

PWB88

Courtesy of LAARC - 1998

PWB88
Pilgrim Street, EC4
J Heathcote and W McCann

NGR: TQ 31680 81050
SMR: 040420

As part of the Blackfriars - Holborn Viaduct Development, Rosehaugh Stanhope funded the excavation of an E-W trench, 18m x 5m, running down the roadway in Pilgrim Street between Ludgate Broadway and Waithman Street.

The central area of the trench was severely truncated by numerous service ducts and a live sewer lying 3.5m below present road surface. On the N side substantial remains of the medieval city wall were located. Running the full length of the trench it survived to a height of 2.8m above foundation level. Built between 1283 and 1320, this wall enclosed the Blackfriars precinct within the city limits.

Only the S face of the wall was observed and this showed three distinct phases of construction. The predominant materials used were squared blocks of Kentish ragstone, regularly coursed, with some tile, flint, greensand and chalk blocks. A number of offsets were observed which were not continuous along the length of the wall but were arranged step-wise in order to cope with the substantial natural slope in the ground surface on this W side of Ludgate Hill.

Towards the E end of the excavated length, the entrance to a bastion which stood on the N face of the wall was located. The entrance was 1.2m wide and allowed the width of the wall at this point to be determined as 3.0m, although the foundations could not be fully excavated. The S side of the trench contained the remains of the 18th c frontage of Stonecutter's Alley. Due to the presence of live services it was impossible to fully excavate this but a series of irregular brick foundations, including a threshold, were observed. The most conspicuous finds assemblage from the site consisted of a quantity of mica schist waste, of early medieval date, derived from the cutting of imported raw material into honestones.

A further trial pit was observed by MoLAS in 1993, on the N side of Pilgrim Street. This located the foundations for the central tower on the medieval extension of the city wall S of Pilgrim Street, and further evidence of a suspected outer medieval ditch parallel to the Roman city wall; it went out of use between 1250 and 1280.

For observations in the street in 1925, see GM138 above.

London Archaeol, 6, 1989, 53; 7, 1993, 200

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Ede, J, 1989b Seed assessment, Archive Report

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Nayling, N, 1989 Dendrochronological spot dates, Archive Report