

TEX88

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TEX88

Thames Exchange, 78 Upper Thames Street and Bull Wharf Lane, EC4
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An excavation and watching brief on a complex sequence of Thames-side land reclamation was undertaken between February 1988 and September 1989, funded by Kumagai Gumi UK Ltd.

The earliest waterfront structure recorded was a 35m length of 3rd c Roman timber quay running W-E at the extreme N end of the site. This structure was robbed in antiquity and left to silt up. Built on the foreshore and sealing the disuse of the quay was a series of Saxon embankments raising the ground by up to 2m. These were of various types: post and plank revetments, vertically-set staves, clay banks consolidated with timbers as hardcore and wattle fences. Incorporated in some of these structures were remains of several boats, including clinker planking, a keel, ribs and a large mast partner. From the beginning of the Saxon sequence the waterfronts respected the N-S line of an inlet, located in the centre of the site, which developed into a property division later to be known as Three Cranes Lane. At least two other N-S property divisions were located and proved to be of Saxon origin. In the early medieval period the waterfront was advanced by successive earthen banks having cobbled ramps leading down onto the foreshore.

By the 12th c the transition had been made to large, complex, prefabricated revetments, which survived up to 2m in height. These front- and back-braced post and plank structures were initially earthfast but later incorporated baseplates as carpentry techniques improved (Fig*TEX). A notable example was a framed scissor-braced jetty with assembly marks, dated to the early 13th c. Major property divisions developed, influencing both the waterfront and associated buildings. Some traces of early Saxon buildings were recorded. A large 12th c warehouse with foundations of split beech logs and massive oak baulks was found to the E, and was replaced by more extensive buildings with chalk and ragstone foundations up to 1.5m deep. At the extreme S of the site the base frame of Three Cranes Stairs was located, a major ferry terminal documented in the medieval period, continuing in use until Southwark Bridge was completed in 1819.

With the help of the Thames Mudlarks a large quantity of metal work was recovered from the site, in addition to worked bone and other organic artefacts. Roman finds include a boxwood scoop with a negroid head, a golden necklace decorated with glass beads, bone hair-pins and an amber intaglio, together with a large amount of Roman pottery from the foreshore deposits. Late Saxon finds include a lead ring decorated with Anglo-Saxon runes, a copper equal-arm brooch, other lead brooches and some coiled wire beads. There were also bone awls, needles and a comb. A large collection of Saxon quernstones,

imported as a partially worked stock from the Eifel Mountains, were recovered from the site. In addition a set of wooden pan-pipes was recovered from a Saxon context.

London's trading connections in the medieval period are revealed by weights and balances, French and German pottery imports, many foreign coins, two pewter spoons with Russian parallels and pilgrim badges of continental origin. Other badges include some from Thomas Becket's shrine, including a church-shaped ampulla. A pewter peacock and a fox staff head were also recovered. Industrial activity is attested by a stone metalworking mould and partially-manufactured buckles. Other items include knives, hones, tweezers and leather scabbards and shoes. A post-medieval waterlogged pit contained several wooden bowls, two brooms, packing boxes, a pannier and a child's ball and skittle, together with Spanish, German and English domestic pottery. There were also some industrial ceramics used in sugar refining.

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