



A REVIEW OF THE 51st LAMAS CONFERENCE OF LONDON ARCHAEOLOGISTS HELD AT THE MUSEUM OF LONDON ON 22 MARCH 2014

Compiled by Bruce Watson

MARDYKE ESTATE, ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT RAINHAM, HAVERING

Peter Boyer (Pre-Construct Archaeology Group)

This former post-medieval farmstead gave its name in the 1960s to a high rise housing estate that is now being redeveloped. The earliest recorded feature on site was a prehistoric palaeochannel. The earliest evidence of settlement was a series of scattered pits, some of which contained burnt and worked flints, postholes and intercutting linear ditches which are provisionally dated to the Bronze Age (c.2000–c.650 BC). A series of linear plough marks may be of prehistoric or early Roman date. Early Roman activity consisted of more linear ditches, probably field boundaries, plus various pits and postholes. Several very deep features may have served as storage pits. There were several instances of what appears to be the ritual deposition of early Roman ceramics. For instance, two complete pots with holes deliberately knocked in their bases were discovered, while some other features contained what appears to be the wholesale discarding of unbroken vessels. Late Roman activity was less intensive and was marked by the realignment of the enclosure or field ditches and construction

of three teardrop-shaped pottery kilns each with a single chamber and a central pedestal. Pottery left inside the chambers from their final firing dates to c.AD 120–300.

CROSSRAIL ROUNDUP

Nick Elsdon (Museum of London Archaeology)

To date archaeological work associated with Crossrail in central London has largely consisted of small scale work on stations and shafts for the new tunnelled railway. Work at Broadgate (outside Liverpool Street Station) alongside a Walbrook tributary channel has revealed two wooden Roman gates, which had been reused as platforms. Adjoining the Walbrook channel a Roman road embankment leading to the stream crossing consisted of dumping alternate layers of clay and brushwood. The gravel road metalling above these deposits contained 11 hippo-sandals; these iron plates were probably fixed to the hooves of horses as temporary protection when they were moved along metalled roads. Many of these finds of hippo-sandals had been flattened by road traffic. The concentration of Roman hippo-sandals in the area west of Ermine Street (the precursor of Bishopsgate) implies that this was an important centre for stabling horses





Fig 1. Burials from the Black Death of 1348–9 being excavated by MOA for Crossrail at Charterhouse Square in 2013 (© Crossrail Ltd)

used to transport goods along this principal route between *Londinium* and the northern part of the province. Walbrook flood deposits contained 39 human skulls believed to have been eroded from Roman burials upstream in the Eldon Street area.

Excavations have also revealed part of the extensive post-medieval cemetery known as the New Churchyard or Bethlehem or Bedlam burial ground. It was established in 1586 as a new extra-parochial burial ground for the City of London on land belonging to the Hospital of St Mary Bethlehem, popularly known as 'Bedlam', a former monastic house which had catered for the mentally ill since the 14th century. Fragments of three headstones have been recovered including one belonging to 'Sarah Long', who died in 1672. During the 17th and 18th centuries waste materials from local industries, including bone working debris, lathe turned knife handles and fan rib offcuts, were dumped within the burial ground. Part of this burial ground was excavated in 1985–86 in advance of the construction of the Broadgate Centre. In late

2014 and 2015 before the construction of the new Crossrail ticket hall more of this burial ground will be investigated.

Excavations at Farringdon ticket hall revealed part of a 16th-century revetted water course possibly of Roman origin, which was later known as the Faggesswell Brook. At Charterhouse Square a tiny portion of the West Smithfield Black Death cemetery established during the 1348–49 pandemic has been excavated. The earliest 11 burials discovered were interred in individual graves aligned south-west to north-east and were dated by associated ceramics to *c.*1350 (Fig 1). A second phase of activity consisted of two burials and a third phase of another 12 burials (two of which were interred in a double grave), the latter aligned east–west. Possibly this third phase of interments resulted from one of the subsequent outbreaks of plague during the later 14th century.

Subsequent to this lecture scientific investigation of the teeth of some of the Charterhouse skeletons has revealed the DNA of *Yersinia pestis*, the bacterium which causes

three related epidemic diseases known as bubonic, septicaemic and pneumonic plague. Osteological examination has now established that some of the deceased showed signs of malnutrition and heavy manual labour. While stable isotope analysis has revealed that 10 of these individuals grew up outside London, so they must have migrated to the capital.¹

NOTE

1 'Crossrail excavations unearth mass grave of plague victims' *Times* 31/3/14 and Channel 4 'Return of the Black Death: Secret History' first broadcast 6/4/14.

RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT LONDON BRIDGE STATION (THAMESLINK)

Amelia Fairman (Oxford Archaeology and Pre-Construct Archaeology Group)

London Bridge railway station began as a small terminus in 1837; a proper station was built in 1840 and then rebuilt and expanded in 1849. Now as part of the Thameslink development the entire station is being rebuilt on a piecemeal basis. In advance of this work within the subterranean vaults under the Victorian station a series of archaeological and geoarchaeological investigations are being carried out. The aim of this fieldwork is to build up a picture of past land-use spanning the early Holocene topography to industrial activity within the vaults.

Topographically, the station is situated over a low lying or marshy area between two gravel islands, therefore it was marginal land during the early Roman period, but around the edge of the higher ground were the timber pile foundations of a late 1st-century AD building, probably a warehouse, and evidence of waterfront or revetment timbers, which were sealed during the late 2nd or 3rd century AD by fluvial deposits. The area was not utilised again until the 11th century, when dumping and land reclamation began. Due to the site's low lying nature, water management or drainage was a constant theme. This management took the form of a network of channels revetted with timbers. The fills of these channels from the 15th century onwards contained extensive evidence of local industries including bone working, butchery, leather working (mainly

shoe making), and smithing debris. Some of the post-medieval revetments included reused timbers derived from buildings and ships. The contents of the 17th- and 18th-century brick-lined cesspits and channels revealed a wealth of material including chamber pots, pewter tankards (several of which bore the inscription: 'Mary Jackson, King's Head Tooley Street'), wine bottles and a bone cribbage board. One unusual find was a small pewter chocolate spoon bearing a bust of William III on its handle. It may have been one of a pair produced in 1689 to mark the joint accession of William III and his wife Mary. The disturbed remains of a clay tobacco pipe kiln are believed to be part of James Minto's Tooley Street workshop of 1809–11.

THE MINORIES EAGLE

Angela Wardle (Museum of London Archaeology)

This amazing discovery certainly caught the imagination of the newspaper headline writers: 'I, Claudius: superb 1,900-year-old sculpture of Roman eagle found in London on final day of archaeology dig' (*Daily Mirror* 30/10/13).

The excavation of an early Roman roadside ditch at St Clare Street in Tower Hamlets last autumn unexpectedly revealed an Oolitic limestone sculpture of an eagle entwined with a serpent. While the sculpture is complete since being buried, the right wing of the eagle has been broken and its head has sustained superficial damage (Fig 2). The sculpture (65cm high and 55cm wide) depicts a roughly half-size representation of a golden eagle with outspread wings, stylised plumage and powerful talons. In its beak the bird is claspings the upper part of a serpent, which is entwined around its body. The grimacing creature possesses an impressive row of teeth and a Y-shaped tongue. On stylistic grounds the sculpture can be dated to the late 1st or early 2nd century AD and would have been made by a sculptor from the Cotswold region, possibly the Cirencester area (hence the geology of the piece), which was an important centre of production for sculpture. The sculpture is unweathered and in very good condition. The back is far less detailed and only roughly finished, implying that it was displayed in a niche where only



Fig 2. Oolitic limestone Roman sculpture of an eagle entwined with a serpent from the Minories, height 65cm (Andy Chopping, MOLA)

its front would be seen and where it was protected from weathering. As the roadside ditch where the sculpture was found adjoined part of the extramural cemetery situated to the east of *Londinium* a funerary context for this sculpture seems likely. Close by were the truncated ragstone foundations of a roughly 3.5m square structure, which may have been part of an elaborate roadside funerary monument or mausoleum; this provides a possible structural context for this sculpture.

The symbolism of this sculpture is still being researched, so nothing definite can be said yet. In Roman funerary art the eagle was almost certainly intended to represent Jupiter (the greatest of all the Roman gods). In this context the snake was perhaps intended to represent a link between this life and the after-life or a sign of rebirth (as snakes shed their skins). If the eagle is interpreted as overpowering the serpent, then it could be seen as the triumph of good over evil, or life over death. It is undoubtedly significant that the snake is not attempting to bite or fight the eagle, but appears to have submitted to it.

RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT 10 TRINITY SQUARE

Louise Davis (Museum of London Archaeology)

The majestic former Port of London Authority Headquarters at Trinity Square, Tower Hill (1912–22) in the City of London has

recently been investigated during its conversion into a hotel. This work has entailed excavations within the central courtyard and inside its Seething Lane gardens. Unusually for the City of London in 1912, the 18th-century houses fronting onto Seething Lane were demolished down to ground level, then their brick-built cellars were infilled with demolition debris and left intact. Survey of these well-preserved cellars revealed that some of their walls incorporated earlier fabric consisting of Low Countries bricks dating from c.1300–1480 and locally made bricks dating to c.1450–1600. Excavations under the Seething Lane cellar floors and the central courtyard revealed a T-shaped arrangement of gravel metalled Roman roads. Along the Seething Lane frontage were traces of Roman buildings — wall foundation trenches consisting of dense concentrations of decayed timber piles above which were traces of ragstone masonry. These wall foundations appear to be of very similar design to these found nearby in 1992–93 at Colchester House, which were interpreted as elements of a monumental late 4th-century AD Roman building, possibly a cathedral or a granary. So it will be interesting to see if these new discoveries are contemporary with the building found at Colchester House. Associated with one of the Roman buildings was a Mesolithic flint adze. The Roman wall foundations were sealed by a build-up of homogeneous soil or ‘dark earth’ into which

many pits had been dug. Medieval masonry structures included chalk wall foundations and chalk-lined cesspits.

Excavations inside the central courtyard of the Port of London Authority building revealed elements of the foundations of an East India Company warehouse constructed during the 1780s. Evidence of trade with the Orient was provided by the discovery of shells of the window pane oyster (*Placuna placenta*); its translucent outer shell was used commercially.

AFTERNOON SESSION: ARENAS OF ENTERTAINMENT IN TUDOR AND JACOBAN LONDON

Introduction

It is worth reflecting that until the dramatic discovery of the remains of the Rose and the Globe in 1989, archaeology played no part in the study of our Tudor and Jacobean theatres; since then much has changed. These discoveries have inspired the reconstruction of the Globe (opened in 1997) as a permanent reminder of the theatrical heritage of Southwark's Bankside.

In November 1990 the publication of PPG16 (Planning and Policy Guidance Note 16) for the first time embedded archaeology in the planning and redevelopment process in England. Previously, in order to get access to sites threatened with destruction by redevelopment and to obtain funding for this fieldwork archaeologists relied on whimsical planning authorities, wary developers and the Department of the Environment: Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission (in 1983 it became English Heritage), which offered selective funding for both fieldwork and post-excavation. In 1989 two London archaeological sites: Huggin Hill Roman baths in the City of London and the Rose Elizabethan playhouse in Southwark were highly influential in changing the approach that our planning system now takes towards archaeology as these developments dramatically exposed the flaws in the existing system. In particular the media interest in the discovery of the Rose and the procession of famous actors and actresses who visited the site and called for its preservation embarrassed the government into action.

THE ROSE DISCOVERED – AND THE ‘ROSE REVEALED’

Harvey Sheldon (Rose Theatre Trust)

It was believed from documentary evidence that the Rose theatre occupied the site of South Bridge House and trial excavations in 1988 confirmed that elements of its brick-built foundations survived; eventually 60% of its now familiar multi-sided or polygonal ground plan and evidence of two phases of construction plus the size and shape of its stage were uncovered. Here was the first, but fragile evidence of the theatrical world of Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare. A campaign to ‘save the Rose’ was launched.

In May 1989 the government asked that the developer redesign the new office block to allow the remains of the Rose to be reburied under the floor of the new basement and to minimize the impact of the new building on the remains of the now famous playhouse. Since 1998 the Rose Theatre Trust has opened this basement to the public on an intermittent basis and illuminated the former wall-lines of the playhouse. However, the long term goal has always been to display the actual remains of the playhouse and excavate the eastern portion of the site. In November 2012, this ambitious plan, known as the ‘Rose Revealed Project’, obtained Heritage Lottery Funding for a ‘first phase development’ — really a costing and feasibility study concerning the excavation of the remainder of the site, the conservation of its remains and those previously excavated. Then the remains of the whole playhouse would be displayed within a new exhibition centre, which would be a new heritage visitor attraction. During 2014 the Trust are planning to make a further application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to carry out these proposals.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE SHOREDITCH PLAYHOUSES

Chris Thomas (Museum of London Archaeology)

Until recently nothing was known archaeologically of the two Elizabethan playhouses in Shoreditch: the Theatre (c.1576–97) and the Curtain (1577–1622); now both have

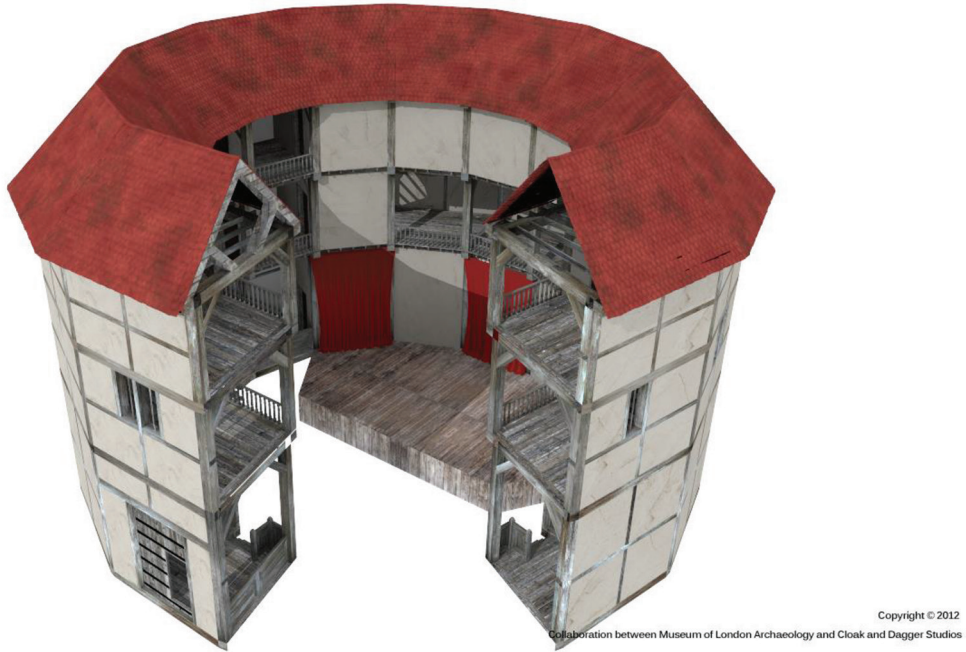


Fig 3. A new reconstruction of the Theatre, London's first purpose-built playhouse. This reconstruction was produced as a collaborative venture by MOLA and Cloak and Dagger Studios (© Cloak and Dagger Studios 2012)

been partly explored. Until 1597 the troupe of players known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men (who William Shakespeare had joined in 1594) were based at the Theatre, then after a dispute with their landlord they dismantled their playhouse and rebuilt it at Bankside as the Globe (see Gurr below). However, while this rebuilding was taking place the Lord Chamberlain's Men performed at the nearby Curtain. The 2010 fieldwork at the Theatre, London's first purpose-built playhouse with its polygonal ground plan, was the subject of a lecture at the 2011 Spring Conference (*Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 62 (2011), 258). Recently a new reconstruction of the Theatre has been produced (Fig 3).

Finding the Curtain was a complicated exercise; the approximate site could be determined from documentary research, and then evaluation trenches were dug to reveal short lengths of brick-built foundations. Initially it was believed that this playhouse possessed the usual polygonal ground plan, but gradually it became apparent, as further trenches were dug, that, like the Fortune, it

had a square plan modelled on that of the inn courtyards, which served as the earliest theatrical venues (see Gurr below). As part of the proposed redevelopment of the site of the Curtain, the remains of this vanished playhouse will be displayed under a new courtyard as a tourist attraction.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BULL AND BEAR BAITING ARENAS AND PLAYHOUSES

Julian Bowsher (Museum of London Archaeology)

John Stow, writing in 1603 in his description of Bankside, Southwark, stated: 'there be two bear gardens, the old and the new place, wherein be kept bears, bulls and other beasts to be baited; and also mastiffs in several kennels, nourished to bait them. These bears and other beasts are baited in plots of ground, scaffolded about for the beholders to stand safe' (*Survey of London* (ed H B Wheatley 1956), 360). One of these Bankside

arenas has been partly excavated confirming its multi-sided plan (very similar in shape to a contemporary outdoor playhouse). Clearly, although the bears and bulls were chained or tethered, the audience must have been protected by a high fence, so the seated or standing spectators must have been situated at least several metres above ground level. The impression is that these animal-baiting arenas were surrounded by several storeys of wooden galleries like the contemporary playhouses.

In 1613 after the Globe was accidentally destroyed by fire following a cannon misfire during a play, this old arena at Bear Gardens was quickly replaced by a dual-purpose polygonal, galleried playhouse and animal-baiting arena, known as the Hope. Partial excavation has revealed two angled parallel brick walls (1.55m apart), that formed part of the polygonal inner foundations of the gallery. The impression is that there was a further unexcavated outer wall that would have made up the full width of the gallery of about 3.6m encircling the yard (diameter c.16m). The Hope was demolished in 1656, but in 1662 a new animal-baiting arena was built next door by Thomas Davis. Partial excavation has revealed that the new venue was a large multi-sided arena with an internal diameter of c.30 m. Excavations have revealed the tibia of an adult brown bear and the skeletal remains of large dogs, probably mastiffs used to bait the bears and other creatures. (For further information see A Mackinder *et al* *The Hope Playhouse, Animal Baiting and Later Industrial Activity at Bear Gardens on Bankside: Excavations at Riverside House and New Globe Walk 1999–2000* MOLA Studies Series 25 (2013).)

THEATRES OF THE PERIOD AND THEIR ROLE

Andrew Gurr

In Elizabethan London there were three different types of play venue. First, there were inn courtyards where performances could be staged before up to c.500 people. Secondly, there were the indoor halls or playhouses which were mainly used during the winter months. These were relatively small, select and of course expensive with capacities of up to c.500 (Table 1). From 1608 until 1642 the troupe known as the 'King's Men' performed indoors at Blackfriars during the winter months and outdoors at the Globe every summer. Thirdly, there were the purpose-built timber-framed, galleried, polygonal, outdoor playhouses with capacities of up to c.3,000 people (Table 2). These playhouses offered a wide variety of prices and viewing arrangements, the cheapest option being to pay 1d to stand in the yard. It was more expensive to have sat or stood in the tiered galleries. The partial rebuilding of the Rose in 1591–2, at the considerable cost of £108, was intended to increase its audience capacity, allowing some 150 extra people to stand in the yard and more in the extended galleries. Access to the extended galleries may have been via an unexcavated (and undocumented) stair turret in the north-east corner of the theatre as internal stairs would have reduced the audience capacity of the galleries by 10%. While excavation of 60% of the Rose has provided a plan of its foundations and allowed its complex shape to be accurately reconstructed, reconstruction of the superstructure of this playhouse and its upper storeys remains problematic.

Table 1. London playhouses in use between 1567 and 1642: indoor venues

Name	Location	Date
1st Blackfriars	City of London former Priory	1576-81
Paul's	St Paul's Cathedral precinct	1576-1608
2nd Blackfriars	City of London former Priory	1596-1642
Whitefriars	City of London former Priory	1608
Cockpit	Drury Lane, Westminster	1617-65
Cockpit at Court	Whitehall, Westminster	1631-65
Salisbury Court	City of London	1629-42

Table 2. London playhouses in use between 1567 and 1642: outdoor venues

Name	Location	Date
Red Lion	Whitechapel	1567
Newington Butts	Bankside, Southwark	1575-94
Theatre	Shoreditch	c.1576-97
Curtain	Shoreditch	1577-1622
Rose	Bankside	1587-1604
Globe	Bankside	1599-1642
Fortune	Clerkenwell	1600-42
Hope	Bankside	1614-54