

MUSEUM OF LONDON

A photograph of an archaeological excavation site. In the foreground, a woman in a white t-shirt and purple trousers is bent over, looking at a clipboard. She is standing on a grid of wooden planks laid over a muddy surface. In the background, another person is kneeling and working on a similar grid. The site is filled with wooden beams and debris, suggesting an ancient structure or foundation. The overall scene is one of active archaeological work.

# Archaeology Matters

No 2, December 1998

## Atlas Wharf on the Isle of Dogs



Two archaeological features rarely encountered on the Isle of Dogs were recently uncovered by Museum of London archaeologists during an evaluation at Atlas Wharf, Westferry Road – a buried prehistoric landscape and the post-medieval Marsh Wall. The prehistoric remains were particularly interesting as they indicated the presence of a timber trackway more substantial than any previously found in London. Owing to the threat posed to these remains by the proposed development it was decided, on the advice of English Heritage, to excavate part of the structure.

Excavation exposed a more complex and extensive structure than was originally revealed by the evaluation. Analysis is still at a preliminary stage but it appears that the structure formed part of a timber platform on the edge of a water channel in a boggy area close to the Thames. Amongst the artefacts recovered were

wooden wedges which may have been used for splitting the logs to build the platform.

Examination of the environmental remains will reveal details of the contemporary ecology. On-site observations suggest that the area was subject to a series of floods and must have been situated in marginal wetland. The platform was constructed of alder, ash, oak and birch, most of which would have been felled nearby but the oak at least must have been brought in from elsewhere.

A definitive date for the platform will follow the dating of timber and peat samples from the site but it is presently thought that the structure belongs to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age.

Dave Lakin  
Museum of London Archaeology Service

## Making Archaeology Accessible

The Museum of London holds the records and finds from the vast majority of archaeological excavations which have taken place in London and one of the Museum's top priorities is to make this valuable collection fully accessible to all.

The Archaeological Archive was re-opened in October after a closure of two years so that the Museum could once again accept the records and finds from excavations in the capital. It represented the first step in a major project which also includes the planned London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC), a research agenda for London archaeology and the publication of a series of gazetteers, making it easier for people to find out what is in the Archive.

The LAARC will be based at the Museum's current resource centre in Hackney and the first three volumes in the Museum of London

Gazetteer Series summarise the records and finds from excavations held in the Archive. The completion of a research agenda will allow academics and others to concentrate on the most important subjects for archaeological research. We hope to extend access to information in the future and link it to other resources such as the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record by use of the internet.

The bid for the money needed for the LAARC is currently being considered by the Heritage Lottery Fund. In the meantime if you would like to contribute to the accompanying fundraising campaign for this resource or would like any further information about the projects mentioned here, please contact me at the Museum of London (details on back cover).

Hedley Swain  
Museum of London



# Enquire within for everything



A former steel stockholders warehouse on the banks of the Grand Union Canal might not at first sight seem the most promising location for a research centre. But behind an austere facade in Hackney are hidden not only the archaeological treasures of the London Archive, but the knowledge and skills which will in time unlock them.

The factory is now home to the Museum of London's newly formed Specialist Services (MoLSS), a commercially independent organisation within the Museum which offers its services to the archaeological community at large. Under the direction of Dr Ellen McAdam, the thirty-two finds and environmental specialists and archaeological conservators who make up MoLSS provide an unmatched breadth of knowledge of the archaeology of London and south-east England, and in many cases beyond;

this summer alone, staff have worked or studied in Yugoslavia, Belgium, France, Norway, Israel, India and Romania.

The services offered by our staff range from on-site processing to technical editing, via faunal remains, archaeobotany, human osteology, pottery studies, accessioned finds, building materials, ancient woodworking and, of course, conservation. Walk into the kitchen at coffee-break and you may disturb a conversation about mud bricks in Roman London, or the history of hawking, or Tudor toys, or, if you are unlucky, post-mortem decomposition processes. Truly it can be said that, despite the building's unprepossessing exterior, one can enquire within for (almost) everything.

Ellen McAdam  
Museum of London Specialist Services

# Preacher's Court and Charterhouse Square

Situated within the busy area around Smithfield Market, the buildings of Sutton's Hospital in Charterhouse stand little changed since their construction in the 1520s. Originally a Carthusian monastery, founded in 1371, then a palace for wealthy Elizabethan noblemen, Charterhouse became a school and a hospital in 1613 as the charitable bequest of wealthy merchant Thomas Sutton. Sutton's Hospital endures today, dedicated to its founder's principles, and Museum of London archaeologists recently excavated part of Preacher's Court before the construction of new accommodation for the resident 'brothers'.

The work took place in the area once occupied by the 'lay brothers', who were responsible for providing for the needs of the hermit-like Carthusian monks, and caring for visitors to the monastery. Two previously unknown phases of medieval buildings were revealed, the earlier with half-timbered walls and clay floors, later replaced in stone. Once analysis is complete, we anticipate that finds will provide new details of the diet and economy of Charterhouse because of the exceptional preservation of plants, seeds, leather and cloth from a number of waterlogged refuse pits.

To the south of the monastic buildings lies Charterhouse Square, reputedly the site of one of London's Black Death burial grounds from 1348-9. Thanks to generous funding from the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, a small research excavation was mounted in the Square, to assess the truth of this tradition. The single trench uncovered a shallow grave containing the body of a 10 year old child, probably a victim of the Black Death epidemic. A chapel was built in the Square in 1481, but its site remains unknown.

Bruno Barber and Chris Thomas  
Museum of London Archaeology Service



# The Temple of Mithras



The discovery of the Temple of Mithras in 1954 created enormous press and public interest with City workers queueing for hours to catch a glimpse of the remains. Now, a new publication discusses not only the excavation but also the media and parliamentary interest generated by this spectacular piece of London's past.

The Temple was uncovered quite unexpectedly by Professor W F Grimes during excavations on sites due to be developed after war damage. The magnificent sculptures revealed during the excavation are now on display in the Museum of London Roman Gallery.

Such was the interest in the excavations that a furious debate over the preservation of the archaeological remains followed and the fate of the Temple was even discussed in Cabinet. As a result, it was decided to use original building

material to delineate the ground plan of the building on another part of the site. These remains can still be seen on display in Queen Victoria Street.

This is the second of five publications of the Grimes excavations produced by the Museum of London and published by English Heritage. Other publications cover work at St Bride's Church (1997), the Roman fort and post-Roman Cripplegate (in preparation) and a gazetteer of the sites that comprise the Grimes archive (see back page for details).

Jenny Hall  
Museum of London

Copies of *The Temple of Mithras, London* by John Shepherd are available from the Museum of London shop priced £20.

# On Tower Beach

Hundreds of people came to see the wealth of archaeology and ecology along the foreshore of the Thames in July this year. Many Londoners were revisiting the beach for the first time since their childhood during an event hosted by the Tower of London as part of the National Archaeology Days. The Tower collaborated with the Thames Archaeological Survey and the City of London Archaeological Society (CoLAS) to give people the chance to walk along the foreshore at low tide.

A children's beach was created here in 1934 with imported sand, proving enormously popular with Eastenders. Fears of pollution led to its closure in the post-war years but the massive improvements to the quality of the water in the last twenty years have made access safe again.

John Clark, from the Museum of London, was on hand at the CoLAS display stand on Tower Wharf to try to identify the objects people had found. There were large amounts of pottery, mostly 17th- and 18th-century and a good range of delftware and various types of decorated German stoneware. Large numbers of clay pipes were also found and a reference series allowed people to date the pipes themselves. One young girl had found a dozen or more of the very earliest pipes, dating to about 1600. Another more unexpected discovery was a bone from a whale!

The Tower hopes to expand on the success of this event in the future, giving everyone the chance to delve deeper into the history both of the Tower and the Thames.

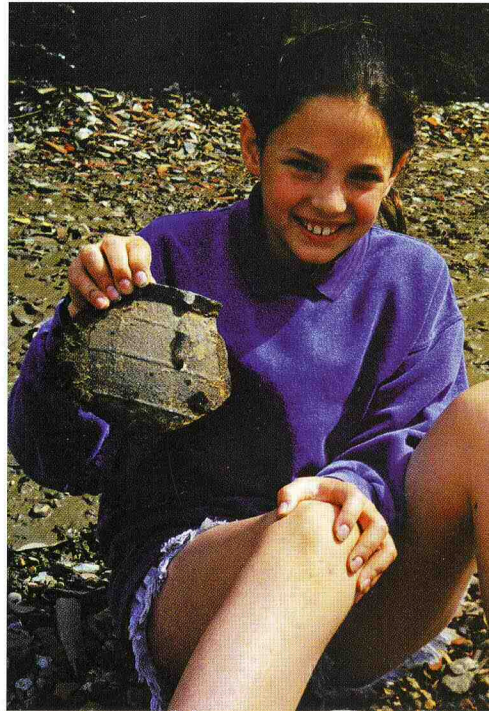
Graham Keevill

Oxford Archaeological Unit/Tower Environs Scheme



The Rt Hon Chris Smith MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, looking at archaeological finds on Tower Beach, with Rose Baillie of CoLAS, and Graham Keevill. ©CoLAS

A young visitor on the beach with her find. ©CoLAS



The Museum of London Archaeological Gazetteer Series — Volume 1  
**Archaeology in the City of London, 1907–91: a guide to records of excavations by the Museum of London and its predecessors**, ed. John Schofield with Cath Maloney  
 £22 ISBN: 0 904818 81 0

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**Archaeology in Greater London, 1965–90: a guide to records of excavations by the Museum of London**, eds. Alan Thompson, Andrew Westman and Tony Dyson  
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The Museum of London Archaeological Gazetteer Series — Volume 3  
**Post-War Archaeology in the City of London, 1946–72: a guide to records of excavations by Professor W F Grimes held by the Museum of London**, ed. John Shepherd  
 £7 ISBN: 0 904818 82 9

**The Temple of Mithras, London: excavations by W F Grimes and A Williams at the Walbrook** by John Shepherd  
 £20 ISBN 1 85074 628 1  
 Published by English Heritage

These publications are available from the Museum of London shop (tel 0171 600 3699) or from MoLAS at Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB (tel 0171 410 2200).

**Conference**

**London bodies: generations past**

Saturday 23 January, 10am–5pm

The discovery, care and investigation of human remains will be discussed by experts from many fields, including archaeologists, curators, geneticists and scientists.

**Lecture**

**Anne Mowbray: a medieval princess**

Friday 15 January, 1.10pm

The surprising discovery of Lady Anne Mowbray's body led to a pioneering investigation by a team of experts. Their work shed new light on medieval diet, costume and burial customs.

Bill White, Osteologist, Museum of London Specialist Services, and John Clark, Curator, Museum of London

Full details of events from the Interpretation Unit:  
 0171 600 3699 ext 200

**Museum of London**

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For details of all exhibitions and events please call the Press & PR Office on 0171 600 3699.

**If you would like to receive Archaeology Matters regularly, please call the Press & PR Office on 0171 600 3699.**

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Cover: Work on site at Atlas Wharf, Westferry Road