



## **From Powerhouse to Playhouse: London Blackfriars at the heart of the nation.**

Professor Simon Thurley, PhD MA

Lecture date: Wednesday 23 November 2022

### Summary:

Although now pedestrianly memorialised in the name of a railway station, for three centuries, London Blackfriars was at the centre of national events. It was a religious, political and cultural centre to rival Westminster itself. Home to priors and friars, of course, but also to kings, ministers, artists and writers, the very name was long resonant with power and creativity. Had the twists of history been different this corner of the ancient city of London could have been the seat of the monarchy and the home of parliament.

Simon Thurley traces its history from the early fourteenth century to the Great Fire of London. Using an array of contemporary documents including plans and views he reconstructs the physical world of Blackfriars before and after the Reformation showing how it rose to have a key locus national events. He also shows how its later notoriety as an illegal playhouse grew out of a long history of officially sanctioned court and aristocratic drama.

### About the speaker

Simon is a historian, archaeologist and heritage champion who believes that our past informs and shapes our future, and that to make a great future for everyone we need to understand and care for our past.

Ever since he was a child, Simon has been investigating history; some of his earliest efforts digging in his parent's garden discovered important Roman remains. After reading History at university and completing an MA and PhD Simon devoted his career to working with history, museums, archaeology and heritage always trying to explain why history matters and make it accessible and enjoyable to everybody.