

DUBLIN CITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVE

Reference Code	DCAA.01.27
Title	Temple Bar West, Dublin 2 (96E0245) Collection
Creation Dates	1992-2003
Level of Description	Collection
Extent and Medium	44 boxes and 5 CDs
Creators	Margaret Gowen and Co Ltd
Administrative/Biographical History	Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd., Rath House, Ferndale Road, Rathmichael, Co. Dublin, is a professional archaeological company founded in the early 1980s. The company has carried out numbers of archaeological excavations and development-led investigations arising from the requirements of development control and planning process, in line with legal provisions of the Planning and Development Acts (2000) and the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004) and Amendments Acts. The Temple Bar West Collection is one of many site archives that has been generated through these development-led excavations.

Key words:

Temple Bar West; Essex Street West; Upper Exchange Street; Copper Alley; Fishamble Street.

Excavation Licence No: 96E0245.

Viking; Viking houses; Anglo-Norman; urban medieval

Excavation Licence No. 96E0245 encompasses excavations carried out in 4 areas. These are: sites fronting onto Upper Exchange Street, Copper Alley and Essex Street West and a site at Fishamble Street. The term Temple Bar West has been used by the excavator to describe all of the sites excavated under this Licence Number.

Excavations began in September 1996. Initially three areas were completed: a large block fronting onto Upper Exchange Street, a connecting site fronting onto Copper Alley, and a third site fronting onto Essex Street West. A fourth site, at the Fishamble Street end, was excavated later.

The complete site lies within the Viking settlement at Dublin, in the north-east corner. This area, bounded by the Liffey to the north and the Poddle to the east, formed part of the early 10th-century town and was presumably enclosed initially by the defensive banks located at Wood Quay and Christchurch Place, which were later replaced in stone. However, no evidence of any defences were uncovered.

At the lowest level, evidence was found (at Copper Alley) of the foundations of an early rectangular post structure (7m long by 4m wide) with a central hearth, the roof of which was supported by an inner row, oval in shape, of large posts (below). This structure/house does not conform to the typical Viking house type (after Wallace) and may represent either a prototype/alternative or an earlier tradition.

To the north (at Essex Street West) the southern bank of a low-lying watercourse (presumably the River Liffey?) was exposed, the line of which was marked by a series of posts, presumably some sort of revetting fence. On a small ridge to the east the remains of a curving slot-trench and large post-holes (in Copper Alley) suggest that the higher area, above and to the east of the river, was enclosed at an early date. After the slot-trench and early house (which lay outside the slot-trench) went out of use, the area was comprehensively ploughed or cultivated.

DUBLIN CITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVE

Following cultivation, the area appears to have been in use as an early Viking metalworking site, with industrial hearths/ovens representing an early and constant feature throughout the site. At the northern end the watercourse was infilled and actively reclaimed. Several Type 1 houses (rectangular post-and-wattle houses with tripartite divisions, central hearths and four-post roof supports [after Wallace]) were then constructed at the northern (Essex Street West) and south-eastern part of the site. At the south-eastern corner the houses, orientated roughly north-south, appeared domestic in function, with a Type 2 (small subsidiary post-and-wattle structure with no hearth) linked to the main house by a wattle path. At the northern end one of the houses, orientated roughly east-west, may have had an industrial function, represented by the large charcoal deposit in the central aisle.

At the eastern side the area continued in use as a metalworking area throughout the 11th and early 12th centuries. Large structures with supporting corner posts were a feature at this level. Unfortunately the preservation at the upper levels was very poor, and as a result the remains consisted of huge numbers of post-holes which indicate intensive activity but which are difficult to interpret. The latest Viking levels consisted of a deep deposit of clay with numerous open-air hearths.

The Anglo-Norman activity on the site is something of a puzzle. It consists of a massive 'quarrying' of Viking deposits on the southern and eastern side of the block, up to 3m in depth. This caused substantial damage to the underlying Viking habitation and industrial deposits. At the extreme southern end of the site (the Copper Alley end), the Anglo-Norman silts cut down to boulder clay level. This quarrying activity tapers out towards Fishamble Street. The quarried area was then infilled with large deposits of garden soil and riverine silt. This large-scale activity must be associated with the reclamation of the block north of the site in the 1260s.

The site has produced a wide variety of finds, including the usual Viking finds of bone pins, antler combs, bone gaming-pieces, amber pendants, metal dress-pins, quernstones, fragments of leather and textiles. More unusual finds include a collection of walrus ivory pins (including the butchered skull of a walrus), an antler handle with a runic inscription, a panel of delicate gold filigree (possibly from a kite-shaped brooch), a bone trial-piece, and a rib-bone/ruler marked out with the Viking 'inch'.

The fourth and final phase of excavation commenced in Temple Bar West in January 1998 at the western (Fishamble Street) side of the site. The previous excavations had uncovered early evidence of habitation and ploughing, as well as mid- to late 9th-century Viking habitation superseded by industrial activity, which continued into the Anglo-Norman period (Excavations 1997, 41-2).

The west side of the site also produced evidence of ploughing followed by early habitation in the form of three small, well-preserved, sunken structures clustered together. These were sealed by a phase of infilling and levelling-up of the slope, which was followed by the creation of three large properties, orientated north-south and delineated by post-and-wattle fences. These properties contained wattle pens and at least one dwelling, thought to date to the mid- to late 9th century. The early 10th century saw reorganisation of the area and the division of the three early properties into six property plots, each of which contained a house (Type 1 after Wallace), wattle path and sub-buildings. At the upper levels the paths were of stone. In all at least seven levels were identified, with over 100 buildings in total. These included one small, sunken house with a well-preserved wattle floor, thought to date to the 11th century.

The excavation was funded by Temple Bar Properties.

DUBLIN CITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVE

Archival History	Transferred to DCAA from the Dept. of Environment 2010. Further accessions from Margaret Gowen and Linzi Simpson in Apr 2014.
Scope and Content	This collection contains the records of the excavation of important Viking remains at Temple Bar West, Dublin 2 (96E0245), directed by archaeologist Linzi Simpson of Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd. Includes feature sheets, structure sheets, registers, plan checklists, finds sheets, pottery sheets, timber sheets, sample sheets, notebooks, Trondheim sheets, plans, stratigraphic and specialist reports, conservation records, media/publicity, administration, photographs, slides and CDs. Includes original artefact illustrations and reconstruction drawings.
Appraisal destruction and scheduling information	
Accruals	
Arrangement	Collection processed and box lists created by Noelle Mitchell. Arranged according to document type.
Access Conditions	Available for public inspection immediately The excavation was funded by Temple Bar Properties.
Reproduction	Photocopies provided for research purpose only. Publishing by written permission from Margaret Gowen and Co Ltd
Language	English
Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements	Slide viewer required
Finding Aid	Box list in reading room and below
Existence of copies/originals	
Related Material	DCAA.01.32. Also www.excavations.ie entry 1993:087, pre-excavation assessments
Publication Note	Database of Irish Excavations Reports, www.excavations.ie .
Notes	This collection is linked to the Temple Bar Redevelopment Collection DCAA.01.32
Archivist's Note	Noelle Mitchell

**DUBLIN CITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ARCHIVE**

Rules or Conventions

ISAD(G): General International Standards Archival Description. 2nd ed.

Dates of Description

7 Oct 2013; 4 Apr 2014; 24 Jun 2014