

Julian Bowsher. *Shakespeare's London Theatreland: Archaeology, History, and Drama.* London: Museum of London Archaeology, 2012. Pp. 256.

Anthony Mackinder with Lyn Blackmore, Julian Bowsher, and Christopher Phillpotts. *The Hope Playhouse, Animal Baiting and Later Industrial Activity at Bear Gardens on Bankside: Excavations at Riverside House and New Globe Walk, Southwark, 1999–2000.* London: Museum of London Archaeology, 2013. Pp. xiii, 92.

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Until little more than a generation ago, historians' knowledge of the early modern English theatre came entirely from documents. Few thought to look for physical remains of the (mostly) wooden playhouses where Shakespeare and his colleagues performed, mainly because everyone assumed that any such remains had long since disappeared. All that changed in 1989 after archaeologists from the Museum of London discovered the remarkably preserved foundations of the Rose playhouse in Southwark, and soon afterwards found part of the remains of the Globe playhouse nearby. These discoveries resulted in a frenzy of international press attention, and provided a wealth of unanticipated data for theatre historians. For the first time, discovery of the exact shape and dimensions of the Rose's stage (both the 1587 and 1592 versions), the size of its yard and galleries, and its external shape (a fourteen-sided polygon) became possible. The Rose remains were particularly valuable because they could be compared with the extensive records surviving in the Henslowe-Alleyn papers at Dulwich College, allowing us to see, for example, the concrete results of the 1592 expansion of the Rose documented by Henslowe.

It took twenty years for Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) to publish the full results of the Rose and Globe excavations in scholarly form, in a 2009 volume by Julian Bowsher and Pat Miller that provided much valuable archaeological and historical context.¹ During that twenty-year period, MOLA archaeologists found the remains of several other early modern playhouses in London, with some of the most exciting finds, such as the remains of the Theatre in Shoreditch, coming within the past few years. Thankfully,

the scholarly community will not have to wait quite so long for the details of these newer discoveries, for MOLA has already started to publish much of this information, starting with the two volumes under review here. The key author of both books is Julian Bowsher, co-author of the Rose-Globe volume and MOLA's resident expert on the archaeology of the early modern London theatre.

The shorter of the two volumes, *The Hope Playhouse, Animal Baiting and Later Industrial Activity at Bear Gardens on Bankside*, is a detailed scholarly account of MOLA's 1999–2000 archaeological excavations at 27 Bear Wharf/Riverside House and 20–22 New Globe Walk in Southwark, just east of the modern Shakespeare's Globe complex. This was the site of three of the six bear-baiting arenas that were built on the south bank of the Thames in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, two of which (numbers 3 and 3A according to the numbering established by W.W. Braines) were on the same site, the other of which, the Hope (number 4), was immediately to the south-east and did double duty as a playhouse. (Bear garden 5 was about 50 meters to the southwest and has been the subject of separate archaeological investigation, not covered in this volume.) This volume contains much of interest to theatre historians, including an admirably thorough documentary history of the oft-overlooked bear-baiting arenas, along with a detailed account of the archaeological finds, including part of the Hope's brick foundation and numerous animal bones found on the site. This is ultimately an archaeology volume first and foremost, though. The section on the bear-baiting arenas takes up only sixteen pages of this 92-page volume, with well over half the volume devoted to the site's use as part of Southwark's glass-working and iron-working industries from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.

The other volume under review here, *Shakespeare's London Theatreland: Archaeology, History and Drama*, has a more explicitly theatrical focus. MOLA published it in 2012 in conjunction with the World Shakespeare Festival, one of many cultural events timed to coincide with the London Olympics. The book is written for a popular audience, but it is chock-full of information, both archaeological and documentary, that any historian of the early modern theatre should find useful. The first two chapters provide brief introductions to Tudor London and the Elizabethan theatre, with some nice colour illustrations, a timeline, and a chart of early modern playing companies with dates and playing venues. A map on page 26 helpfully shows the locations of the most important playhouses and other venues discussed on the following

pages, though it unfortunately misplaces the Bell Savage inn inside Ludgate near St Paul's, rather than outside Ludgate adjacent to the Fleet prison.

The heart of the book is the next five chapters, which contain fairly thorough histories of every known theatrical venue used in greater London between 1567 and 1642. First is a chapter on the four city inns that served as part-time playhouses in the late sixteenth century. (Full disclosure: I read an early version of this chapter and provided some suggestions and comments.) Chapters follow on 'The Playhouses' (open-air playing venues from the Red Lion [1567] to the Hope [1613]); 'The Theatres' (indoor venues from St Paul's [1575] to Salisbury Court [1629]); 'Other Venues', including the London-area royal palaces and the Inns of Court; and 'Animal-Baiting Arenas', namely the six different Bankside bear-baiting venues mentioned above. This section of the book is especially useful for a couple of reasons. One is the information about the archaeological excavations of the Rose, Globe, Theatre, Curtain, and the various bear garden sites, which is presented in a very accessible way and used to complement the documentary evidence. The archaeological discussions of the Theatre and Curtain are especially useful, since they include more detail than was found in the press releases and articles that appeared a few years ago when the discoveries were announced. The discussion of the Hope and bear gardens 3 and 3A is less detailed than that in the standalone volume reviewed above, but it is probably enough for most readers' needs, and there are two pages on the 2008 excavation of bear garden 5, not covered in the other volume.

The other notable feature of these chapters is the fact that they include information about three playing venues that were planned but never completed: the George Inn in Whitechapel (1580), a playhouse in Wapping (1600), and an indoor playhouse in Porter's Hall in the Blackfriars complex (1615). These rarely appear in popular histories of the Elizabethan theatre, despite having long been known to theatre historians, but they provide useful context and correction to the standard narrative of early modern playhouse construction — especially the George, which shows John Brayne trying to convert a suburban inn to a playhouse four years after he and James Burbage opened the Theatre.

The chapter on 'Players, Playhouses and Playgoers' is a useful overview of playing and playgoing practices in early modern London, but what really sets it apart is the information about the many physical objects found in the playhouse excavations, complete with copious illustrations. We see fragments of a wooden baluster from the Rose's galleries and a section of roof thatch,

among the only surviving fragments of the above-ground physical fabric of an early modern playhouse. Many fragments of the ceramic money pots used to collect admission fees have been found at the Rose, Globe, and Theatre sites, along with a few silver pennies and twopences found below the Rose galleries, after having apparently fallen between the floorboards. There are photos of stage properties found at the Rose, such as a cannonball used for sound effects and a leather sword scabbard, as well as dress pins, costume beads, fruit seeds, and tobacco pipes, and drinking goblets found at both the Rose and Theatre sites. Not only do these objects provide valuable insights into the people who worked at and attended London playhouses four hundred years ago; they are also a tangible, almost visceral link to those people and the world they lived in.

This volume's last chapter, 'Walks', provides a different kind of visceral link by guiding readers to the sites of the early modern playing venues discussed in the previous pages, complete with maps and photographs of the sites today. The eight walks cover the city of London (the inns, St Paul's, and Blackfriars), the east (the Boar's Head and Red Lion), the north (the Theatre, Curtain, Fortune, and Red Bull), the south (the Bankside playhouses), the west (Whitefriars, inns of court, Cockpit, and Whitehall), plus the former royal palaces at Greenwich, Hampton Court, and Richmond. Having visited most of these sites I can attest that, while there is usually not much to see, knowing that you are standing on or near the exact spot where Shakespeare, Richard Burbage, or Edward Alleyn performed four hundred years ago can be exciting. The archaeological work described in these two books has provided many opportunities for such connections, in addition to adding immeasurably to our knowledge of the nuts and bolts of the early modern English theatre.

Notes

- 1 Julian Bowsher and Pat Miller, *The Rose and the Globe — Playhouses of Shakespeare's Bankside: Excavations, 1988–91* (London, 2009).