

VR Y89

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VR Y89

Vintry House (Vintners' Place), 68–69 Upper Thames Street, EC4

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Roman and early Saxon deposits were overlaid by naturally-laid alluvial mud, indicating a rapid rise in sea level. This was followed by a sequence of buildings, dated to the 10th-early 11th c, with walls and roofs supported by posts. Wattle stakes marked internal partitions or structures; one building had at least six successive floors, one made of planks and others marked by brushwood and compacted silt; and timber edging to a tile hearth was repaired at least once. Outside the buildings were wattle fences; waterlaid sand and gravel against the S face of one of these showed that it had acted as a riverside revetment.

At least six further revetments were recorded, dated by their carpentry from the 12th to the 16th c, indicating progressive reclamation and migration of the waterfront to the S. Carpentry techniques include a form of scarf joint not recorded before in London and a back-braced edge-trenched mortice and tenon joint dove-tailed in three directions. The latest revetment, a chalk and Kentish rag wall founded on an elm timber raft, was on the line of the existing riverside wall. To the N chalk foundations, including some built on split beech timber rafts, indicated buildings on the reclaimed land.

To the S of the existing Vintners' Hall was a set of tile hearths, separated by low tile walls and extended and repaired, reusing roof tiles on edge, at least three times. These were probably part of the kitchens of the original hall, in use until the Great Fire of 1666 when the hall was destroyed. Other strata were removed by modern basemending and foundations.

Spoil from the pile holes on the site was metal-detected with the help of members of the Society of Thames Mudlarks, producing a very large assemblage of well-preserved early and late medieval ceramic and inorganic finds. In addition to large quantities of dress fittings, coins, trade seals and waste products of metal working, numerous badges were found commemorating pilgrimage and denoting personal allegiance. Notable in the latter category is a small pewter hart-and-tree badge used by Richard II and his followers, the first example found in London. Deposits in the coffer dam in the river produced a large pewter plate with the letter V on it possibly signifying its use by the Vintners' Company. Other finds from the coffer dam include an elaborate pewter crucifix badge of late, 14th-15th c date, a 15th c Talbot badge of allegiance to the Earls of Shrewsbury and a small lead ingot with the mark of the Plumbers' Company, paralleled by one found at Nonsuch Palace, Surrey. A wattle-lined cesspit at the N end of the site contained two almost complete wooden bowls, a large boxwood comb and Spanish and German pottery of late medieval date.

The watching brief on this site was given the code VHA89.

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