# The material culture of early modern Inns of Court

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In 1161 the Knights Templar acquired the land between Fleet Street and the Thames, with the Temple Church being consecrated in 1185. Following the suppression of the Knights Templar in 1308, the land was eventually granted to the Knights Hospitallers of the Order of St John of Jerusalem in 1338. Later in the reign of Edward III (1327–77) the land was leased to students of the common laws of England, who continue to occupy the site to the present day.

Recent archaeological investigations within Inner Temple by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) has revealed Middle Saxon settlement and material that may relate to the Bishop of Ely's Inn, thought to have been situated here before the arrival of the Templars.1 However, a large proportion of the finds from these excavations were associated with the lawyers, who continued to reside here after the suppression of the Hospitallers in 1540. Retrieved from sequences of rubbish pits and yard surfaces at Hare Court (HCO99) and Church Court (TCT99), the finds provided an insight into the daily life of lawyers in the 16th and 17th centuries. In 2006, further archaeological work was undertaken by PCA at Hare Court. The numerous finds retrieved from the investigation adds significantly to our understanding of the material culture of lawyers and the Inns of Court in the early modern period.

# **Hare Court**

Hare Court is situated to the northwest of Church Court and to the west of Temple Church (St Mary's) and is bounded by chambers buildings on all four sides (Figs. 1 & 2). The court is named after Nicholas Hare (d. 1591) who built chambers on the south side of the court in the 1560s. Before this, the courtyard is believed to have been known as Little Court or Garden Court and may have been the same as Nut Tree Court, called Nut Garden during

the reign of Henry VIII. Hare Court survived the Great Fire of 1666, but was badly damaged in a fire in 1678. The west range was rebuilt in 1679 and replaced again in 1893–4. In 1657 some timber and roughcast structures on the eastern side of the court were replaced with more substantial buildings, which became known as 1–5 Inner Temple Lane. These buildings were pulled down in 1857 and replaced with Dr Johnson's Buildings.

The archaeological work in 2006 involved the hand excavation of 20 trenches for landscaping purposes, taking the form of tree pits, planting beds, a statue base and a new path (Fig. 2). The courtyard area was 750 sq m in size and the site was assigned the site code HCV06. Due to the limited trench depth required for the landscaping works, none of the groundworks exceeded *c*. 1.7 m in depth, and natural

deposits were not reached. The most intense phase of archaeological activity related to the 16th and 17th centuries. Most of this activity took the form of dump layers, which were interpreted as episodes of ground levelling and raising. Of interest was an assemblage of scorched tile recovered from one of these horizons, which may well have been associated with the fire of 1678. Gravel yard surfaces and associated bedding layers were also recorded towards the centre of the site, and documentary evidence exists in the form of a gardener's bill of 1658 for the gravelling of the courtyard. This bill came to £39 4s 6d, while a further bill for sand and paving amounted to £3 1s.2 Three rubbish pit groups were observed across the site, all of which had been backfilled with domestic waste associated with the lawyers' chambers.

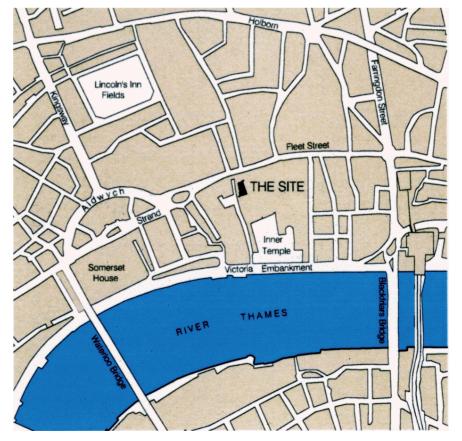


Fig. 1: site location (Crown copyright 2008. All rights reserved. Licence number PMP36110309)

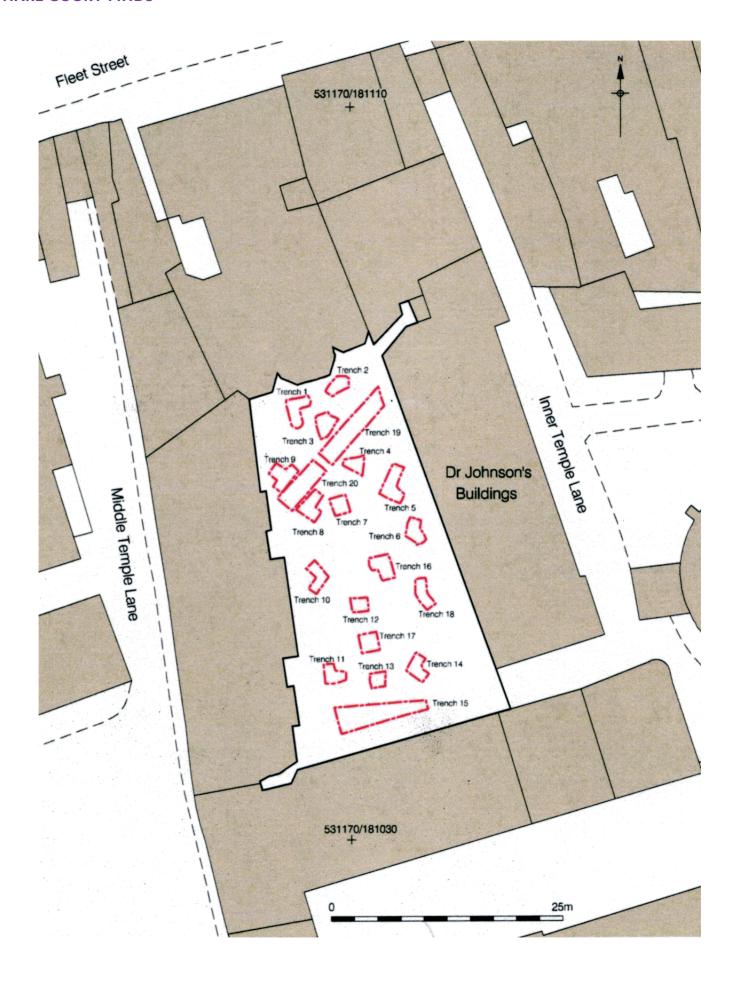


Fig. 2: trench location



Fig. 3: Surrey-Hampshire border whiteware upright candlestick (yellow-glazed) and drinking jugs (green-glazed)

# The material culture of lawyers in the early modern period

There were five main Inns of Court in the City of London: the Inner and Middle Temple, Grav's Inn, Lincoln's Inn and the now defunct Inns of Chancery. The legal profession functioned around the courts in Westminster, while the Inns provided accommodation (chambers) during term time, as well as being essentially a teaching institution for lawyers and law students. The Inns operated on a college system with a Hall where the assembly met for breakfast, dinner and supper everyday; the hall was serviced by a kitchen and pantry, whilst a chapel was another essential building in the layout of an inn, very much like that of an Oxbridge college.3

The material culture of postmedieval lawyers has been previously discussed.4 Matthews and Green defined the pottery recovered from the Inns of Court as in the 'Surrey tradition', what is now defined as Surrey-Hampshire Border red and white wares, with drinking jugs, candlesticks, cups, goblets and ink pots being the most common forms associated with the everyday lives of lawyers and their students. At Hare Court, before the most recent excavations, the finds from a large rubbish pit group of c. 1640–60 was used to define the material culture of this profession for that period. Surrey-Hampshire Border ware pottery

dominated the assemblage; drinking jugs were the main pottery form, but were antiquated for the time, as was the use of stool pans, but candlesticks were numerous, while few decorated items were recorded and no ink pots were found. Other criteria for the group were the use of fine Venetian-style glass<sup>5</sup> and, uncommon for the time, a sizable group of clay tobacco pipes of a good quality. Other ceramics in the 1640–60 pit group were associated with the kitchen (tripod pipkins and their lids) and the communal dining hall (dishes, chafing dishes and fuming pots), while another small class of forms were probably associated with personal use in the chambers or living accommodation, notably as bedpans.6

One of the identifiable characteristics of the post-medieval ceramic sequence at the Inns of Court is a greater proportion of white earthenware compared to other types of pottery; this is a very notable contrast to contemporary pottery assemblages, where there is usually a more even representation of different pottery types. At Lincoln's Inn, the steward placed the earliest known orders for pottery in 1482 (with a presumed potter) for cups, beer pots and goddarts (goblets), and white cups are specifically mentioned in 1498–9.7 These orders for drinking vessels were placed at a time when the Surrey whiteware industry stopped being the major supplier of pottery to

London, but it may well be that each of the Inns of Court wanted a quality ceramic product for the dining halls. A reliable source of such pottery was from the Surrey-Hampshire production centres; this set a precedent over the next two centuries and created something of an establishment identity.

## The ceramics

The pottery from the HCV06 excavation shows that most of the ceramic items associated with lawyers by Matthews and Green are present.8 First, that a fashion for Surrey whiteware drinking forms are present at the institution in the late medieval period, but probably tapping into the ceramic profile of London for that time where Surrey whitewares were the main supplier for the city's pottery needs. The documentary evidence suggests that although orders were still being placed for white earthenware drinking cups at Lincoln's Inn during the early 16th century, it appears that at the Inner Temple ashen (wooden) cups were in common usage, until they were supplanted by 'green pots' in 1559-60; it is believed that this occurred across the board at the other Inns of Court around the same time.9 The whiteware drinking jug was in evidence at the Inner Temple from at least the early 16th century, evinced by the presence of Early Border ware, and this form persisted until the end of the 17th

#### HARE COURT FINDS

century, when pewter and glassware displaced this vessel shape.<sup>10</sup> Whiteware cups in Surrey-Hampshire border ware are present at the HCV06 excavation in stratigraphy dated to the late 16th and early 17th centuries (*c*. 1550–1640), but are not present after this time which accords well with their absence in the HCO99 1640–60 dated pit [134].

Some of the information gathered from excavations at Hare Court does not correspond with Matthews and Green's criteria, namely the use of mugs and inkpots; however, their publication was based upon chance finds of pottery recovered and stored at the various Inns. Border whiteware rounded mugs are never very common in the stratigraphy (one was found in the post-1700 deposits) and were largely shunned by the Inner Temple in preference for their drinking jugs. This pottery type is mostly in the form of green-glazed rounded drinking jugs. This is the most common form by sherd count and profusely litters the postmedieval stratigraphic sequence from the late 16th century onwards at both the Hare Court (HCO99 and HCV06) and Church Court (TCT99) excavations. Two each of intact and near-complete examples come from a pit [84] (Fig. 3) and are dated by associated clay tobacco pipes to 1610-40. Matthews and Green<sup>11</sup> do illustrate two mugs and one has a stamp featuring a Pegasus, the coat of arms for the Inner Temple, so commissions for this form must have been made to a Surrey-Hampshire

Small drinking jugs were found in the HCO99 excavation and sooted early-tradition drinking jugs were found in pit [134].12 It is interesting that this medieval form persisted at the Inns of Court after it lost fashion to rounded mugs and other forms in the rest of London during the early 17th century, and is testament to the buying power of this institution to continue ordering antiquated vessels. The replacement of ceramic drinking vessels was an ongoing economic concern for the 16th- and 17th-century Benchers at the Inns of Court, and various fines and remits were issued for taking vessels away from the Hall, that the collegium were to provide their own personal drinking wares and to stop using pots as percussive instruments during rowdy gatherings, both on formal and private occasions. There are additionally several references to drinking pots being used as missiles and weapons during riots and drinking sessions.<sup>13</sup> Therefore the frequency of drinking jugs in the deposits of the Hare Court excavations can be explained by the documentary evidence for being bought in bulk, but also probably by misappropriation, horseplay as well as casual accidents and breakages.

Inkpots were another criterion for Matthews and Green for the ceramics associated with lawyers;14 for a profession where writing legal documents and accounts was de rigueur, this form should be well represented, but the HCV06 excavation produced only a small number of small rounded jars dated to the end of the 16th century that may have been this form. Analysis of the stratified ceramic sequence of the HCV06 excavation can confirm that Matthews and Green's hypothesis about the material culture of lawyers, that the large quantities of whiteware pottery backs up the documentary evidence for orders being made to the Surrey-Hampshire border potters, and that the use of drinking jugs, cups and candlesticks was definitely established sometime during the late 16th century.

A further departure from Matthews and Green's criteria, reflected in the pottery from HCO99 pit [134], is that not only drinking forms were supplied in Surrey-Hampshire whiteware, but also kitchen, tablewares and sanitary wares are present. These vessel functions showed that the Inner Temple required other ceramic items besides their usual characteristic pottery to run its day-to-day existence, like any other institution or domestic household. At the end of the 16th century there is a wider range of whiteware forms for the Hall kitchen, such as tripod pipkins, besides bowls and dishes that could also be used for serving food communally in the Hall, and the new occurrences of a porringer would have been used. Probable work items include upright candlesticks (Fig. 3, centre), while costrels, a money box and small iars are also included. The finds also show that the Red Border ware was an important source of pottery; together

with the whiteware, they accounted for 97.4% of the group by sherd count. It seems likely that all the pottery ordered from the Surrey-Hampshire borders for official use would have been kept in the pantry (attached to the Hall), and would have been issued from there, including the candlesticks probably used to light the Hall tables.<sup>15</sup>

However, other types of pottery were sourced, such as the local coarse redware for larger, robust forms such as jars and possible serving jugs, while bowls and chafing dishes occur in both wares. The local 16th- and 17th-century post-medieval redwares were made mostly in locations along the Thames at Woolwich, Greenwich, Deptford, Lambeth, but also at Moorgate. 16 At the HCV06 excavations they provide the second largest quantity of pottery during all periods. The forms present in all the redwares are mostly for the kitchen, such as dripping dishes and tripod pipkins or food preparation and serving, but these wares also provide larger-sized vessels, such as storage jars and serving jugs, items not provided for by the Surrey-Hampshire border industry. It may be that the coarse redwares were the preferred vessel for cooking and preparing certain foods in, while whitewares were favoured as serving forms.

The paucity of decorated ceramics in both the HCV06 stratigraphy and pit [134] (HCO99) could be significant, but most of this class of pottery is supplied by the delftware industry (the exception being a small number of Low Countries wares) and mostly as medicinal wares where the contents were possibly more important than the pot. Delftware chargers, which are rare here, were probably not durable enough for largescale communal living areas, and maybe in most of the living quarters there was not always room or necessity for the display of such items. The other poorly-represented types of pottery, particularly drinking forms such as Essex fine redwares, German stonewares and Cistercian ware may represent personal vessels used by the students and lawyers who obeyed the dictums of the Benchers not to take drinking jugs away from the Hall, or that they preferred more modern vessels to drink from away from the hall. These items may possibly have been brought

by 'freshers' from their homes and represent the catchment areas for the students of the Inner Temple, perhaps learning by word of mouth that personal drinking items were not supplied by the Inn and they were therefore prepared for the situation.

# The clay tobacco pipes

The clay tobacco pipe bowls from HCV06 are of types dating from 1580-1740;17 the 17th-century examples generally have a good finish, i.e. are nicely trimmed and burnished, often with complete or near-complete milling of the rim, which is thought to represent a more expensive product. However, the quality of the pipes suffers a little after c. 1660. The earliest bowl is a larger variant of the 1580-1610 dated heeled AO3 type and recorded in a contemporary context. Spurred bowls (AO6, AO9, AO15) rather than heeled types (AO4, AO5, AO10: one has an S V mark, AO11, AO12 and AO13 and AO18) appear to be more favoured on the site for most of the 17th century, and probably reflects the main output of the local master pipe makers.

The presence of clay tobacco pipes of such early dates and good quality in the HCV06 stratigraphy indicates that some members of the Inner Temple or visitors were affluent, and this habit was part of their daily lives and contrasts with other contemporary sectors of society. Pipes dating from between 1580-1610 are very rare excavated finds; most London post-medieval sites only start to have clay tobacco pipes in any significant number after c. 1660, if any at all before this date. The relatively large number of non-local pipes (four, possibly five examples) is interesting and may indicate where the students or visitors came from. The different Inns are known to have had different catchment areas for students, where the adjacent Middle Temple was dominated by west countrymen, the Inner Temple intake derived more from the north, the midlands, and London.18 This may explain why there are clay tobacco pipes from Bristol (with an EL incuse stamp on the heel and dated c. 1630-50),19 Southern Central England (heeled and dated c. 1620-60), York or Hull (the heel of a large bulbous type dated 1660-90), and why an 18thcentury hair curler made in Bristol was

present at Church Court (TCT99).<sup>20</sup> The nineteen clay tobacco pipes dating to between 1610–60/80 from the HCO99 pit [134] differed from the HCV06 assemblage in that they were probably of better quality; three of the local high quality pipes were marked, and the only evidence from the more recent excavation is for one local type of bowl (an AO10), marked SV, perhaps itself a mark of quality.

#### The glass

Of particular interest among the fiftyfive fragments of glass recovered from the HCV06 site was a small assemblage of vessels that can be dated to the late 15th through to the early 17th centuries. All of them are in the common natural green glass typical of the English glass industry of that date. These include fragments from at least three cylindrical drinking vessels, one with a rigaree base and mould-blown lattice ("nipt diamond waie") decoration and another with an applied spiral trail as decoration. The base of a jug, with a hollow tubular base ring, was another item of tableware represented here.

Also included in this assemblage were fragments from one utilitarian vessel. Two bases from urinals are included – these vessels were used not only as 'vases de nuit' but also for the medical practise of uroscopy. There are also fragments from at least four small bottles or phials and the bases of two larger bulbous bodied bottles of a type which is later superseded by the common 'thick walled English' wine bottle.

#### The small finds

The excavations yielded nearly 100 metal and small finds, giving us a further insight into activities and daily life in the Inner Temple during the early modern period. Comprising a welldefined assemblage of material dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, they are coherent with the findings of previous archaeological work in Hare Court. This is particularly reflected in the large number (58) of copper-alloy lace-chapes, bringing the total number retrieved from Hare Court to well over one hundred. The unusual concentration of these small dress accessories - reflecting the fashion of

laced-up clothing and use of decorative detail on garments – could be seen as an indication of the presence of small-scale trade and stall-holders in this part of the Inner Temple. Bunches of small iron buckles, probably for shoes or spurs, also testified to trade of this kind of goods, while pumice stone, which could be used as an eraser, and lead printing types indicated the presence of both printers and parchment makers.<sup>21</sup>

However, the new finds also add to the picture of inhabitants (and visitors) of the Inner Temple at this time, and to our understanding of fashion and material culture in the very early modern period. Many of the dress accessories were associated with 16thcentury pottery, and they fit in well with the picture that is beginning to emerge of daily life in Tudor and Elizabethan period London.<sup>22</sup> They include a range of sturdy copper-alloy pins, sometimes with decorative heads and finials;23 these strong pins were most likely used to hold women's headdresses in place.24 Another characteristic 16thcentury form is the wire double-hook dress fastener, sometimes decorated with intricate wirework.25 An innovation was also to coat copperalloy accessories in what may have originally been a reddish-brown lacquer.<sup>26</sup> Traces of this can be seen on a D-shaped buckle<sup>27</sup> and on several of the lace-chapes28 as well as on a triangular-shaped dagger chape of folded copper-alloy sheet, decorated with a herringbone pattern (Fig. 4). An unstratified 17th-century enamelled coat button, embossed in high relief with the motif of a lion passant, is a rare find (Fig. 5). An almost identical button,



Fig. 4: decorated and lacquered 16th-century copper-alloy dagger chape (sf 43, actual length 43 mm)

### HARE COURT FINDS



Fig. 5: 17th-century enamelled coat button (sf 61; actual size 26 mm)

but with the lion facing the other way, was retrieved from the Thames foreshore; this may originally also have been enamelled.<sup>29</sup> Both high-relief and enamelled buttons are unusual, and the owner is likely to have been a person of some standing; datable evidence

suggest they became fashionable around 1650.30

Other personal belongings are reflected in toilet implements; from the late medieval and early modern periods there are both sets, riveted together like modern-day Swiss army knives, and a

range of individual implements. The latter often have double functions, like the simple copper-alloy nail cleaner/ear-scoop from Hare Court (Fig. 6 top). An ear-scoop with finely moulded stem, previously recovered at Church Court,31 was part of a set, and so most likely was a delicately carved bone ear-scoop from the recent excavations (Fig. 6 bottom). Toilet sets of bone became increasingly popular from the 16th century onwards.32 An unusual find is a delicate brush made from a simply carved splinter of bone, tightly wound with silk thread and copper-alloy wire at one end (Fig. 6 centre). Under the microscope some of the bristles are still visible. The function of this little implement is not known, but a use as a make-up brush is suggestive!

The assemblage from Hare Court also included finds that reflect more serious activities at the lawyers' courts. A copper-alloy book clasp with splayed end and a decoration of concentric circles is of a characteristic early postmedieval type (Fig. 7 bottom). A metal dip pen, associated with 16th-century pottery, is a more unusual find (Fig. 7



Fig. 6: (top) copper-alloy nail cleaner/ear-scoop (sf 41, actual length 70 mm); (centre) ?make-up brush made from a simply carved splinter of bone (sf 14, actual length 83 mm); (bottom) carved bone ear-scoop (sf 31, actual length 62 mm)



Fig. 7: (bottom) copper-alloy book clasp (sf I5, actual length 43 mm); (top) 16th-century metal dip pen (sf 40, actual length I40 mm)

top). From the Middle Ages until the 18th century, a feather quill was the usual implement for writing with ink. Not until the early 19th century, with increased demand and the manufacturing of steel nibs, was there a wider use of metal pens.33 The Hare Court pen is made of a folded copperalloy sheet, and similar copper-alloy pens of quill form are known from late medieval deposits in London.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps the earliest example of a medieval metal pen is a bronze fountain pen, clad with felt inside, from Tuscany; this dates from the mid or late 14th century.35

Other finds reflecting the profession of lawyers are four copper-alloy jetons.<sup>36</sup> These coin-like tokens were used for calculating sums on a counting board. The Hare Court jetons were all made in Nuremberg, a centre of production for these counters from the mid-16th century. Two are heavily worn from much use, and one, decorated with the lion of St. Mark, appears to have a garbled or nonsensical inscription in Lombardic lettering. The fourth is partly legible and shows it was inscribed with the motto 'GOTES SEGEN MACHT REICH' (God's blessing brings riches).37 The only coin

retrieved is a heavily worn and clipped silver penny of Edward IV; even if this coin was minted in the late 15th century it was probably still in use in the early 1600s.<sup>38</sup>

An intriguing find from Hare Court is a length of cord-like copper-alloy chain, now in two pieces (Fig. 8). This type of loop-in-loop chain was common during the Roman period, but there are also later examples; a length of identical chain was recovered from the final pre-Reformation phase of the Carthusian monastery at London Charterhouse.<sup>39</sup> These cord-like chains do not correspond with the variety of chains used as dress accessories in the late medieval and early modern periods,40 and recently they have been interpreted as scourges.41 A complete scourge, made of silver wire, is known from the late Saxon Trewhiddle hoard; this too is constructed like a cord, but with the use of a different technique of plaited or knitted wire.<sup>42</sup> The possible scourge from Hare Court may be a residual medieval artefact; however, it would not be out of place in the turbulent times following the Reformation. It was found with pottery dating from c. 1600-1630, a period characterised by events such as the

Gunpowder Plot and the reintroduction of recusancy laws to deal with dissenters of the newly reformed Church of England.<sup>43</sup>

#### **Conclusions**

The finds recovered from the recent excavations at the Inner Temple have given an insight into life and activities there during the 16th and 17th centuries. Although there are similarities to domestic finds assemblages, the material culture of lawyers, their students and servants also have atypical elements. The institutions were wealthy enough to place contracts with the Surrey-Hampshire pottery industry to supply the Hall and kitchen with most of their pottery requirements, which included large numbers of the antiquated whiteware drinking jugs. Fiscal items involved in the accountancy of the Inner Temple are the jettons used in conjunction with a counting board. Finds reflecting the academia of the institution are also represented by possible inkpots, a metal dip pen nib, pumice used as an eraser, a book clasp and candlesticks to provide lighting to work by. The sanitary items include the use of outdated stool pans, toilet sets for

### HARE COURT FINDS



Fig. 8: possible scourge of cord-like copper-alloy chain (sf 9, actual length 85 mm)

personal ablutions and pottery and glass pharmaceutical containers for their ailments. A number of high-status items, such as glassware and certain dress accessories, may relate to more affluent members of this collegium, as do the clay tobacco pipes, some of which also give an indication of the catchment

areas where students were travelling from to study here. There are a number of finds from the Inns of Court that should not be expected in a largely male preserve, such as the hair pins and a possible make up brush. The scourge provides an insight into one individual's religious beliefs, perhaps a recalcitrant.

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- 37. Cf. Egan ob cit fn 22, 172.
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- 41. C. Thomas, B. Sloane and C. Phillpotts Excavations at the Priory and Hospital of St Mary Spital, London, MoLAS Monograph I (1997), 109 table 14 category E: identification by G. Egan.
- 42. D.M. Wilson 'The Trewhiddle Hoard' Archaeologia 98 (1961), 75-122, pp. 92-92, plates XXII and XXVIa.
- 43. For recusancy laws, see B. Magee The English recusants: a study of the Post-Reformation Catholic survival and the operation of the Recusancy Laws (1938); E. Rose Cases of conscience: alternatives open to recusants and Puritans under Elizabeth I and James I (1975).