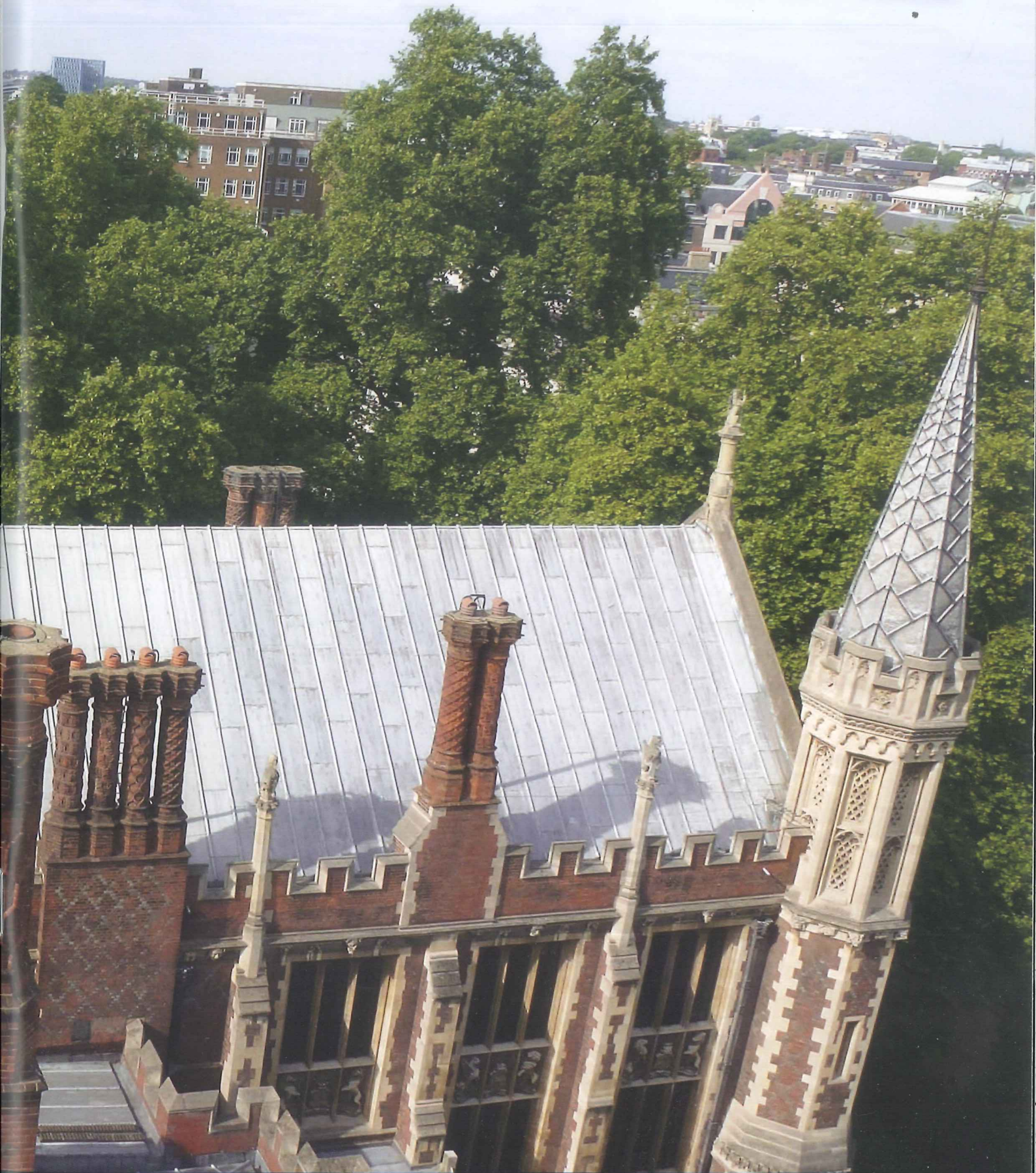
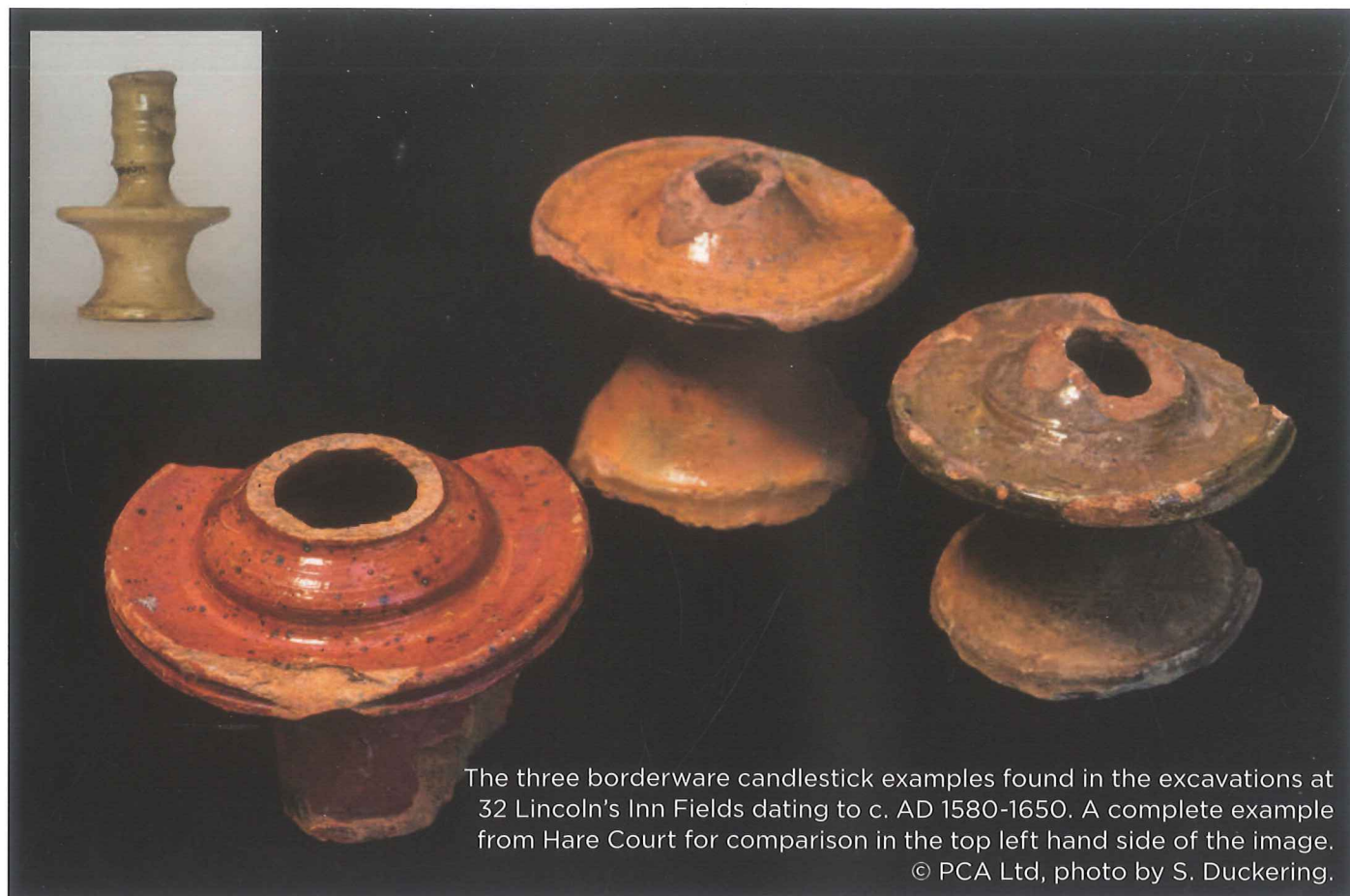


REVIEW 2013



THE HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF LINCOLN'S INN

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES



The three borderware candlestick examples found in the excavations at 32 Lincoln's Inn Fields dating to c. AD 1580-1650. A complete example from Hare Court for comparison in the top left hand side of the image.
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'Burning the candle... it gives a lovely light': Sixteenth and seventeenth century lawyers and students at Lincoln's Inn

Archaeological work was completed in 2011 and 2012 at 32 Lincoln's Inn Fields as part of planned building works at the site on the lower ground floor and basement of the former Land Registry building. Cartographic evidence shows the land being first developed in the seventeenth century, being previously situated between playing fields used by the students of the Lincoln's Inn.

The four Inns of Court are thought to have emerged in the mid-fourteenth century, though there is no documentary evidence for the existence of a Society of Lincoln's Inn until the early fifteenth century. But some time prior to 1422, the greater part of 'Lincoln's Inn' as they had become known moved to the estate of Ralph Neville, the Bishop of Chichester, near Chancery Lane with property subsequently acquired from Richard Sampson also a Bishop of Chichester in 1537. Lincoln's Inn acquired the freehold in 1580 and the Old Hall part of the Inn dates to AD 1489. The open land to the immediate west of Lincoln's Inn

and to the immediate north of 32 Lincoln's Inn Fields originally comprised two separate fields (hence the plural of Fields) known as Purse and Cup Fields. These were used as recreational land for the students of the Inns. A third field, Fickett's Field, was known as Lesser Lincoln's Inn Fields and this was to the south currently occupied by Portugal Street. Considerable archaeological investigations have been carried out within Lincoln's Inn.

The excavations uncovered a group of fragmentary artefacts mostly from a single large pit, which is typical of the assemblages associated with Lincoln's Inn for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The lawyers and students who were working in the area at the time left behind a material culture which sets them apart from other contemporary London communities.

The pottery from the excavations dates between c. AD 1580-1650. This material mostly derives from a rubbish pit, which was probably backfilled around c. AD1600. There were forty-two sherds of pottery, representing twenty-six vessels weighing 2,393g. Excavations at the other Inns of Court have produced comparable assemblages of ceramics all

demonstrating that the material culture associated with these establishments differs notably from other sectors of contemporary society (Mathews and Green 1969; Thorn 1970). The pit produced pottery from the Surrey-Hampshire borders (28 sherds/12 vessels/734g).

My candle burns at both ends; It will not last the night; But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—It gives a lovely light! ;

by Edna St Vincent Millay, Source: *Poetry* (June 1918).

In this region a series of kiln sites have been excavated producing good quality post-medieval white and redware pottery (Pearce 1992). Documentary sources indicate that Lincoln's Inn, in order to fulfil its ceramic needs, was placing orders directly with potters, presumably from the Surrey-Hampshire area, possibly as early as 1482, and certainly from there by 1494-5. The vessel forms in the whiteware recovered at the current site can be linked to specific locations within Lincoln's Inn. Green-glazed whiteware drinking jugs, and a probable pedestal cup, and an olive-glazed dish with combed wavy line decoration on its broad rim, were probably used during communal meal times within the Old Hall. An item associated with the kitchens that serviced the Old Hall comprises yellow-glazed border whiteware tripod pipkins used mainly to cook food. An upright candlestick was also found in the form of a single olive-glazed whiteware example, and there are a further two red border ware ones which came from unstratified (disturbed) deposits (Figure 1). These would have been issued from the pantry to lawyers and students for use in their own private apartments located within the Inn and they would have been important in extending the hours of work beyond daylight. The candlesticks could also have been used in the hall and other areas. Candlesticks are infrequently found on other post-medieval archaeological excavation in London, but they invariably occur in multiples when digging in any of the Inns of Court.

The other principal type of pottery present in the pit is coarse sandy London area redware which originate from a number of sources, such as the ones located in Lambeth and Moorgate, although the main production sites were in Greenwich, Woolwich and later Deptford. The redware represented by ten sherds, constituting nine vessels and weighing 1,327g, dates to c. AD 1480-1600. It is characterised as being coarsely made and sparsely glazed. This industry made large vessel forms, which complemented the range of mostly smaller vessels marketed to London by the Surrey-Hampshire border potters. In the coarse redware the forms present are mostly for kitchen use such as bowls, jars and jugs. The latter two forms, together with a carinated dish and a

cauldron or pipkin, are found in the green and yellow-glazed slipware version of the redware, which was produced up to c. AD 1650. A single sherd of the better glazed and fired local post-medieval redware, dated to after c. AD 1580, was also identified.

There were a small number of imported pottery types found in the pit. There are five sherds of Dutch redware, in the form of a chafing dish (a vessel containing burning coals used to keep food warm in an overlying dish); this would have been used at the table in the hall and there was also a possible cauldron which would have been employed in the kitchen. Dutch redware was imported in large quantities between AD 1350 and 1650 and provided a better quality pottery compared to the local redwares. Another frequent import is a handle of a jug in Frechen stoneware from Germany. This pottery



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was shipped to London over the 1550-1700 period, mostly in the form of drinking vessels, and the final import found is a sherd from an Italian Montelupo polychrome maiolica dish, decorated in the style of '*Estenuazione dei motivi rinascimentali*' [extension of the renaissance motifs] dating to c.AD 1590 to 1610 (Berti 1998, 358, no.269).

This is a fairly rare find for London and uncommon as a decorative item amongst the sixteenth and seventeenth century assemblages previously excavated at the Inns of Court. The Italian dish probably represents the property of an individual, perhaps used for display in private quarters. The reason why display pottery is rare at the Inns of Courts may reflect the fact that the pottery present here mostly derives from centrally procured vessels provided by the institution. Also, in a male dominated segment of society, it may have been that plain, utilitarian pottery was favoured.

The material culture of the Inns of Courts during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is idiosyncratic consisting as it does largely of whiteware pottery in the form of candlesticks, occasional ink pots, stool pans and particularly drinking jugs. The latter two vessel forms would have appeared antiquated by the early seventeenth century when newer types, such as rounded mugs and chamber pots were in everyday use by the rest of London's inhabitants. This attests to the buying power of the Inns of Court ensuring that they received a by-then conservative range of vessel shapes directly from the production sites and so maintaining a particular tradition, perhaps displaying a 'corporate identity', somewhat alien to the extramural world around them.

The large quantity of green-glazed, whiteware pottery sherds common to the Inns of Court (Jarrett 2005), partly reflects the considerable quantities of pottery from selected sources used by these institutions. However, the attrition rate of pottery appears to have been unusual, often by what appears to have been wilful breakage possibly at parties and feasts or as a result of fighting. Besides the cost of replacement, which appears to have been a concern to the benchers, to the extent that fines for breaking pots were in place by AD 1506 and that from 1615 on ordinances were continually updated to stop pots being removed from the hall leading eventually to Houses and individuals having to provide for their own personal items (Matthews & Green 1969). Other finds from the excavations comprised two small pieces of milled lead window came, an iron nail, bone waste and a copper-alloy double-loop buckle. The latter had part of a leather strap still attached to its central bar, and is of a type common in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Whitehead 2003, 60–65). Its size suggests it served on a belt and it is therefore likely to represent a casual loss. A sawn-off cattle metatarsal is a type of waste associated with bone working, representing an offcut from the midshaft which could then be further worked into a range of products such as cutlery handles or combs (cf. Andrews 1989, fig. 7). Its presence seems surprising in the social context represented by the Inns.

The animal bone from the pit-fills constitutes a limited species range with the principal components being cattle, including the upper limb parts from veal calves and sheep/goat, with a lesser constituent of rabbit and chicken. The notable presence of veal is typical of this period (Albarella 1997 and Rielly in prep) and the group as a whole represents a good indication of affluence, as suggested by the predominance of good quality meats such as the cattle upper limb parts.

The material culture of the Inns of Courts for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is less well

understood and appears to merge with that seen in other sectors of society. In part this will have been linked to the virtual demise of the whiteware pottery production on the Surrey-Hampshire borders by c.1700. Afterwards it was restricted to a very few forms, such as chamber pots which were made up to c. 1750. Certainly, by this time there was the start of a move away from the use of pottery drinking jugs to that of wine glasses which were found on the benchers' tables in the halls from AD 1677.



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