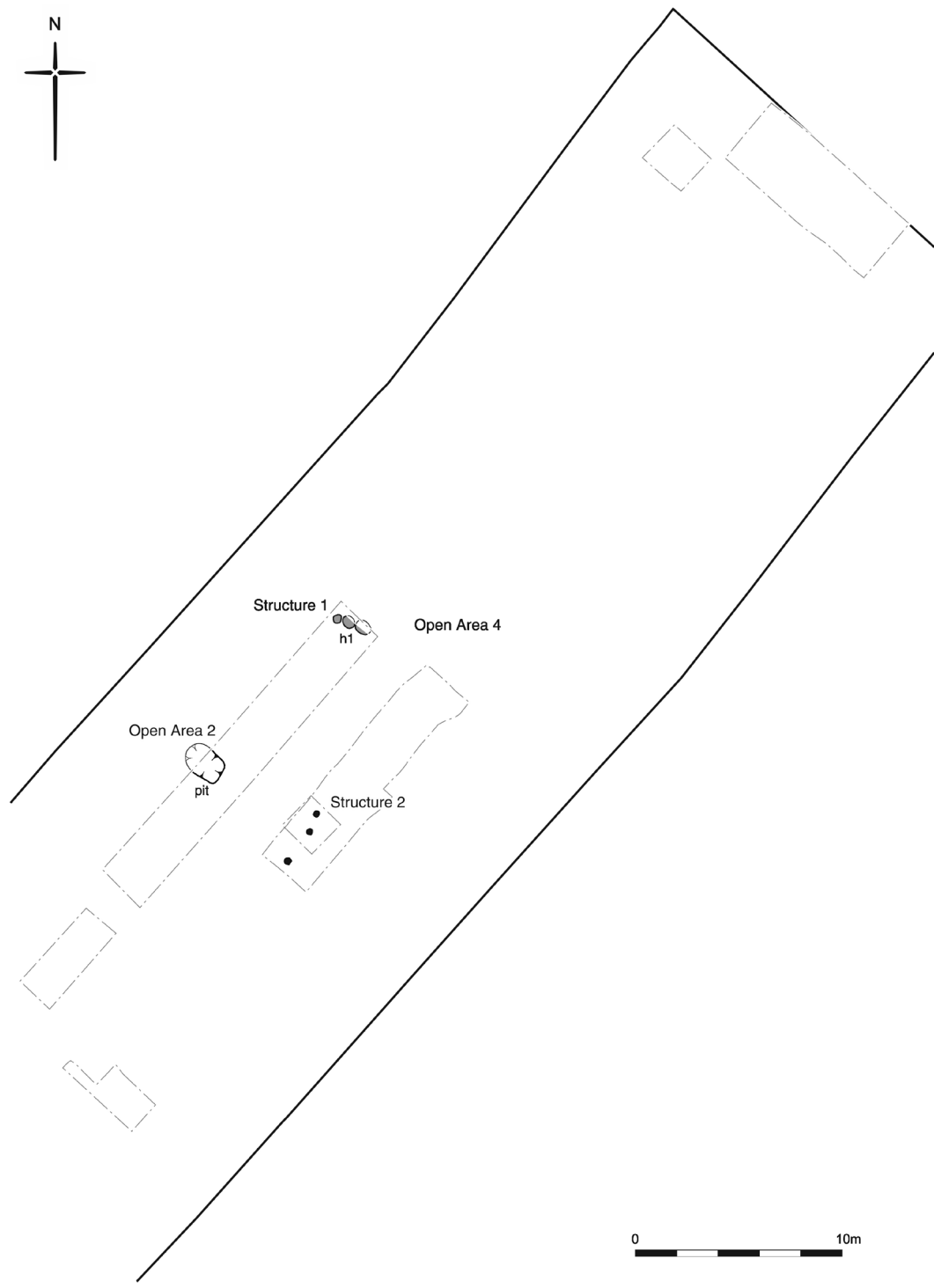


Fig 4. Roman pit (OA2) and Middle Saxon features (OA4)

occupied. Structural activity was represented by a fragment of fencing (Structure 1) and a group of three robbed out postholes (Structure 2), plus various scattered stake-holes of indeterminate function (Open Area 4, Fig 4). Associated pottery consisted of one sherd of an Ipswich coarseware jar, in use in *Lundenwic* by *c.*AD 730, before becoming the dominant type by *c.*750. The impression is that the site was initially located on the periphery of *Lundenwic*, when it was predominantly used for waste disposal, and that only later was it actually settled.

Subsequent activity consisted of the dismantling of the earlier structures and robbing out of the hearth lining. Then the area was covered by external levelling dumps (Open Area 5, Fig 5). Next a gully was dug and was later infilled with daub and rubbish. Afterwards a series of external gravel surfaces was constructed. The function of these surfaces is uncertain, they may have been yards associated with buildings lying beyond the area of excavation. These surfaces were sealed by dumps of daub and brickearth, which in turn were covered by more external gravel surfaces. These later surfaces were sealed by further dumping; Saxon finds included a loomweight (Fig 7, No. 2).

The infilling of a rubbish pit was followed by further external dumping and this was superseded by more rubbish pits and external brickearth dumping (Open Area 6). Next a circular wattle-lined well was constructed, which was later used as a rubbish pit; it contained pottery dating to AD 730–850. This activity was contemporary with the excavation of further rubbish pits and a small portion of a sunken-floored building (Building 1) with two superimposed brick-earth floors. The latter's walls had apparently been entirely removed or robbed out, then the interior backfilled with brickearth and daub. There were a number of external features including a rubbish pit and various postholes, some of which were in a roughly square arrangement and perhaps served as loom frame supports (Structure 3, Fig 6). Finds included a loomweight (Fig 7, No. 1), a large fragment of lava quernstone, sherds of Ipswich fine and coarseware, three fragments of vessel glass, and some iron slag (including a fragment of smithing hearth bottom).

Initial Saxon activity in Area 2 consisted

of a single rubbish pit, which is probably contemporary with Open Area 5 or 6 (Fig 5). This pit was superseded by the excavation of a large ditch, which is probably contemporary with or later than Open Area 6. This ditch was *c.*6m wide and 3m deep, aligned north-west–south-east with a V-shaped profile (Fig 6). Only the northern side of this ditch lay within the area of controlled excavation, but traces of the rest of it were recorded during the monitoring of ground works. Its primary fill was eroded brickearth, overlain by mixed clayey and sandy silts containing residual Roman ceramic building material. It was later systematically infilled with clayey silts. Finds included Roman pottery (AD 50–300), ceramic building material, squared ragstone rubble blocks, small fragments of cuperous slag, an iron object <125> of uncertain function (see Saxon finds), and fragments of lava quernstone, probably of Saxon date. If the upcast from this ditch was used to create a bank or rampart on the southern side of the feature, no trace of it was observed during the watching-brief, but its absence is perhaps either due to later truncation or the bank being used to systematically infill the upper part of the ditch. The date of this feature is uncertain as its fills produced no Saxon pottery, but as it post-dates a Middle Saxon rubbish pit, containing pottery dating to *c.*AD 730–850, it cannot have been dug earlier than AD 730, so it is interpreted as part of a defensive feature encircling the north-east portion of 8th- or 9th-century *Lundenwic* (see discussion section). It seems highly unlikely that this feature was intended as a drainage ditch because of its dimensions and the fact that it was situated on a relatively free-draining slope.

The Saxon finds

Lyn Blackmore

Nine sherds of Saxon pottery were recovered (317g); with the exception of one base, all are body sherds. Of these, three sherds are from jars/cooking pots in chaff-tempered ware (MOL fabric code: CHAF), while the others are from Ipswich ware jars and spouted pitchers (IPSC & IPSF) (Blackmore 2003, 229–35).

Four fragments of Niedermendig lava quernstone were also found (total 1,598g).

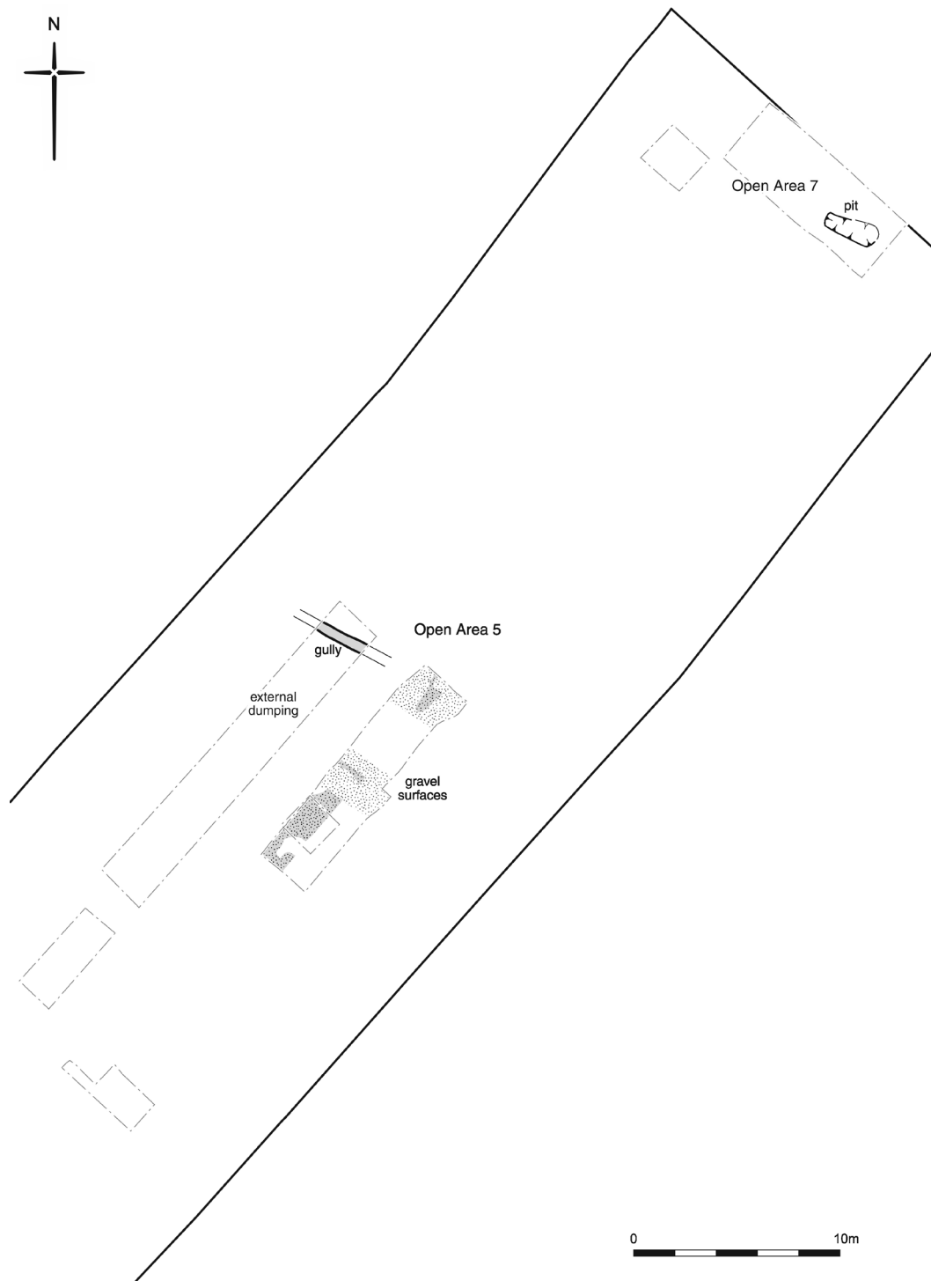


Fig 5. Later Middle Saxon features (OA5)

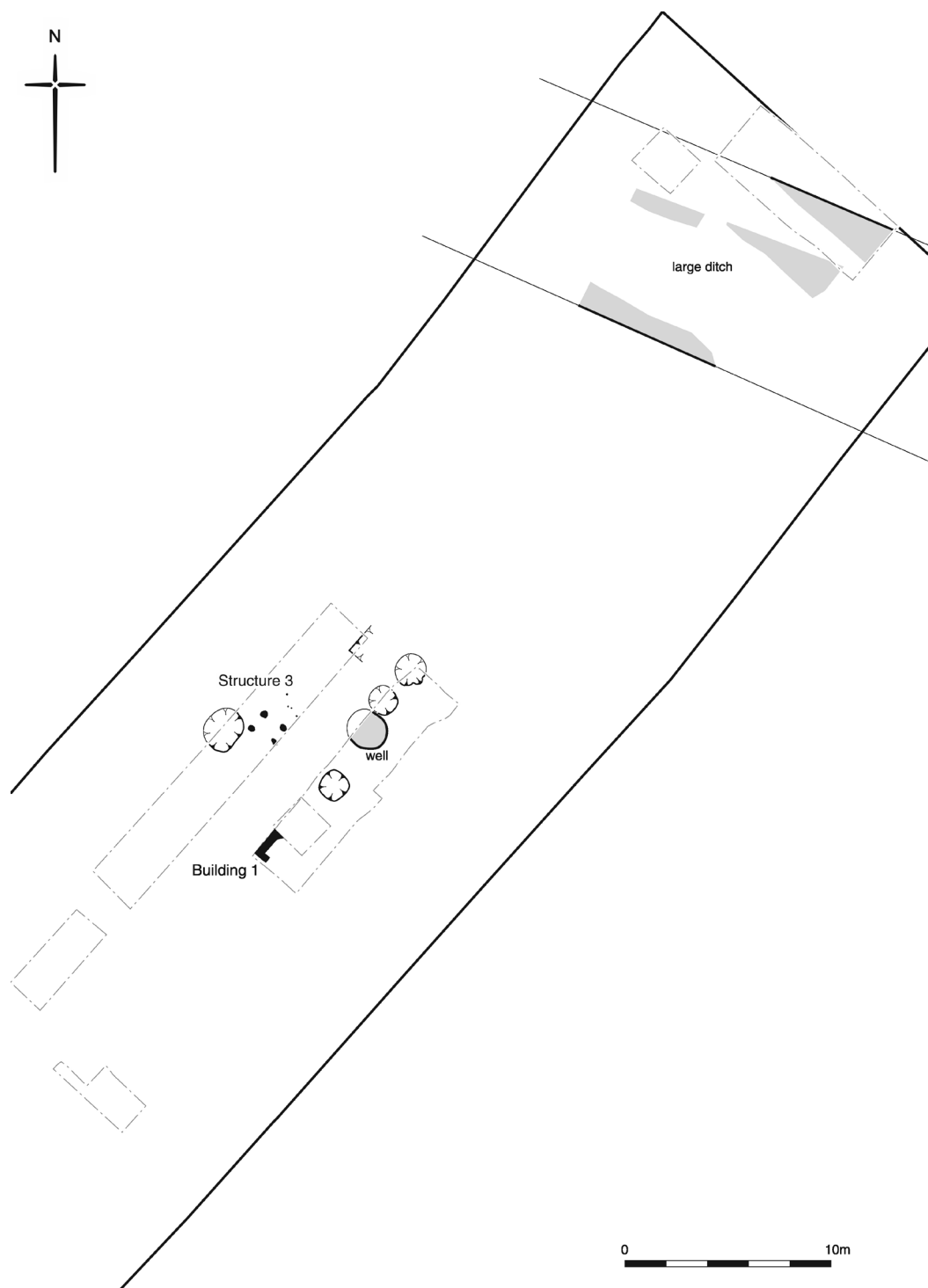


Fig 6. Later Middle Saxon features and ditch (OA6)

This is the most common stone used for querns during the Roman and Saxon periods (Goffin 2003a, 204–9). In addition, parts of four loomweights were found which vary in fabric, size and quality of manufacture. Two weights, in a fine sandy fabric with moderate fine flint inclusions, are approximately 50% complete with a C- or D-shaped profile. One has two finger impressions on the upper side; similar impressions, usually in a triangular configuration, have been noted on other loomweights from *Lundenwic* (Goffin 2003b, 221; fig 151) (Fig 7, Nos 1–2). The iron object <125> is of unknown function and uncertain date (Fig 7, No. 3). It has a flat base and is bent over on each of the long sides to form a channel that tapers from 40mm to 30mm and is 15mm deep (extant length 125mm, external width 45–50mm). It is too heavy and open for a woolcomb mount and it also lacks perforations. It could possibly be part of the handle attachment for a tool such as a scythe, or a bar of iron intended for working into an artefact.

A single piece of antler was found in a residual context (Period 5). It is possibly waste

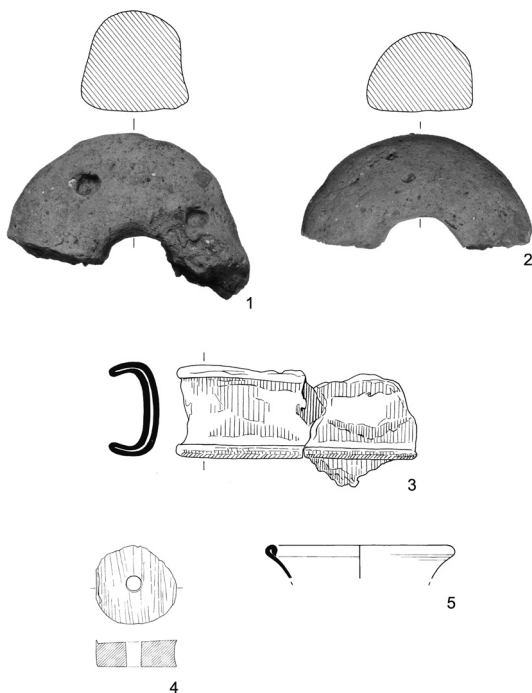


Fig. 7. Saxon finds: 1. Loomweight <26>; 2. Loomweight <160>; 3. Iron object <125>; 4. Antler waste <12>; 5. Glass rim <147>. Scale 1:4

from spindlewhorl manufacture (Fig 7, No. 4). This irregular slice of antler beam is transversely sawn with a hole drilled through the centre and snapped from two different angles; the section is wedge-shaped, being 15mm thick on one side but only 6mm thick on the other.

The Saxon glass

Matthew Stiff

Five glass sherds were found, all but one are derived from identifiable vessel types of late 7th- or 8th-century date (see catalogue; Fig 7, No. 5). Four of these sherds were recovered from Open Area 6. Three sherds were derived from tall palm cups. Vessels of this type were common in *Lundenwic* (Evison 1988; Stiff 1996, 213; 2003, 44–5). One sherd <195> is from either a tall palm cup or a funnel beaker. This very light green-blue sherd is decorated with vertical, optic-blown ribbing. Funnel beakers with this type of decoration are found in contexts dating as late as the 9th century, an example being found in Birka (grave 942), Sweden (Arbman 1940, fig 192, 1; Arbman 1943, 364–6).

The jar or flask fragment is extremely unusual; no similar finds are known from *Lundenwic* or other trading settlements of this period.¹ It appears to come from the neck and shoulder of a flask or jar. It is of blue-green glass, decorated with a diamond-shaped pattern that appears to be moulded rather than optic-blown. Similar patterns can be found from towards the base of optic-blown palm cups or deep palm cups decorated with more complex cruciform decoration (it is not possible to determine the full pattern of the Keeley Street fragment). An example of such a vessel was recovered from a stone sarcophagus found beneath the portico of St Martin in the Fields (Akerman 1855, 53).

Saxon glass catalogue

Rim fragment

Tall palm cup fragment <147> (residual in Period 6), light green-blue. Outsplayed inward-rolled cavity rim, tiny, horizontally-elongated bubbles, fair gloss and clarity, light surface iridescence, good gloss and clarity; length: 38mm, width: 20mm, thickness: 1.4mm, rim diameter: 95mm, rim thickness: 5.1mm.

Body fragments from Open Area 4

Tall palm cup fragment <146>, light green-blue, from lower section of vessel wall. Striated markings on exterior face, tiny slightly elongated bubbles, good gloss and clarity; thickness: 2.5mm.

Jar/flask fragment <152>, green. Unusual fragment decorated with diamond-shaped moulded or optic-blown ribbing. Fragment appears to come from shoulder and lower neck of jar or flask, tiny bubbles, good gloss and clarity; length: 13mm, width: 11mm, thickness: 1.1mm.

Funnel beaker/tall palm cup fragment <195>, very light green-blue. From mid-wall of vessel decorated with vertical optic-blown ribbing, tiny vertically-elongated bubbles, good gloss and clarity; thickness: 0.9mm.

Tall palm cup fragment <151>, light green-blue. From lower wall of vessel, thickening towards the base, tiny vertically-elongated bubbles, fair gloss and clarity.

The Saxon building material

Ian M Betts

The majority of the building material comprised lumps of burnt daub from wattle and daub structures and reused Roman ceramic tile, probably intended for lining hearths or as paving. Many of the best preserved daub fragments show evidence of closely-packed wooden rods c.9–16mm in diameter with a crudely smoothed outer face. They are from wattle and daub panels comprising horizontal rods interwoven between regularly spaced vertical rods. The daub from Open Area 5 was derived from two panels of different widths (around 60–70mm and 80–110mm thick) and is similar to examples from *Lundenwic* (Goffin 1988, 117).

The Saxon plant remains

Kate Roberts

Charred plant remains were rare on this site. Free-threshing wheat (*Triticum aestivum/turgidum/durum*) was the dominant cereal grain and there was also a single possible rye grain (*cf. Secale cereale*). Charred seeds of arable weeds including vetch/tare/vetchling (*Vicia/Lathyrus* spp) and medick/clover (*Trifolium/Medicago* spp) were present. Saxon

free-threshing wheat and rye were found nearby at the Royal Opera House (Davis 2003) and Bruce House sites (Giorgi 1999) (Fig 1, Sites 1 and 5).

Occasional seeds were present from wetland plants (rushes), which could have been growing locally or have been used as flooring. Possible food waste is evidenced by seeds of blackberry/raspberry (*Rubus fruticosus/idaeus*). Seeds of stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*) were also found.

The Saxon animal bones

Alan Pipe

Saxon deposits produced a total of 1,180 animal bones. The fragment count was dominated by ox (*Bos Taurus*), with smaller contributions of ovicaprids including sheep (*Ovis aries*) and pig (*Sus scrofa*) and occasional examples of goose (*Anser sp*), chicken (*Gallus gallus*) and single finds of horse (*Equus caballus*) and cat (*Felis catus*). Recovery of wild species was limited to an innominate (pelvis) of roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*). Oxen or ox-sized fragments made up 52% of the fragment count; sheep/goat and 'sheep-sized' bone made up 34%, and pig comprised 12%. The domesticates were almost all young adults or older; with only a few fragments of neonate and infant calf. There was no evidence for bone working, although one ox skull had been chopped through the base of the horncore in preparation for detachment of the horn layer for manufacture. Statures for ox and sheep lay in the ranges 1.16–1.30m and 0.56–0.73m, with one estimate for pig of 0.72m. These values correspond to those for cattle and pigs at *Lundenwic* and the Royal Opera House (Rielly 2003, 323), although the greatest stature for sheep at Keeley House exceeds that from other *Lundenwic* sites (Armitage 2004, 31–2) (Fig 1, Site 5).

Comparison with the Saxon assemblage from the Royal Opera House shows a generally similar faunal composition with dominance by cattle and, to a lesser extent, sheep/goat and pig, with sparse recovery of goose, chicken and mallard/domestic duck and virtual absence of 'game' species (Rielly 2003, 319). The absence of fish bones from the site may be due to the small size of the assemblage.

Saxon period discussion

Lyn Blackmore and Bruce Watson

Saxon *Lundenwic* was established during the 7th century AD as a trading settlement and a river port or *emporium*, centred on the modern Strand area (Fig 1). The site was located within the north-east portion of *Lundenwic*; a combination of this relatively peripheral location and the depth of the post-medieval cellars might explain why there was a relatively low density of features and a small-sized finds assemblage compared with the more densely occupied area of the settlement found under the Royal Opera House (Malcolm *et al* 2003, 1–2, fig 11). The fact that most of the pottery from Keeley Street is Ipswich ware indicates that here, as in other peripheral parts of the settlement, the main period of activity was during the 8th century (Blackmore 1988; 1989; 2003). The absence of later shell-tempered wares suggests either that there was no 9th-century activity or that these deposits have been destroyed by later activity.

The excavation revealed a variety of Middle Saxon features and external deposits. Features included a wattle-lined well, 10 pits used for the disposal of faecal waste and rubbish, and several lengths of shallow ditch or gully. The two areas of gravel metalling perhaps served as yard surfaces or pathways. There were various external levelling dumps of daub rich, organic rubbish. Surviving structural evidence was very limited, possibly due to the degree of post-medieval truncation, which resulted in the better survival of deeper intrusive features such as rubbish pits. Recorded structural evidence consisted of various robbed-out postholes and stakeholes, probably fences, and a fragment of a robbed-out sunken-floored building. It can be inferred from the daub fragments that buildings on and around the site were of wattle and daub construction as found elsewhere in *Lundenwic* (Malcolm *et al* 2003, 151–2).

The finds assemblage comprised objects associated with the preparation and consumption of food and drink, and crafts such as grinding and weaving. Fragments of glass palm cups or possibly a funnel beaker, together with an unusual sherd from a flask or jar, were found.

During the 8th century *Lundenwic*'s wealth

attracted sea-borne Viking raiders, who from AD 842 onwards repeatedly attacked it (ASC 1996, 64). These events probably prompted the construction of defensive ditches around *Lundenwic*. Excavations at nearby Bruce House, the Royal Opera House and Maiden Lane recorded substantial ditches of 8th- or 9th-century date, which may represent localised defensive works (Malcolm *et al* 2003, 118–19) (Fig 1, Sites 1, 4 and 5). The substantial ditch at the City Lit site is interpreted as part of the 8th- or 9th-century defences of *Lundenwic*. The impression is that 8th- or 9th-century *Lundenwic* did not possess a single defensive circuit, but instead there were several adjoining fortified enclosures.

In response to these attacks on *Lundenwic* it is recorded that the downstream derelict Roman city was reoccupied in AD 886 as a defensive measure (Watson *et al* 2001, 55). This fortress quickly superseded *Lundenwic* as an international port. By about AD 900 Saxon *Lundenwic* was abandoned and the area reverted to farmland until the post-medieval period. However, the development of nearby Thorney Island began in the 1040s when King Edward the Confessor (1042–66) decided to rebuild Westminster Abbey and then to establish a new royal palace there. Westminster therefore became the centre of royal government and later the site of Parliament, which is the reason why many courtiers and ambassadors chose to reside here in the Covent Garden area during later centuries.

PERIOD 5: MEDIEVAL AND POST-MEDIEVAL FIELDS (c.1240–1620)

Following the supposed abandonment of the site in c.AD 850 (Period 4), it became part of an agrarian landscape, characterised by a natural soil build-up (Open Area 8, not illud). Finds including medieval pottery (dated to c.1240–1400) are interpreted as the result of spreading domestic rubbish on the fields.

Until the 16th century, the area around Drury Lane remained as farmland, but as the Cities of London and Westminster expanded this area was developed by rich and aristocratic families for housing. John Stow writing in c.1600 noted that in the Drury Lane area were 'divers ... hostelries, and houses for gentlemen' (Stow 1603 ii, 98).

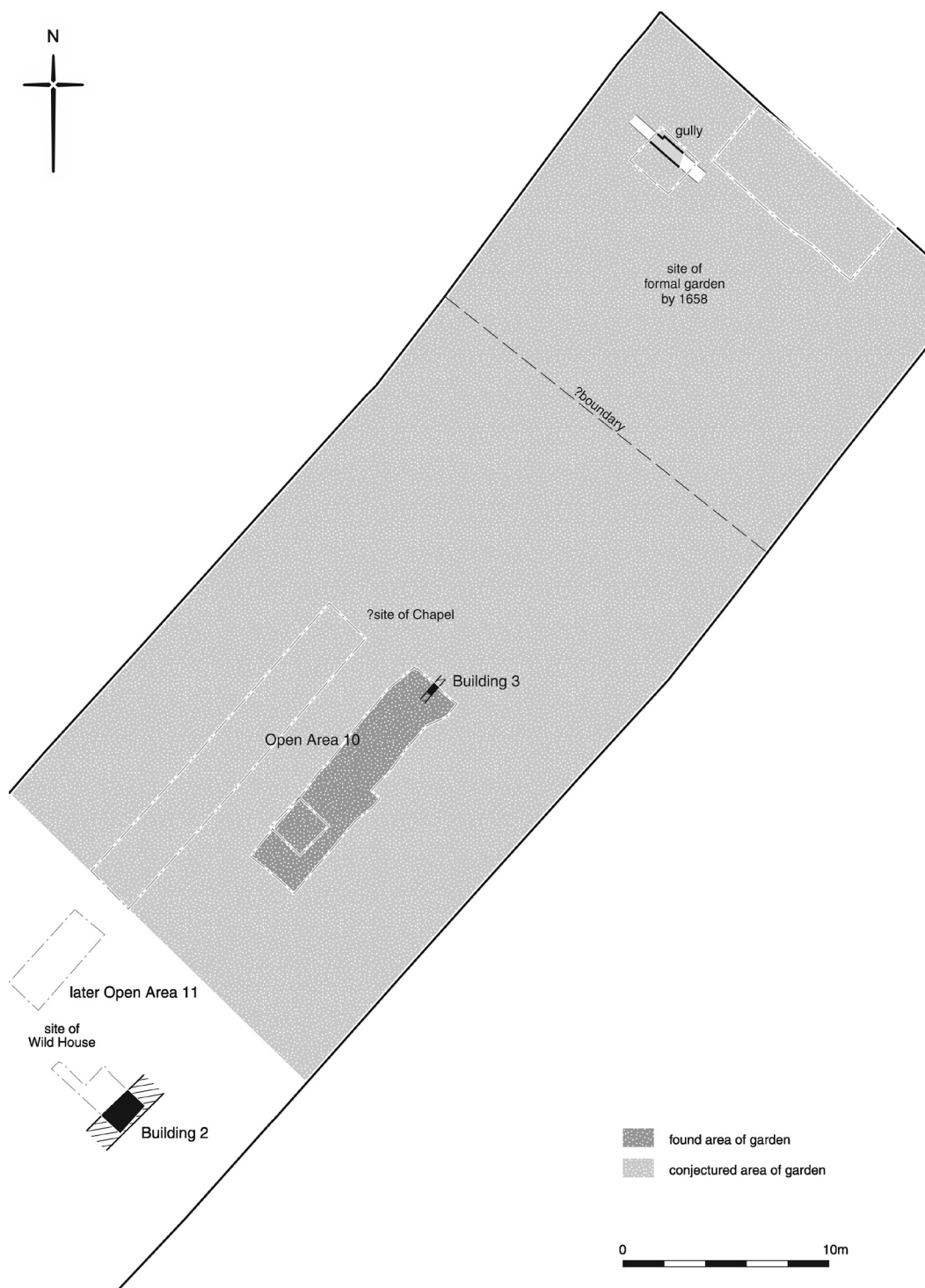


Fig 8. 17th-century Wild House (B2), showing the postulated extent of the property and position of the garden (OA10) and the possible chapel (B3)

PERIOD 6: WILD HOUSE AND ITS GARDEN (c.1629–1700)

By 1658 a substantial brick-built residence and its formal garden, latterly known as Weld or Wild House, had been constructed on the site (Figs 8–9). The only surviving part of Wild House (Building 2) excavated was in Test Pit 3, where the remains of the house had been extensively damaged by later cellars and the foundations of the 1884 school. The excavated remains consisted of one fragment of brick wall foundation, which was superseded by an east–west-aligned drain with bricklined walls founded on stone slabs. Later a north–south-aligned brick drain was added. Both drains were filled with silt containing 19th-century material, suggesting that they were later reused as soakaways.² The drains were found some 2m below modern ground level, which implies that they lay below cellar floor level. However, there was no evidence of these floors, probably due to robbing (Open Area 11). The presence of the drains might imply that the kitchens of Wild House were situated nearby, to the rear of the building behind the public rooms.

A thin spread of mortar to the rear of the house is interpreted as construction debris from the building work during 1629–57 (Open Area 9, not illus). This spread was sealed by garden soil horizons (Open Area 10, Fig 8). The impression from Hollar's view of 1658 is that this area to the rear of the house was not planted with trees, but might have been either an informal garden or the kitchen garden (Fig 9). By 1658 a geometric arrangement of raised flower beds and paths had been laid out in the northern portion of this area (Figs 8–9). This style of formal garden was typical of the early 17th century. In 1629 John Parkinson published *Paradius in Sole* (Park in the Sun), in which he described the range of flowers he grew in his own Long Acre, London garden (Fleming & Gore 1979, 34–5, 41). The only evidence of garden features found on the site was a short length of gully (Fig 8). Later a number of quarry and rubbish pits were dug within the garden (not illus); their fills contained 17th-century pottery and clay tobacco pipe dated 1610–60 (types AO4, AO5, AO8, AO9, AO10, see Atkinson & Oswald 1969). These features were probably dug after 1655,

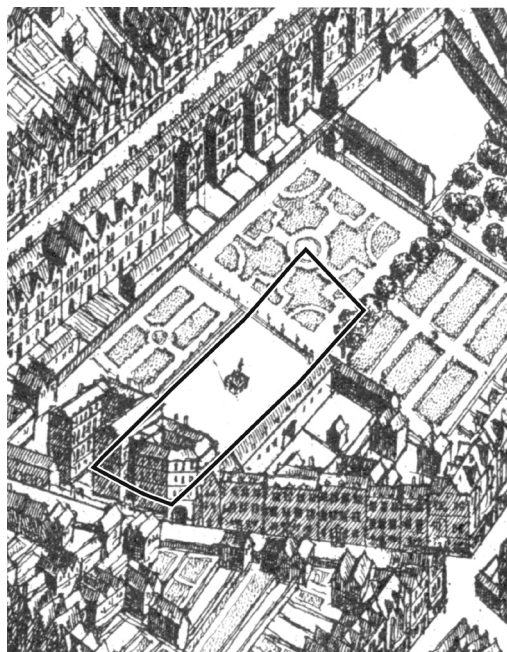


Fig 9. Hollar's engraving of 1658 showing Wild House and the formal garden to the rear, looking north-east

when the property had passed into multiple occupancy.

There was one fragment of brick foundation, aligned south-west–north-east within the area of the garden (Building 3, Fig 8). This foundation is too substantial for a garden feature, but was possibly part of the chapel built by Weld in c.1657, the existence of which is documented in 1679, or it was part of some undocumented building erected in the garden after 1688. A free-standing structure is shown in the garden on Hollar's engraving, which may have been the chapel (Fig 9).

Some time after 1694 and before the mid-18th century, Wild House was demolished. It appears that the paving of the cellar floors was removed and then the cellars backfilled.

The 17th-century glass

Beth Richardson

Two pieces of high quality early to mid-17th-century glass were recovered from a rubbish pit in Wild House garden and a third fragment was a residual find in cellars of a later building.³ Two pieces from a mould-blown lion-mask stem (Fig 10, No. 1) come from a



Fig 10. Post-medieval finds.

Material associated with Wild House: 1. lion-mask glass goblet stem<149> (height 74mm); 2. fragment from an open glass vessel, probably a goblet <150> (1:2); 3. tin-glazed floor tile <3> (top surface 52mm by 50mm).

Material associated with Wild Court Rookery: 4. 'House' plate from Cesspit 1 [56] (1:2); 5. stoneware gold-working crucibles <155>, <156> from Cesspit 1 (1:4); 6. back scratcher <8> from Cesspit 1, probably ivory in the form of a clenched fist holding an object; it would have screwed onto a handle (height 42mm); 7. complete bone rattle <6> from Cesspit 1 (length 125mm); 8. blue transfer-printed whiteware London-shaped teacup from Cesspit 2 [58] (height 60mm); 9. riveted blue transfer-printed whiteware plate from Cesspit 2 [58] (1:2); 10. pink transfer-printed whiteware plate depicting image of Father Matthew from Cesspit 5 [71] (1:2); 11. misshapen gold finger-ring from Cesspit 5 <4> (17 by 19mm); 12. ivory chess piece <10> from the backfill of the cellars (OA13), a rook in the form of a castle tower with crenellations and inscribed stylised stonework (height 34mm)

distinctive goblet type which originated in Venice and was made throughout northern Europe until the mid-17th century. Most lion-mask stems from London come from just a few moulds, and because of this and the poor quality of the glass and the moulds, it is thought that the goblets are of English (London) origin (Willmott 2000; Willmott 2002, 63). The example from Wild House is Willmott's mould type A, one of the two most common moulds. It is clear mixed alkali glass with 14 upper gadroons and 11 lower gadroons. The other piece of glass is a small fragment decorated with bands of opaque white glass and clear and opaque *vetro a retorti* trails (thin canes of clear and opaque white glass twisted to make a chequered spiral effect) (Fig 10, No. 2). It is part of a high status open vessel, probably a goblet, either of Venetian or high-quality European manufacture (Willmott 2002, 16–17).

Discussion of Wild House period

In 1629 the site and the surrounding area of Aldwych Close were sold to Sir Kenelm Digby and Sir Edward Stradling. In 1632, when Stradling divided his property in two by constructing an east–west brick wall extending from Drury Lane eastwards towards Lincoln's Inn Fields, he had already built a 'mansion house' on the northern part of his land. On 20 December 1632 Stradling's house and land to the north side of this wall was sold to George Gage. As a condition of sale it was agreed that the building work on the property would be completed by 1634 (*Survey of London* 1914, 93). On 25 February 1639, after Gage's death his creditors sold the property to Humphrey Weld (1612–85), a property developer and administrator after whom the surrounding streets are named, who built a number of houses on this land (Clayton 2004, 976). In 1649 the southern portion of Stradling's property was also acquired by Weld, who began to build houses along the east side of Wild Street (*Survey of London* 1914, 94).

In 1657, Weld or Wild House and Stradling's House were united to become one property with a chapel to the rear, which might be the free-standing building shown on Hollar's engraving of 1658 (Fig 9). Hollar depicts Wild House as an imposing structure of two

adjoining four-storey properties of different designs. The northern dwelling comprised three blocks arranged around a courtyard, while the southern portion was an irregular five-sided arrangement of blocks apparently grouped around a central courtyard. This house may have been embellished with Portland stone dressings, as part of a cornice was found reused in Building 5 <165>. The only fragment of the house located is interpreted as a cellar with internal drains situated within the rear portion of the property. Finds probably associated with the house included a London-made tin-glazed floor tile with a blue on white tulip and fruit design (Fig 10, No. 3) and two drinking glasses (Fig 10, Nos 1–2).

In the 1666 Hearth Tax rolls this property was described as two houses containing 30 hearths, which were both occupied by the Marquis of Winchester. He had leased the property from Weld in May 1665. By 1673 the property was divided into at least four dwellings, one of which was occupied by Weld himself. The property was a centre for Catholicism, Weld having become a Catholic himself in the 1630s, and he had a private Catholic chapel on his property (Clayton 2004, 976). Probably because of Weld's religious beliefs the southern portion of his property became the residence for a succession of Catholic ambassadors. From April 1659 until 1665 the Portuguese ambassador resided here, followed by French and Spanish ambassadors in 1673 and 1675 respectively (*Survey of London* 1914, 94–5).

Following the flight of Catholic James II in December 1688, the ambassador's house and chapel were apparently looted and perhaps burnt down or at least damaged by anti-Catholic rioters, in common with other Catholic chapels in London. A medal issued in 1689 depicts the Drury Lane area, including the ruined Portuguese chapel in Duke Street, but apparently it does not show either Wild House or its chapel (Hawkins *et al* 1885, 660–1).⁴ Shortly afterwards Wild House was purchased by Isaac Foxcroft, who let it on a 'building lease' (*Survey of London* 1914, 97). In 1694 the property was advertised on a leasehold basis.⁵ By 1746 Weld's property had been demolished and the whole area redeveloped. As part of this redevelopment Little Wild Street and Little

Wild Court had been established by 1746 and these two streets were flanked by rows of terraced houses (Rocque 1746, pl 11). The archaeological evidence suggests that this redevelopment probably took place on a piecemeal basis between c.1700 and 1740.

PERIOD 7: 18th-CENTURY TERRACED HOUSES ALONG LITTLE WILD STREET AND WILD COURT

The early 18th-century terraced houses of Wild Court were originally erected as supplementary chambers for the lawyers of Lincoln's Inn. The three-storey houses each contained ten rooms and were described as of 'a good size' and 'wainscoted' (Anon 1854a, 589; 1854b, 410). Wild Court was situated within the parish of St Giles in the Fields. On the site of 10 Little Wild Street were the remains of two buildings. The first consisted of fragments of three successive brick-paved cellar floors (Building 4; Fig 11). The final destruction of this building and the infilling of its cellars took place before c.1720. The second building consisted of a fragment of brick-paved coal cellar floor and associated cellar wall, which was in existence before 1720 (Building 5), but was demolished and its cellar infilled after 1870 (Open Area 13).

Truncated elements of a number of brick-built cellared properties survived.⁶ The bonding pattern of these walls was generally irregular, but it mainly consisted of alternate headers and stretchers (English Cross). Within the backyards of 4–5 Little Wild Street were several fragmentary phases of walling which included a lot of reused bricks (Building 6; Fig 11). These appear to be elements of several outhouses apparently associated with houses, which were replaced by Building 7.

The rear walls of the cellars of 3–5 Little Wild Street (Building 7; Fig 11) were represented by a 12.2m long, south-west to north-east aligned wall foundation. To the north of these houses was an area of yards containing cesspits, intended for the disposal of faecal waste. Within one of the adjoining houses (No. 2) was a circular brick-lined soakaway. The walls of Building 7 were extremely fragmentary, but the two surviving portions were constructed of much better quality brickwork than the neighbouring

properties. The rear wall of the cellars at 10–13 Wild Court stood up to 1.3m high and showed traces of rendered or plastered internal surfaces (Building 8; Fig 11).

The internal features of these cellared buildings included small fragments of brick-paved flooring, and below floor features such as drains and three rectangular brick-lined cesspits, an unlined rubbish pit and a robbed out brick-lined well. There were traces of coal dust on some of the internal paving, confirming that the cellars had been used to store coal. The disuse and robbing out of these features and the sealing of the cesspits probably took place during the 1855 refurbishment.

THE WILD COURT ROOKERY AND ITS REFURBISHMENT

By the mid-19th century Wild Street had become part of an infamous slum known as the 'Wild Court rookery', which was described by journalists such as Thomas Beames and Charles Dickens (editor of *Household Words*) (see cover). By 1854 more than a thousand people were resident within the 14 houses at Wild Court, some of whom slept on the staircases. This degree of overcrowding created problems concerning sanitation, waste disposal and the contamination of drinking water, which caused high rates of infant mortality and typhus. A reporter observed that 'in these yards cesspools and rotten water-butts are neighbours'. Faecal waste and rubbish were being routinely dumped in rooms, cellars and backyards. In fact the backyards were frequently used as additional toilets. The 16 cesspools or cesspits which served 13 of these properties were described as up to 16 ft (5.1m) deep and about 5 ft (1.6m) square from which 150 cart loads of material were apparently removed during the refurbishment before these features 'were filled in and obliterated'. Waste disposal from upper storey rooms was via an open trough, which drained into an open sewer (Anon 1854a; 1854b, 409–11; 1855, 86).

During 1854, 13 of 14 houses in Wild Court were acquired by the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes, with the intention of refurbishing the properties for rent as 'healthy homes'

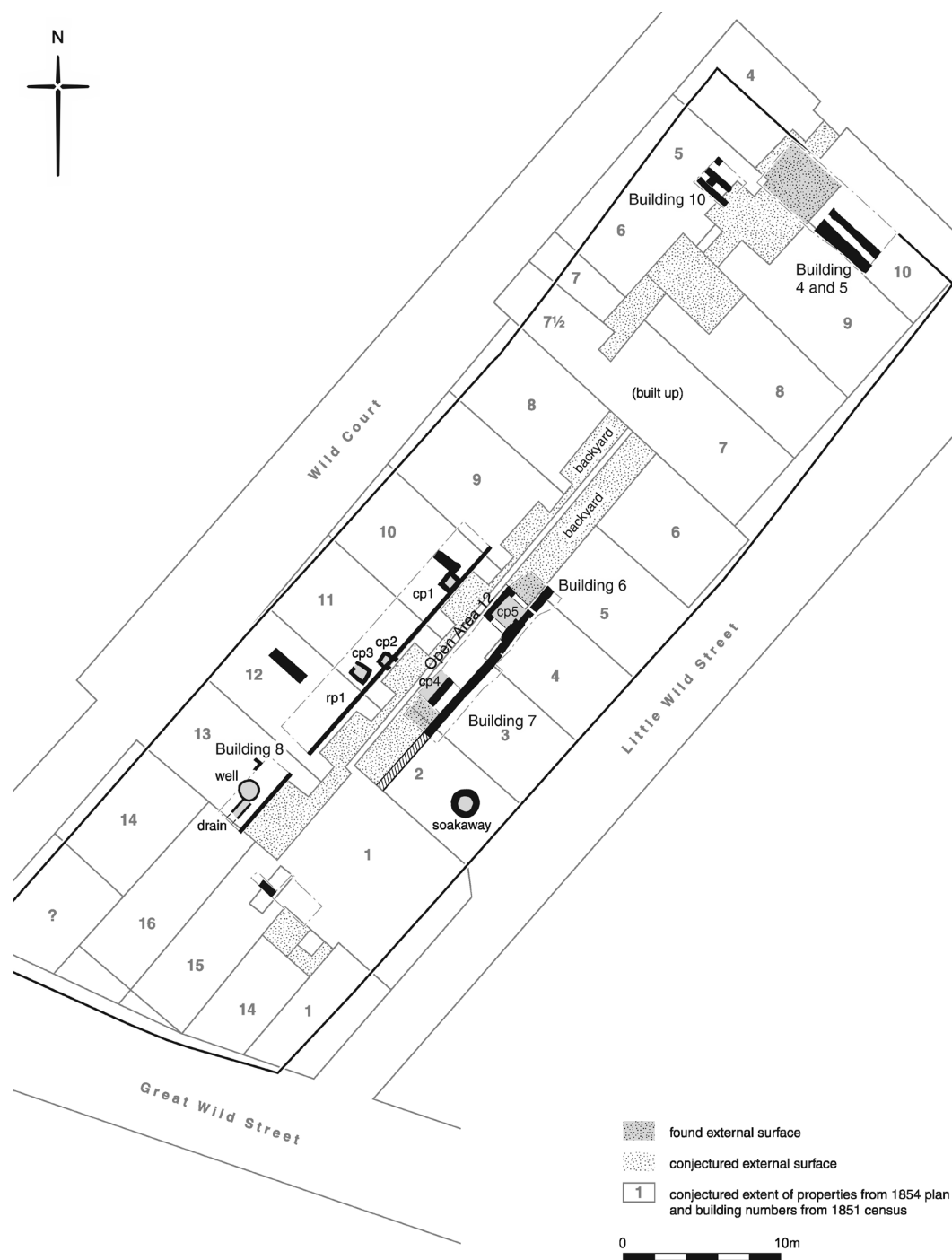


Fig 11. Plan of excavated buildings (B4–B9), associated cesspits (cp1–5) and rubbish pit (rp1) along with the conjectured extent of nearby properties from the 1854 plan and building numbers from the 1851 census

(Anon 1854b, 409–11). Between February and August 1855 these properties were cleaned up and refurbished with their cesspools infilled, drainage improved and water closets installed. Drinking water was supplied by a tap installed on each floor. This process, described in *Household Words*, included the removal of 330 cart loads of ‘accumulated filth, animal and vegetable, ... including vermin’ from the cellars of the houses (Anon 1855, 86). The excavations revealed that the various internal drains, cesspits and wells were infilled and sealed and the area raised slightly before the cellars were repaved for use as tenant’s workshops. The type of brick used in these alterations is of post-1840 date.⁷ In addition parts of the cellar walls were repaired and rebuilt and in the case of 10 Wild Court Street the internal face of one cellar wall relined, perhaps to stop damp, as many were described as ‘impregnated with a foul moisture’ (Anon 1855, 86). Salt-glazed ceramic foul drains had been installed in some of these cellars by making holes in the lining walls, presumably this work was carried out as part of the 1855 refurbishment. Similar drains were installed in great numbers between 1858 and 1880 to connect housing to London’s new integrated sewage system (Halliday 1999).

The cesspits of 10–13 Wild Court

Beth Richardson and Nigel Jeffries

Three rectangular brick-lined cesspits to the rear of 10–13 Wild Court (Fig 11) were not emptied or scoured out during the 1855 refurbishment; instead they were sealed up preserving large domestic finds assemblages.

The fills of these pits generally consisted of a loose dark greyish brown (often with a green hue), fine sandy silt, derived from decayed faecal waste and organic rubbish. Only the basal metre or so of these truncated features survived.

The cesspit which served 10 Wild Court (Cesspit 1) was backfilled in two distinct episodes. The chronology of the first episode (context [57]) confirms that the material found is related to the feature’s *use* during the first quarter of the 19th century. However, the second episode ([56]) relates to its *disuse* (Tables 1–2). Most of the 50 ceramic vessels associated with the first episode were creamware drinking vessels, such as rounded bowls, teabowls, teacups and small cylindrical mugs. In addition, a blue transfer-printed whiteware teacup decorated with Spode’s Greek pattern (Coysh & Henrywood 1984, 162–3) was recovered. Plates are limited to a few base and rim sherds; the only profile was from a creamware plate decorated with a scalloped rim and finely moulded foliate decoration. Finds from the lower fill also included up to six vitrified stoneware crucibles (Fig 10, No. 5). Analysis of the contents of these crucibles confirms that they were used for gold working, probably cupellation (see crucible report). The use of archaic technology and the context in which it was carried out suggests that this gold working was probably an illicit activity.

The lower fill of the cesspit also included 90 fragments of animal bone, which indicate the inhabitants of 10 Wild Court had a varied diet of rabbit, veal, and duck together with more frequent cuts of beef, pork and chicken (Rielly 2004). The fragments of up to three

Table 1. Cesspit 1 serving 10 Wild Court, early 19th-century pottery from context [57]: the use of, by function and number of vessels

Function	Forms found	Estimated number of vessels (ENV)	% of ENV
Drinking (general)	Rounded bowls and jugs	13	26.5%
Drinking (tea)	Cream jug, saucer, teabowls, teacups, and teapot lid	14	28.6%
Food consumption	Plates	9	18.4%
Industrial	Crucibles	6	12.2%
Miscellaneous	Unidentified	1	2.0%
Sanitary	Chamber pots	4	8.2%
Storage	Jars	2	4.1%
Total		49	100%

Table 2. *Cesspit 1 serving 10 Wild Court, mid-19th-century pottery from context [56]; the disuse of, by function and number of vessels*

Function	Forms found	Estimated number of vessels (ENV)	% of ENV
Domestic	Blacking pot	1	2.6%
Drinking (general)	Rounded bowls, jugs and mugs	5	12.8%
Drinking (tea)	Saucers, teacups, and teapot	15	38.5%
Food consumption	Plates	9	23.1%
Food preparation	Bowl	1	2.6%
Food serving	Dish, oval dish and serving dish	3	7.7%
Sanitary	Chamber pots	2	5.1%
Storage	Jars, and pot lid	3	7.7%
Total		39	100%

glass wine bottles and a beaker represent vessels connected with alcohol consumption (see glass report).

The material relating to the second episode or *disuse* of this feature ([56]) yielded some 48 clay tobacco pipe bowls and 39 ceramic vessels dating between 1850 and 1870, therefore placing their deposition within the 1855 refurbishment. There were four clay tobacco pipe bowls and one mouthpiece dating between 1780 and 1820 (AO27; see Atkinson & Oswald 1969). The pipes included one Dutch import of *c.*1770 <193>, of type AD29 (Atkinson 1972, fig 79) and a type AO28 bowl (*c.*1820–60) <24> which bears the Prince of Wales' feathers. Pottery dating from the second quarter of the 19th century includes the base from a whiteware cup decorated with bright emerald green glaze and moulded relief sprigs, and sherds of blue transfer-printed 'flow blue' decorated whiteware. The most complete vessels were two plain whiteware rounded jugs used for decanting drinks together with the profile of a teacup. Decorative or 'special' ceramics were represented by a bone china teabowl with a delicate over-glaze painted floral decoration and a pearlware plate revealing part of an under-glaze painted inscription that reads 'house' (Fig 10, No. 4). There was a complete yellow ware chamber pot with blue mocha dendritic decoration. The stoneware blacking pot (Green 1999, fig 139, type 427, 171), which once contained boot polish, demonstrated a level of personal care and attention.

There was some high-quality glass from the second episode, including a piece of clear

hip flask decorated with optic-blown lattice decoration which would have given a quilted appearance when filled with liquid. A free-blown tumbler base is made from extremely fine clear glass, and would almost certainly have formed part of a bedroom toilet set with a jug or carafe. A mould-blown, clear, multi-ribbed bottle may have contained medicine or tonic; the small number of other pieces of bottle come from standard green wine bottles and pale blue glass medicine bottles (see glass report). Other objects recovered included three bone and ivory objects. A carved clenched fist, probably ivory, has a screw attachment-thread and was probably part of a back scratcher (Fig 10, No. 6). This finely-carved object was a luxury item and may have been over 50 years old when deposited.

A complete cylindrical baby's bone rattle was found (Fig 10, No. 7). It was decorated with two diamond-shaped patterns of nine holes on either side of the cylinder. The central hole on one side has a screw thread for the handle. The ends of the cylinder are plugged with perforated discs, also decorated with concentric rings. The handle has a moulded terminal and a screw thread at either end. There is a metal ball (probably lead) inside the rattle. Bone rattles of this type were made in India and were in common use during the late 19th century, although they are rarely found, possibly because, unlike silver rattles, they were not necessarily kept as heirlooms (Noreen Marshall, Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, pers comm). A small circular bone box lid is possibly from a needle case. It has a screw thread, and is decorated on its

upper surface with scored rings and with four grooves which would have provided a grip for opening and closing the box. Because of their durability and possible longevity of use, none of the bone and ivory items can be dated closely within the Victorian period, but the rattle is probably contemporary with the pottery and glass while other items may be contemporary or earlier.

Scientific examination of the crucible fragments from Cesspit 1

David Dungworth

A group of up to six used vitrified stoneware crucibles of the same shape and size as those in the Museum of the History of Science in Oxford (Hull 2003, fig 6.1–6.7) was found in the lower fill [57] of Cesspit 1 (Fig 10, No. 5). The residues in these crucibles indicate that gold was refined firstly by cupellation to remove base metals (such as copper) and then by parting using salt cement or sulphur to separate the silver.

The crucibles are small, wheel-thrown ceramic vessels, circular at the base but triangular at the rim. The form became very popular in the post-medieval period with millions being manufactured for small scale metallurgy (Rehren 1996), alchemy (Martinón-Torres & Rehren 2005), and chemistry (Salter in Hull 2003). Sections through four examples (three bases and one rim sherd) were examined using a scanning electron microscope. Chemical composition of areas, inclusions and points was carried out using an energy dispersive X-ray detector attached to the scanning electron microscope (Dungworth 2010).

All four crucibles have similar microstructures/textures and chemical composition. They are silica-rich and contain low levels of oxides that would easily vitrify (*eg* soda, potash and iron oxide). The chemical composition and microstructures of the crucibles suggest they were heated to temperatures in the region of 1000–1200°C.

The vitrified layer on the interior surface

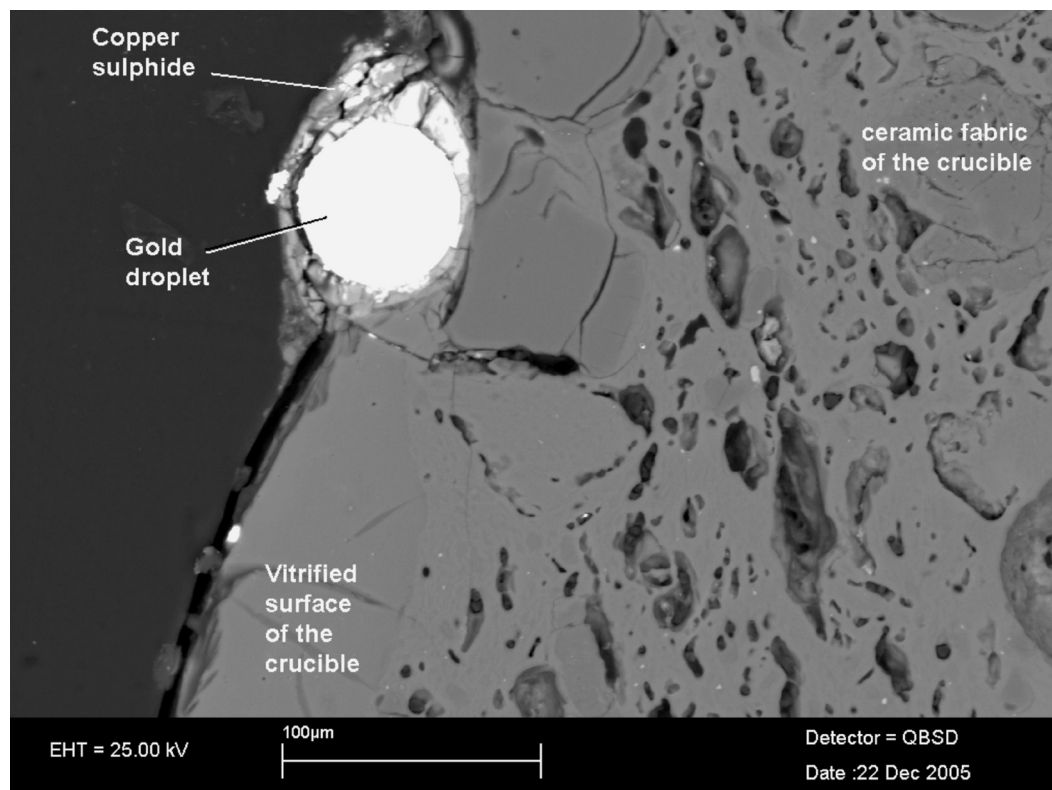


Fig 12. Scanning electron microscope view of part of the vitrified surface on the interior of crucible <154>

of the crucible rim (Fig 12) contains high levels of sodium and chlorine. In addition there are tiny droplets of silver trapped in this vitrified layer. The composition of the vitrified surface suggests that it was used to refine gold by the salt cementation method. The salt cementation process for parting silver and gold is described in numerous historical documents (*eg* Hawthorne & Smith 1979). The gold alloy would be sealed in a vessel with salt and brick dust. The vessel was then heated to allow the chlorine in the salt to react with the silver in the gold alloy, leaving the pure gold behind. The historical sources make it clear that salt cement parting was no longer practised in Britain by the early 19th century. For instance, Lewis (1765, 155) noted that 'the process indeed appears upon the whole to be incommodious, whether considered as a method of purifying gold or of ascertaining its purity; and accordingly, though once in much esteem, it is now rarely practised'.

Crucible <154> also has a number of metal and metal-sulphide particles on the interior and exterior surfaces. All of the metal and sulphide droplets are outside the vitrified layer (Fig 12) and so presumably were trapped after it was formed. The sulphide

droplets provide evidence for the parting of gold and silver using sulphur. Sulphur parting is mentioned in many historical sources (*eg* Sisco & Smith 1955; Ure 1844) but was also becoming a redundant technology in Britain by the early 19th century. During the post-medieval period, strong acids became increasingly the preferred method for separating gold and silver.

Crucibles <153>, <157> and <188> each have a pronounced band of vitrification 5–10mm above the base which indicates that they had contained a regulus (Fig 13) — a regulus being the metallic residue from smelting or assaying. Small gold particles were detected on the interior surface of each crucible (in particular zone 3, Fig 13). Two of the crucibles appear to have been provided with a thin layer of bone ash on the interior surface. In one case this bone ash layer also contains base metals (lead and copper). The exact processes carried out in these crucibles are difficult to ascertain exactly because there are no contemporary parallels from archaeological excavations, and the examples from Wild Court have undergone some depositional and post-depositional alteration. Nevertheless, the gold particles suggest gold working, the vitrification

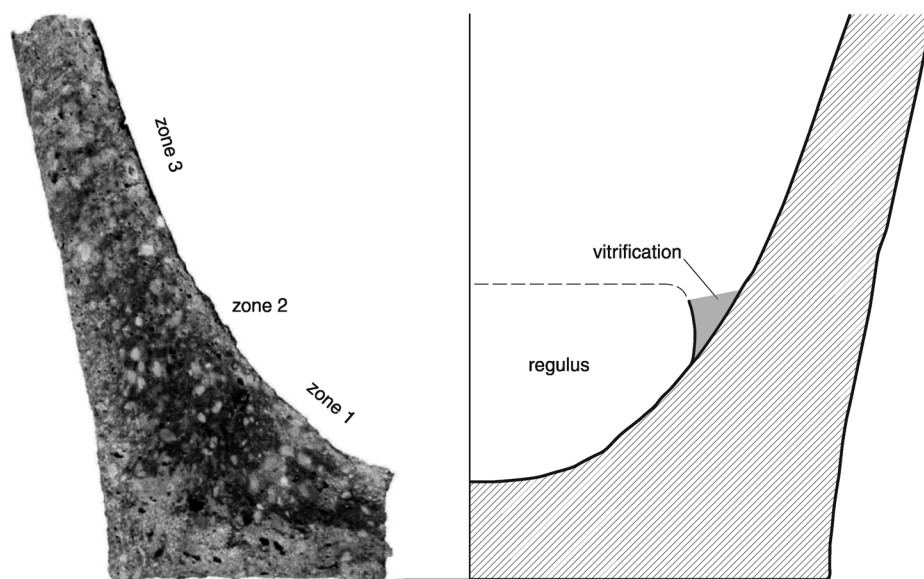


Fig 13. Cross-section through crucible <153> with a drawing showing the positions of the regulus and the pronounced area of vitrification

suggests some sort of refining and the bone ash may have been used for cupellation. Cupellation was used to remove the base metals from silver or gold. Most texts stress the importance of adding large quantities of lead for cupellation but the Wild Court examples contain little or no lead, although the examination of earlier cupels used for gold refining suggests that low levels of lead were used to cupel gold (Bayley 1991, 126).

11 Wild Court and its cesspits

Within the cellars of 11 Wild Court were two adjoining brick-lined cesspits. The back-filling of the most northerly of these two features had a *terminus post quem* of c.1840, based on the clay tobacco pipe found and the presence of plain refined white earthenware pottery that includes a teacup with 'gothic' moulded panels (Wall 1999, fig 2, 110) (Cesspit 2, Fig 11). Many of the 62 ceramic vessels discarded in this feature can also be dated to the second quarter of the 19th century, with the majority being blue transfer-printed whitewares (Table 3).

No overwhelming preferences of taste as measured by different forms decorated with the same transfer-printed decoration are present among the ceramics. However individual and non-matching vessels used for tea drinking, including a teapot, plus various saucers, teacups and slop bowls, were present. While the slop bowls are relatively complete with many profiles surviving, some of the fragile teawares are badly smashed, with only

one or two sherds present from each vessel. The one exception is a blue transfer-printed whiteware London shape teacup with the external central image depicting panpipes surrounding a floral garland and a crossed stick and spade in the background (Fig 10, No. 8). A matching London shape teacup and saucer in bone china with painted floral pink lustre indicate careful curation, as does a delicate late 18th-century blue transfer-printed whiteware fluted teacup with a Chinoiserie print.

The crudely drilled repair on the rim of a blue transfer-printed whiteware plate suggests it was riveted and hung from a wall, perhaps as a display piece (Fig 10, No. 9). The profiles of two dinner plates, one with even scalloped blue shell-edge decoration applied and one in plain whiteware, together with two blue transfer-printed whiteware dessert plates decorated with the ubiquitous willow pattern print, also represent vessels for dining.

Glassware was rare in this cesspit (only one medicinal phial was found), and the small quantity of animal bone shows beef was consumed. The backfill also yielded up to 30 clay tobacco pipe bowls, many of which are marked with their London maker's initials, dating from 1780–1820 (type AO27) and 1820–40 (AO28). A type AO27 pipe <68>, depicting two sitting foxes, may have been made for a public house (see clay pipe report).

The second brick-lined cesspit within the cellars of 11 Wild Court had been bisected by a later drain, therefore very little of its fill

Table 3. Cesspit 2 serving 11 Wild Court, early 19th-century pottery from [58] by function and number of vessels

Function	Forms found	Estimated number of vessels (ENV)	% of ENV
Display	Figurine and vase	2	3.3%
Drinking (general)	Drinking bowls and jugs	9	14.8%
Drinking (tea)	Saucers, slop bowls, teacups, teapot and teapot lid	26	42.6%
Food consumption	Plates	14	23.0%
Food serving	Serving dish	1	1.6%
Horticultural	Flower pot	1	1.6%
Hygiene	Ointment pot	1	1.6%
Miscellaneous	Unidentified	6	9.8%
Sanitary	Chamber pot	1	1.6%
Total		61	100%

survived (Cesspit 3, Fig 11). Its fill contained the earliest decorated clay tobacco pipe found on site, <13>, a type AO26, dating to c.1740–1800, bearing the royal arms of the House of Hanover. The pottery recovered from this fill comprised 19 fragmented vessels, dating from 1820–40.

A small unlined rubbish pit was dug in the backyard of 12 Wild Court (Rubbish pit 1, Fig 11). It contained some window glass and 16 fragmented ceramic vessels, which include two complete blue transfer-printed white and pearlware teacup bases decorated with Chinoiserie designs and the profile from a plain whiteware serving dish.

Yards to rear 2–4 Little Wild Street

Within the yards to the rear of the Little Wild Street properties were an unlined cesspit, a small pit and a brick-lined cesspit that went out of use during the 1855 refurbishment (Open Area 12, Fig 11). A series of brick walls formed part of the outhouses or privies with one wall forming part of the lining of another cesspit (Cesspit 4), which contained residual pottery dating to 1620–1700.

There was a brick-lined cesspit, which served 4 Little Wild Street (Cesspit 5, Fig 11). Finds from its backfill included a farthing of 1844, a halfpenny of 1799 or 1806–7, a broken slate pencil <164>, and a variety of domestic and personal items. The ceramic sherd links identified between its two fills suggest that its disuse occurred as part of the same event,

and therefore this material is discussed together. The ceramics comprised up to 64 ceramic vessels, and teawares again dominate (Table 4). Matching sets were evidenced by two matching blue transfer-printed whiteware teacup and saucer sets decorated with the floral ‘pattere’, ‘fibre’, and ‘Two Temples’ prints together with a substantially complete ‘flow blue’ saucer (Coysh & Henrywood 1984, 140, 372). Children’s possessions were represented by two matching miniature whiteware cups painted with under-glaze green and red floral sprigs. Profiles of two whiteware slop bowls were also found, one of which has colour ground and banded decoration applied (Sussman 1997, 6–7, 41).

Dating from the second quarter of the 19th century were the green and pink coloured transfer-printed whiteware teacups and saucers; these included a smashed saucer depicting the image of Father Theobald Matthew (1790–1856), a leader of the temperance movement, showing an awareness of the public campaign for abstinence (Fig 10, No. 10). A teacup bearing the same image was also found in the cesspit serving an Irish tenement on Pearl Street in New York (Yamin 2001, fig 12.6, 164). A pearlware tureen decorated with a Chinoiserie design represents a type of pottery predominantly used for serving soups and other sauces. Twenty clay tobacco pipe bowls were recovered from Cesspit 5, with the latest types dating between 1840 and 1880, including two identifiable London pipemakers.

Table 4. Cesspit 5 serving 4 Little Wild Street, early 19th-century pottery from context [60] and [71] by function and number of vessels

Function	Forms found	Estimated number of vessels (ENV)	% of ENV
Domestic	Blackening pot	1	1.6%
Drinking (general)	Jugs, mug and rounded bowls,	5	7.8%
Drinking (tea)	Saucers, slop bowls, teabowls, teacups and teapot	36	56.3%
Food consumption	Plates	6	9.4%
Food preparation	Bowl/dish and bowls	3	4.7%
Food serving	Dish, serving dish and tureen	3	4.7%
Leisure	Toy cup and toy plate	3	4.7%
Horticultural	Flower pots	2	3.1%
Hygiene	Ewer and ointment pots	3	4.7%
Storage	Jars	2	3.1%
Total		64	100%

A limestone alley (marble) and two white clay ceramic alleys were found in this cesspit. One has painted decoration of thin red rings on a yellow background. A misshapen, plain gold finger-ring has a duty mark dating it later than 1784–5 (Fig 10, No. 11). There are also eight plain flat-disc copper-alloy or brass buttons of about the same size (15–20mm) with eye and four-hole fastenings. These examples are undecorated, and would have come from coats, waistcoats or trousers.

5 Wild Court

This cellared property was represented by a series of fragmentary internal brick foundations and a brick drain. The cellars were apparently relined during the 1855 refurbishment (Building 10, Fig 11).

The glassware from Wild Court

Beth Richardson

The glassware recovered from these cesspits included medicine and wine bottles, fragments of pale blue/green window glass and a wide variety of other vessels. These vessels included fragments of two wine glasses made in thick clear glass of a standard mid- to late Victorian form with a plain conical bowl and a multi-piece stem. Thick clear glass fluted tumblers were present of a similar type to nos 82–86 illustrated in the trade catalogue of the London glass manufacturer Apsley Pellatt published *c.*1840. These tumblers were used for serving water, soda water, brandy and other spirits (Wakefield 1970, 52; Shepherd 1988, 159). There were also bowls or dishes: pieces of jade green glass and a blue mould-blown knob from the stem of a bowl or dish. Pieces of opaque white glass flask or vase with a fluted rim may be 18th-century. A blue pressed glass eggcup (with a raised diamond decoration and a moulded fluted stem and base) would have been mass-produced but was probably a valued possession. There was also a clear glass stopper from a perfume or toilet water bottle.

The clay tobacco pipes from Wild Court

Tony Grey

The pipes are all of London manufacture except for one Dutch import of *c.*1770

from Cesspit 1 (described earlier).⁸ A wide range of pipemakers and workshops was represented, but there are very few expensive or elaborately decorated pipes. Most of the *c.*1820–60 decorated pipes have only moulded wheatsheaf or leaf seams, though there was one novelty ‘pony hoof’ pipe. Thirty-four different pipemakers are represented by their names, initials or symbols with only a very few identifiable, including William Williams of Kent Street, Borough, 1823–64 (Oswald 1975, 149; Atkinson & Oswald 1969, fig 3, no. 36), with surname and City of London arms on the bowl of a type AO28 pipe (1820–60) (Cesspit 1 [56] <53>) and WW initials on the spur of an AO28 (Cesspit 5 <183>). Pipes by William Williams are attested at several other London sites.⁹ An AO27 (1780–1820) (Cesspit 5 <181>) bears the surname of James Jones of Featherstone Street, City Road, 1802–40 (Oswald 1975, 139) along with the City of London arms on the pipe bowl.

The people of Wild Court Rookery

By using the 1851 census returns, together with contemporary maps such as the 1854 architect’s plans (Lees 1979, fig 5, 79) and the house numbers on Horwood’s 1813 London map (Horwood 1813, 13), it has proved possible to identify the individual properties and their occupants and link them to the excavated remains and finds (Fig 11).

Study of census returns for the excavated properties revealed several points of interest (Table 5).¹⁰ Firstly, the properties of 10–13 Wild Court possessed almost entirely Irish people as their heads of household (91%). It is documented that many of the Irish in this area of London were recent arrivals in the capital and often had relatively low paid labouring jobs (Lees 1979, 56–75). However, in complete contrast the heads of households of the neighbouring properties at 2–5 Little Wild Street were entirely listed as either Londoners or English (91%), only one of whom was a labourer. Secondly, there was clearly a high degree of multiple occupancy with families and various ‘lodgers’ living in one or two rooms. Thirdly, while some adults did not give an occupation, very few were listed as ‘jobless’. The general impression is, therefore, of a fully employed, but transient

Table 5. Details from the 1851 census returns for 10–13 Wild Court and 2–5 Little Wild Street

Address	Total no. of people	Occupation of heads of household & their gender	Origin of heads of household
10 Wild Court			
Schedule No. 64	18	labourer (male)	Ireland
84	17	bricklayer's labourer (m)	Ireland
87	2	Chelsea pensioner (m)	Ireland
88	7	widow (female)	England?
89	10	widow (f)	Ireland
90	15	widow (f)	Ireland
91	12	silk dealer (m)	Ireland
	Total residents	81	
11 Wild Court			
92	16	labourer (m)	Ireland
93	12	labourer (m)	Ireland
94	12	fruit seller (m)	Ireland
95	5	bricklayer (m)	Ireland
96	11	tailor (m)	Ireland
97	13	labourer (m)	Ireland
	Total	69	
12 Wild Court			
63	6	charwoman (f)	Ireland
98	17	labourer (m)	Ireland
99	8	glove maker (m)	Ireland
100	3	fruit seller/widow (f)	Ireland
101	9	mat maker (m)	Ireland
102	15	superannuated (m)	Ireland
	Total	58	
13 Wild Court			
108	7	labourer (m)	Ireland
110	11	labourer (m)	Ireland
111	3	fruit seller (m)	Ireland
112	5	cabinet maker (m)	Scotland
	Total	26	
2 Little Wild Street			
186	2	needlewoman/widow (f)	London
187	3	cabinet maker (m)	London
193	4	house servant (m)	England
	Some entries confused with 1 or 11/2		
	Total	9	
3 Little Wild Street			
188	3	car[t]man (m)	England
189	3	sash maker (m)	London
190	3	pewterer (m)	British
191	3	police constable (m)	England
192	2	comb maker (m)	England
	Total	14	

4 Little Wild Street

194	2	coach man (m)	England
195	4	type founder (m)	England
196	4	reader (m)	England
197	3	shoe maker (m)	England
198	4	needlewoman/widow (f)	London

Total 17

5 Little Wild Street

199	4	labourer (m)	London
200	5	cartman (m)	England
201	7	boot maker (m)	London
202	2	boot maker (m)	London
203	4	fine wood cutter (m)	London
204	2	laundress/widow (f)	England
205	4	shoe maker (m)	London
206	5	porter (m)	London
207	3	laundress (f)	London
208	5	tailor (m)	Ireland

Total 41

population, who were badly paid and therefore obliged to live in overcrowded conditions. Of the seven properties selected for study from the 1851 census, the occupations listed for the heads of households were:

Men: bricklayer, bricklayer's labourer, cabinet maker, carman (cartman), Chelsea pensioner, coach man, comb maker, fine wood cutter, fruit seller, glove maker, labourer, mat maker, pewterer, police constable, porter, reader (perhaps a proofreader), sash maker, servant, shoe/boot maker, silk dealer, superannuated (retired), tailor and type founder.

Women: charwoman, laundress, needlewoman and widow. The widows were probably running communal lodgings in one or two rooms, providing accommodation to single people, who could not individually afford the rent of a whole room.

Some adults (both men and women) have blank entries under occupation with children often described as scholars in this column or with a blank entry. There were 81 people living at 10 Wild Court and 58 at 12 Wild Court (Table 5).

After the refurbishment, the tenants of Wild Court were described as costermongers, tailors or shoemakers, all of whom 'were

able to earn their living without falling into any serious straits' (Anon 1855, 87). A contemporary observer noted that 'Wild Court ... did not by any means impress us as the most squalid or the filthiest place we knew in the metropolis. It was indeed far from that, and it was tenanted by people, certainly poor, but by a whole grade more prosperous than are commonly found in Rotherhithe or Bethnal Green' (Anon 1855, 86).

It would be easy to take the historical accounts of the dire conditions of Wild Court and interpret the artefacts as a broader reflection of these squalid realities. What does the archaeological record have to say about the 'pale and ragged' people who dwelt here during the 1850s (Anon 1854b, 409)?

Backyard archaeology: attribution of finds and rubbish disposal

The sanitary conditions of Wild Court before its refurbishment in 1855 were apparently terrible (described earlier). Part of this refurbishment involved clearing the accumulated rubbish and sealing up the cesspits. As much of the rubbish found in these features dates to the 1840s and 1850s, it is highly likely that this material

were discarded shortly before these cesspits were filled in and sealed during the 1855 refurbishment.

Cesspit 1 serving 10 Wild Court appears to have been backfilled in two episodes. The earlier one, consisting of the household and workplace rubbish, including gold working crucibles, is interpreted as predating the 1855 refurbishment (see crucible report). Interestingly the archaic nature of the gold refining indicates that it was an illicit activity. Melting down of stolen gold objects is a long established technique of disguising the source of the material. Until the autumn of 1854, for several years ‘thieves’ had illegally occupied an untenanted room in one of the Wild Court properties and the cellar below it (Anon 1854b, 410). The finds from this lower fill show that the inhabitants of this property consumed a variety of meats and drank from matching creamware teabowls.

Household Words describes how the unpaved cellars of Wild Court were being used as ‘a receptacle for garbage’ and backyards were ‘six inches deep with filth’ (Anon 1854b, 410). All the cellars that were examined were brick paved, but perhaps in 1854 this paving was obscured by rubbish. Dustbins (or ashpits) within these yards were emptied fortnightly, which was clearly not frequent enough, as much of the household refuse was being deposited elsewhere (Anon 1854a, 590). Generally over half of the clay tobacco pipes were around 30 years old when they were finally thrown into this cesspit and may therefore demonstrate a pattern of casual discard and accumulation of material in the backyard, which was then gathered up and redeposited into these features during the refurbishment.

Most poor London families would have lived in one room, and if they did have a fireplace, it may not have been constructed for efficient cooking. One can imagine that cooking would have been particularly difficult in the subdivided rooms in the Irish tenements, and those who attempted it perhaps needing a rota system which focused on family units, or they had their meals organised by one of the many widows listed as the head of households in the 1851 schedules (Table 5). Ceramic vessels used solely for cooking are not represented, as is usual by the 19th century, with the metal kettle or cauldron being the preferred

choice. Similarly evidence of diet is scarce. With many of the inhabitants crammed into rooms within Wild Court it is likely that many of the lodgers recorded in the 1851 census would have relied on local cookshops and street vendors for most of their meals (Ehrman 2001, 76).

The ceramics do not reflect any of the appropriate formal dining customs adopted by the ‘middle class’ during the mid-19th century (Cantwell & Wall 2001, 211–15). Lees (1979, 63) states that the Irish were a highly mobile population, so are unlikely to have possessed cumbersome ceramic vessels, instead preferring tin tankards and plates. The rooms in Wild Court were described as sparsely filled, with little in the way of storage facilities (Anon 1854a, fig 5, 590). ‘Poor dwellings’ were apparently often devoid of furniture with any cupboards and shelves holding only a few pieces of crockery (Lees 1979, 79). Yet reflected within the assemblage is evidence of careful curation — be it delicate matching bone china teacups and saucers, individual slop bowls, glass medicine phials and vases, children’s toys or other personal possessions, including a gold finger-ring, a back scratcher and an ivory chess piece (Fig 10). The 1855 refurbishment undoubtedly led to some people moving out and there is a strong possibility that some possessions were discarded as part of a more general clear out of what was ‘left behind’. After the refurbishment in August 1855, of the 83 families living in these properties only 22 were previous tenants (Anon 1855, 86).

It is worth considering the reason for the relative scarcity of material possessions found in these cesspits. This is presumably because during the 1855 refurbishment the systematic removal of large amounts of ‘corrupt matter’ has biased the site data (Anon 1855, 85). While other 19th-century London cesspits serving other working class areas (*eg* in Clerkenwell and Lambeth) have often yielded hundreds of artefacts, the quantities found from Wild Court are by comparison relatively small.

Despite the comparatively small size of the assemblages, the range of material found is varied and indicates a degree of adaptability on the part of the inhabitants. For example, the dominance of drinking vessels — as represented by teacups, slop bowls and rounded

bowls — in the ceramic assemblages means these were undoubtedly put to other uses (drinking and teaware vessels make up over 50% of all ceramic vessels by function). Slop bowls could be used for serving stews, soups and other beverages rather than purely for tea dregs. One plate bears the inscription 'industry pays debts', a quote associated with Dr Benjamin Franklin, and presents an image of Father Matthew, a leader of the temperance movement, showing awareness of contemporary social trends. The presence of children's toys and possessions shows evidence of childhood pastimes and recreation (a chess piece), with ceramic gold working crucibles indicating craft activity, which may have been illicit (discussed earlier). As slate pencils were widely used in contemporary elementary schools the presence of one here is a good indication that at least some of the children attended school. Evidence of health care and personal hygiene is provided by finds of bone-handled toothbrushes and glass phials that probably contained medicines and scents.

The clay tobacco pipes and the numerous wine bottles can be attributed to recreational pastimes. The identified makers' marks on the pipes show that they were made in London and none portray any Irish nationalist images and motifs as commonly found in North American contexts, for example the Boott Mills boarding-house in Lowell, Massachusetts (Beaudry & Mrozowski 2001, fig 9.4, 123).

The City Lit excavations were an opportunity to study the 'material histories' (Hicks & Jeffries 2004) relating to a notorious and extremely well documented London slum. The census returns show the properties on the site were inhabited by either Irish (Wild Court) or English and London-born tenants (Little Wild Street), and provide interesting details concerning occupations. While the finds from the cesspits can be attributed to the particular properties, their multiple occupancies make it impossible to connect them to particular families or individuals.

Slum clearance and schools

In 1876 the area was described by the Metropolitan Board of Works as 'some of the most wretched houses in the metropolis in

which the inhabitants are closely packed'.¹¹ This description could be interpreted as meaning that the 1855 refurbishment was a long term failure, but it is more likely that the high level of multiple occupancy that continued in these properties was now seen as unacceptable. In c.1882 (after 30 November 1881) all the properties on site were demolished as slum clearance carried out by the Board of Works (Charles 2001, 46). The demolished brick superstructure of the buildings was used to infill the cellars and level up the yards to the rear of the Little Wild Street properties (Open Area 13). Before or during the demolition a certain amount of domestic rubbish was dumped into the cellars. This material may well represent material discarded by the householders within the cellars shortly before the demolition began. Material from the backfill of these cellars included domestic pottery dating to 1830–1900 and clay tobacco pipes dating to 1820–60. Other finds included a white clay ceramic alley and a 19th-century ivory chess piece (Fig 10, No. 12). The four semi-complete, laced Derby or Oxford men's leather shoes are probably of late 19th-century date, although the Derby and Oxford styles date back to the late 18th century (Goubitz 2001, 301).

Immediately after the site had been cleared, Great Wild Street Elementary School was constructed here. The school was completed during 1884 and opened on 5 January 1885. In c.1905 Little Wild Street was renamed Keeley Street, after Robert Keeley (1793/4–1869), a comic actor and theatre manager. The school closed in 1935 and from 1936 was a London County Council Handicraft Centre. In 1947 the Kingsway Evening Institute (later known as the Kingsway College for Further Education) took over some of the buildings. From 1970–71 until 20 July 2001, parts of the premises were used by the City Lit and the remaining portion from 1976 was used as a Centre for the Deaf (Charles 2001, 45–6). The new City Lit premises at Keeley House were opened on 3 May 2005. There is a permanent display in the City Lit canteen about the history of the site, which includes a number of finds from the excavation.

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NOTES

- 1 Open Area 6, rubbish pit fill <151>.
- 2 The red bricks were London made, measuring 2 x 4 x 9 inches, and on stylistic grounds date to c.1450–1700, but were only widely used after 1500.
- 3 <148> <149>, [115] Mould-blown glass stem and base from a three-piece goblet with lion-mask, fourteen upper gadroons, eleven lower gadroons and the characteristic slight distortion of Willmott's (2000) decorated mould group A. Clear mixed alkali glass, little weathering.
- 4 <150>, [121] Fragment from an open vessel, probably a goblet. Clear glass with bands of opaque white glass and clear and opaque glass *vetro a retorti* trails, and (above and below these) the remains of other white and *vetro a retorti* bands. Clear mixed alkali glass, little weathering.
- 5 The 1689 medal is interpreted as showing the ruined Portuguese chapel in Duke Street and people burning 'emblems of Popery' in the foreground (Hawkins *et al* 1885, 660–1), but as two ruined buildings are shown in the background, the possibility that it also represents the destruction of the Wild House or its chapel should be considered.

5 In September 1694 it was described as follows 'Weld House is to be Lett, containing 33 Rooms, Garrets and Cellars with other suitable conveniences' (*London Gazette* 1694, 13–17 Sept).

6 Red unfrosted bricks, dimensions 2.5 x 4 x 9 inches.

7 Red frosted stock bricks, dimensions 2.75 x 4 x 9 inches.

8 The pipes were classified according to the London typology of Atkinson & Oswald (1969), although the Simplified General Typology of Oswald (1975) was used to obtain closer dating for some of the 18th-century material.

9 Ludgate Broadway (LUB88), Regis House, King William Street, City (KWS94), Magdalen Street, SE1 (MGS96).

10 1851 Census returns for the parish of St Giles in the Fields, Family Record Centre Islington, fiche RG1508.

11 *Metropolitan Board of Work Annual Report for 1876*, Guildhall Library.

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