

Secret Rivers



**Large
Print**

Section 1

Secrets of the Thames

Display case

1. Middle Bronze Age skull

1260-900 BC

Over 250 ancient human skeletal remains have been found along the Thames in London. The majority are prehistoric skulls. London's rivers provided a focus for human activity including burials. These were susceptible to flooding and the bones washed out. The water current affects bones in different ways; skulls roll and often travel quite some distance. This skull has polishing and scraping, frontal tooth loss and stones wedged in the ear canal, all signs of river movement.

Found on the foreshore at Mortlake

2. 'Commentaries on London Mudlarking', 2016

Roman nicolo glass intaglio

This journal, created by Johnny Mudlark, is an illustrated record of his experiences and observations whilst mudlarking along the Thames. A permit is required to search the foreshore and finds must be reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

These pages of the journal show the discovery of the intaglio, which was originally set within a finger ring.

The dolphin motif suggests a strong connection to the water.

Found on the foreshore in the City of London

Lent by Johnny Mudlark

3. Gilded copper-alloy mount

8th – 9th century

Early Medieval Irish finds, such as this mount from a house-shaped shrine, are unusual in London. It was found at the site of a Viking river crossing at Putney. The Vikings travelled extensively using seas and rivers. Was this gilded mount traded or taken during a raid and brought to London?

Found on the foreshore at Putney

Lent by Bob Wells

4. Iron quillon dagger

Mid-15th – early-16th century

This dagger has been deliberately damaged. It is one of several bent blades found near Blackfriars. In medieval London, the Worshipful Company of Cutlers oversaw the cutlery trade including bladed weapons. They maintained the manufacturing standards and had the power to seize sub-standard goods and issue fines. Were these bent knives and daggers confiscated? Were they publicly destroyed and thrown into the Thames?

Found on the foreshore at Blackfriars

5. Ceramic River Egg, no. 2664

2012

In 2012 an anonymous artist created 5,000 ceramic eggs, each stamped with a unique number and 'London'. The artist arranged the eggs in the shape of the Thames on a hill in Sussex and then placed them in the Thames. The eggs dispersed and some travelled with the river and were found at various locations along the foreshore.

Found on the foreshore at Erith by Andy Richards

Family caption: A lost treasure?

Look closely at the dark blue glass object. It was once part of a Roman finger ring. Can you see which animal is carved on it?

The Romans linked dolphins to Neptune, the god of the sea. They believed dolphins helped keep people safe when they travelled on a boat. What kind of person do you think might have owned this ring? How do you think it ended up in the Thames?

Section 2

Sacred Rivers



Display case

1. Three Neolithic polished axeheads

4000-2000 BC

Polished stone axeheads were high-status items.

They required skill to create, time to polish and were often made from stones traded over long distances.

Many show no signs of use so may have been created as offerings. They are often found deposited in water, sometimes at the meeting point of two waterways.

The two incomplete Southwark examples were found in Bermondsey Lake, one of the Thames channels.

Found in the Thames near London Bridge

Found at the Bricklayers Arms, Southwark

A Roman temple complex found at Tabard Square

Before the Romans arrived, the Southwark landscape was a series of low sand and gravel islands among multiple channels of the Thames. This landscape seems to have had a ritual or symbolic significance which continued into the Roman period. As water levels rose so the Romans reclaimed the land using drainage ditches and raising ground-levels. They created the religious precinct as shown; note the Thames channels in the background.

2. Poppy-headed jar, flagon and Samian dish

c. AD 130

These vessels have all been deliberately damaged and then placed into a large ditch. Originally one of the channels of the Thames, it was recut to become a boundary marking out the religious precinct. This ditch would have been filled both by Thames tidal water and rainwater. The deposition of these pots marked the transformation of this landscape into a significant religious site.

Found at Tabard Square, Southwark

3. Marble inscription

c. AD 160

The Latin inscription translates as 'To the Divinities of the Emperors (and) to the god Mars Camulos. Tiberinius Celerianus, a citizen of the Bellovaci, moritix, of Londoners the first...'

The inscription suggests the temple was dedicated to Mars Camulos, a Romano-Celtic god, and was founded by Tiberinius Celerianus who was a 'moritix', a Gaulish sea trader. This connection to water may hint at the significance of this site for the temple.

Found at Tabard Square, Southwark

4. Bronze foot

2nd century AD

This rare survival for London includes part of a left foot in a simple sandal from a larger than life-sized statue. It is impossible to identify who the statue depicts but the two most likely deities are Mars or Isis. Isis was known for protecting ships at sea. The statue probably stood on a stone plinth in the open area in front of the temples.

Found at Tabard Square, Southwark

5. Cow's skull

This skull shows that the cow has received a lethal blow to the centre of its forehead. It was found in the watery boundary ditch along with many other offerings to the gods including complete pots and other animal bones.

The remains of animal sacrifices from the temples would have been considered magical and divine. They were therefore placed somewhere significant, not just thrown away.

Found at Tabard Square, Southwark

6. Roman finger-shaped hook and cloven foot

This finger may have been used to attach an inscription to a wall, perhaps similar to the marble tablet displayed here but smaller. It dates from the transformation of the site into a formal religious precinct.

The cloven foot is from a religious statuette of an animal or the god Pan (half man, half goat). Animal symbolism is a significant aspect of Roman religion. Statues were important physical representations of the divine and were considered powerful objects.

Found at Tabard Square, Southwark

7. Curse tablet

2nd century AD

Curse tablets were common during the Roman period and are often found in watery contexts. They are thought to have been a popular magic where the people named would be cursed by the deity connected with the place. Thieves are often cursed, perhaps in hope of justice. This tablet has the same Latin inscription on both sides and translates as: 'Titus Egnatius Tyrannus is cursed and Publius Cicereius Felix is cursed'.

Found in the Walbrook Valley

8. River god statue, fish plaque and **Venus figurines**

1st-2nd century AD

Several artefacts excavated from the area of the Walbrook are associated with nearby temples and shrines. The river god statue, possibly a representation of Neptune, is believed to be from an earlier temple on the site of the later Temple of Mithras. The fish plaque references the zodiac, religious symbols used in the worship of the god Mithras. The Venus figurines may have come from nearby domestic shrines or may have been placed in the stream.

Found in the Walbrook Valley

9. Facepot and two miniature jars

1st-2nd century AD

A number of complete ceramic vessels have been found in the Walbrook. Some of them, like this facepot and the two miniature jars, are believed to have been votive (used for religious or ritual purposes). Across Britain these vessels are most often found associated with sacred sites. However, not all the complete vessels found in the Walbrook can be interpreted as votive, some were thrown away as rubbish.

Found in the Walbrook Valley

10. Spearhead, miniature sword and stud

1st-2nd century AD

Many military artefacts have been recovered from the Walbrook, some of which may have been placed there as offerings. Life as a soldier was dangerous so faith, magic and superstition were important. Soldiers' offerings may have included pieces of their equipment or armour, such as the spearhead and the stud, or miniature models, like the sword. The spearhead has the owner's name 'VER VICT' scratched into its surface, possibly meaning Victor, a soldier under the command of Verus.

Found in the Walbrook Valley

11. Brooches

1st-2nd century AD

Brooches were commonly worn by Romans and were frequently lost. However, so many complete brooches were found around the Walbrook it seems likely that some were offerings. Some of the brooches reference gods, for example the sandal-sole and cockerel were associated with Mercury. Dogs were linked to gods connected with healing, such as Nodens and Asclepius. The mythological sea-serpent may have seemed appropriate for an offering into water. Others, like the shield brooch, may have had a military connection.

Found in the Walbrook Valley

12. Roman styli

It can be hard to tell if a group of objects are just ordinary items that were discarded or if the group had a ritual significance. The large number of styli (writing implements) found in the Walbrook indicates something unusual – perhaps an example of everyday items being used for a sacred purpose. A number have been deliberately bent, sometimes into an S-shape. Might this have been an act of ritual destruction?

Found in the Walbrook Valley

Display case: side 2

1. Late Bronze Age copper-alloy sword

1200-700 BC

This is one of 180 Bronze Age blades in the museum's collection. Around half come from the Thames in west London. This cluster of findspots may reflect changing places of deposition, perhaps in response to the shifting tidal limit. Today the Thames is tidal up to Teddington Lock but this has fluctuated through time due to environmental factors. Changing water levels would have had a huge impact on riverside communities. Could these bladed weapons represent a spiritual way of 'fighting' back the waters?

Found in the River Thames at Strand on the Green

2. Viking iron sword

Late 10th – early 11th century

The maker's name 'INGELRII' is inlaid into the blade. Ingelrii was a smith or guild of smiths working in the Frankish empire during the 10th – 12th centuries (in modern France and Germany). The sword was a valuable and expensive possession and would not have been thrown away lightly. Many high quality metal objects have been found in rivers in Britain and throughout Europe. A likely interpretation is that they were deliberately thrown or placed there as offerings.

Found in the River Thames at Putney

3. Medieval iron sword

14th century

This sword is shorter than other medieval swords of this type, and may have belonged to a young member of the nobility. It was discovered in the Thames foreshore when a boat's propeller churned up the gravel. Medieval swords have also been found in the rivers Wandle, Lea and Roding as well as several from the Thames.

Found in the River Thames at Putney

4. Four Viking iron battleaxes

Late 10th – early 11th century

In the centuries before the Norman Conquest a wide range of weaponry including swords, spears, daggers and battleaxes, like these, were deposited in the Thames. It is unlikely that they were just discarded as the valuable metal could have been reused. Some may have been lost during battles, but their number and the spread of locations suggest they have ritual significance.

Found in the River Thames at Chelsea, Richmond, Kew and Bermondsey

One of the group lent by the Thomas Layton Trust

5. Two Middle Bronze Age spearheads

1400-1275 BC

These two spearheads were found deliberately embedded between timbers in a wooden structure built out over the Thames. It is uncertain if it was a jetty or a wooden bridge to an island, but it allowed access to this valuable landscape. It is impossible to tell whether it had a purely practical or a more spiritual significance.

Found on the foreshore at Vauxhall

6. Roman copper-alloy coins

Large numbers of Roman coins were discovered in the Thames in the vicinity of the Roman bridge. Ritual activities focused around bridges and river crossings. Bridges allow people to be out over the deeper water, reducing the risk that objects could be retrieved.

There is a long tradition of throwing coins into water. Originally this was possibly a way of appeasing the water gods, but today it has evolved into making wishes or hoping for good luck.

Found in the River Thames near London Bridge

7. Archaeologia, the Journal of the Antiquaries of London, 1860

In 1856 workmen at Dowgate, City of London, discovered a number of pilgrim badges. The Reverend Thomas Hugo, an antiquarian, passing on a river steamer saw the discovery and collected the badges. In his report for this journal, he noted that similar pilgrim objects had been found in rivers in York and King's Lynn as well as on the Continent in the Somme and the Seine. All the illustrated badges are now in the Museum of London's collections.

8. Pilgrim badge of St Thomas Becket

14th – 15th century

This is one of the badges acquired by the Reverend Hugo. There are over 1,000 pilgrim souvenirs in the museum's collections. The majority come from the Thames, but many were found during excavations of the layers of rubbish deposited during the construction of medieval revetments (river walls). It seems likely that most of the badges were lost or thrown away. However, a few were found deliberately folded suggesting they were ceremonially 'killed' and deposited in the river.

Found in the river wall at Dowgate, City of London

9. Metal statuette of Vishnu

20th century

There are seven sacred rivers in the Hindu faith. In 1970 the Thames was blessed to become another sacred river. This means that it can be used for various religious rites. Many small objects relating to Hinduism have been discovered on the Thames foreshore. This statue depicts Vishnu, the preserver and protector of the universe. The River Ganges is said to flow from the toe of Vishnu.

Found on the foreshore at Bermondsey

10. Three ceramic Diwali lamps

20th century

These three lamps were used during Diwali, the Hindu festival of light. They would have been filled with vegetable oil or ghee with a cotton wick and used to light boundaries and entrances to houses. Lamps are also used during Hindu rituals around death. After use, these religious objects should be disposed of appropriately, this includes deposition into a sacred river.

Found on the Thames foreshore

Family caption: A Roman wish?

Lots of Roman coins have been discovered in the Thames. Can you find some examples in this case? Archaeologists think they may have been thrown into the river on purpose, just like we throw coins in wishing wells today. Have you thrown a coin into a wishing well or fountain? What did you wish for?

Archaeologists have also found jewellery and whole pots in London's rivers. We don't know why people long ago did this, perhaps they were gifts for their gods. Can you think of any other reasons?

Wall captions

Blessing of the Water, London Bridge,

08/01/2012, 1.30pm

From the series *Thames Log*, 2011-2016

Chloe Dewe Mathews, colour pigment print

The annual Blessing of the Thames occurs on the Sunday after Epiphany. The congregations of St Magnus the Martyr on the north side of the river and Southwark Cathedral on the south meet in the centre of London Bridge. They bless the river and those who live and work on it, then cast a wooden cross into the water. This custom only began recently in London but has older roots in the Eastern Orthodox Church. The ceremony relates to the religious significance of water and rivers for baptism, purification and renewal. Similar river blessings take place internationally.

continued over page...

‘The angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city.’

Revelation 22.1

This photograph was taken by Chloe Dewe Mathews as part of her five-year project, *Thames Log*, ‘documenting encounters and happenings’ along the course of the river which include many ritual activities.

Lent by Chloe Dewe Matthews

Profane to Sacred, 2018

Sarah Wilson, polyester mix fabric, plastics, gold spray paint, gilt and gold powder

This cope (ceremonial cloak) was worn by the Bishop of Lambeth for the 2019 Blessing of the Thames. It was created as an artwork inspired by lost and discarded items in the Thames. It echoes the sacred transformative nature of the river, showing that even rubbish has the potential to be something significant. Plastic objects collected from the Thames foreshore were used in screen-printing, lace-making and some were sewn on to decorate the orphery (border of the cope).

Lent by Sarah Wilson

Thames River Sounds, 2010-2012

Dale Garland, field recordings

Dale Garland is a sound recordist who has a long-standing project recording found and environmental sounds. He has recorded the sound of the Thames in various locations as part of an exploration of the sounds that water creates in various states. Here he reflects the changes along the course of the river as it moves through different environments. This piece was recorded at Windsor and attempts to capture the sound of the river without modern intrusions.

© Dale Garland

Section 3

Biography of a River



Display case

1. Roman bone dice, hobnailed leather shoe, copper-alloy harness mount, pendant and bell

The Roman artefacts found in the Fleet have a very different profile to those from the Walbrook. This reflects the Fleet's presence on the boundary of the city rather than at its heart. Objects were lost or discarded by those crossing the river or working alongside it. They still provide clues as to who populated this area. This group of objects may have been used or worn by soldiers.

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

2. Roman mill stone fragment, incomplete stone quern and burnt grain

Excavations discovered remains of the Roman wharves and a mill built on the islands. The wheat was transported as spikelets (grain still enclosed in the chaff) and then processed here. This grain is burnt; sometimes the grain over-heated during the drying phase of processing. The mill used the tidal power of the Fleet to grind the grain into flour. It was built in the 2nd century AD but by the 3rd century water levels had dropped and the mill fell into disuse.

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

3. Roman wooden wax tablet, iron stylus, lead-alloy lamp

The River Fleet was wide enough for Roman ships to sail up to the islands to unload cargo. Merchants were amongst the first residents of Londinium and were keen to exploit new trading opportunities. Based at the wharves along the river, they would have used wax tablets and styli to keep records of goods and financial transactions.

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

4. Tankard, dish and spoons, Bartmann **bottle, and bowl**

15th – 18th century

Just after the Norman Conquest in 1066, major building works took place and the northern island was reoccupied. This included the construction of the Fleet Prison which for centuries was used primarily for debtors. Prisoners had to buy food, beer and necessities such as tankards, spoons and dishes. The tankard has the prisoner's name, 'J. Hurst' and 'Fleet Cellar' engraved. In the late 18th century the privilege of a cell in the Fleet Cellar cost J. Hurst 4 - 8 shillings a week.

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

5. Glass bottle and Werra ware dish

17th – early 18th century

The Fleet Prison held people from all backgrounds. Higher-status items like the German Werra ware dish and the glass bottle show that a stay in the prison could be fairly comfortable if you had enough money. Some people chose to remain in the prison, living with a certain degree of freedom within the area known as the Rules, rather than clearing their debt and leaving.

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

6. Wooden sundial, bone dice and manufacturing waste

16th – 17th century

This small wooden sundial was also excavated from the prison. It is missing the gnomon, the raised element that casts the shadow indicating the time. It was probably made in London.

There were various means of passing the hours in prison but gambling was forbidden and this included the use of dice. However, prisoners seem to have made their own by carving them from animal bone. Around 40 were found in one area of the site.

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

7. Ceramic tobacco pipe

1840-1860

The prison was in use for approximately 750 years, during which time the landscape was completely transformed. Built on the northern island, it used the water channel as a natural moat. As the centuries passed London grew and surrounded the prison, and the River Fleet was buried underground.

This tobacco pipe was found on the site and its date coincides with the demolition of the prison in 1846. Was it smoked and left behind by one of the workmen?

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

8. Men bathing in the Fleet Ditch, 1750-1780

**Francis Hayman and Charles Grignion,
engraving**

The conversion of the lower part of the Fleet into a canal was intended to beautify London, but it was neglected and soon regained its reputation for being dirty and dangerous. This print illustrates lines from Alexander Pope's satirical poem, *The Dunciad*, in which a diving competition is held in the filthy canal to see 'Who flings most filth, and wide pollutes around the stream'. Many of the participants drowned; 'number'd with the puppies in the mud.'

9. Copper-alloy dog's collar, 18th century, dog and cat skulls

This dog's collar has the inscription: 'Tom at Ye Greyhound, Bucklersbury'. Bucklersbury is within the City of London near the route of the Walbrook. How did this collar end up in the River Fleet? The Fleet was infamous for being polluted with dead dogs.

Pope wrote in 1728:

'To where Fleet Ditch, with disemboguing streams, Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to the Thames.'

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

Family caption: A dog's life

Today dogs must wear a collar and name tag in case they get lost. Can you find a dog's collar in this case? How is it different to collars today?

Can you read the writing on this collar? It says 'Tom at Ye Greyhound, Bucklersbury'. There are clues about the dog on this collar. We know his name and where he lived. He lived in a pub called The Greyhound. Do you think Tom might have been a greyhound?

Medieval architectural stone and painted window glass from the Blackfriars monastery, founded on the site in 1276

These fragments are a rare survival of the buildings of the Blackfriars monastery, built on the site of the Templars' land in after 1275. The monastery was dissolved during Henry VIII's Reformation in 1538. The majority of the building material was taken and reused elsewhere. These fragments, mainly from a window, survived because they were reused to line a local well, where they remained until it was excavated 450 years later. Today traces of the monastery live on in the name of the Underground station, bridge and nearby pub, The Blackfriar.

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

Display case

1. Two pattens

15th century

Wooden pattens were used to protect shoes and raise the wearer above the mud. These two were found together and may have been a pair. They have a leather hinge to aid walking. During medieval times the streets and paths were filthy and frequently muddy, especially along the river edges.

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

2. Ceramic Mill Green jar and pipkin

14th and 17th-18th century

From the medieval into the Georgian period the Fleet valley became more densely occupied to accommodate London's growing population. This gradual development put further pressure on the resources of the Fleet and it necessitated digging more wells to provide clean water. This unusual jar was excavated from inside a well. Pipkins were cooking vessels that would have been used widely in nearby homes.

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

3. Animal bones

These butchered bones include horn cores, skulls and bones from cattle, sheep and pigs. The Smithfield butchers were criticised for throwing their waste into the Fleet. The large amount of material dumped contributed to the congestion of the river. In 1502, 1606 and 1652 the river was scoured to restore the flow. The Smithfield market also led to the urban legend of the boar that escaped and lived in the common sewer. It was supposedly sighted at the mouth of the Fleet Ditch. Recorded in 1736, this legend has inspired several modern authors.

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

4. Fish trap, fish hooks and fish bones

Late medieval – Tudor

This wicker fish trap and iron fish hooks show that the Fleet was used as a food source. The fish bones are from a range of species including sturgeon which was, at the time, considered a luxury mainly eaten by the nobility. Fish bones found on the site include a broad mix of coastal and freshwater species indicating that the fish being consumed were not just caught locally.

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

5. Oyster shells

Several layers of oyster shells were excavated around a wooden bridge spanning the Fleet dating to the mid-11th century. The sale of oysters was still in evidence in 1699 when records show barrow-boys selling them on Fleet Bridge. The oysters were prepared and eaten on the spot and the waste shells thrown into the river.

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

6. Medieval – post medieval toys, miniatures and gaming counters

A number of toys have been found, including a bone fish, miniature furniture and ceramic counters. These toys span a long period of time. Were they lost or thrown away into the Fleet? Are they evidence of children playing on the banks of this river?

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

7. Crucible, token mould, scabbard chapes, and knives

Late 15th – 17th century

During the late 15th – 17th centuries the Fleet Valley was a centre for metalworking. A number of crucibles were recovered which were used to melt the lead alloy before being poured into moulds like this stone token mould. 'Seconds' were also found where the objects were miscast like the copper-alloy scabbard chape (metal tip on a leather scabbard). A huge number of knives have also been found in the Fleet, perhaps reflecting the fact that cutlers worked in this area.

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

8. Bone manufacturing waste

Animal bone was an easily-available raw material due to the proximity of the meat market at Smithfield. This shoulder-blade (scapula) was worked by button-makers before being discarded. Numerous other industries were also based along the Fleet such as tanneries, breweries, cloth-working, printing and the making of hones (stones for sharpening blades). In medieval times it was close enough to the City of London for trade but far enough removed that the filthy, foul-smelling industries could be tolerated.

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

Display case

Medieval oak three-seater toilet seat

Mid-12th century

This toilet seat was found lying over a cesspit. It was located in a yard behind buildings that faced onto Fleet Street (modern day Ludgate Hill). These buildings were constructed on the infilled channel of the southern Fleet island. The tenement included commercial, residential buildings and stores as well as a yard planted with trees. Records from the 14th century show that the tenement was known as 'Helle' and was owned by John de Flete, a capper (cap-maker), who left it to his wife Cassandra.

continued over page...

‘...How dare

Your dainty nostrils (in so hot a season,
When every clerk eats artichokes, and peason,
Laxative lettuce, and such windy meat)

‘Tempt such a passage? When each privy’s seat
Is filled with buttock? And the walls do sweat
Urine, and plasters? When the noise doth beat
Upon your ears, of discords so unsweet?
And outcries of the damned in the Fleet?’

Ben Jonson, 1612

Found in the lower Fleet Valley

Wall captions

Entrance to the Fleet Canal, c. 1750

Follower of Samuel Scott, oil on canvas

Looking north across the Thames, this painting shows the entrance to the Fleet with Bridewell Foot Bridge, the City Wharf and Dock, and Blackfriars Stairs.

Following the Great Fire of London in 1666, the Fleet was developed into a canal up to Holborn, lending this view a Venetian appearance. This grand aspect, however, did not last long as the wharves proved unprofitable and Londoners continued to dump their rubbish in the river.

Lent by Guildhall Art Gallery, City of London

The Fleet River at Holborn Bridge, 1841

Antony Crosby, ink drawing

The final part of the Fleet Ditch to remain uncovered was behind the houses to the east of Field Lane under what is now Farringdon Street just north of Holborn Viaduct. This section of the river was an open sewer in 1840; notice a wooden latrine projecting over the ditch at the left of the drawing. The surrounding area was a notorious rookery (slum), famed for high levels of crime.

Lent by London Metropolitan Archives, City of London

**Shorings for a new sewer under the
Regent's Canal, 1837**

Antony Crosby, ink drawing

When Regent's Canal was dug in 1812 the Fleet had to be buried beneath it at Camden Town. Antony Crosby, who surveyed the river in the 1830s, made this drawing in preparation for a book (unpublished). It shows the river emerging from an arch beneath the canal near Camden Road with wooden shores holding up a new sewer to its left.

Lent by London Metropolitan Archives, City of London

Holborn Bridge, 1840

Antony Crosby, ink drawing

Before the Fleet Market was built over the river in 1736, Holborn (or Oldbourne) Bridge spanned the Fleet at Holborn Street. In 1840 workers altering the Fleet Sewer uncovered Christopher Wren's stone bridge of 1674 and parts of earlier brick bridges.

Antony Crosby entered the sewer to survey and draw the structures. On one occasion he was caught by the rising tide and had to dash back up the sewer to escape.

Lent by London Metropolitan Archives, City of London

Section 4

Pleasure and Poverty



Wall

London River Sounds, 2011-2012

Ian Rawes

Between 2008 and 2012 sound recordist and archivist Ian Rawes visited over 140 sites along London's smaller rivers and canals to record the sounds of water. He plotted these onto a 'sound map' based on Harry Beck's iconic plan of the London Underground. The 10 clips playing here are from the rivers Beam, Brent, Hogsmill, Pool, Ravensbourne and Roding, the Beverley Brook, Mutton Brook, Pymmes Brook and Silkstream. Hear more at **soundsurvey.org.uk**

© Ian Rawes, London Sound Survey

Display case

1. Ceramic chamber pot

19th century

Archaeological excavations on Jacob's Island revealed that Charles Dickens's description may have understated the terrible conditions. The excavations revealed the watercourses that shaped the island and discovered in its mud all the detritus of life on this foul-smelling island.

One of the finds was this broken chamber pot. Sanitary conditions were so terrible that the residents had to empty waste into the same channels from which they drew drinking water.

Found Jacob's Island

2. Copper-alloy spoons and wooden spatula

19th century

After cholera outbreaks in 1849 and 1854, the authorities stepped in and the wooden houses were pulled down and the ditches infilled. Sealed within them was all the domestic waste that had been thrown in, like these cooking utensils. The carved initials 'VR' on the wooden spatula are still visible. The wood has survived because of the waterlogged conditions. Similarly, the remains of the galleried houses that overlooked Folly Ditch were also found.

Found Jacob's Island

3. Bone toothbrush

18th – 19th century

The bristles on this toothbrush are missing.

Toothbrushes were relatively uncommon for the lower classes and sticks dipped in soot were often used for cleaning teeth. Where toothbrushes were owned, one would have been shared amongst the entire family.

Found Jacob's Island

4. Ceramic mug, various broken ceramic and glass vessels, 19th century

This mug was found among the domestic waste and has the inscription 'For a Good Girl'. It highlights the children living in these awful conditions. By the mid-19th century, the diseases and the squalor were a matter of public concern. Henry Mayhew wrote in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1849:

'As I passed along the reeking banks of the sewer...I beheld a little child...as the little thing dangled her tin cup as gently as possible into the stream.'

Found Jacob's Island

5. Cholera Map of the Metropolis, 1849

Richard Dugard Grainger, lithograph

This map, published in the General Board of Health's report of the cholera epidemic, plots incidents of the disease in London in 1849. Jacob's Island is marked in black, indicating a disease hotspot. The cause of the outbreak is inscribed as 'Poisoned Water open Ditches.' A health inspector observed 'the drains and sewers of all the houses [...] empty themselves into the ditch' while 'many of the inhabitants were in the habit of using the water for cooking and other purposes; nay, had even drunk it unboiled in the heat of summer.'

Lent by Royal College of Physicians, London

6. Oliver Reed as Bill Sikes in *Oliver!*, 1968

Oliver Reed poses as the villain Bill Sikes in this press shot for Carol Reed's 1968 film *Oliver!*

Although the movie conflates various locations from the original novel, this reconstruction of Jacob's Island with one of the rickety bridges crossing Folly Ditch is close to historic images of the area. The notorious Bermondsey slum has continued to inspire storytellers, most recently appearing as a location in the videogame *Assassin's Creed Syndicate* as one of the gang strongholds.

Romulus/Warwick/Kobal/REX/Shutterstock

7. Lead-alloy toy water-cart, 1906

This toy is a miniature example of the water-carts that the authors Charles Kingsley, Charles Blachford Mansfield and John Malcolm Forbes Ludlow bought to deliver clean drinking water to the residents. Kingsley read accounts of Jacob's Island in the *Morning Chronicle*. He was motivated to visit to see the conditions for himself. The experience also inspired and provided settings for his 1850 novel *Alton Locke*.

8. Ceramic tobacco pipes, 1820-1850

These tobacco pipes were found adjacent to the site of a public house. Most were made locally and have little decoration. The pipes, together with the ceramic and glass vessels, give a valuable insight into the people living and working there. The range of material is every-day and inexpensive, supporting published representations of Jacob's Island as an impoverished area.

Found Jacob's Island

Wall captions: Neckinger

**Cleaning and Paring Sheep Skins for Wool Rugs
at Neckinger Mills, 1862**

Geoffrey Bevington, later gelatin silver print

Neckinger Mills on Abbey Street, Bermondsey was originally a paper manufactory powered by the River Neckinger. In the mid-19th century it was taken over by Bevington and Sons, a firm of tanners. Here animal skins were turned into leather in foul-smelling tanning pits with the waste draining into the Thames via the Jacob's Island ditches. This photograph shows the processing of sheep skins to make wool rugs.

View of London Street, Dockhead, 1813

Robert Bremmell Schnebbelie, watercolour

In the 19th century Jacob's Island was bordered by the Thames to the north, St Saviour's Dock to the west and a network of tidal ditches to the south and east. These artificial channels were dug to divert the water to drive mills and serve industries. Local residents also used the water to wash and even drink. Notice the naked child about to bathe in the filthy ditch at the centre of the image.

London Metropolitan Archives, City of London

Folly Ditch, Jacob's Island, 1887

James Lawson Stewart, watercolour

Jacob's Island was one of the worst slums in London, with the *Morning Chronicle* dubbing it 'the Venice of drains' in 1849. This watercolour, painted later in the century, shows the 'crazy wooden galleries, [...] dirt-besmeared walls and decaying foundations' of the houses described by Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist*. Fresh water could be provided at high tide, but the inhabitants were at the mercy of the mill owner who controlled the sluice gates at the mouth of the Neckinger.

Remains of Bermondsey Abbey, 1811-1820

Charles John Mayle Whichelo, ink drawing

A small section of the Neckinger or connected drainage channel can be seen at the bottom left of this bird's-eye view of Bermondsey Abbey from the tower of St Mary Magdalen Church. The original priory was founded on the gravel peninsular of Bermondsey Eyot (island) in the 11th century and the monks used the nearby river to power their watermill. In order to exploit fully the tidal section of the river, the Neckinger's outlet was diverted slightly to the east.

Display case

1. A Design for the Rotunda and Canal at Ranelagh Gardens, 1742

**William Jones (architect) and François Morellon
de La Cave (engraver), engraving**

Ranelagh Pleasure Gardens opened to the public in 1742 as a more upmarket rival to Vauxhall Gardens.

This plan shows the amphitheatre which formed its centrepiece with the ornamental canal to the left.

The Westbourne – flowing to the southeast – is not included in the bird's eye view, but is thought to have fed the canal before joining the Thames a short distance to the south.

2. A View of Chelsea Water Works, 1752

John Boydell, engraving

The Chelsea Waterworks Company was established in 1723 to provide drinking water to the western districts of central London and drew water from the Thames supplemented by the Westbourne. This engraving shows a pump house at the left with a water tank and pipes made out of bored logs laid out before it. The presence of well-dressed figures indicates that the waterworks formed a visitor attraction in the 18th century, offering an industrial counterpoint to the pastoral fantasy of nearby Ranelagh Gardens.

3. Bowling balls and fishing weights

18th – 19th century

Archaeological excavations on the site of Chelsea Barracks provide an insight into the 18th – early 19th-century landscape and the people using it. The Westbourne ran through this area of Chelsea into the Thames to the south. This was a practical landscape but also one for recreation. There were osier beds, for growing willow for wicker-making, and lakes on each side of the Westbourne. Environmental evidence demonstrates that the lakes were stocked with fish. The bowling balls were found preserved in the mud along with the fishing weights.

Found Chelsea Barracks

Kindly loaned by Qatari Diar Europe LLP

4. Toy sail-boat, cannon and anchor

18th – 19th century

A toy sail-boat, still with traces of paint surviving, an anchor and a toy cannon, were recently excavated from the site of former lakes next to Ranelagh Pleasure Gardens in Chelsea. These toys offer a glimpse into the games children played on the banks of the lakes. The lakes were cut by the Chelsea Waterworks Company in the 1720s and lined with reused barge bases. They were filled with water from the Westbourne.

Found Chelsea Barracks

Kindly loaned by Qatari Diar Europe LLP

5. Copper-alloy cufflinks and finger-ring

Late 17th – 18th century

These cufflinks and finger ring are made from a copper alloy, bronze or brass, and the finger-ring has a glass setting. These are not high-status objects which would have been made from gold or silver and used gemstones. Perhaps these easily lost trinkets reflect people from different backgrounds visiting to enjoy the lakes.

Found Chelsea Barracks

Kindly loaned by Qatari Diar Europe LLP

6. Ranelagh Regatta Ball Ticket, 1775

**Giovanni Battista Cipriani, Francesco Bartolozzi,
etching**

Entry token to Ranelagh Gardens, 1745

This is a ticket to the Regatta Ball at Ranelagh Gardens in 1775. The view is of the Thames at Chelsea with Ranelagh's Rotunda peeking through trees at the left. Old Father Thames sails down the river on an oyster shell brandishing medals and accompanied by the figures of Britannia and Abundance. Attendees were to arrive at Ranelagh by boat, then have supper accompanied by music and dance under a shelter set up around the canal.

7. Ceramic tobacco pipes

Late 18th – early 19th century

The bowls of these four tobacco pipes have been cast with decorative motifs. The decoration includes references to royalty and the upper classes with the Hanover arms and the three feathers of the Prince of Wales. These contrast with the plain, cheaper tobacco pipes that were found in large numbers on Jacob's Island.

Found Chelsea Barracks

8. Cup and saucer, punch bowl and salt cellar

Chelsea-Derby porcelain

1746-1780

This finely-decorated punch bowl, salt cellar and cup and saucer set capture the pleasures and indulgences of Ranelagh Gardens. They were made close by at the Chelsea Porcelain Manufactory. The punch bowl is decorated with a view of the Thames showing the location of the factory with the Ranelagh Rotunda to the right. Only wealthier middle-class and upper-class Londoners could afford to use such fine china and attend the entertainments at Ranelagh Gardens.

Family caption: Brush those teeth!

Look at the toothbrush in this case. It is made out of bone. What's missing?

The bristles would have come from pigs, horses or badgers. Imagine brushing your teeth with pig hair!

This toothbrush was found near the River Neckinger. It was one of the dirtiest rivers in London. People used the water for drinking, cooking and washing their clothes but they also threw their rubbish in it. Would you drink water that had rubbish in it?

Family caption: Smooth sailing

About 300 years ago a lake was dug possibly to store water for drinking from the River Westbourne. Local families also visited the lake to play games by the water. Do you know where your water at home comes from?

This boat was found at the bottom of the reservoir. How do you think it got there?

The Proposed Canal at Hyde Park, c.1827

John Martin, lithograph

The well-known 19th-century artist John Martin was also active in devising grand engineering schemes to solve London's sewage problems and beautify the city. This is his unrealised proposal to improve water quality in London by rerouting clean water from the River Colne north of Uxbridge to the pond in Regent's Park, a reservoir and public bath in Bayswater, the Serpentine, and ponds at Buckingham Palace and in St James's Park. The Westbourne and Tyburn are both incorporated into this scheme.

London Metropolitan Archives, City of London

Skating on the Serpentine, 1786

Thomas Rowlandson, watercolour

At the command of Queen Caroline in the 1730s, Royal Gardener Charles Bridgeman created the Serpentine by damming the Westbourne and linking together a number of natural ponds in Hyde Park (it is now supplied with water from three specially-dug boreholes). It has provided a picturesque focus to the royal park and a site for public recreation ever since. Thomas Rowlandson's satirical watercolour shows elegantly-dressed Londoners skating – and falling over – on the frozen lake.

Fields at Bayswater, Looking Towards

Craven Hill, 1793

Paul Sandby, watercolour

The stream in this painting is flowing into Bayard's Watering Place, a name first recorded in 1380 as a place to refresh horses on the former Uxbridge Road to London. The river here was known as the Bayswater Rivulet, or Westbourne. Flora Tea Garden was located here in the 18th century, offering middle-class Londoners a place to take refreshments, play games and escape the city. The leading landscape painter Paul Sandby lived nearby and frequently included the Westbourne in his paintings and drawings of the area.

The Chinese House, the Rotunda, & the Company in Masquerade in Ranelagh Gardens, 1751

Thomas Bowles II, etching

The canal forms the focal point of this coloured print depicting a masquerade at Ranelagh Gardens in Chelsea. A pavilion – the ‘Chinese House’ – has been built over the lake and wealthy visitors enjoy the spectacle in fancy dress. This ‘pond’ formed a particular ‘wonder’ at night when it reflected ‘thousands of gay lamps’ (Robert Bloomfield, A Visit to Renelagh, 1802). Water, extracted from the Westbourne, played an important role in creating this escape from the reality of city life.

Section 5

Daylighting

WET DARK and BURIED

Help us unearth the River Effra

Bringing back the river
**Effra
Redevelopment
Agency**

Visitors Centre:
73 Norwood Road SE24
Phone 071 403 3738 for
more details

Wall

Still Waters (front and back), 1992

David Hockin and Denise Turner, leaflet

The proposal to daylight the River Effra came about as part of Still Waters, a month of street-based actions, walks, talks and art-interventions staged by Platform, an organisation which seeks social and ecological justice through art, activism, education and research. Curator Andrea Phillips and artist-activist John Jordan founded the Effra Redevelopment Agency to express the ambition for the restoration of lost rivers and engage the public in debates about the future of London's natural environment.

Lent by Platform

Newspaper poster, 1992

South London Press

Branding and press coverage were key to Platform's aim to stimulate a public desire to see buried rivers revived. Nearly three decades later, the Effra remains buried, but it is today much better known and the idea of uncovering it has prompted both protests (Reclaim the Streets, 1998) and re-greening initiatives (Lost Effra Project, 2013 onwards).

Lent by Platform

Wet, Dark and Buried, 1992

John Jordan and Andrea Phillips, poster

In 1992, the public's attention was drawn to the Effra Redevelopment Agency – and the river itself – by campaign posters installed at Vauxhall and Oval Underground stations, both of which sit along the course of the buried river. The name of the organisation, the logo and the poster's typography echo the promotional style of government-backed development projects in London in the 1980s.

Lent by Platform

Seeing is Believing, 1992

John Jordan and Andrea Phillips, poster

Modelling itself on the London Docklands

Development Corporation, the Effra Redevelopment Agency used logos, corporate language and promises of increased property values to appear like a genuine public body. This leaflet invites the public to take part in a debate about 'digging up a lost river'. Combining utopian visions of a healthy 'water city' with promises of 'business prospects booming and tourism growing', Platform provoked the public to question whose interests are being served when urban planning decisions are made.

Lent by Platform

Watershed model of the Effra, 1992/2019

**Katie Lloyd Thomas (original model maker);
Sahra Hersi (restorer)**

This model maps the Effra Watershed: the water catchment area that drains into the Effra valley. The river forms a narrow path between high ground. It is joined by several tributary streams and joins the Thames at Vauxhall. The model demonstrates how south London might be remodelled to accommodate the restored river.

For more information about the Effra Redevelopment Agency and other projects, visit **platformlondon.org**

Lent by Platform

Family caption: Lost and found

Where has the river gone?

This boat was found at the bottom of the reservoir.

Rivers and streams flow from high ground to the sea, sometimes joining other rivers on the way.

Although the Effra has now been buried beneath the streets of south London, we can still find its secret course by following the valleys between hills.

Can you see where the river flows?

Tyburn Angling Map, 1999

Simon Gudgeon, coloured print

The Tyburn Angling Society claims to have been established by a royal charter issued by King Edgar the Peaceable in 959, which is now housed in Westminster Abbey. Although the interpretation of the words 'andlang teoburnan', which appear in the document, have been disputed, the Society nevertheless continues to celebrate their founding with an annual dinner. Their ambition to see the Tyburn restored as a 'premier salmon river' is illustrated on this map by the sculptor Simon Gudgeon.

Lent by The Tyburn Angling Society

River Tyburn Restoration Project, c. 2001-2004

Guant Francis Architects, map

Guant Francis Architects were commissioned by the Tyburn Angling Society to draw up plans for a restored river. Here a section of the Tyburn is shown as it flows south from Marylebone Lane, passes Bond Street Underground Station, and winds its way through the lanes of Mayfair towards Green Park. The plan includes two fishing huts and roads converted into bridges, including the Tyburn Bridge on Oxford Street (formerly Tyburn Road).

Lent by The Tyburn Angling Society

River Tyburn Demolition Zone, c. 2001-2004

Guant Francis Architects, map

The buildings coloured in red are those earmarked for demolition to make way for the restored Tyburn. James Bowdidge, the Honorable Secretary of the Society and a former property developer, estimated that this would represent over £1 billion worth of property including Buckingham Palace. In consultation with the chartered surveyors GVA Schatunowski Brooks, the society has proposed that building owners could be compensated through a 'reverse rights of light' levy imposed on those who benefit from the improved aspect.

Lent by The Tyburn Angling Society

Tyburn Salmon, c. 2000

Simon Gudgeon, bronze

This sculpture of a salmon represents the Tyburn Angling Society's ambition, not only to uncover the Tyburn, but to convert what is at present a sewer into a stream clean enough to support wild brown trout and salmon. This small version was made as a design for a larger-scale sculpture intended to be installed in Berkeley Square with the Tyburn flowing along its south-east corner.

Lent by The Tyburn Angling Society

Section 6

Renewal



Wall 1

Croydon Church, Surrey, 1800-1848

James Bourne, watercolour

Croydon Minster, 2018

John Chase, pigment print

The Wandle rises in Croydon and once ran through the town past the Church of St John the Baptist where it was known as the Croydon Bourne. A report of 1848 found that the river was being used as an open sewer. As a result clean water and sewer pipes were provided and the Wandle was covered over. Although this section now lies beneath a bypass, the river was returned to the surface for a short section in nearby Wandle Park in 2012.

River Wandle at Merton Abbey, 2000

Mike Seaborne, colour coupler print

River Wandle near Merton Abbey, 2018

John Chase, pigment print

These two photographs, taken almost 20 years apart, show the same view of the River Wandle at Merton.

This was the site of Merton Priory between 1117 and 1538. From the 1660s the area became a centre of textile manufacturing, with William Morris establishing the workshops of Morris and Co. nearby in 1881.

The first photograph shows the site being cleared for building work. The riverbanks have now regrown.

Wall 2

The DLR viaduct over Bow Creek, 1992

Peter Marshall, pigment print

Limmo Peninsula Ecological Park, 2018

Richard Stroud, pigment print

Peter Marshall has been photographing the Lea Valley since the early 1980s, documenting major changes including the decline of industry, areas of wilderness, small businesses and the redevelopment of the Olympic Park site. This shot shows the viaduct carrying the Docklands Light Railway over Bow Creek during construction with the Pura Foods factory in the background. In 2018 the factory has been replaced with new housing and an ecological park built on the peninsular.

Junction of the Lea and Pudding Mill River, 2006

Mike Seaborne, pigment print

River Lea, West of the London Stadium, 2018

Richard Stroud, pigment print

Mike Seaborne's photograph was taken as part of a Museum of London project documenting the site of the London 2012 Olympic Games prior to its closure for redevelopment in July 2007. The Pudding Mill River (a channel of the River Lea) has now been almost completely covered over by the London Stadium, the carpark of which can be seen in the more recent shot of the same view. This is probably the most recent London river to be buried.

View of the New Bridge at Bow, c. 1834

Unknown artist, watercolour

Before the first Bow Bridge was built in the 12th century, farmers from Essex had to ford the River Lea in order to carry produce to London. This watercolour – a view from the north with the Bow Back River to the left and factory buildings behind – was probably made to celebrate the new bridge of 1834. The area still retains its largely industrial character.

**The Iron Bridge over the River Lea, near
East India Docks, Poplar, 1815-1825**

William Havell, watercolour

This iron bridge was built in 1810 to cross the River Lea at Bow Creek near the East India Docks (seen in the background). This created a new road connection between the City, Whitechapel, the docks and Essex, benefitting trade and hastening military communication and the movement of troops. As suggested by the herd of sheep on the left of the image, this part of east London still had a rural character in the early 19th century.

View of Wandsworth, Surrey, 1819

John Burges Watson, watercolour

The River Wandle meets the Thames at Wandsworth, from where it gets its name. This view, looking towards the tower of All Saints Church on the High Street, shows some of the industries associated with the river including, on the left, a mill drawing water. Behind is an old windmill and the Ram Inn which operated a brewery from the mid-16th century.

Wandle Alphabet, 2011

Jane Porter, poster

The Wandle Alphabet is made up of objects found in the Wandle by illustrator Jane Porter during monthly river clean-ups with the Wandle Trust. The idea for the project started with the finding of a driver's learner plate. It took a further five years to find the remaining 25 letters, which also include the 'Z' key from a typewriter, a bicycle lock and a set of false teeth. Hear Jane Porter discuss the Wandle Alphabet at the nearby listening point.

Family caption: Now I know my ABC

An artist called Jane Porter collected rubbish from the River Wandle every month for five years to help keep the river clean. She used some of the rubbish to make this alphabet poster. The 'f' is from a fish and chip shop sign, the 'j' is a bicycle lock and the 'u' is made from false teeth!

Which items spell out your name?

Display case

Plastic toys, 21st century

These toys were picked out of the River Wandle during monthly clean-up sessions run by the Wandle Trust. In 2017 volunteers removed approximately 51 tonnes of material from the river. Plastic bags are the most numerous item found, along with tyres, toys and household goods. The Trust also find many objects associated with crime, including knives, motor scooters, number plates and safes. Coconut shells – placed in the river as offerings to Maa Ganga by members of the Hindu community – are also found regularly.

Lent by South East Rivers Trust

Listening post

River Wandle: Flowing Through Time, 2014

Groundwork London and Living Wandle Landscape Partnership

Take a sound cup and press a button to hear about the River Wandle.

These clips come from a collection of recordings in which Londoners share stories of how work, play and pollution affect the Wandle. They were produced for a project aiming to reconnect local people with their river.

1. Andy talks about sticklebacks and canoeing on the river
2. Holly talks about Merton Board Mills and pollution
3. Jane talks about the Wandle Alphabet

Living Wandle Landscape Partnership Scheme,
funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund

Section 7

Tracing the Rivers



Peckham Lights Postcards
Loraine Rutt, 2015

Wall 1

An Anecdotal View of Walbrook, 2015

Adam Dant, ink drawing

The channels of the buried Walbrook appear as a faint branch-like shape on this hand-drawn map of the Walbrook Ward in the City of London. The map is annotated with historical events that took place in the area, and the cluster around the brook are testament to its historical importance. Portraits of people associated with the ward are included around the border, including 'Amy Sharrocks, Artist' whose work *Walbrook* is also displayed in this section of the exhibition.

Collection of Fidelity International

London's Lost Rivers, 2011

SF Said, Polaroid photographs

Children's author and photographer SF Said used expired Polaroid film to photograph the former courses of London's lost rivers for a walking guidebook by Tom Bolton. The degraded chemicals in old self-developing film result in unpredictable colours and visual artefacts, including fire-and-water-like effects, creating ghostly reminders of the lost waterways.

These images were taken along the courses of:
(from top left to bottom right) the Walbrook, Neckinger, Westbourne, Fleet, Tyburn, Peck, Wandle and Effra.

Lent by SF Said

Lost River Fleet, 2010

Simon Dovar, pencil drawing

The course of the lost River Fleet has been erased from this hand-drawn street map of London from Kentish Town to Blackfriars Bridge. This inventive approach emphasises the river's absence, and might be interpreted as a critique of past Londoners who chose to bury the river, or a representation of the sense of loss experienced by some Londoners today. The drawing was made by illustrator Simon Dovar for the Londonist's hand-drawn map competition, held in collaboration with the Museum of London.

Lent by Simon Dovar

Peckham Lights Postcards, 2015

Loraine Rutt, porcelain tiles

Cartographer-turned-ceramicist Loraine Rutt represents the burial of the River Peck through a series of contour maps cast in porcelain. The four tiles (left to right) are based on maps from 1768, 1842, the 1890s and the present day. Lit from behind, the Peck and its valley are the thinnest parts of the porcelain and thus the most brightly illuminated. As Peckham was developed through the 19th century, the river was built over. One small rivulet remains today in Peckham Rye Park.

Lent by Loraine Rutt

Rivers of London, 2014

Stephen Walter, photogravure etching

Stephen Walter's hand-drawn and highly-detailed maps draw on local history, anecdotes, mythology and memory to create new and surprising depictions of cities. In this print, London has been stripped of its buildings and pavements to create a water map of its rivers, streams, brooks, canals, water mains and sewers. Annotations refer to river names, historical incidents and Walter's own commentary on the fate of the Thames tributaries.

Data Flow (River Lea), 2019

**Michael Takeo Magruder with Drew Baker,
interactive virtual environment**

By revealing traces of ‘lost’ waterways, many of the artworks in this section of the exhibition prompt new understandings of London, asking us to reconsider how we interact with the city. These ideas are similarly explored in this newly commissioned installation, but with respect to a river that still flows through London. Data Flow combines real-time environmental data from the Lea with people’s depictions and stories about London’s rivers. The result is an ever-changing stream of virtual information that is as ‘live’ and unpredictable as the River Lea itself.

Commissioned by the Museum of London as part of the Curating London project

Memories of the River, 2019

Collaboratively produced digital archive

As part of the museum's Curating London contemporary collecting and research project, the artist Michael Takeo Magruder is leading a series of creative workshops with families, schools and young people to capture their memories about rivers. These images and texts are part of an ever-growing digital archive that is being produced over the duration of the *Secret Rivers* exhibition. Each memory added to the archive becomes part of the *Data Flow* artwork – a remixed 'river' of data made from personal stories and experiences.

Ripples in the Water

As you look at the Data Flow artwork, can you spot ripples appearing in the digital 'water'? A video camera is tracking people's movement near the installation and feeding live data into the virtual environment. Can you work out how to control the ripples?

Display case

Walbrook, 2009

Amy Sharrocks, mixed media

Photographer Ruth Corney

In her live artwork *Walbrook*, Amy Sharrocks set out to 'trace a memory of water' through the City of London. Having re-mapped the buried Walbrook by dowsing (water divining), a stream of blue-clad volunteers, joined together by ribbon, walked the course of the river from Islington to the beach below Cannon Street Railway Bridge. The work has been described as an attempt to reclaim the body of water and prompt a different understanding of the landscape

Lent by Amy Sharrocks

Hidden Rivers of London, 2012

Geertje Debets, print, drawing and collage

For her MA in Graphic Design at the University of the Arts London, Geertje Debets set out to develop a design concept for the underground rivers of London that had been ‘tamed by humans with stone and asphalt’. Using the letterpress technique in her sketchbooks and illustrated book, Debets demonstrates how the underground rivers appear throughout the city in the names of streets, places, houses, companies, schools and orchestras. Debets first learned about the buried rivers from the Frieda Klein novels of Nicci French.

Lent by Geertje Debets

The Lost Rivers of London, 1995

Tracey Bush, artist's book

By representing the lost rivers of London through embossed printing, rather than ink, Tracey Bush alludes to the ghostly traces of these ancient watercourses. Sinuous overlapping lines suggest flowing water and shifting tides, emphasising the organic and dynamic aspects of London's secret rivers. This hand-made print is one in a series of artist's books that Bush made on the subject of the River Thames.

Museum of London

Literature inspired by London's rivers

Various authors

With the exception of the Fleet, whose stinking waters provided an ideal target for satire in the 18th century, the inner-city tributaries of the Thames received relatively little literary attention while they still flowed above ground. However, in recent years writers have become fascinated by the obscure histories, hidden geography and mysterious potential of London's 'lost rivers'. The books shown here have all drawn inspiration from these waterways, and in turn introduced them to thousands of people for the first time.

A source of inspiration

London's rivers are the subject of songs, poems, pictures and stories. Explore the books and works of art in this section of the exhibition and see what you can discover about the rivers that inspired them.

If you were to paint a picture, take a photograph or write a story about a river, which one would you choose?

Wall 3

The Heath, 2006-2011

Andy Sewell, pigment print (reprinted 2019)

This photograph comes from Andy Sewell's five-year project to document Hampstead Heath and capture the wild feeling of this highly-managed landscape.

Sewell is interested in the condition of 'biophilia', the human urge to associate with nature. This image shows a male swimmer in one of the bathing ponds created along the Hampstead Brook, the western branch of the River Fleet. The ponds still drain into the Fleet Sewer.

A smaller version of this print was purchased with the assistance of The Art Fund and the V&A Purchase Grant Fund

Lent by Andy Sewell