

## Books and Arts

### Book Review

The history of London - What lies beneath

London Clay: Journeys in the Deep City. By Tom Chivers.

In 1858, London was hit by the "Great Stink" after the banks of the Thames became clogged with raw sewage.

Exacerbated by a heatwave, the stench was overpowering.

To dispel it — and the threat of cholera — Joseph Bazalgette, a civil engineer, created a sewer system that, although decrepit, is still in use today.

As part of this Victorian megaproject, the Fleet river, by then little more than an open drain, was encased in cement and lost to public view.

More than a century and a half after the stream disappeared, most Londoners are unlikely to have heard of it, or to know that, where it joined the Thames, the Fleet was once almost 100 metres wide.

Residents might also be surprised to learn that Westminster Abbey, where monarchs and other worthies are interred, was built on what in the 13th century was an island.

The city is littered with such transformations and unexpected tales.

In "London Clay" Tom Chivers delves into the capital's streets and uncovers some of these stories.

Much of his journey is conducted above ground, but in one passage he descends to the "malodorous" Fleet, wisely clothed head-to-toe in protective gear.

He finds sweeter aromas pursuing the Ambrook river in a wood in south London, and intrigue in the basement of a government building where the Tyburn is rumoured to bubble up.

Forgotten waterways are not his only interest: he stomps around Bermondsey, once surrounded by marshes, and peers into a sinkhole, the site of an abandoned Tube station.

A lifelong Londoner (and a poet), Mr Chivers knows the local history and geography well.

His book bounces back from Jack the Ripper to Geoffrey Chaucer by way of Elizabethan theatre, taking in asides on the mishmash of contemporary architecture and the idiosyncrasies of passers-by.

A memorable assortment of modern-day characters includes environmentalists, a youth worker and a Roman Catholic priest.

The drifting focus is sometimes discombobulating, at other times charming.

The book's anchor is what lies beneath.

As its title suggests, London's geology is dominated by clay, along with sand and gravel in the river valley's bedrock.

Mr Chivers overlays a street map with colours representing the different substrata — “half eccentric artwork, half primary-school science project” — which becomes a springboard for his digressions.

Quirks of geology may not interest everyone, but his travel-book-cum-memoir will open readers' eyes to what is around and below them.

Its delight in exploration is matched by a thoughtful meditation on grief.

Mr Chivers reflects on the death of his mother when he was a teenager, visiting her grave and recalling her efforts to preserve the site of a 16th-century theatre.

He likens the scars of his sorrow to the flow of a river you cannot see: “It remains, the trace of a buried channel, and gives its form to the land that is your life after loss.”

文学与艺术

书评

伦敦的历史——城市之下

《伦敦黏土：城市深处之旅》，作者：汤姆·奇弗斯。

**1858** 年，泰晤士河沿岸被未经处理的污水堵塞，伦敦遭受了“大恶臭”的袭击。

热浪加剧了恶臭，令人难以忍受。

为了消除恶臭——以及霍乱的威胁——土木工程师约瑟夫·巴泽尔杰特创造出了一种污水管道系统，虽已老旧，但至今仍在使用的。

舰队河作为这项维多利亚时代巨型工程的一部分，当时还只是一个露天排水沟，它被用水泥包裹起来，从公众视野中消失了。

在这条河消失了一个半世纪之后，大多数伦敦人很可能都没听说过它，也不太可能知道，在它与泰晤士河交汇的地方，曾有近 **100** 米宽的舰队。

居民们可能还会惊讶地得知，威斯敏斯特教堂是在 **13** 世纪的一座岛屿上修建的，那里埋葬着君主和其他显贵。

这个城市充满了这样的变化和意想不到的故事。

在《伦敦黏土》一书中，汤姆·奇弗斯深入研究了伦敦的街道，揭开了其中的一些故事。

他的大部分旅程都是在地面上进行的，但其中有一段，他向下到达了“恶臭”舰队，明智地从头到脚穿戴上了防护装备。

他溯安布鲁克河而行在伦敦南部的树林里发现芳香，对政府大楼的地下室产生了兴趣，传言泰伯恩就是从那里冒出来的。

被遗忘的水道并不是他唯一的兴趣所在：他在曾经被沼泽包围的伯蒙德赛漫步，凝视着一个天坑，那里是一个废弃地铁站所在的地方。

奇弗斯毕生都是伦敦人(也是一位诗人)，他对当地的历史和地理了如指掌。

他的书在各主题间反复横跳，经由伊丽莎白时代的戏剧，从开膛手杰克到杰弗里·乔叟，对当代建筑大杂烩和奇异路人进行剖析。

描绘了令人难忘的现代人物，包括环保主义者、青年工人和罗马天主教牧师。

这种飘忽不定的焦点有时令人不安，有时又令人着迷。

这本书的支柱就是隐藏在下面的东西。

正如书名所示，伦敦的地质以黏土为主，以及河谷基岩中的沙石。

奇弗斯先生用代表不同底层结构的不同颜色，描绘出一张街道地图——“既像古怪的艺术品，又像小学的科学项目”——这成了他离题的跳板。

也许不是每个人都对地质学的奇特之处感兴趣，但他的游记兼回忆录将开阅读者的眼界，让他们看到周围的以及地下的东西。

在书中，探索的喜悦与悲伤的沉思相互交融。

奇弗斯回忆起他十几岁时母亲去世时的情景，拜访母亲的坟墓，回忆起她为保护一处 16 世纪剧院遗址所做的努力。

他把自己悲伤的伤痕比作一条看不见的河流：“它依然存在，留下一条深埋的沟渠的痕迹，在这片土地上被赋予形态，这就是失去后的生活。”