London in the Not-so-Dark Ages

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Londinium

5th century urn: St Martin-in-the-Fields

MOLA
MUSEUM OF LONDON
ARCHAEOLOGY

Lundenwic

London
Early and Middle Saxon London - coming out of the Dark Ages?

1. Background
   - Rural settlement c AD 400-650
   - City and Lundenwic, early finds

2. The development of Lundenwic
   - Roman to Saxon London
   - Burials
   - Growth and organisation of Lundenwic
   - Trade and industry
   - Decline

3. Summing up
Late 4th-/5th-century finds

Roman riverside wall strengthened AD 388-402

St Bride’s

- Western cemetery
- Billingsgate bathhouse
- Eastern cemetery
- Silver ingot found near Tower of London

Museum of London

B538 (M)
Early Saxon rural settlement and cemeteries
Early Saxon finds

Glass cone beaker and pottery pedestal beaker from the Mitcham cemetery (Clark 1989)
5th- to 6th-century pottery

Chaff- and sandstone-tempered wares
Emerging kingdoms, changing faith

- AD 597 Augustinian mission
- AD 604 St Paul’s founded
- AD 616-653 East Saxon reversion to paganism
- AD 653 Christianity re-established

City, near St Paul’s?
Saxon finds from outside the City (pre-1983)

- 7th-century palm cup, St Martin-in-the-Fields, found 1722 in a sarcophagus burial
- The Garrick Street ring, late 7th-/early 8th-century
- The Fetter Lane sword pommel, 8th-century

© British Museum
Early excavations in Westminster

The Savoy, Strand, 1930s
From Clark 1989

The Treasury, 1960s

Arundel House, Strand, 1970s
Lundenwic as understood 1984

From Popular Archaeology

The Aldwynch: Mid-Saxon London Discovered?

From The London Archaeologist

Focus on London

London on the Strand

Popular Archaeology

London on the Strand

Popular Archaeology

London on the Strand

Popular Archaeology

London on the Strand

Popular Archaeology
Middle Saxon London, as understood c 1990

Map from Clark 1989

Vince 1990

2003
2004
2012
2013
Lundenwic ‘discovered’ 1984
First excavation at Jubilee Hall, 1985

Since then over 80 excavations and watching briefs carried out
Early and Middle Saxon London - coming out of the Dark Ages?

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   - Rural settlement and burial c AD 400-650
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4. Summing up
Lundenwic c AD 700, as understood 2003

Late 6th-/7th-century saucer brooch, Royal Opera House

Royal Opera House site (ROP95), the largest in Lundenwic (2500m2)
New discoveries
2003 to 2009

London Archaeologist 2004

The origins of Lundenwic? Excavations at 8–9 Long Acre/16 Garrick Street, WC2

Lyn Blackmore
Alan Vince
Robert Cowie

Introduction
This article summarises the results of an excavation undertaken by the Museum of London Archaeology Service in advance of proposed redevelopment (Fig. 1). The investigation, which extended across the entire area of the site, revealed a number of Saxon features. A small amount of pottery and other finds were recovered, including a jet bead and a 7th-century iron sword. The site was previously occupied by the London Transport Museum, whose collection of Saxon objects included a jet bead and a sword. The excavation also revealed a number of post-medieval remains, including a 17th-century well and a 19th-century drain.

Archaeological background
Lundenwic was an important port that functioned as part of a network of trading settlements around the coast of north-west Europe. Over the past century, a number of excavations have been undertaken in the vicinity of the site, including those at 8–9 Long Acre and 16 Garrick Street. These excavations have revealed a range of Saxon features, including buildings, cemeteries, and defensive structures. The site was also occupied by a number of non-Saxon groups, including the Romans and the Normans.

Fig. 1: the site location with an inset of Greater London
St Martin-in-the-Fields, excavations 2005-7

Double-flue tile kiln made of reused roof tiles with thick outer wall of chalk; cut by 19th-century drain

Archaeomagnetic dating: last firing AD 400-500

1st- and 3rd-century timber buildings
Late Roman burials
St Martin-in-the-Fields
The reused sarcophagus

19th-century damage at the head end may explain missing skull
St Martin-in-the-Fields, excavations 2005-7

Burial 1 (disturbed) with coin of Constantius (AD 355-65)

At least two sarcophagi, two palm cups and a spear found c 1722 when portico constructed

Skull from burial 1 found in later ?grave cut with urn of c AD 430-500
St Martin-in-the-Fields

Mud-brick oven, C\textsuperscript{14} date AD 540-600; imported glass bead of c AD 550-600 found in deposit over the oven, which was cut by a beamslot
From Roman to Saxon London

- Upper St Martin’s Lane
- St Paul’s
- St Martin-in-the-Fields
- Billingsgate bathhouse
Excavations at Upper St Martin’s Lane, 2007-9

Tower Street 6th-century small-long brooch

British Museum

Roman brooch, 3rd century, with parallel and distribution (Hattat 1989)

Cone beaker, late 5th-/6th-century

12 sherds Early Saxon pottery
C\(^{14}\) dating of cremations

B1: AD 410-550 (95% confidence), AD 480-540 (42% confidence)

B8: AD 430-640 (95% confidence), AD 530-610 (67% confidence)

Cremation pot B6
5th- to 6th-century tweezers from cremation pit <B6/B7/B8>

Copper alloy tweezers found at Broechem, Belgium (Annaert and van Heesch 2004)

Length 77mm

Found with 19 burnt glass bead fragments
London Transport Museum
Inhumations B11 and B12 with finds from B12

Kentish disc brooch from well cutting B12

© Museum of London
Finds from inhumation B12 c AD 575-600

1. Kentish disc brooch
2. Frankish-type buckle
3, 4. Imported beads

1: Silver and garnet keystone disc brooch a=Damage b=Garnet (1:1); 2: Shield-on-tongue buckle (copper alloy) (1:2); 3: Glass bead (possibly in necklace) (1:2); 4: Amber bead necklace (1:4); 5: Roman glass vessel rim fragment (1:2) 6: Roman terret (copper alloy) (1:2); 7: Iron strips (possibly with the chain) (1:1); 8: Iron knife (1:2); 9: Chain object (possible chatelaine) (1:2)
St Martin-in-the-Fields: high status male burial c AD 660
St Martin-in-the-Fields – parallels for the silver ring

The silver ring worn on the left hand of the high status male suggests that he was an official, possibly overseeing the development of the wic, or a port reeve, charged with endorsing transactions.

Garrick St (Lundenwic), gold ring, late 7th/8th century

British Museum

Figure 136 The finger-rings from (a) Krefeld-Gellep (after Pirling 1974) and (b–d) Trezzo sul’Adda (after Roffia 1986: (b) tav. 5; (c) tav. 13; (d) tav. 31). Scale 1:1
St Martin-in-the-Fields: female grave group c AD 650-660

Amethyst beads

Kentish gold pendant with green glass setting

Glass beads and silver ring
Weapon burials in Covent Garden

James Street (MOLA)

Floral Street (MOLA)

Bedfordbury (MOLA)

James Street (PCA)

See LAMAS 2009
Long Acre: male with Continental belt suite – burial of a foreign merchant?

C^{14} dates: cal AD 655-715 (95%), AD 660-695 (68%)

Bern-Solothurn type, AD 660/70–700/10

Ipswich Buttermarket grave 1306
Female burials and jewellery

Opera House: saucer brooch (late 6th-7th-century) and annular reticella twist bead (later 7th-century)

Drury Lane: one coiled gold bead, like those on the Desborough necklace c AD 650-700

Floral Street: Kentish composite disc brooch, c AD 650-670
From burials to wic
The development of Lundenwic

References:

by Wulfhere of Mercia (658-75)

Reeve witnessing transactions in royal hall for kings of Kent by AD 680

York Buildings: waterfront timbers dendro-dated to c AD 679; river 100m to south of Strand

References: ‘portum Lundonie’ AD 672-674
‘supra vicum Lundonie’ AD 687
Royal Opera House: Period 3 (c AD 600-675)

C14 dating
Grave 1: AD 607-660 (1 std dev)
   AD 559-676 (2 std dev)

Grave 2: AD 640-673 (1 std dev)
   AD 604-756 (2 std dev)
Royal Opera House, Period 4.1

Hearth of Roman tiles, building 7

Remains of wall bench, building 8

AD 670-700
Royal Opera House, period 4.2

Cobbled oven base and framework, building 16

Circular hearth or oven base of Roman tiles, building 11

AD 700-730
Royal Opera House, period 5.1

Courtyard area, buildings 6/40, 41, 44

View to the main road

AD 730-750/770
Royal Opera House, periods 5.2, 5.3

AD 750-800+
Pottery quantification: Royal Opera House

- Total 2800 sherds
- Chaff-tempered wares dominate until c AD 750
- Ipswich wares arrive c AD 730, dominant from c AD 750
- Imports the third most common group
Lundenwic c AD 675-750

Total area c 50-60 hectares

Population ?5000-10,000 (Keene 2000)
Expansion westwards

WST86: Ecgbert coin, AD 835-839

Medieval Archaeology 2004

Whitehall and Westminster Abbey

Expansion westwards
Expansion eastwards

Fetter Lane pommel, 8th-century

Hare Court, series G sceat (Quentovic?), AD 720-30

Excavations at Hare Court, Temple (Butler 2005)

© Pre-Construct Archaeology
The Saxon waterfront

Reeve witnessing transactions in royal hall for kings of Kent by AD 680

York Buildings: timbers dendro-dated to c AD 679; river 100m to south of Strand

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‘supra vicum Lundoniae’ AD 687
Trade and exchange

Porcupine sceat, Dorestad, c AD 710
Wodan sceat, Jutland (copy), AD 720s

Hare Court, series G sceat (Quentovic?), AD 720-30 © PCA

Reused quernstone
Imported reduced wares, 
$c$ AD 675-850

Northern France/Belgium

Tating-type ware, with applied tinfoil decoration, France or Rhineland
Imported reduced and oxidised wares, *c* 670-850

**Beauvais**

**Seine valley/Rhenish**

**Rhenish (Badorf)**
Bone and antler working

Stages in comb manufacture
(Ribe, Denmark)
Textile production

Royal Opera House, spindle whorls, pins and thread pickers

Frisian-style spindlewhorls from Oost-Souburg (top), Royal Opera House and Upper St Martin’s Lane

Loom weights from James Street
Metal working

Antler mould for disc brooch showing a bird, based on a Hamwic coin, c AD760s

Copper alloy key and stone mould for different types of key

Iron knives, one with twisted copper alloy inlay
Daily life

Cauldron and trivet in well (ROP95)

Carved stone lamp, bone runic object (ROP95)

TATBERHT runes on cattle rib (NPG97)
Pre-Construct Archaeology

Large comb (USM06)
9th-century defensive ditches

Royal Opera House

Hoard of Northumbrian stycas, c AD 850
Decline of Lundenwic, retreat to city?

The Temple hoard, over 250 coins buried c AD 841-2

Later 9th-century strapend, Temple Place

Key Dates (ASC/Asser)

842 – Viking raid
851 - Viking raid
871-2 – Vikings over-winter
878/9 – Viking raiding army settles at Fulham
883 – English besiege city
886 – King Alfred restores city

Alfredian coins from the new market to the south of St Paul’s (MOLA)
The beginnings of Lundenburgh, at St Paul’s and Aethelred’s hithe
Conclusions: Dark Ages illuminated

- Roman walled town avoided by Anglo-Saxons; limited activity there from 7th century
- Late Roman religious focus at St Martin-in-the-Fields attracted Anglo-Saxon settlers, trade developing by 6th century
- 6th- to 7th-century burials along hillside, high status cemetery at Martin-in-the-Fields
- Lundenwic laid out as a planned town from AD 670s by Wulfhere of Mercia or Hlothere and/or Eadric of Kent; becomes port of Mercia
- Expansion in early/mid 8th century
- 9th-century decline - Viking attacks; return to walled Roman city before AD 886
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