

Fig. 1: location plan of the site showing the topography in the Roman period

Excavations at 8 and 10-18 London Bridge Street

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Introduction

THE MUSEUM of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) carried out excavations between September 1997 and June 1998 on the adjacent sites of 8 & 10-18 London Bridge Street, in the London Borough of Southwark (TQ 3276 8022 & TQ 3279 8020) (Fig. 1). Both excavations were within standing buildings being converted into apartments, retail units and a hotel. For the purposes of this document “the site” refers to the archaeological work at both properties. Four trenches were excavated; Trenches 1, 2 and 3 in Number 8 and Trench 4 in Numbers 10-18 (Fig. 2). Of these, only Trenches 2 and 4 were excavated to the base of archaeological deposits, as the others were subject to depth restrictions. Roman, medieval and post-medieval remains were recorded.

Geology and topography

In the site area London Clay is overlain by sands and gravels deposited at the end of the last Ice Age. During this period erosion formed eyots (gravel islands capped with sand) on the south side of the River Thames. The site is located near the south-

east edge of what is now defined as the North Island. The tops of the eyots lie between 1.00 and 2.00m OD¹. They are separated by marshes, mud-

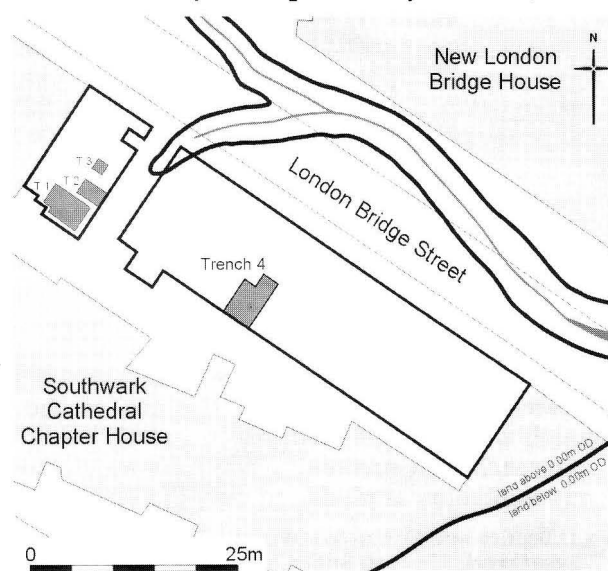


Fig. 2: trench location plan

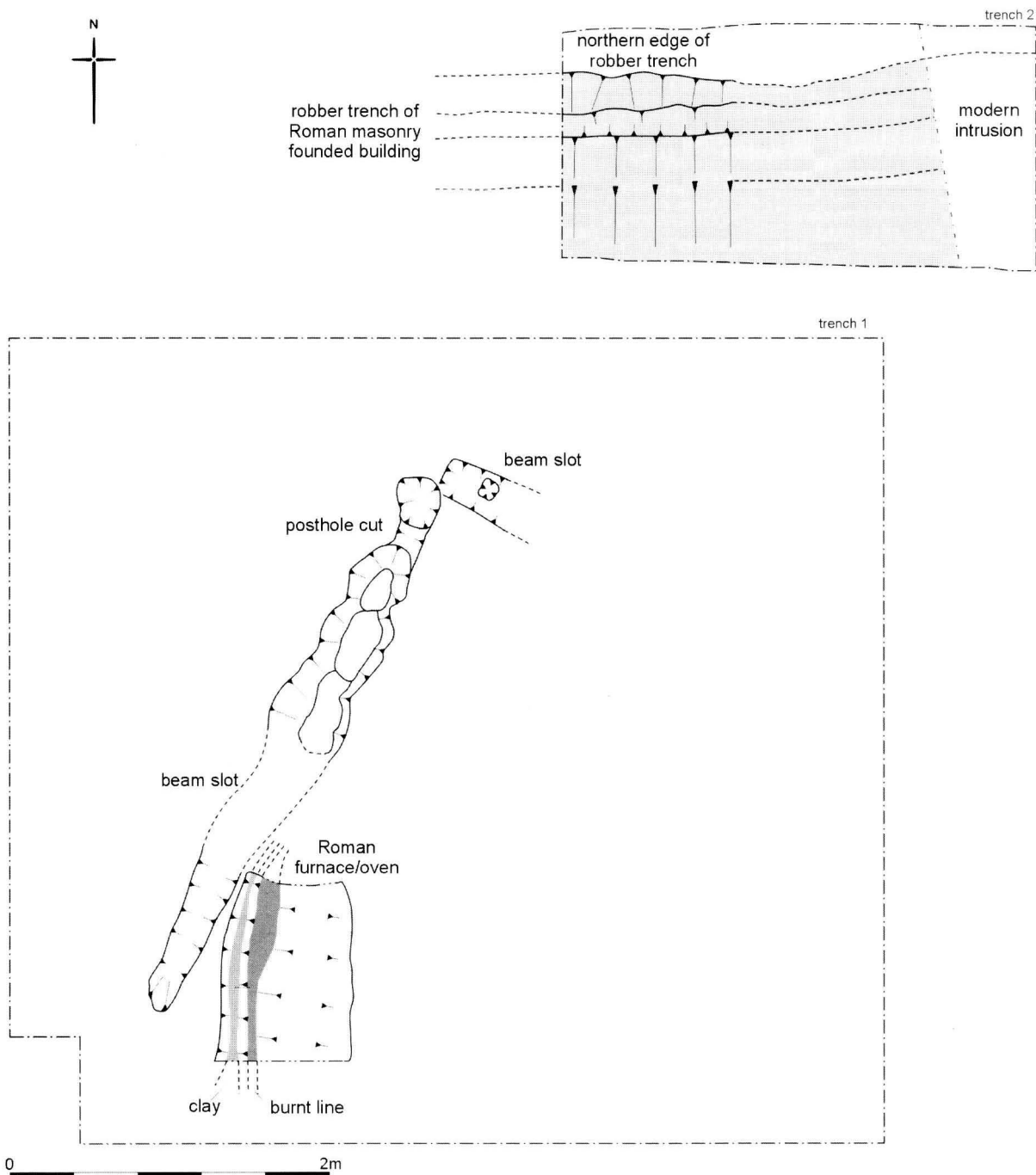


Fig. 3: plan of the 2nd century AD features: a furnace, clay and timber building and the construction cut of a masonry building

flats and tidal watercourses. One such watercourse, located just to the north of the site, extended north-west into the eyot (Figs. 1 and 2).

In Trench 2 the surface of the geological deposit, represented by sand, sloped down from 0.52m OD

to 0.44m OD, from north to south. In Trench 4 the sand survived to 0.83m OD. In both trenches the sand was sealed by alluvium, probably deposited during periodic flooding of the watercourse to the north of the site (Figs. 1 and 2). Geological deposit was not

1. D Bentley in C Cowan & L Wheeler *Roman Southwark* MoLAS Monograph; P Thompson & J Drummond-Murray, *Roman Southwark: The Early Settlement Excavations on the Jubilee Line Extension Project at Borough High Street 1995* (in prep) MoLAS Monograph, in prep.

located in Trenches 1 and 3 due to the depth restriction.

Archaeological and historical background

There is some archaeological evidence for a pre-Roman Southwark. In 1862 flint tools and a neolithic polished axe were found during the construction of Duke Street Hill *c.* 100m north of the site². A late Bronze Age circular ditch with evidence for cremation burials was recorded in 1984 at Fennings Wharf, near the modern waterfront immediately east of London Bridge, *c.* 180m north of the site³. Evidence for Iron Age occupation was found at 4-6 St. Thomas Street 60m south-west of the site⁴ and an Iron Age burial was excavated and recorded *c.* 150m to the south-west at 124 Borough High Street⁵. However, no pre-Roman finds were made at the London Bridge Street site.

Roman

Background

Southwark developed as a suburb of *Londinium* from the middle of the 1st century AD. The Roman roads from Dover and Chichester to *Londinium* (Watling Street and Stane Street) converged near the modern Borough underground station. A single main road continued from this point along a south-west/north-east alignment towards Roman London Bridge, constructed by *c.* AD 70 immediately east of modern London Bridge⁶. Settlement grew up alongside the road and the North Island became the focus of development. There is evidence that both Southwark and *Londinium* were burnt during the Boudiccan revolt of AD 60-61.

By the end of the 1st century AD some 45 acres had been settled south of the river⁷ and evidence for Roman public buildings, possibly with military associations have been found. Roman Southwark may also have been an artisan area -- clay and timber buildings have been archaeologically excavated with evidence of iron and gold smithing, bronze working and other industrial activities. It appears that Roman Southwark was abandoned by the end of the 4th century, with the Roman bridge no

2. GLSMR 90712.

3. *London Archaeol* 5, no 3 (1985) 65.

4. *Surrey Archaeol Collect* 75 (1984) 271.

5. M Dean & M Hammerson 'Three inhumations from Southwark' *London Archaeol* 4, no. 1 (1980) 17-22.

6. T Brigham & B Watson *London Bridge in the Middle Ages and Beyond* MoLAS Monograph, in prep.

7. M Carlin *Medieval Southwark* (1996) 2.

8. M Carlin *op cit* fn 7, 6.

9. C Cowan & L Wheeler *Roman Southwark* MoLAS Monograph, in prep.

10. site code ILA79.

longer standing⁸. The forthcoming MoLAS monograph on Roman Southwark will detail the physical layout of the settlement, the beginning of the town, subsequent development, layouts of buildings, evidence of the type of economy and so on⁹. This article complements that more exhaustive survey.

The archaeological results

Roman structures were recorded in Trenches 1, 2 and 4. The Roman sequence yielded pottery which spanned the 2nd to 4th century AD, with wares restricted to the 1st century absent.

In Trench 1 the Roman deposits overlay alluvial silts. A furnace or oven pre-dated the beam slots for the base plates to the north-west corner of a clay and timber building. These were aligned south-west/north-east and north-west/south-east (Fig. 3), both parallel and perpendicular to the Roman road referred to above (Fig. 1). A series of brickearth surfaces were associated with this building. The building appeared to have been in use during the 2nd century AD and was obliterated by fire, confirmed by early 3rd-century burnt deposits which sealed it (Fig. 3).

A Roman jet armband was present in the 2nd to early 3rd-century brickearth surfaces in Trench 1 (Fig. 4). The fragment has a twisted cable decoration forming a continuous spiral, thought to imitate a common type of copper alloy bracelet. Similar examples have been found in 3rd to 4th century contexts in Colchester and Ironmonger Lane in the City of London¹⁰. The main source of jet was Robin Hood's Bay at Whitby in Yorkshire.

In Trench 2 an east-west foundation cut with a base level of -0.23m OD survived to 1.21m OD (Fig. 3). It was interpreted as a foundation trench, as some rubble fill survived at the base of the cut. Any masonry had been robbed, and the backfill of the cut was dated to the early 2nd century or later. To



Fig. 4: fragment of jet armband dated to the 3rd century AD

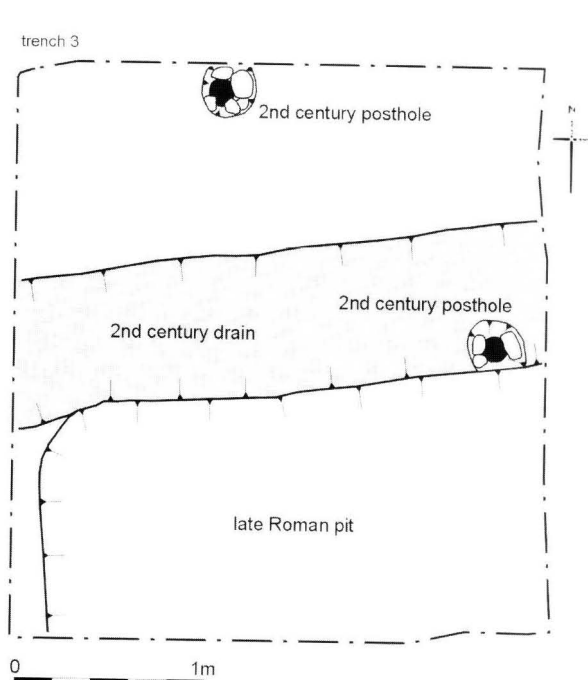


Fig. 5: plan showing the drain, postholes and pit dated to 120-250 AD

the north of the cut was a metalled path or road surface at 0.92m OD. It was not apparent whether this was an internal or external surface. Sealing both this surface and the backfilled foundation cut was a sequence of clay and timber buildings, represented by a total of seven successive brick-earth slabs and gravel surfaces. These were cut into by four post-holes. Pottery from the building sequence had a date range of late 2nd to the early 3rd centuries AD. After the removal of the masonry foundation during the 2nd century, ground level had been raised to at least 1.49m OD during the late 2nd to the early 3rd centuries -- over half a metre higher than the metalled surface.

In Trench 4 pottery dated the archaeological sequence to 120-250 AD¹¹. An east-west aligned drain extended beyond the western and eastern limits of

the excavation. The drain had been cut into the alluvial silts and survived to 1.25m OD with a base level of 0.23m OD. It was filled with silt cut into by a post-hole with a fragment of *opus signinum* used as post-packing. A second posthole packed with ragstone fragments was found on the north side of the trench beyond the drain cutting the alluvial silts (Fig. 5). While it is difficult to interpret just two post holes, they may have formed part of a structure or building which post-dated the disuse of the drain.

In Trenches 1 and 4 a change of land use in the 3rd century AD followed the demise of the building sequence. This change was signified by a series of pits. Five pits were found in Trench 1 while a single pit was found in Trench 4. The pit in Trench 4 was sealed by a garden soil or 'dark earth' type layer similar to deposits associated with the abandonment of Londinium¹².

A stamped Caerleon ware bead and flange mortarium was found in a medieval context in Trench 4 (Fig. 6). This vessel is very important, as not only is this the first time that this fabric has been found in London but, after a preliminary search, the stamp has not yet been paralleled. The stamp consists of three letters DB[illegible]. The letters have characteristic serrated outlines and the fabric is typical of the description given at Usk of Caerleon 1 (Fabric 21)¹³. It is a fine brownish-orange fabric with a slightly darker reddish slip. Hartley discusses the difficulties of interpreting these stamps and suggests that the three letter stamps may be part of a letter-series (such as found on tile stamps) or are the product of literate or semi-literate potters¹⁴. Caerleon ware is thought to have been produced between AD 110-170/180(?). Additionally, on this mortaria the bead is raised above the level of the flange, a typological factor which may indicate a later date¹⁵. The distribution of these Caerleon ware mortaria stamps seems to be mostly in the south-west of the country¹⁶ and its occurrence in London is intriguing.

11. L Rayner, 'Roman Pottery Assessment' in P Askew *10-18 London Bridge Street, An Archaeological Excavation and Watching Brief* MoLAS (1998) 17-18.

12. D Perring *Roman London* (1991) 78-81.

13. K F Hartley 'The Mortaria' in W H Manning *Report on the*

Excavations at Usk 1965-1976 (1993).

14. K F Hartley in G Boon 'Legionary Ware at Caerleon?' *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 115 (1966) 51-2.

15. Hartley *op cit* fn 13, 412.

16. Hartley *op cit* fn 14, 51.

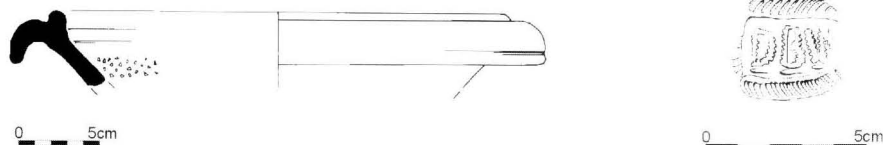


Fig. 6: drawing of the 2nd-century stamped Caerleon ware bead and flange mortarium

Saxon

Background

It has been suggested that after having been abandoned for up to 450 years Southwark was fortified from either AD 916, or even from shortly before c. AD 886¹⁷. Southwark played a vital role in the defence of London against Viking incursions during the 10th and 11th centuries. The 13th-century Olaf Saga recounts how in 1014 the bridge across the Thames – presumably a replacement for Roman London Bridge – was attacked successfully by Ethelred's Viking allies, led by Olaf, who went on to capture Southwark from the occupying Danes¹⁸. In the saga Southwark is described as a great market town, well defended by earthworks which survived until the end of the 13th century, at which time they were levelled.

The army of William the Conqueror attacked and burnt Southwark at the time of the Norman Conquest of 1066, but afterwards the settlement grew, and by the time of the Domesday Book (1086) there were at least 50 households, a Minster church (on the site of the present Southwark Cathedral), St Olave's Church, St Mary Overie dock, a trading shore and a herring fishery¹⁹.

Archaeological evidence

There was no primary evidence for Saxon activity at the site, but a ceramic loomweight and a child's bone comb dated to the Saxon period were recovered from the backfill of a medieval pit in Trench 1. The comb, possibly of walrus ivory²⁰, is highly polished, double sided and near complete with a set of coarse and fine teeth. The main body of the comb is decorated with incised marks. The two horizontal lines provided a guide for the depth to which to saw the teeth (Fig. 7)²¹. It has parallels in Scandinavia and particularly Sweden²².

Medieval

Background

The Domesday Book of 1086 refers to the Priory of St Mary Overie in Southwark, now the site of Southwark Cathedral. In 1106 the priory was re-founded by William Pont de l'Ardeche and William Dauncey under Augustinian tenants. Following the canonisation of St Thomas Becket in 1173, a hospital named St Thomas the Martyr was founded within the Priory²³.

17. M Carlin *op cit* fn 7, 9-10.

18. M Carlin *op cit* fn 7, 14.

19. Carrie Cowan, *pers comm*.

20. Lyn Blackmore, *pers comm*.

21. A Macgregor *Bone, Antler, Ivory and Horn* (1985).

22. *Ibid* 80.

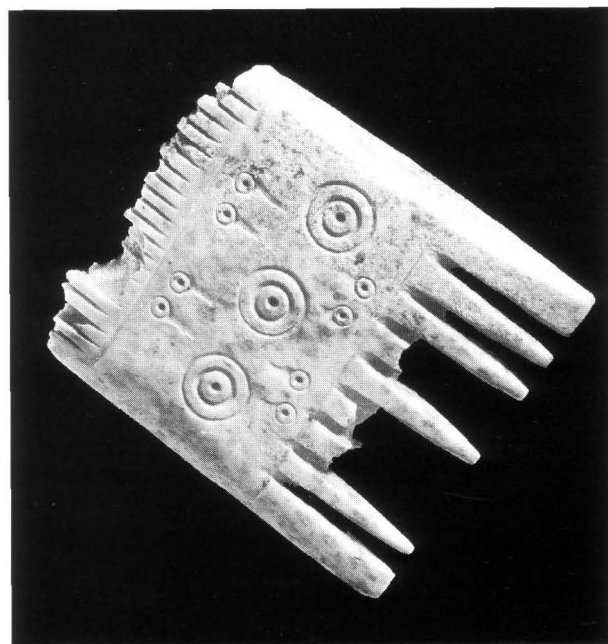


Fig. 7: the Saxon child's bone comb

In 1212 all the buildings of the Priory of St Mary Overie, except the refectory, were destroyed by fire. During the rebuilding it was decided not to construct a new hospital on the old site and the hospital was therefore separated from the Priory in 1215. The medieval St Thomas hospital was constructed on ground belonging to the diocese of Winchester and its site can be seen to the south of St Thomas Street on Fig. 8. The buildings included a church, the nave of which was the first hospital ward, a chapter house, cloister, dormer, frater, kitchen, masters lodging, a larder house and a stable²⁴.

By 1238 the hospital precinct had grown to cover eight and a half acres. The hospital had also acquired a churchyard for the interment of those who died within the hospital precinct. Funds given to the hospital by William de Acstede, who established an obit²⁵ and chantry, paid for the care of the sick and poor and the construction of a chapel to the Virgin Mary in the choir of the church by 1294. Another gift allowed the aisle of the church to be rebuilt after a bequest Henry Yevele, in 1400²⁶. Improvements were carried out at the hospital in the 15th century as some of the buildings were

23. E M McInnes *St Thomas' Hospital* (1963) 14.

24. M Carlin *op cit* fn 7, 75-85.

25. A memorial service held on the anniversary of the benefactors or founders death.

26. J Harvey 'Henry Yevele Reconsidered' *Archaeol J* 108 (1951) 107.

dilapidated²⁷. The area now bounded by St Thomas Street, London Bridge Street, Joiner Street and Borough High Street was known as the Parish of St Thomas by the 16th century.

In the mid 14th century the site area was occupied by several small tenements, replaced by a single tenement by the mid 15th century. This tenement was acquired by the hospital in 1507²⁸.

The archaeological evidence

Medieval deposits were present in Trenches 1 and 4. The medieval pottery spanned from the 11th to mid 15th century, with much of it from the Surrey-Hampshire border.

In Trench 1 there were five heavily truncated rubbish pits and a post-hole. Pottery from the backfills was dated to 1150-1400. The bones of a small hawk, falcon or more probably merlin were found in the backfill of one pit. The merlin is rare from archaeological sites in London and the bones may be positive evidence for falconry²⁹. During the medieval period, social status dictated which bird a person could fly and merlins were flown by ladies, sparrowhawks by priests and kestrels by

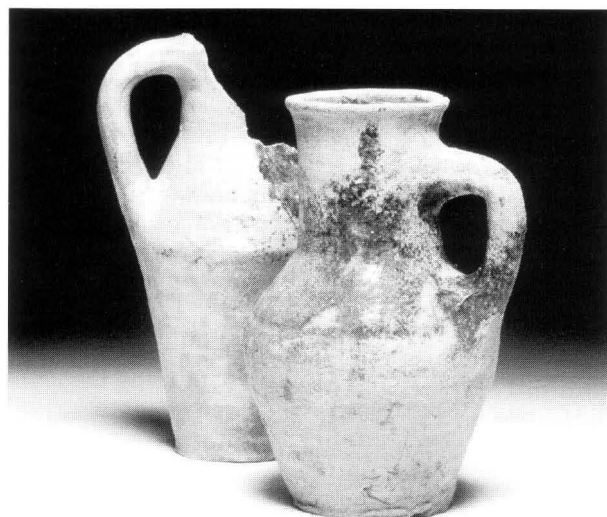


Fig. 9: two 14th-century Kingston type ware jugs

knights³⁰. Merlins tended not to be used for catching food, but for 'lark-hawking', where the larks tended to escape their predator, but the spectacle itself became a dramatic air display. Their short life-span of four to five years meant they were only kept for a short time then released³¹.

In Trench 4, an early medieval rubbish pit cut through the dark earth-type deposit. After back-filling, this was sealed by a levelling dump, containing mid-14th-century pottery which included two medium-sized jugs in 14th-century Kingston type ware, one complete (Fig. 9). At the western end of the trench two further rubbish pits had been cut into the levelling dumps. On the eastern side of the trench cutting into the dumps were the remains of the north-west corner of a chalk, flint and ragstone cellar wall (Fig. 10). Incorporated into its fabric were two early to mid-14th century grave slabs, one of which had an incised inscription on two of its upper chamfered sides. The cellar had been backfilled with domestic debris which included shellfish waste and pottery dated to the 14th-15th centuries.

The grave slabs

The two grave slab fragments are rare finds and were publicised in 1998³². This led to research by Stephen Humphrey of the Southwark Local Studies Library and Sally Badham, a researcher of

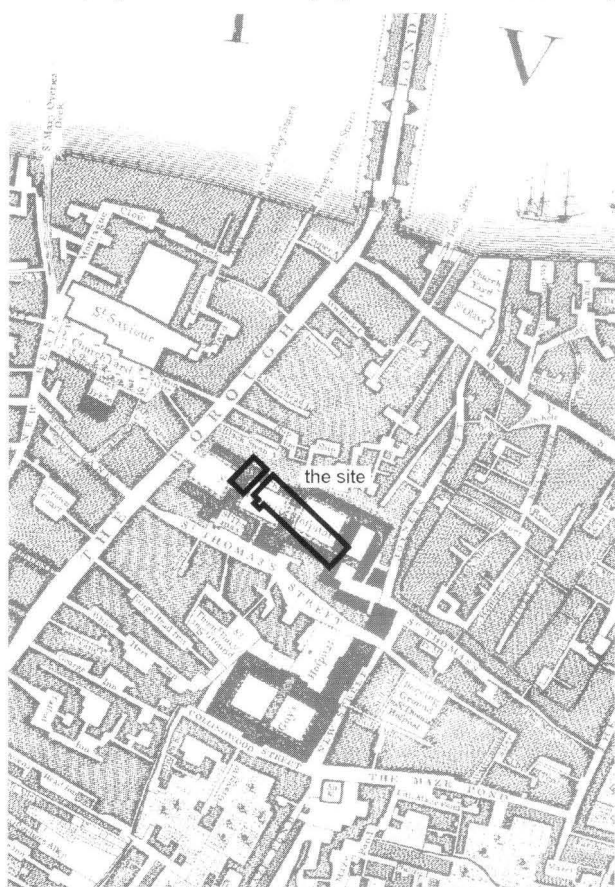


Fig. 8: John Rocque's map of c. 1746.

27. M Carlin, *op cit* fn 7, 406.

28. P Askew 'Early Medieval Purbeck Marble Grave Slabs from Southwark' *J Church Mon Soc* 13 (1998) 15-16.

29. W Prummel 'Evidence for Hawking (Falconry) from Bird and Mammal Bones' *Int J Osteoarchaeol* 7 (1997) 333-338.

30. Colin Shawyer *pers comm*.

31. Graham Relicca *pers comm*.

32. P Askew 'More Odds & Ends' *Ecclesiology Today* 16 (1998) 24.

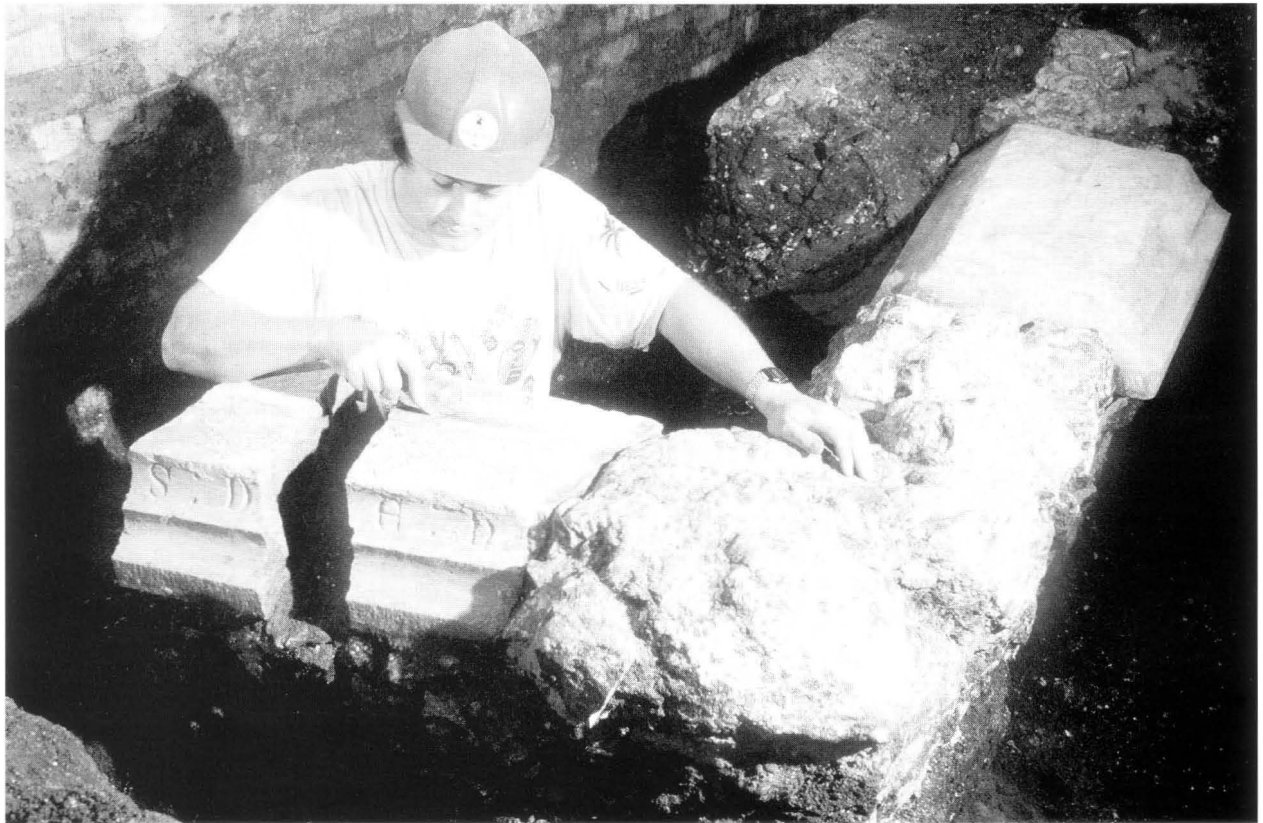


Fig. 10: medieval cellar wall with the early to mid 14th-century medieval grave slabs incorporated into its fabric

Purbeck marble funerary monuments³³, which resulted in a further refinement to the initial interpretation of the grave slabs³⁴. The two slabs represent coffin lids for adults. They were carved from Purbeck marble at the quarry workshops around Corfe and sold both locally and through the marblers' workshops in London³⁵.

The larger of the two grave slabs represents the foot half of a coffin lid with the stem and semi-circular base of a relief cross. The sides of the slab have a double hollow moulded chamfer. The base is not a common Purbeck type, stepped calvarie (base of a crucifixion cross) being the most common. Most semi-circular bases are usually associated with a single moulded chamfer and date to the first half of the 13th century. The double hollow chamfer on the slab indicates a date of c 1270-1330 (Fig. 10).

The inscribed slab is from the central part of a double hollow chamfered coffin lid, just above the calvarie with the stem of a relief cross. The

inner chamfer is incised with part of a text, probably starting at the top centre of the slab and runs in an anti-clockwise direction. The style identifies the lid as a product of the Camoys series of slabs and brasses produced in London under the direction of the marbler, Master Adam Laurenz (a.k.a Adam of Corfe and Adam the Marbler) c. 1305-1338. Laurenz had workshops in both Corfe and St Paul's Churchyard, London. The inscription is in French and reads, S: D E: H E and]KATOR[(Fig. 10). The person commemorated was a member of the laity (clerics almost always have Latin inscriptions at this date). The former part of the inscription may be the name of deceased and the latter, an indulgence offering 14 days or years of pardon to whoever prays for the soul of the commemorated.

The surfaces of both slabs are in good condition and suggest they were not exposed to the erosive affects of an external environmental such as that of a graveyard. Both may have come from within one of the churches in the vicinity, possibly the

33. S Badham, B Gittos, P Gittos & P Lankester 'Survey of Purbeck Marble Coffin-Shaped Slabs' *Church Mon Soc Newsl* 14-14 (1994 and continuing).

34. Askew *op cit* fn 28, 16.

35. S Badham & M Norris (in prep) *Early Incised Slabs and Brasses from the London Marblers* Soc Antiq Occas Pub. The slabs are illustrated as figures 1 and 2 in 'Early Medieval Purbeck Marble Grave Slabs from Southwark' *J Church Mon Soc* 13 (1998) 16.

chapel of medieval St Thomas Hospital. In this case the slabs would be part of a table-tomb. It is known that the hospital had the rights of burial, a defining right of a parish and a source of income.

As the documentary evidence for the early 15th century highlights the dilapidated state of St Thomas hospital and the proposals for reparation, it is not inconceivable that the hospital chapel was included in the scheme of works. Any renovations may have led to the discarding or removal of some monuments. As both slabs are weighty it seems unlikely that they would have been moved a long distance.

Table-tombs from earlier than the 15th century are rare. This is partly because many would have been destroyed in the subsequent rebuilding of churches. Even an abbot or a bishop in the early medieval period might have a low grave-cover with limited sculptural adornment³⁶. Among the churches in Southwark, only the cathedral has survived in part from the medieval period³⁷ and it has just two medieval memorials: one is a wooden effigy of about 1275 to an unknown knight and the other is to John Gower the poet (d. 1408).

The medieval cellar into which the grave slabs were incorporated was probably associated with the tenement known on the site and acquired by the hospital in 1507.

Post-medieval

After the Reformation, St Thomas Hospital was closed in 1540. A proposal of 1546 to revive it was turned down by Henry VIII. However, in 1551, Edward VI expressed concern at the numbers of sick and poor on the streets and this led to a new foundation of the hospital under the name of St Thomas the Apostle. The first patient was admitted in 1552. Between 1693 and 1709, the hospital was rebuilt and extended at the expense of Sir Robert Clayton, and is seen both to the south of and underlying the site on John Rocque's map of c. 1746 (Fig. 8).

Archaeological evidence for the post-medieval period was present only in Trench 3, where a truncated brick-built vaulted wall foundation was found on a north-south alignment. Documentary and cartographic evidence suggests that it relates to the post-medieval rebuilding of St Thomas Hospital between the late 17th/early 18th century (see Fig. 8).

Conclusions

The site area was the subject of Roman exploitation from the early 2nd century until the end of Roman Southwark. A sequence of buildings which

dated from no earlier than the early 2nd century was recorded. The presence of an oven or furnace demonstrated that some form of manufacture was taking place. A building in Trench 1 was destroyed by fire in the early 3rd century. Later in the 3rd century the buildings were demolished and rubbish pits excavated through their plots. The intervening period was represented by a dark earth-type deposit into which pits had been dug. These were backfilled, sometime between the 12th and early 15th centuries. Early to mid-14th century grave slabs were reused in a medieval cellar wall which provided the first evidence for post-Roman development of the site. The grave slabs may have come from St Thomas hospital, located to the south of site. The cellar was backfilled in the 14th or 15th centuries, after which its plot was acquired by the hospital in 1507.

Acknowledgements

MoLAS would like to thank London Bridge Hotels Ltd. and Wilmott Dixon Construction Ltd. who funded the excavation and this publication. Our particular thanks go to Ivan Elias of London Bridge Hotels Ltd, and to Warren Troy, Project Surveyor of Wilmott Dixon Construction Ltd. We are grateful for the help and assistance of Sarah Gibson, Senior Archaeology Officer at the London Borough of Southwark for help in making the arrangements for the archaeological work.

Thanks also go to Robin Densem, MoLAS Project Manager and Barney Sloane for their comments on the text. The MoLAS field staff were Carrie Cowan, Niall Roycroft, Dave Saxby, Kieron Tyler and Jo Wainwright. The finds analyses which are incorporated into this article were by Charlotte Ainsley, Ian Betts, Lyn Blackmore, Jackie Keily, Roberta Tomber and Terence Smith from Museum of London Specialist Services. The drawings for this article were by Steven Cheshire and Jeannette van der Post of MoLAS. Photographs are by Andy Chopping and Maggie Cox of MoLAS. Editing was by Kieron Tyler.

Sally Badham and Stephen Humphrey contributed their expertise on the funerary monuments. Additional comments on the subject of the merlin bones were made by Graham Rellica, Assistant Conservation Officer of the RSPB (Grampian region) and Colin Shawyer of the Hawk and Owl Trust.

36. R Leach *An Investigation into the use of Purbeck Marble in Medieval England* (1978).

37. S Roffey 'The early history and development of St Marie Overie Priory, Southwark: the 12th century Chapel of St John' *London Archaeol* 8 no 10 (1998) 255-262.