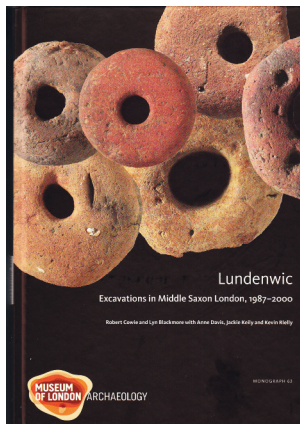


Lundenwic: excavations in Middle Saxon London 1987–2000



Robert Cowie and Lyn Blackmore with Anne Davis, Jackie Keily and Kevin Rielly

MOLA monograph 63

2012

361 pages, hardback
187 illustrations (some colour),
tables, bibliography and index

£34

Reviewed by Chris Jarrett

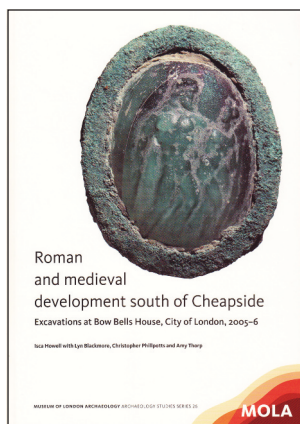
This important monograph draws together information from 18 excavations within the area of Middle Saxon London (Lundenwic) previously not published in any detail. The evidence from these excavations, as well as from others that have made it to press (notably the Royal Opera House: MoLAS Monograph 15) has been synthesised to produce a piece of work that gives as complete as possible an understanding of the settlement.

Having set out the history of the discovery, the identification of the settlement (in the Covent Garden area) and the documentary evidence for its existence, the authors then deal with the 18 archaeological excavations, each presented separately as summaries: phased and incorporating the finds and environmental evidence. Further chapters place Lundenwic in its political, geographical, regional and international settings, and review the prehistoric and Roman landscapes pre-dating the settlement, before discussing its Early Saxon origins, and its development in the late 7th to mid 8th century AD, through to its abandonment in the mid-9th century. Subsequent chapters are

thematic, bringing all known evidence together to discuss aspects of Lundenwic: its layout and organisation, food production and consumption, craft and industry and trade and exchange. A section on life and death, besides looking at the cemeteries, explores evidence for clothing, accessories, equipment and other personal items. In the conclusions, future research topics are suggested for Lundenwic, eg its relationship to other local communities, both religious and secular, and investigating better-preserved botanical assemblages, to provide data on how plants were used, and how cereals were stored and distributed. The all-important specialist appendices present summaries of the finds, new research (eg a review of the loom weight typology and reclassification of the shell-tempered pottery fabrics) and discussions on each category, as well as a useful gazetteer of the sites and finds spots of Middle Saxon London which additionally covers The City, Westminster and Southwark.

The authors have created a very readable monograph on the settlement, about which, until 30 years ago, little or nothing was known. The book can be enjoyed both by the general reader interested in London's past and as an important academic study of Middle Saxon archaeology. It certainly deserves a place in students' reading lists if their courses include urbanisation or period themes. For those interested in arguments as to whether *wics* (trading centres) were set up by royal patronage or through Frankish or Frisian traders economic concerns, the authors come down on the side of royalty. It is commendable that the authors make extensive reference to other organisations' archaeological work in Greater London and leave no 'hone stone unturned' in their research. Indeed, it will be interesting to know how much the next generation of archaeologists can say, which is new or different to that presented in 'Lundenwic'. However, there is hope; new excavations will and have come about since the book's publication in 2012 and already there is new insight into the elusive, near archaeologically impenetrable waterfront area. Recent excavations at Adelphi Building (see the autumn 2014 cover of *London Archaeologist*) will help expand upon the data.

Roman and medieval development south of Cheapside: Excavations at Bow Bells House, City of London, 2005–6



Isca Howell with Lyn Blackmore, Christopher Phillpotts and Amy Thorp

MOLA, Archaeology Studies Series 26

2013

114 pages, hardback
63 illustrations (some colour),
tables, bibliography and index

£15

Reviewed by Dominic Perring

This well-presented report in the MOLA's Studies Series describes excavations undertaken in 2005–6 on a site between Cheapside and Watling Street. The site had already seen extensive truncation, leaving only fragmentary remains of Roman and

medieval deposits. Opportunities for study were further curtailed by building proposals that left parts of the site untouched. The evidence recovered from a patchwork of small trenches confirms existing knowledge of the archaeology of this part of the City, whilst offering little to excite wider attention.

The sequence included an early roadside ditch along Cheapside, with late Neronian gravel quarries dug across much of the site. Late 1st century building activity was followed by a downturn in activity, although fragmentary remains of early-2nd-century masonry buildings were found on the Watling Street frontage. Building materials (reported on by Ian Betts) hint at high status buildings within the vicinity of the site in this and later Roman phases. The site was reoccupied in the 10th century, with later medieval features including masonry foundations, and various 13th- and 14th-century finds recovered from pits and wells.

Pottery specialists will be interested in the publication here of a good late-Neronian assemblage recovered from a well, and a wide-ranging description of the imported amphorae from the site. A Roman iron wool comb represents an unusual find, whilst a 1st century glass and copper-alloy pendant showing Hercules and his companion Iolaos was a unique one (the subject of a note by Martin Henig). The first cameo to have been found in Roman London, it is prominently illustrated on the cover of the report.