

FEN83

Courtesy of LAARC - 1998

FEN83
5-12 Fenchurch Street, EC3
F Hammer

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SMR: 043255-61

Excavation on the S side of Fenchurch Street, between Gracechurch Street and Philpot Lane (by arrangement with Land Securities (Management) Ltd) recorded 2m of Roman stratigraphy in an area of c 225 sq m in plan; in addition a number of sections along and beneath the two roads forming the sides of the site showed the whole sequence of layers from natural to the modern road surface. The area is situated immediately S of the main E-W road through the Roman city, opposite the SE corner of the forum in the centre of the city.

Eleven periods of Roman occupation could be identified, comprising 30 buildings or structures. The first seven periods from c AD 50 to the early/mid 2nd c were followed by slower development in four periods from the early/mid 2nd c to c 350.

The earliest timber and brickearth buildings (Periods I to III) comprised two or perhaps three properties, and had trading or manufacturing functions. The associated ceramics were of a remarkably high quality, including many cups and beakers in Lyon ware and at least two mould-made South-Gaulish colour-coated cups of a type which is otherwise almost entirely absent from the City. The coarser wares include products of the Neronian industry identified amongst the kiln waste recovered from Sugar Loaf Court in 1982.

Little Boudican fire debris was found, as the area was carefully cleared for a major building in Flavian times, including deep gravel, mortar and stone foundations and plastered mudbrick walls (Period IV). Nearly 20m long and at least 11m wide, it consisted of a big hall on pile foundations, with buttresses strengthening the N wall. Built on to it to the N lay a number of smaller rooms with many successive floors and partition walls of several phases (Periods IV-VII), with little evidence of inhabitation but with traces of slag and perhaps glassmaking in one case. They seem to have been used as shops or workshops.

On the E side a gravelled alleyway led from the main road to a side entrance with stairs. This was soon overbuilt towards the east: a room was found with a substantial *opus signinum* floor, divided by a plastered and polychrome painted brickearth wall from a kitchen. This included a hearth and shelf, where the pots were still in position when the building burnt down, probably together with the adjoining building to the west, producing a thick layer of debris.

Cutting into it, the succeeding building (Period IX) only survived as N-S partition foundations of chipped ragstone and a very substantial ragstone-mortar foundation, which was seen in section along the eastern part of the S frontage of Fenchurch Street and returned under Philpot Lane. No traces of a road were seen behind the wall under

Philpot Lane at the Roman level. Evidence of the late 3rd c came from two wells, constructed within one large pit in the NW; fire put them out of use when the charred timber construction collapsed into the shaft. One of these wells was thereafter used as a dump; of the small mammals which had fallen into it, bones of two black rats, *rattus rattus*, are the oldest found in Britain so far.

A pit cut into the backfill of this well contained three unbroken pots, upside down, all of which contained charcoal and one an eroded coin. No building was found in association with this foundation deposit or offering, as the upper layers were truncated.

Two further building periods (X-XI) followed at least in the NE of the site, above which was dark earth Period XII), recorded in several parts of the site. In Period XIII above the dark earth seven successive road surfaces were recorded beneath modern Fenchurch Street and Philpot Lane. Pits dating from c 850 to 1700, several chalk foundations and a chalk-lined well, brick-lined wells and pits were also recorded.

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