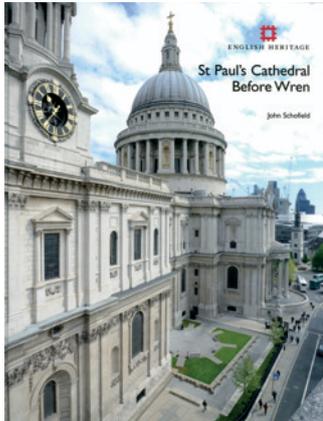


St Paul's Cathedral before Wren



John Schofield

English Heritage

2011

386 pages
275 illustrations in b&w and
colour, bibliography, index

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£100

Reviewed by Warwick Rodwell

It is an extraordinary fact that many of Britain's greatest archaeological monuments have never received the level of holistic study and publication that they deserve. London has its share of such monuments: Westminster Abbey, the Palace of Westminster, the Tower of London, and St Paul's Cathedral, to name only the most obvious. At last, these *lacunae* are being filled, and a magnificent volume on the White Tower has been published (2008), as has a large monograph on Westminster Abbey Chapter House (2010). Now, we have the first of a pair of volumes on St Paul's, by Dr John Schofield, who has spent his working life studying the archaeology of London, and is the Cathedral Archaeologist. He has published prolifically on the medieval and later buildings of the capital, and no-one is better placed to tackle the cathedral.

This volume comprises a comprehensive account of the archaeology and history of the cathedral and its churchyard from the Roman period to 1675, when Wren began the construction of the present building. A series of small excavations and observations beneath and around the cathedral, in 1969–2006, provide the main focus of the study, supplemented by many other recorded finds, stretching back to Wren himself. In all, 84 sites are embraced. The first two chapters introduce the study area and its archaeological history, followed by an account of the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods. Sadly, the recorded evidence for Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian activity is slight in comparison to the pre-eminent importance of St Paul's during those periods. Even the exact site of the Anglo-Saxon cathedral remains unknown: destroyed by fire in 1087, it probably lay axially beneath its Norman successor, and elements of the foundations doubtless survived until Wren's rebuilding. Schofield has usefully assembled all the available evidence and published the significant artefacts.

There then follow three substantial chapters covering the recorded medieval and post-medieval remains, and the impact of the Great Fire of 1666. Photographs of large-scale excavation within the churchyard, being carried out by heavy machinery in 1969, provide a chilling reminder of how much archaeology in

the precinct has been casually destroyed in modern times: then a student at the Institute of Archaeology, I witnessed it at first-hand. The form of the Gothic church is relatively well understood as a result of the several plans and numerous drawings of the structure by Hollar and other 17th-century artists (and a few views of the 16th century). Moreover, some elements of this monumental building still survive outside the envelope of Wren's church, notably the extraordinary 14th-century chapter house which occupied the centre of the garth of the southern cloister. A recent, imaginative landscaping scheme has enabled part of its structure to be investigated and displayed.

Extrapolating the plan, and attempting a reconstruction of the elevations, of the Romanesque cathedral is challenging, but Schofield has examined every shred of evidence and considered the several alternatives proposed by previous writers, notably Richard Gem. Although many details remain exiguous, the crypted Norman church was one of the major buildings of 11th-century Britain. Much later, but equally important for architectural history, was the classical western portico erected by Inigo Jones, 1633–42; lost in the Great Fire, it is well known from illustrations, and now fragments of its masonry have been recovered from excavations and are published here for the first time.

Although a large quantity of medieval and later moulded masonry has been recovered, Schofield has resisted the temptation to cram it all into the present volume, describing only the most significant pieces. Similarly, he has been selective in respect of all other classes of archaeological finds; they are mostly illustrated at the relevant places in the narrative, rather than *en bloc*. While specialists will wish more space had been devoted to finds, they could easily have swamped the publication. Instead, the author has skilfully selected from a huge body of evidence derived from historical documents, antiquarian illustrations, the structure, tombs, burials, excavations and loose finds, and merged this to create a coherent narrative.

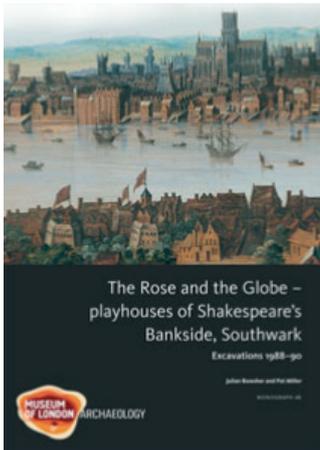
The substantial but not excessive price of the volume reflects its size (copies are available on the Internet at around £80, which is good value). The main text is scholarly and readable and is supported by a series of specialist reports, a full gazetteer of the sites discussed, extensive endnotes and a large bibliography. The number and quality of the illustrations is impressive.

In sum, this is a magnificent and seminal volume, and it redounds greatly to the credit of English Heritage to have brought it to publication, with the support of the Friends of the Cathedral, the City of London and the Museum of London. We now eagerly await volume two, which will embrace the archaeology of Wren's cathedral.



ABOVE A medieval 'hogback' style grave cover stone, one of the earliest surviving artefacts from the Cathedral, catalogued for the first time in this volume. Photo © MOLA.

The Rose and the Globe - playhouses of Shakespeare's Bankside, Southwark Excavations 1988-1990



Julian Bowsher and Pat Miller
 Museum of London Archaeology
 2009
 275 pages
 172 illustrations in b&w and colour plus 41 tables, bibliography, index
 ISBN 978-1-901992-85-4
 £26
 Reviewed by Becky Wallower

Sometimes it takes much longer than we'd like to get reviews into the magazine because of space constraints. With entries for the 2012 London Publication Prize closing in May (see back cover), there is no better time to highlight just what made this book such a worthy winner of the previous prize in 2010.

The excavation of the Rose in 1989 is often credited with changing archaeology in London: heightened awareness of the vulnerability of the remains beneath our feet led to the regime of developer-funded archaeological interventions to ensure their protection. But investigations into both the Rose and the Globe (in 1990) also opened a door to new scholarship on the Elizabethan playhouses. This volume recounts advances in the understanding of that world as well as the story of the excavations.

I use the word 'story' advisedly. The writing here is first rate, providing a fascinating narrative and avoiding the trap of the regrettably widespread, formulaic 'evaluation report' style. In the exposition of each phase of the structures, the documentary,

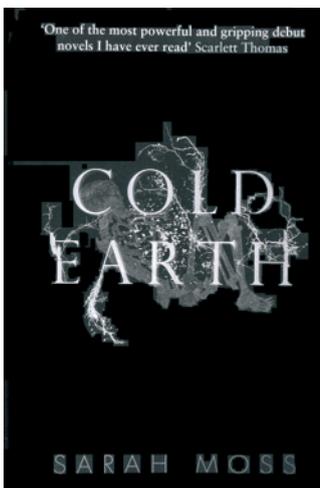
excavation, artefactual and environmental evidence is integrated as appropriate. Although the volume concentrates primarily on the Globe and the Rose, updated evidence from subsequent excavations and scholarship (on the Theatre, the Hope and the Curtain, for example) is also brought in where possible.

The authors differentiate between three types of performance space: the inns with galleried courtyards; the theatres, originating from indoor halls in livery companies and inns of court; and the playhouses, semi-covered purpose-built structures found outside the City, and the principle focus here. Lucid discussions of the archaeological/historical phases of both the Rose and the Globe are followed by two especially useful and revealing chapters. Chapter 6 on the playhouse buildings summarises all that is known about their construction, comparing evidence for all parts of the structure, from entrances, walls and roof to stage, galleries and tiring house. Chapter 7 puts the people in the playhouses. Using mainly artefactual evidence, it examines how public and players used the spaces, what they ate, drank, wore, smoked and played while they were there. Descriptions of the costumes, props and instruments of the players, and of the ceramic moneyboxes, dice and tobacco pipes of the attendees all build up a vivid picture of life swarming through the playhouses

This study has transformed our knowledge of Elizabethan theatre. It refutes earlier misconceptions using firm evidence: the ubiquitous hazelnut shells didn't signal nut-eating Tudor theatre-goers, for example, but served as a common surface-dressing material; the rake of the yard in the Rose would have made the animal baiting mooted by some quite impractical. Archaeological evidence of the shape of the building (no one had ever conjectured a 14-sided playhouse) and the development of the stage (to a protruding platform with pillars supporting a roof) likewise nail long-running conjecture and debate.

The production values are of the usual very high MOLA standard (in the newer hardback format), and the excellent photos, charts, maps and drawings all contribute to a thoroughly accessible and groundbreaking volume. Not every study can take such a wide ranging approach, but this is a model of what good synthesis can provide. If you haven't bought it yet, do so now.

Cold Earth



Sarah Moss
 Granta Books
 2009
 280 pages
 £10.99
 Reviewed by Clive Orton

We probably all have stories about field projects that went wrong – in my case, surveying a derelict 1930s golf course in the belief that it was prehistoric earthworks. However, few projects can have been as disastrous as the one that forms the context of this novel – a graduate students' expedition to a remote Viking site on the west coast of Greenland. The leader is of the 'pot noodle' school of catering, and the team have foibles guaranteed to get on each others' nerves. On top of that, they learn an epidemic is sweeping the rest of the world, their communications fail and the 'plane due to take them home doesn't arrive.

As they struggle to survive while the days shorten, the cold deepens, and tensions rise, the students write their last letters home, not knowing whether they will ever be found, or indeed whether anyone is still alive to read them.

The descriptions of what it feels like to be on an isolated excavation can rarely have been bettered, and although the project is, in some sense, just the context for the inter-personal relationships, it did feel very authentic. If your current project feels boring or just routine, then read this and be grateful.