

Chester Archaeological Society

Registered Charity No 1068062



Forthcoming Lecture at the Grosvenor Museum

Saturday 7th December 2019 at 2:30pm

London's Waterfront 1200-1666: archaeology and history

Dr John Schofield (formerly Museum of London)

The area around the north end of the medieval London Bridge in the City of London has attracted much archaeological attention. This presentation will summarise the main findings for the period 1100–1666 from four excavations of 1974–84, recently published. It explores the main characteristics of this waterfront area in the medieval and Tudor periods; the sources of the pottery and artefacts incorporated into reclamation units, and any significance in their locations behind waterfront revetments or on the foreshore; what the medieval and post-medieval artefacts say about culture, fashion and religious beliefs; the functions of the buildings and open areas, and to what extent these can be linked to owners or occupiers specified in the documentary record. The research also examines if and to what extent the area south of Thames Street was an industrial suburb. Here also lay the parish church of St Botolph Billingsgate, destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666 and not rebuilt, many details of which can be reconstructed from excavation in 1982 and rich documentary evidence. Sixty-one human burials in the church include one of a man in his sixties who may be John Reynewell, mayor of London in 1426–7. The several thousand artefacts and several hundred kilos of English and foreign pottery (the latter now analysed into over 100 separate wares) from the four sites in the study deserve further research by scholars who can use the newly published account as a stepping stone into the archive held at the Museum of London.



Figure 1: Corbel showing an angel and a possible merchant's mark, found in earth trucked away from the Billingsgate site in 1984; possibly from St Botolph Billingsgate parish church
Photograph: © Guy de la Bedoyere.



Figure 2: Finds from London waterfront sites: clockwise from top left, mounts from a sword or horse harness; Metropolitan slipware; floor tile from Antwerp; and a 12th-century shoe with embroidered stripe. Photographs: © MOLA.

About the presenter:

Dr John Schofield worked as an archaeologist at the Museum of London from 1974 to 2008, and was involved in direction of many excavations in the City. His books include the Building of London from the Conquest to the Great Fire (1984), Medieval London Houses (1995) and London 1100-1600: The Archaeology of a Capital City (2011).