

Obituary: Mark Samuel

20 December 1957 to 10 November 2025

Nick Holder

Mark was an archaeologist at the DUA from 1981 and he went on to become a leading specialist in monastic archaeology and architectural reconstruction. His particular area of expertise was recording and interpreting monastic window fragments - the strange bits of worked stone you find reused as rubble in 16th-century foundations. Mark was one of only a handful of people who could look at a curiously shaped stone fragment and say 'it's a fragment of supermullioned Perpendicular tracery from a window of the late 14th century... now look at that mason's mark'. He worked on many of the MoLAS and MOLA publication projects, virtually reconstructing monastic windows and cloisters from Merton Priory, St Mary Spital and Bermondsey Abbey. Among his 'non-monastic' projects were studies of the great 15th-century civic buildings at Leadenhall and Guildhall and, at the latter, he rediscovered a lost Christopher Wren building! He was one of the pioneers of digital graphics in archaeology, still using his beloved AutoCAD 2005 in the 2020s.

Having left MOLA in one of the many economic 'downturns' (his one in 2001) he founded a consultancy Architectural Archaeology. Among many clients, he worked for me reconstructing the London Blackfriars. We had a couple of enjoyable field trips in 2014, hunting lost fragments of the friary that had been moved to a wood in Surrey and a Victorian church in Belsize Park. I think fondly of Mark when I look at his reconstruction painting on my wall.

Mark grew up in London, the son of a Modernist architect, Edward Samuel. Mark chose the path of art and archaeology rather than architecture but the family influence was clear. They had family holidays in Kilcoe, County Cork, and Mark later sold the family house, Kilcoe Castle, to the actor Jeremy Irons. Mark married Kate Hamlyn (died 2017) and is survived by their sons Ned and Fineen.