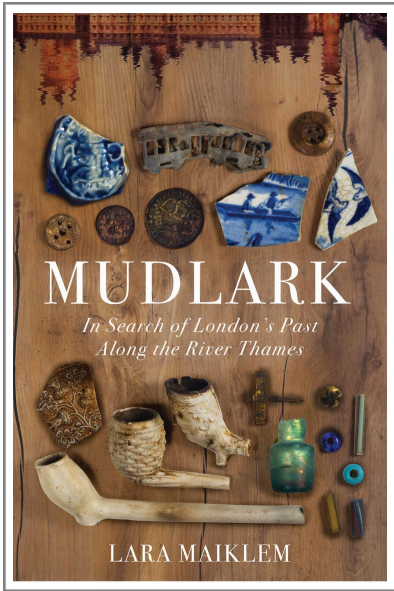


*Submitted By Mary Ferm*

## ***MUDLARK: IN SEARCH OF LONDON'S PAST ALONG THE RIVER THAMES***

By Lara Maiklem



I embarked on the adventure of reading this New Yorker-reviewed book mostly for fun. Who wouldn't want to join a member of the British Society of Mudlarks as she minutely examines the muck of the Thames foreshore to uncover traces of London's past inhabitants? A more apt analogy to genealogy research would be hard to find.

Maiklem takes us on a journey from the tidal head of the Thames downriver to the estuary. This means the book is organized geographically rather than chronologically. At each of thirteen locations she focuses on a few specific types of artifacts that can be found there, illuminating selected aspects of daily life over the centuries—what the artifacts were used for, how they came to London, how they ended up in the Thames. As we do in genealogy research, she finds tiny hints, learns the back stories with the help of museum professionals or other searchers, preserves and carefully documents and

organizes her finds. This creates a carefully edited narrative with several story arcs, rather than an overwhelming list. It is an interesting approach that could be transferred to a genealogy write-up. Along the way she describes her own life's journey--how mudlarking satisfies a need for quiet personal space in a big city. We also meet some of the people who share her obsession and passion.

This book kept my attention from the story about the printer who in 1911 bequeathed his personally created type fonts to the Thames so his rival couldn't misuse them, to the final episode about bottles collected at some personal risk among the shifting tidal islands in the estuary.

**Kitsap Regional Library has two copies, including one at Bainbridge.**