

## DUBLIN CITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVE

Reference Code	DCAA.01.26
Title	Golden Lane, Dublin 8 (04E1030) Collection
Creation Dates	2004-2008
Level of Description	Collection
Extent and Medium	3 boxes, plus 2 outsize boxes; 3 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 Golden Lane Collection is one of many site archives that has been generated through these development-led excavations.

### Key words:

Golden Lane, Dublin 8: Excavation Licence No. 04E1030;  
Early medieval cemetery, Viking Age, urban medieval and post-medieval

Test excavation was carried out on this site in 2004 (Excavations 2004, No. 547). This summary describes excavations carried out between March and September of 2005. The site is located on the eastern corner of Golden Lane and Chancery Lane within the former GE Capital Woodchester Bank complex, which was demolished as part of a new development. A key component of the development from an archaeological perspective was the exemption of the site of the church and graveyard of St Michael le Pole (as depicted on historic maps such as Bernard De Gomme's map of 1673, John Rocque's map of 1756 and the first edition of the OS map) from basemented development and the preservation of that portion of the monument along with its associated archaeological deposits in situ.

The excavation was carried out on an area measuring 50m by 50m, the most northern section of the site was severely truncated by the construction of the Woodchester Bank building some twenty years earlier. The excavation sought to record all of the surviving archaeological deposits within the footprint of the basement of the new building.

The site of St Michael le Pole and the growth of the city of Dublin

Early ecclesiastic remains of the church of St Michael le Pole were identified and excavated by the Dublin Archaeological Research Team (DART) in 1981 (Gowen 2001). The church site dates from as early as the 8th century AD and remained as a place of worship up until the end of the 17th century, when it was converted into a school (*ibid.*, 31). The foundation for a round tower and a church and the remains of a medieval graveyard were located during the excavation at the site in 1981 (*ibid.*, 38). The city of Dublin grew in parallel with the church site and Chancery Lane is recorded as a street in the medieval period, dating from c. AD 1230. Golden Lane is first referenced in AD 1382 (Clarke 2002, 13). The site of St Michael le Pole was completely surrounded by post-medieval development in the city and no trace of the monument survives aboveground today.

Early medieval cemetery of St Michael le Pole:

A total of 272 burials were excavated on the Golden Lane site. The burials were located in a halo beyond and surrounding the graveyard boundary wall as depicted on the historic maps. The burials have provisionally been dated to the early medieval period (c. AD 700–1200). The vast majority (267) of these were located in the extreme north-east corner of the site in an area measuring 22m by 10m. This cemetery was clearly an element of the early church site at St Michael le Pole. The potential cultural associations of this pre-Norman church site are particularly intriguing, as the site appears to span both the

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early medieval and Viking Age, culturally and chronologically. No ditch or enclosing feature was identified cut into the boulder clay defining the extent of the cemetery.

The burials were interred in the supine position as extended inhumations, orientated with the head to the west. Thus far the burials have only been dated by grave morphology and artefactual association. Numerous examples of ear-muff stones were noted at the site along with a variety of hand positions in common with other 'Early Christian' cemeteries in Ireland. The reuse of disturbed skulls as ear-muffs was a feature of the cemetery, as was the presence of plank lining around the graves. Additionally, the tight clustering of the burials (in a cemetery) is consistent with 'Early Christian' burial practices at church sites in Ireland. The discovery of stick pins associated with the graves indicates that burial in this portion of the cemetery continued into the 11th and 12th centuries. The provisional interpretation of the earliest phase of burial suggests that the church of St Michael le Pole is a pre-Viking Irish Early Christian church site. The presence of culturally Irish burial grave morphologies and burials with stick pins suggests that Christian burial continued in the cemetery immediately outside the Hiberno-Norse town. These are significant findings, both in terms of the debate on the site of the monastery of Dubh-Linn and with respect to the cultural background of the individuals interred in the cemetery in the Hiberno-Norse period.

### Viking Age/Early Christian activity:

A series of pits, a corn-drying kiln and five isolated burials were excavated beyond the St Michael le Pole cemetery throughout the remainder of the site. One of the isolated burials was interred with grave goods that included an iron spearhead and knife, two lead weights, and a buckle and strap-end. The grave goods accompanying this stout adult male (c. 25 years) indicate that this is likely to be a pagan Viking burial dating from the first half of the 9th century. Three other burials located outside the cemetery were adult males and the fifth was an adolescent female; none of these burials was found to contain grave goods.

### Medieval settlement and the establishment of property plots:

A large double-ditched medieval subrectangular enclosure (c. AD 1200–1500) was uncovered during the excavation. The external dimension of the enclosure measured 25m east–west by c. 22m, with an entrance/gatehouse feature located on its western side fronting towards present-day Chancery Lane. The ditches enclosed an area measuring 20m east–west by 15m. The enclosure was cut through and was later than the cemetery and demarks the end-use date for the cemetery. A large well and limekiln were recorded within the enclosure, but no clear stratigraphic relationship was evident between the limekiln, well and medieval enclosure. It is possible that these internal features pre-date the earthen monument. The fill of the ditches contained many sherds of medieval pottery and the final tertiary fill of the ditches contained an Edward IV farthing dating from 1460–1. The preliminary interpretation based upon finds suggests that the earth-cut enclosure was constructed in the 13th century and continued in use up to the end of the 15th century. It is tempting to classify the medieval enclosure as a moated site constructed immediately outside the walls of the city, especially as the southern and eastern boundary were water-filled. However, the depth and width of the ditches falls short of a typical moated site and hence the Golden Lane example is peculiar.

A series of medieval field boundaries and refuse pits were identified throughout the site; these features are indicative of the land enclosure and domestic settlement that occurred outside the town walls in the medieval period and the general landscape of field system and more dispersed occupation than outside the walled town. An interesting collection of medieval pottery was the principal dating indicator from these features. Additionally, a perfectly preserved medieval bronze hand bell was recovered from one of the pits.

### Post-medieval settlement:

A small number of significant high-status early post-medieval artefacts were discovered on the site. These include Schnellen drinking tankards from Siegburg in Germany dating to the 1570s, an inverted baluster-stem drinking glass dating to c. 1620 and a shaft and globe wine bottle dating to c. 1650, with a seal marked with the letter 'B'. These artefacts were fragmented, but their relative completeness suggests that they were discarded close

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to the place where they were used, in the immediate vicinity of Golden Lane. The cellars (basements) of four 'Dutch Billies' were excavated along Chancery Lane. The buildings are likely to have been built after 1690 and involved a significant alteration to the streetscape and rebuilding effort along that portion of the lane. Each cellar measured 12m east-west and was between 9m and 13m wide. The four properties can be best summarised as two pairs of buildings, each one subdivided into two. The buildings were constructed around a shared central triangular chimneystack between each pair of houses, with rooms to the front and rear with a corner fireplace in each. The individual properties varied in plan and the building sequence recorded in the excavation suggests that Nos 19 and 20 were built before Nos 17 and 18.

The cellars at Nos 17-20 were cut deeply into the boulder clay and little evidence of the pre-existing 16th-century buildings survived on site. Reused early post-medieval house timbers were discovered and the party cellar wall of Nos 19/18 was built over a well. The presence of the well built under the wall is evidence for an earlier phase of building. This, in combination with the variation in plan of the basements, is highly suggestive of earlier buildings influencing the layout of the post-restoration Dutch Billy buildings on Chancery Lane.

The continuity of property plots from the Viking Age down to the present day is a feature that was first identified in excavations in medieval Dublin (Wallace 1994), and subsequently in Waterford (Hurley et al. 1997, 149) and Cork (Hurley 1997, 4), where post-medieval and medieval property plots were superimposed on the earlier Viking and medieval property divisions. This feature is again uncovered at the Golden Lane site, where the medieval rectangular enclosure and other field boundaries are fossilised in the property plot walls laid out at the site in the 17th and 18th centuries. This evidence is indicative of continuity in property ownership and inhabitation of the site from at least AD 1200 to the present day.

### References

- Clarke, H.B. 2002 Irish historic towns atlas, No. 11, Dublin Part I, to 1610. Dublin.  
Gowen, M. (2001) Excavations at the site of the church and tower of St Michael le Pole, Dublin. In S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin II*. Dublin, 13-52.  
Hurley, M.F. 1997 Excavations at the North Gate Cork, 1994. Cork.  
Hurley, M.F., Scully, O.M.B. and McCutcheon, S.W.J. 1997 Late Viking Age and medieval Waterford: excavations 1986-1992. Waterford.  
Wallace, P.F. 1994 (first published 1981) Anglo-Norman Dublin: continuity and change. In D. Ó Corráin (ed.), *Irish Antiquity*, 247-66.

<b>Archival History</b>	Transferred to DCAA from the Dept. of Environment, 2010
<b>Scope and Content</b>	This collection contains archaeological excavation records from a site at Golden Lane, Dublin, excavated by Franc Myles. Includes registers, plans checklists, finds sheets, skeleton sheets, context sheets, administrative material, conservation records, reports, photographs and CDs.
<b>Appraisal destruction and scheduling information</b>	
<b>Accruals</b>	
<b>Arrangement</b>	Collection processed and box lists created by Noelle Mitchell. Arranged according to document type.
<b>Access Conditions</b>	Available for public research 2013. During closure period available for research to Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd.
<b>Reproduction</b>	The terms of the Copyright and Related Acts (2000) allows DCLA to provide photocopies of material for research purposes only. Researchers wishing to publish will be obliged to write to Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd. for permission
<b>Language</b>	English

## DUBLIN CITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVE

**Physical Characteristics and  
Technical Requirements  
Finding Aid**

Box list in reading room and below

**Existence of copies/  
Related Material**

**Publication Note**

Database of Irish Excavations Reports, [www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie). Also see references in  
Administrative/Biographical History

**Notes**

**Archivist's Note**

Noelle Mitchell

**Rules or Conventions**

ISAD(G): General International Standards Archival Description. 2nd ed.  
Ottawa: International Council on Archives, 2000

**Dates of Description**

16 - 20 Sep 2013