

John Michael Maloney 1950–2026

John Maloney was a key figure in the development of urban archaeology in the City of London, always friendly and warm with a great smile and a great tale to tell, and someone who touched the lives and projects of many people. John joined the newly formed Museum of London's Department of Urban Archaeology (DUA) in 1974, an extraordinary time in both London's development and that of urban archaeology. A surge in central London office building meant a rapid increase in archaeological fieldwork with developer funding in its infancy.

It was a time of huge innovation and imagination, with the Museum's archaeology teams literally pioneering processes which today are taken for granted: the DUA's new single context recording system was developed, based on Ed Harris's stratigraphic matrix, which correlated the extent and nature of known nearby deposits. An invaluable precursor to today's desk-based assessments, it was used to broker early conversations with developers. Finds colleagues were building the remarkable fabric reference collection for London, and there were extraordinary advances through the Greater London Environmental Archaeology Service in the dendrochronology reference curve.

This was the London archaeology into which John had arrived. When he spoke about his first dig, at Baynard's Castle, it sounded like it had been a baptism of monumental scale, with the remains of the medieval castle about to be demolished and the discovery of part of the Roman riverside wall. John worked on countless, major archaeological sites in the ensuing years. The image of him drawing a section beneath the Roman forum, in the GPO tunnel under Gracechurch Street in 1977 is now iconic. It was the Roman and later city defences that most absorbed him. At Duke's Place in Aldgate, his work revealed a small postern gate, and at Vine Street, Crosswall near Aldgate, he was rightly proud to discover evidence of a previously unknown bastion that had been added in the 4th century, now named Bastion 4A.

One of John's great qualities was to be always open to new ideas and on the look-out for better ways of doing things. Over the years, he worked hard to bring about improvements for the workforce, such as allowances for protective clothing, and to help with union representation. When he saw the influence on building design of height limits and protected views, he explored in detail the potential for a scheme of protected depths. Another quality – not known to all but, by all accounts, felt strongly by some – was his fierce ability on the DUA football team.

John became the DUA's Principal Archaeological Excavations Officer in 1986 and, with a team of 10, became even more closely involved in developer negotiations. In a pre-planning-condition era, his persuasive powers were noteworthy. One of his colleagues' strongest recollections is of John's deep passion for convincing developers to celebrate their archaeology. He believed strongly in the importance of archaeological remains and was fiercely proud of the stories they could tell. He was a strong advocate for decorating site hoardings and creating viewing platforms where possible. He established a dedicated PR Officer role and a regular newsletter, and often returned from meetings with his pre-prepared, developer-friendly folder of example hoarding displays under an arm, and a smile on his face.

In those still early days of developer funding, John played a powerful role in raising the profile of archaeology – the hoardings at Fish Street Hill famously invoked the Great Fire of London; in Leadenhall Street, a public viewing gallery was built out over the forum excavations; while commuters at Canon Street Station saw

temporary exhibitions about the excavations of the Roman Governor's Palace beneath. At the peak of the DUA's work in the 1980s, media site visits were taking place almost every week, and John did countless interviews (and lectures, tours and conferences), and could always be relied upon for a brilliant soundbite. Colleagues recall how John was the perfect host at post-excavation finds reviews: these were designed to show developers and their construction teams the finds and emerging stories, and kept client relationships going in the otherwise less visible phases of indoor analysis.

He started his own consultancy, Archaeological Aspects, in 1991. He took on a series of important projects, including the Baltic Exchange where the fates had been so good to him, but he only just escaped the devastating bomb in 1992, which destroyed the Baltic Exchange and surrounding buildings. He joined AOC Archaeology in 1995 as Managing Director for Consultancy. Then he took on the role of creating the new Stonehenge Visitor Centre as Deputy Project Director for English Heritage, before becoming the principal consultant in Halcrow's Archaeology and Heritage team. In 2010, he joined Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA) as their Marketing Manager, until his retirement in November 2014. In this role, he was contentious, making adjustments and recommendations from the start! He is fondly remembered there as being very popular both with clients and colleagues.

John being John, retirement didn't really mean retirement. Having moved to Pickwick for a quieter life, he served on the Corsham Town Council between 2017–19, and also with the Corsham Civic Society, becoming its Chair in 2022! In 2024, he published a book on Pickwick, the village he now called home, co-authored with Tony Clark.

Archaeology owes John – not only for all his archaeological field and post-excavation work, not only for his impassioned advocacy and championing the preservation of remains such as the Roman amphitheatre at the City's Guildhall and the Roman Bath House at Huggin Hill, and not only for his enduring legacy in Health and Safety site management. We owe him, too, for the records he was always absolutely adamant that he would create, to chart the defining days of urban archaeology in the City of London. He passed on two, fully bursting filing cabinets of DUA archive in 1991, and, through LAMAS Transactions and LA especially, has published articles capturing stories which few had thought to record.

John Michael Maloney BA(Hons) MCIfA FSA FSRA, Freeman of the City of London, made a big impact. Many people remember with great appreciation being interviewed by John for roles that sparked and influenced their careers. And all remember him fondly as a very warm hearted and welcoming colleague with a big smile. Their condolences go out to Cath, whom he met at Birmingham University and who joined the DUA too, shortly after John, and to their two children Anna and Michael who, as his colleagues always knew, were everything to John.

Taryn Nixon, Gary Brown & colleagues

Any donations in John's memory to his chosen charities – CAFOD and English Heritage – can be made via this link:
<https://ajbfunerals.co.uk/notice/john.maloney/>

