

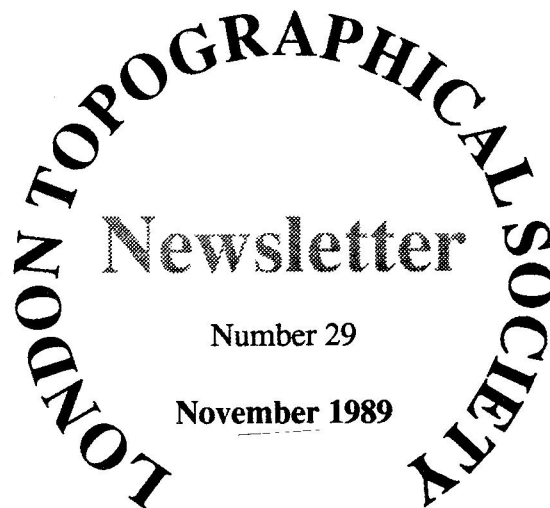
## The Annual General Meeting held on 14th September 1989

Having been postponed from 5th July because of the transport strikes, the eighty-ninth AGM of the London Topographical Society was held on 14th September. Members found their way to the new map room of the Royal Geographical Society, Lowther Lodge in Kensington, to enjoy a hearty tea which was followed by the AGM, held in the wood panelled lecture theatre. The official business of the meeting was enlivened by the Hon Editor's report, hinting at the machinations which lay behind the publication of *Good and Proper Materials*. The Hon Editor indicated that members can look forward to the fattest ever *London Topographical Record* in 1990. Among the eleven main articles are two by Peter Jackson, 'Hollar's Prospect of London and Westminster' and 'London Illustrations in *The Gentleman's Magazine*'; David Webb has written about 'Guide Books to London before 1600'; and Chris Ellmers has contributed an article on 'The Museum in Docklands'.

At the conclusion of the Agenda a voice from the floor kindly and sincerely expressed appreciation and thanks for all the work of the Council members and officers of the Society.

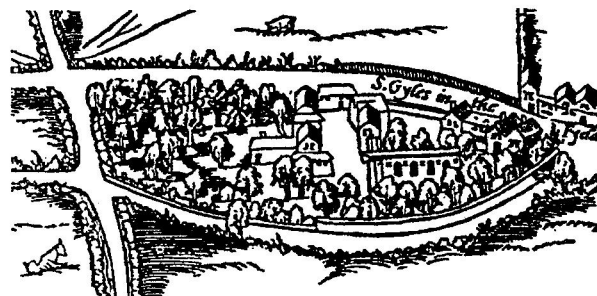
This year members heard three short addresses on different subjects, by Mr Christopher Brooking, Dr Helen Wallis and Mr Ralph Hyde. Christopher Brooking contributed an article on the Brooking Collection to *Good and Honest Materials* and in his talk he revealed that he had been the self-appointed Curator of the Brooking Trust since the age of four. No wonder that his collection comprises some 25,000 items and that permanent premises are needed for what is virtually an architectural museum. Mr Brooking rescues anything from balconies to architraves from London buildings that are being destroyed and he is an expert on door furniture and window pulleys; he is presently doing research into sash cords from Buckingham Palace. Enquiries to Christopher Brooking, Woodhay, White Lane, Guildford, Surrey GU4 3PU.

Dr Helen Wallis, who is herself a Fellow and Hon Vice President of the Royal Geographical Society, gave a brief history of that Society from its origins in the African Association (1788) to its sponsorship of recent expeditions. The Royal Geographical Society purchased Lowther Lodge for its headquarters in 1912, and here it has remained, enjoying the house that was built for the Hon William Lowther MP by Richard Norman Shaw in 1873. Norman Shaw's bold use of the vernacular Queen Anne style for a London house was revolutionary at the time and Lowther Lodge is still a remarkable building. The lecture theatre was built between 1928-30 on the site of the former stables.



The last speaker, Mr Ralph Hyde, Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the Guildhall Library, and the author of *Panoramania! The Art and Entertainment of the All Embracing View* (1988), drew attention to the facsimile of Robert Barker's panorama of 1792, 'London from the Roof of the Albion Mills', which has been published jointly by the London Topographical Society and the Guildhall Library. It comes with an introduction by Ralph Hyde, a key by Peter Jackson and costs £12 to members. There remains one building on the skyline above the Temple, which defies identification – see 'Unidentified building' in the News and Notes.

The AGM was attended by over a hundred members, many of whom lingered to inspect Norman Shaw's drawings for Lowther Lodge, which were on display.



A detail from the mid sixteenth century Agas map view, LTS publication 122 (1979).

# The London Postal Districts

Simon Morris

The origin and development of the London postal districts contains much to interest London topographers. The postal districts were introduced in 1857 and, after many alterations, sub-divided into their present number of sub-districts in 1917. These districts are administrative divisions devised by the Post Office for its convenience in collecting and delivering post. Unlike the *arrondissements* of Paris, none of the London postal districts, such as NW3, is coterminous with a municipal, parliamentary or other boundary. But by forming part of all Londoners' addresses they have gained far greater significance than the Post Office ever intended, and now form one of the most generally understood and widely used bases for the division of London.

The London postal districts have remained substantially unchanged since 1917, and were unaffected by the reorganization of the London boroughs in 1965. They are prominently featured on many maps of London, and are generally smaller, and have more precisely drawn boundaries, than the London boroughs. For example, W8 includes only what most people would understand by Kensington, while the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea occupies a considerably greater area, and districts which estate agents term 'Kensington' stretch almost to Hammersmith and Kensal Green. By reason of their permanence and prominence the postal districts have become a permanent feature of London topography, and an essential element in every Londoner's mental map.

## Origins

For so long as London had a postal service the Post Office has divided it into separate areas for deliveries. However, until the 1857 division, they were not widely known to the public, and were not reflected in postal addresses.

In 1830<sup>1</sup>, for instance, the built up area of London was divided into nine divisions. Figure 1 shows the 1830 walks which were last revised in 1794 despite considerable growth in the built up area during that period. The outermost limits of the town delivery of the General, Foreign and Twopenny posts, shown in Figure 1, were described as 'singularly capricious and irregular'. The Commissioners could not explain why these limits had been devised, and recommended that the town delivery be extended to a larger, more circular area. They also recommended that the divisions be equalized, and these were subsequently reorganized. Outside the metropolis, districts of delivery extended to a circumference of some 15 miles. These were served by nine horse-drawn delivery van routes, known as 'rides', which dropped post off at towns along the route, and from these towns the post was distributed over the immediate district (Figure 2). A town such as Richmond came within the country districts of the London distributed post: post was brought to the town after sorting in London, and it was then delivered in the Richmond area by foot on four separate walks of 10 to 15 miles each<sup>2</sup>. The position was similar in Hackney<sup>3</sup>, which then counted as a country area<sup>4</sup>.

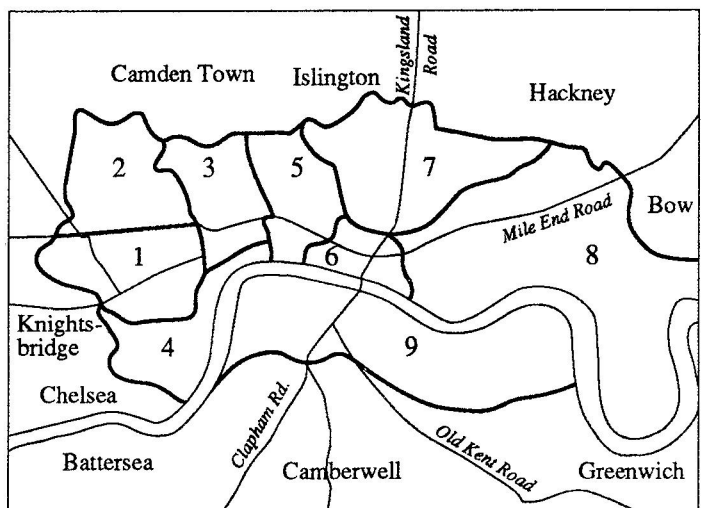
## Steps to reform

At the time of the 1830 Report the Government saw the postal service as a means of raising revenue rather than as a service. Organization in the London postal district was complex, haphazard and expensive. There were three distinct categories of mail within London, and separate groups of postmen for their delivery. Postage on a packet was usually paid by the recipient rather than the sender, and the postal tariff generally depended on the distance the letter travelled.

The first substantial prospect of change came in 1837 when Rowland Hill published a pamphlet entitled *Post Office Reform*. This suggested improvements to the Post Office system, and he may have issued it with a view to bringing himself to the attention of the Government and being rewarded with a position in the Post Office<sup>5</sup>. He was called to give evidence to the current Commission of Enquiry into the Post Office<sup>6</sup>. In his evidence he stated that he was appalled by the dilatory nature of the delivery system based on a single sorting office in St Martin's le Grand. Instead of this he recommended eight or ten sorting offices, roughly equal distance from each other, on 'great thoroughfares near to principal centres for the departure of coaches', such as Bank and Angel. Each sorting office should be responsible for the delivery of post within a defined postal district and, to facilitate sorting and delivery, he proposed that this was reflected in the postal address. Accordingly he suggested that 'Cornwall Terrace, Regent's Park' might become 'Cornwall Terrace, London A'. Alternatively postal districts might follow existing divisions (such as parliamentary boroughs) so that the address might be 'Cornwall Terrace, North Westminster, London'.

This particular suggestion was opposed by the Post Office and rejected by the Commissioners on the ground that it would be difficult to implement before letters were pre-paid. However, some of Hill's other suggestions, such as a uniform penny post with postage paid by the sender, were introduced in 1840.

Rowland Hill repeated his suggestion for the introduction of postal districts before the Select Committee on Postage in 1843<sup>7</sup> and, while on this occasion it was considered beneficial, it was still not implemented. What brought it closer to implementation, and Hill closer



**Figure 1:** The postal divisions (or 'walks') of London in 1830. 1 St James's; 2 Marylebone; 3 East Westminster; 4 South West; 5 West City; 6 Lombard Street; 7-North East; 8 East; 9 Southwark.

to achieving his goal, was his appointment as Secretary to the Postmaster General in 1846, followed by elevation to Secretary of the Post Office in 1854.

No time was lost: in a minute of 21st December 1854 Hill established a Committee of Officers on the Question of Establishing District Sorting Offices and Hourly Deliveries in the Metropolis, which reported on 4th July 1855. Neither the minute of establishment, the deliberations of the Committee nor its Report have survived<sup>8</sup>, although a summary of the Report was published<sup>9</sup>. In this the Committee reported that it carefully considered Hill's original plan of 1837 and also reviewed many different suggestions, since by 'varying different details a large variety of results might be obtained'. One such suggestion, rejected on grounds of complexity, was that streets were numbered consecutively (like modern New York) and that street names be dropped from addresses<sup>10</sup>.

### The 1857 plan

The Committee favoured the existing plan of compact districts within the centre of the metropolis, surrounded by segmental divisions radiating out to the boundary. It recommended the division of the area within 12 miles of the General Post Office into ten districts of which two (EC and WC) were central and eight others (N, S, E, W, NE, SE, NW and SW) were outer districts stretching through the environs of London to a 12 mile circle bounding the London district (Figure 3). Each of these was to be treated as a separate town for postal purposes.

The extent of each postal district was fully considered. The boundaries of the WC and EC districts were fixed so that postmen should not have to walk more than fifteen minutes from the GPO in St Martin's le Grand before commencing their delivery. The limits of the outer districts within the built up area followed main roads and 'aimed

to keep together parts of a locality which have a connected and peculiar character'. Outside London, the boundaries between the outer districts generally followed the existing limits of the country delivery rides.

As the Committee's report entirely endorsed the Post Office Secretary's long-standing proposals, steps were promptly taken for its implementation. In November 1856 a leaflet for each post district was prepared<sup>11</sup>, exhorting the residents to append district initials to their addresses. It is clear from the number of leaflets ordered for each district that they were by no means equal in number of delivery addresses: EC required 30,000; WC 13,000; N 35,000; but NE only 17,000. Indeed, N, SE, S and NW were predominately rural. It was this inequality in size that was shortly to necessitate further reorganization.

To assist in this exercise, the Post Office published two booklets<sup>12</sup>. The first, priced at 1d, was entitled *Principal Streets and Places in London and its Environs as Divided into Postal Districts*. Published in December 1856 it contained, in table form, a list of the main streets and their postal districts. 340,000 copies were sold, apparently on a commission basis by postmen leaving one at each house and collecting it the next day if it was not paid for. A larger edition, which sold 13,000 copies for 1 shilling, was published in April 1857. It contained an index map (reproduced as Figure 3) and maps of the two central districts, and the inner portions of the eight outer districts. The London NE plate is reproduced as Figure 4. Edward Stanford prepared the maps, and engraved and glycolithographed the ten plates for £8 per block (the two central districts forming one plate) and the key map for £18.

*The Post Office Guides* from January 1857 onwards instructed correspondents how to address their letters. 'By the addition of the initials of the Postal Districts to the

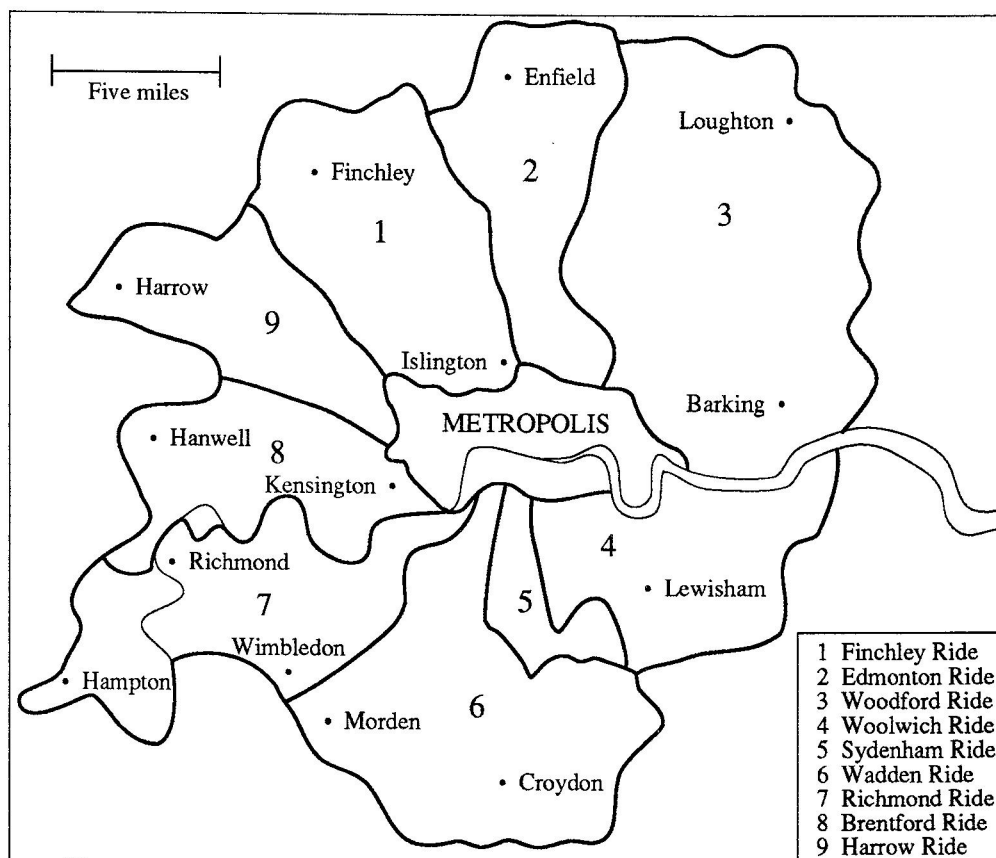


Figure 2: The country districts of the London Twopenny Post in 1830.

ordinary addresses of letters for London and its neighbourhood, the public will greatly facilitate the arrangements of the Post Office' proclaimed the 1857 *Guide*, which included a full list of streets and towns within the 12 mile radius and their postal district initials. Correspondents were supposed to add the initial to all correspondence addressed within this area. The example was given of Albany Street, New Road, Regent's Park, which should become Albany Street, NW. At first the London postal districts included outlying towns such as Barnet, Kingston, Hampton Court and Romford, and the district initial was also to be included in their addresses. However, *The Post Office Guide* contained no examples, and it seems unlikely that many letters were addressed to 'Harrow, London NW' rather than to 'Harrow, Middlesex'.

The introduction of the London postal districts seems to have been a success, although in 1857 only one third of the letters were properly addressed<sup>13</sup>. Liverpool, Manchester and Dublin all introduced similar schemes within fifteen years. It was also claimed that, as a result of their introduction, the post was delivered more quickly<sup>14</sup>.

The new districts were immediately and strikingly reflected in most contemporary maps. London maps immediately prior to 1856 which showed any district boundaries tended to feature the borough boundaries, or possibly only those of the City of London: see, for instance, Smith's *New Map* (1853) and Carey's *New Plan* (1855). After 1856, the new postal districts were given equal, if not greater, prominence than municipal boundaries. Town maps such as Mogg's *London and Environs* (1859), Wyld's *London and Postal Districts* (1860) and Crutchley's *Railway Map* (1865) printed the districts in bold colour. Maps showing the area around London, such as Davies' *Map of the Environs of London* (1857) and Cross' *New Plan* (1859) boldly displayed the London Postal Districts. The prominence given to the postal districts no doubt reflected

the importance of the post as almost the sole means of communication at the time other than personal visits.

### Reform of the postal districts

The 'Hill' scheme, under which the London postal districts extended well into the country, was soon changed. Within a few years it was decided that having so great an area under the control of one central office was unwieldy, and some control was devolved to the more distant areas<sup>15</sup>. Between 1865 and 1870 thirty towns such as Romford, Beckenham, Sutton, Ealing and Enfield were transferred out of the London postal area<sup>16</sup>.

The use of the initial indicating the district was also curtailed. Soon only an address in an inner or suburban district such as Hackney included the district initial; other addresses within the London postal districts such as Chingford or Walthamstow bore no initial, while more distant parts within the original 12 mile London postal districts, such as Woodford and Loughton, were now altogether excluded<sup>17</sup>.

Consequent upon these changes, steps were taken to

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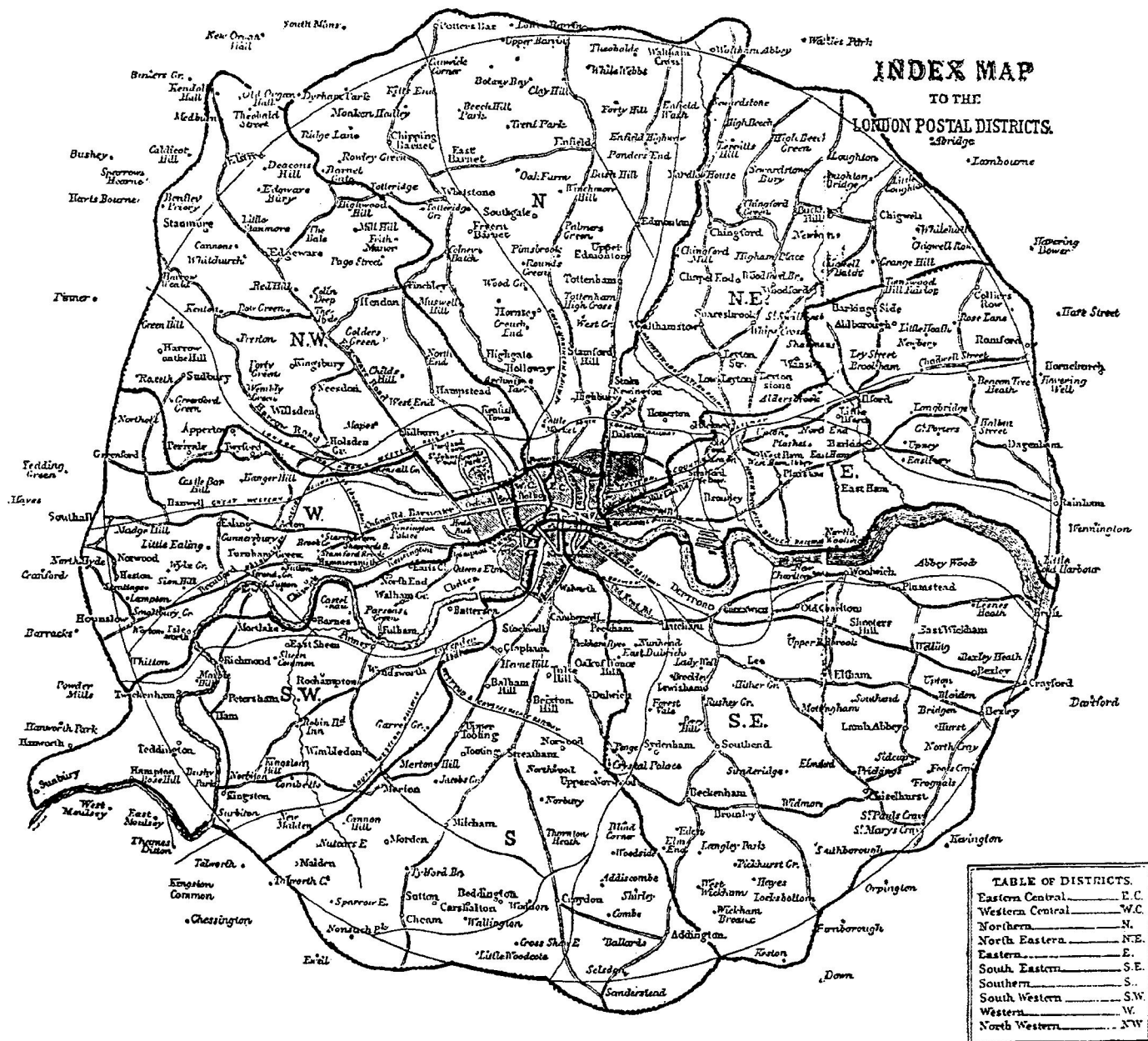


Figure 3: The division of London and its environs into ten districts (1857).



abolish the North Eastern and Southern postal districts, thereby destroying the symmetry of the original design. NE was wholly amalgamated with E, while S was split between SW and SE. As has already been remarked, NE and S were predominantly rural, and NE was numerically the second smallest district. With the removal of the towns such as Croydon out of the Southern district in 1866, and Romford out of the Eastern district in 1865, it may have been difficult to justify the continued existence of eight outer postal districts, and S and NE had the weakest cases.

In March 1866 the novelist Anthony Trollope, who was the Surveyor to the Post Office, was requested by the Secretary of the Post Office to investigate collections and deliveries in the eight outer postal districts<sup>18</sup>. Trollope is said to have disliked Hill, who had retired in 1864, and is supposed to have taken pleasure in undoing his work<sup>19</sup>. Trollope recommended that supply be adjusted to reflect demand, and highlighted the NE and S districts for the low number of letters the postmen carried per delivery. In a further report in April 1866, Trollope recommended amalgamating the North Eastern district office to the Eastern district office on grounds of 'great saving of expenditure'. He additionally recommended a reduction in deliveries in the NE, S and SE districts, where there were often as few as thirty letters on the third or eighth daily delivery, compared to the target delivery of fifty letters.

The proposal for the abolition of NE met with some internal opposition<sup>20</sup>, and it was pointed out that there had been a 57% increase in the number of letters delivered between 1860 and 1865, while the district yielded a fair profit. Nonetheless, the proposal went ahead; at the end of 1866 the North Eastern District Office closed, the staff was re-deployed and there was a corresponding reduction in collection and deliveries in that area. The entry for the

NE district was combined with that for the E district in the 1868 *Post Office Guide*. However it was not until 1869 that proposals were made to abolish the distinction between NE and E, and for the public to be instructed to address all such letters with E<sup>21</sup>. This went ahead, and the *The Post Office Guide* for 1869 refers to the abolition of NE, and all streets formerly shown as NE in the street list were now shown as E. The Metropolitan Board of Works, however, declined to alter NE to E in its street names, pointing out that this was the duty of local boards<sup>22</sup>.

The abolition of the Southern district went ahead at the same time. In October 1867 the Metropolitan Surveyor of Posts proposed that S be abolished on grounds of potential savings. He proposed that Kennington and Lambeth should be transferred to SE and that, outside the built up area, the remainder of S should be divided equally: Clapham, Tooting, Merton, Stockwell, Brixton, Streatham and South Lambeth should be transferred to SW; and Camberwell, Dulwich, Norwood and South Norwood to SE, which district should be renamed South<sup>23</sup>.

This was formally referred to the Postmaster General on 6th November 1867 but seems to have been 'leaked' since the first letter of complaint from the public was received only two days later. The proposal, nonetheless, was approved in December 1867. A notice was sent to each address to be transferred from S to SW notifying the change which was to take effect from 1st March 1868, and the addresses transferring to SE, who were to change on 1st April 1868. *The Post Office Guide* for 1st January 1869 refers to the abolition of S and the redistribution of streets formerly designated S to SE and SW. The 1869 edition of Davies' *New Map of London and Environs* reflected this alteration.

Rather belatedly, a deputation of tradesmen and representatives of the Vestry of Lambeth petitioned, and later sought to visit, the Postmaster General. However

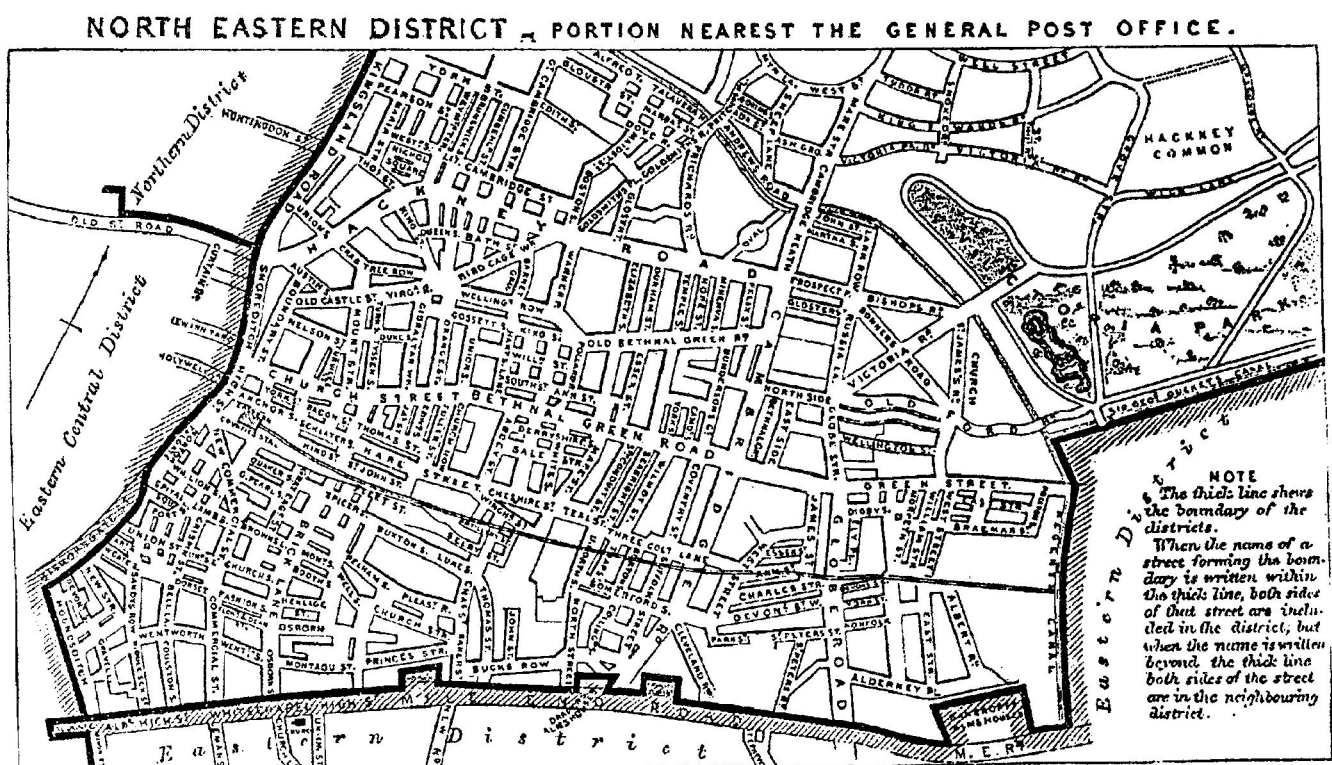


Figure 4: London NE plate from *Principal Streets and Places in London and its Environs as Divided into Postal Districts*, by Edward Stanford for the Post Office (1857)

their submissions were rejected as they were unable to produce any evidence of harm resulting from the reorganization<sup>24</sup>. Sir Rowland Hill had written to his successor in April 1868 protesting about the alteration, but this was also ignored<sup>25</sup>.

More than a year after abolition the Post Office noted that some street signs still had S after their names and requested the Board of Works to change this since the public was still using the S initial. This, once again, the Board declined to do because it was the responsibility of the district boards. The Post Office then contacted the local Vestries requesting the removal of S from street signs, but this provoked renewed complaints from the Lambeth Vestry. In order to avoid further conflict, the Secretary of the Post Office resolved that 'no energetic means should be taken to get rid of the obnoxious S'<sup>26</sup>. As it was no longer used on maps of London, and had been removed from *The Post Office Guide*, use of the S district initial on correspondence doubtless died out after a few years.

Although there is no evidence in the Post Office archives of contemporary dissatisfaction with the abolition of the NE district, at least some residents in the former NE district were unhappy about the alteration. In 1891, twelve years after the change, some residents in Hackney including the bank manager, a Doctor and Member of Parliament got up a petition complaining that 'transferring them to the East End' affected the value of local property, the selling price of businesses, and deterred new residents<sup>27</sup>. Mr Stow, the Post Office Surveyor for the area, was sympathetic. Considering the areas affected, he felt that Bethnal Green really was East End, but that the Post Office could restore the NE initials to addresses in Hackney, Homerton and Clapton at little cost<sup>28</sup>. However, he felt that this would be 'postally devoid of meaning' as correspondence to such addresses would continue to be sorted and delivered together with letters for E. Transferring those areas from E to N was also considered, but the local M.P. who presented the petition to the Postmaster General was shortly notified that no change was possible, especially after so many years<sup>29</sup>. The petitioner, Dr Daly of Dalston, was not deterred; he wrote with evidence to the effect of the reorganization<sup>30</sup>, including a statement from a private school master in Hackney who said that he continued to use the NE initials on his writing paper in order to keep his boarders. The Postmaster General, however, rejected all possibility of change: it would be inconvenient and expensive to reintroduce NE although he estimated the cost at the small figure of £170 per annum<sup>31</sup>.

Strangely, though, this was not the end of the matter. For reasons which are not recorded the decision was eventually taken to authorize the use of NE on addresses within the former NE district: perhaps correspondents in that area were continuing to use these initials; indeed maps such as Mogg's *Postal District and Cab Fare Map* (1876) still showed NE despite its abolition. The first reference to this concession is in *The Post Office Guide* for January 1889, which stated that correspondents might use E or NE as preferred, and reinstated the NE initials in its list of streets. This change does not seem to have been reflected in any maps of London. *The Post Office Guide* continued to permit this usage until 1917 when the districts were individually numbered, while the Metropolitan

Borough of Hackney, into which most of the affected area fell, continued to put NE on its street signs until 1917 (Figure 5).

### The numbered postal districts

After 1867, when the ten London postal districts were reduced to eight, the extent of the London postal districts underwent a number of changes. By 1870, a number of outlying towns within the 12 mile boundary had been removed. However, as the built up area of London expanded, parts of these districts were transferred back into the London postal districts. For instance, N was subsequently extended to include Wood Green, E to include Walthamstow, and in 1913 SE to include Woolwich, Eltham, Abbey Wood and Charlton.

Outside the inner area which had been built up by 1856, boundaries between the postal districts were frequently adjusted as districts straddling the boundaries were built up. The site of the 1862 Exhibition in Kensington was split between W and SW; once it was built on, it was all transferred to W. Elsewhere, straight lines across fields had to be brought into conformity with the new rows of houses in districts such as Fulham, Willesden and Tufnell Park.

One recurring proposal for reform was for the postal districts to be sub-divided into smaller areas, with the sub-divisions made known to the public. Each postal district had long been divided into sub-districts, the area of each being generally the distance postmen could reasonably cover on foot, and each sub-division could correspond to the delivery area of a sub-district office<sup>32</sup>. On previous occasions this proposal had been rejected as too complicated and insufficiently cost effective. However, when Mr Percy Holland of Cadogan Gardens, SW wrote to the Post Office raising this very idea in 1916 he was proposing the right suggestion at just the right moment<sup>33</sup>. What had changed was that, under war conditions, new and inexperienced sorters were finding it difficult to sort the London post into over one hundred correct sub-districts by the name given on the letter.

Mr Holland's suggestion was swiftly approved and adopted, although he does not seem to have received any recognition or reward. It was decided to number each sub-district within a postal district as part of a separate series, rather than as a single series beginning EC1 and ending with N116. The basis of the division was that the head district office was numbered 1, followed by other offices in alphabetical order. There were, however, exceptions: Paddington, a head district office, was numbered W2. Battersea, another head district office, began a separate alphabetical sequence starting with SW11. Norwood, then a head district office, commenced a separate sequence beginning with SE19. Golders Green (NW11) and West Wimbledon (SW20) were introduced later and numbered out of sequence. An explanatory leaflet was issued to all addresses, and *The Post Office Guide* for January 1917 instructed correspondents to use the individual numbers. Usage of the correct postal district rose from 32% in 1917 to 65% in 1922.

After 1917 the London postal districts remained substantially intact, although a number of detailed alterations have taken place, such as moving Albert Embankment from SE11 to SE1 head district office in 1961 to accommodate office development. There have, indeed,

been surprisingly few changes in inner London between the introduction of the 1856 postal districts and today, while most of these have been made to accommodate new developments. For example, EC has expanded to include Aldgate High Street, the Mint, Mount Pleasant and Clerkenwell Road, while WC now accommodates Shaftesbury Avenue and Northumberland Avenue; W has gained Park Crescent from NW, and NW the area of Kilburn Park from W.

### Acknowledgements

I should like to thank Trevor Ford for putting me on the trail of the North Eastern London Postal District, and David Webb for letting me rummage through the Bishopsgate Institute's map collection. I am grateful to the staff of the Post Office Archives in Glasshill Street, SE1 for their patience.



**Figure 5:** Cotesbach Road, in Clapton, was built around 1900. It is now in E5.

### Notes

1. Twenty-first Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the Collection...of Revenue...Part IV 1830 ('the 1830 Report') (London Library PP 214).
2. An uncatalogued map in the Post Office Archives shows the 1841 delivery areas marked in manuscript.
3. Examination of a letter carrier in Richmond in App 60 to the 1830 Report.
4. Examination of a letter in Hackney in App 61 to the 1830 Report.
5. This suggestion is made in Daunton, MJ, *Royal Mail* (1985) p 15.
6. Ninth Report of Commissioners appointed to Inquire into Management of the Post Office Department; his examination on 12th February 1837 is in App 3 (Post Office Archives ref: POST 71/22).
7. Examined by Select Committee on Postage 1843. Questions 1952 onwards (POST 71/34).
8. Information obtained from file E13762/1917 (POST 30/4010-11). The 1854/5 papers were regarded as lost in 1917.
9. A summary of the Report appears as App A to the 2nd Report of PMG on PO, 1856.
10. PMG Minute 27th May 1859 (POST 35/168 p 137).
11. File 2280/1858 (POST 30/120).
12. File 2280/1858 (POST 30/120).
13. File E13762/1917 (POST 30/4010-11).
14. File E1421/1881 (POST 30/391); Minute 26th March 1866.
15. File E1930/31 (POST 73).
16. It is difficult to track alterations to the outer boundaries from references in the Post Office Archives, while contemporary maps may not accurately reflect the changes.
17. Map with manuscript dated 1881 prepared by the Post Office in connection with the Hackney Petition in file E1421/1881 (POST 30/391).
18. File E1421/1881. The request is dated 26th March 1866 and his response 4th May 1866.
19. Daunton suggests as much at p 3.
20. Memo of Mr Boucher of Circulation Department 5th December 1866 (POST 30/391).
21. Minute 19th April 1869 (POST 30/391).
22. Letter 25th May 1869 (POST 30/391).
23. Letter from Mr Cunynghame to Secretary 12th October 1867, file E1506/1870 (POST 30/199).
24. The Vestry wrote on 21st March 1869; their request for a delegation to visit the PMG was rejected in July 1869 (POST 30/199).
25. Letter dated 20th April 1868 (POST 30/199).
26. Minute 25th November 1869.
27. Petition in POST 30/391.
28. Minute 20th January 1881 (POST 30/391).
29. Minute 26th February 1881 (POST 30/391).
30. Letter 14th March 1881 (POST 30/391).
31. Letter 27th May 1881 (POST 30/391).
32. See file E13762/1917 (POST 30/4010-11).
33. Letter 5th June 1916 (POST 30/4010-11).



## Book Reviews

*Inside London: Discovering London's Period Interiors.* By Joe Friedman. Photographs by Peter Aprahamian. Phaidon 1988. 128 pages with copious colour plates. £17.95.

*London Revealed: the beautiful, bizarre and unexpected interiors of the capital.* By John Freeman and Peter Dormer. Macdonald Orbis 1989. 239 pages with copious colour plates. £16.95.

It is a usual if inexplicable phenomenon – if a book appears on any particular subject, at least one other on the same theme will stand beside it, fresh on the bookshelves. *Inside London* and *London Revealed* are even odder – they are written by authors with remarkably similar names, though John Freeman is a professional photographer and Joe Friedman a background researcher. Both books are sizeable, slightly unwieldy volumes of colour photographs of interiors of London buildings, and they are priced within a pound of each other, though *London Revealed* is nearly twice as long. Is there anything to choose between the two?

The answer is, not much, but both are enthralling. Both are short on text, but that doesn't matter – it's the photographs that count, and the searching out of what has been photographed, with results that are a feast. Palaces, mansions, churches, courts of justice, civic buildings, hotels, shops, theatres, clubs, pubs, museums, halls of commerce, schools, government offices and people's own homes, both ordinary and extraordinary – they are all here. *Inside London* arranges its treasures by function, *London Revealed* prefers a more thematic approach with sections on 'The Grand Scale', 'Monuments Preserved' (which can be anything anywhere), 'Private Lives', 'The Decorative Tradition' and 'Into the Twentieth Century'.

Inevitably, there is a certain amount of repetition – I noticed St Pancras Hotel, the R.A.C., the Reform Club, the Black Friar and Bride of Denmark Public Houses, Osterley House, Sir John Soane's Museum, Leighton House, the Linley Sambourne and Little Holland Houses, the Granada Tooting, Lancaster House and the Durbar Court in the Foreign Office in both volumes, and that is by no means a complete list of subjects common to both. But it does not really matter – it is just an indication of the treasures which are to be found behind London's sometimes impassive façades. I would say that John Freeman's book is stronger on the London of the present day, and the Joe Friedman has found some unusually original locations – I particularly liked Martyn's Coffee Shop in Muswell Hill. Both volumes provide useful gazetteers by which to identify the outsides of the buildings.

The idea of a book devoted to the interior of London's buildings is not, of course, a new one. Dugdale's *History of St Paul's Cathedral* (1658), which provides use with the best record of what old St Paul's looked like before it vanished in the Great Fire, contains many interior views, drawn and engraved by Wenceslas Hollar's incomparable

hand. Rudolph Ackermann's *Microcosm of London* (1808), with illustrations by Thomas Rowlandson and Augustus Pugin, gives us the best ideas of what London looked like from the inside at the turn of the nineteenth century. William Henry Pyne's *Royal Residences* (1819) revealed details of the grandest homes, while Britton and Pugin's *Illustrations of the Public Buildings of London* (1825–28) and *London Interiors* (1841–44) employed the skills of a number of artists, including John Le Keux and T.H. Shepherd, to show what the more important buildings looked like once the visitor had entered the doorway. The significant slant of all these nineteenth century volumes is that they confined themselves to important public buildings, while the two modern books under review go into the homes of private individuals. Anyone fortunate enough to possess or have access to Bernard Adams' *London Illustrated 1604–1851* may continue the delightful game of adding to the historical list – by the way, that is a book (published in a limited edition by the Library Association in 1983) which every devotee of London should have on his or her shelves, in spite of the alarming price – £75.

A consideration of these earlier studies of interiors leaves your reviewer meditating on the respective merits of the camera and the engraver's tools. The camera has the greater immediacy, and the colour used throughout both volumes is excellent, but no film could quite convey the essence of Sir John Soane's Picture Gallery in the way in which John Le Keux's delicate steel-engraving records and distills it. The point is worth considering, perhaps.

Anyway, both the books under review are good value. If someone gives you a book token, acquire one or the other, or, better still, both. They will delight and refresh you, and give you new ideas for what to visit in London, as time and chance permit. But the true London buff will be hoarding tokens, filching from the house-keeping, walking to work to lay by the bus fare, in order to acquire *London Illustrated*. Now, that's a book *really* worth having.

— Ann Saunders

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*City and River* by Chris Ellmers, edited by Caroline Williamson. Museum of London 1989. 16 pages. £1.25 plus 50p postage from the Museum Bookshop.

This attractive little book has been published by the Museum of London to accompany an exhibition at the Museum 'The Lord Mayor, The City and The River' which runs until 12th December 1989. The exhibition explores London's river as the focus for trade and City ceremonial and the book follows this theme from the late twelfth century when the Mayor was granted conservatory powers for the Thames, to the closure of the City's wharfs and docks in the late 1960s. Sadly the text of the book is almost lost among the lengthy captions and crowded illustrations, furthermore the source of many of the illustrations is not clear. Inconsistencies in referring to the Docks in the singular or plural, with capital letters or not, and the mis-spelling of Lambeth mar what might have been a perfect little monograph.



*Pewter. A celebration of the craft 1200–1700* by Peter R.G. Hornsby, Rosemary Weinstein and Ronald F. Homer. Museum of London 1989. 112 pages. \$4.95.

Pewter lacks the glamour and the value of gold or silver and is generally associated with beer tankards. An exhibition at the Museum of London (until May 1990), with an excellent catalogue, should correct this image.

Pewter has been made in Britain since the Roman period but it has not received the attention which it deserves. As the catalogue explains, pewter is an alloy of tin with other metals, and it reached the height of its popularity in this country *circa* 1700, becoming outmoded by pottery and porcelain in the eighteenth century. Today, pieces which might previously have been made of pewter are usually made of stainless steel or plastic. Thus old pewter flagons, chargers, cups, porringers, spoons, pilgrim badges and chalices have become collectors' pieces.

The history of the Pewterers of London, the control of the craft by the Worshipful Company of Pewterers, the manufacture, buying and selling of pewter and most interesting of all, the development and use of pewter are subjects explored in the catalogue, which also contains a bibliography, an article on the dating of pewter, and details and illustrations of the wide variety of pieces featured in the exhibition, from a crucifix figure to a spice pot. Many of the pieces are from the collection of an anonymous lender, whose support has made this celebration of the craft of pewter possible.

*The Photo Library.* Dirk Nishen Publishing 1987–8.

*River Thames in the late Twenties and early Thirties.* Photographs by George Reid, edited by Mike Seaborne. 1987. 32 pages. \$2.95.

*Streets of London in the late Twenties and early Thirties.* Photographs by George Reid, edited by Mike Seaborne. 1987. 32 pages. \$2.95.

*The London Blitz.* Photographs by Arthur Cross and Fred Tibbs, edited by Mike Seaborne. 1987. 32 pages. \$2.95.

*Island Women – Photographs of East End Women 1897–1983.* Introduced by Eve Hostettler. 1988. 32 pages. \$2.95.

*London in the Thirties.* Photographs by Cyril Arapoff, introduced by Mike Seaborne. 1988. 32 pages. \$2.95.

*Shelters – Living underground in the London Blitz.* Images by Bill Brandt and others, introduced by Mike Seaborne. 1988. 32 pages. \$2.95.

These are volumes 1 to 3 and 5 to 7 of *The Photo Library* (vol. 4 does not relate to London). Each is thirty-two pages with a slightly smaller number of full page photographs with informative captions. The cost of each is \$2.95, which seems a little high, but the booklets are well produced.

George Reid concentrated on topographical photographs of London scenes which were about to disappear; there are few pictures of the rebuilding which was taking place in his era. Reid took photographs from a collapsible stand (illustrated in volume 2), giving an elevated viewpoint, the stand converting to a wheeled trolley for moving on to the next location.

Cross and Tibbs were Constables of the City of London Constabulary, running a photographic department on an equipment budget of £10 a year! Tibbs' classic photograph of the Salvation Army building falling across Queen Victoria Street is included but most of the scenes are new, at least to me. All are City scenes.

The *Island Women* volume is as its name suggests concerned with people rather than places, and the captions give potted biographies of the subjects. The photographs have been copied from private collections, many taken by a photographic club in which members took turns to have their photographs taken by the local studio, in return for weekly subscriptions.

Arapoff was a Russian refugee and professional photographer who had a studio in Oxford, but took London scenes for various magazines. The subjects here include the Caledonian Market and the hop pickers, with a disproportionate section on a rent strike in the East End.

The pictures of the underground shelters of the London Blitz were taken by Brandt (until he fell ill) and a replacement photographer from the Ministry of Information investigating the management of the shelters in November 1940. The last three volumes under review are of social rather than topographical interest, but the first three are recommended for the art of Reid and the immediacy of the Blitz pictures. Recently, more titles have been added to the series, including one on the Charing Cross Road in the 1930s (all men in macs at bookstalls and buses in fog and snow), and another on Suffragettes.

— Roger Cline.

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*Westminster Abbey: the Monuments.* Photographs by Joe Whitlock Blundell, introduction by John Physick and captions by Jill Waters. John Murray. 1989. 128 pages. \$9.95.

Medievalists may bemoan the fact that the aisles and transepts of Westminster Abbey have virtually disappeared behind these huge memorials to the dead, but the damage is now irreversible and in compensation we are left with one of the finest exhibitions of sculpture in the world. This book, as the publishers point out, is the first guide to devote itself to these magnificent memorials.

Yet it is not really a guide book at all. For in spite of informative captions and a useful plan, only seventy-six out of a total of about 450 are represented. Moreover, hardly a signal example is shown in its entirety and anyone looking for the monument of a particular individual is more likely to find his hand or her foot or even an animal's head or a weeping cherub. What we are left with, however, is a collection of wonderful photographs of details which help us to view old favourites with a fresh eye and to see in them elements which we never knew existed either because they were too high up or because we viewed them too casually.

I shall certainly visit the Abbey with a more perceptive eye in the future.

— Peter Jackson

### Two London paperbacks

Batsford have recently published two fat paperbacks covering those ever-popular London subjects – street names and literary associations. At £9.95 each for about 400 pages of closely-packed and conscientiously-researched facts, they represent good value for money.

Gillian Bebbington's *Street Names of London*, first published in 1972, gives a brief description of nearly 4,000 streets and the derivation of their names. There is comprehensive cover of the area from Kensington to the City, and from Hampstead to the Thames, with a small strip of Southwark along the river. Although the maps are rather illegible, there is good cross-referencing of entries to a list of no less than 340 sources.

George Williams' *Guide to Literary London*, first published in 1973, offers thirty-eight walks, graded according to the number and importance of the authors, whose ghosts line the route. Although it is claimed that the longest tour can be covered in less than an hour's steady walking, some are fairly strong meat. One takes twenty-seven pages to describe and covers over 140 literary associations around Fleet Street and the Strand. However, using the good clear sketch maps, it would be possible to take short cuts or even simply enjoy this book from the comfort of one's favourite armchair.

— Patrick Frazer

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### Book Announcement

*Guide to Bayswater* by John Wittich and James Dowsing. Sunrise Press 1989. £2.30 plus 40p postage and packing.

In recent decades the district of Bayswater has been conquered – or so it seems – by an invasion of *bureaux de change*, small hotels and the general tourist horde. It is easy to forget that it was formerly an area favoured by fashionable society and successful merchants. In this connection, a new guide-book to the district has been published to help sweep away the current image of Bayswater as a kind of Kuwait or Heathrow annex.

*Guide to Bayswater* presents in a sympathetic way the out-of-the-way places to explore, such as the Greek cathedral, and the Tyburn memorials; it describes the legacy of superb stucco terracing and tells of the famous residents of past and present. The many churches are covered, as are the curiosities (for example the Pets' Cemetery), and the beautiful squares with which Bayswater is well endowed.

This new guide is available from Sunrise Press, 34 Churton Street, London SW1V 2LP or from the Museum of London Bookshop, the London Tourist Board Bookshop at Victoria Station, Army and Navy Stores Victoria and the Porchester Road branch of Westminster Library.

— Sunrise Press

### Soane's Monuments

The Soane Monuments Trust urgently needs £110,000 to enable it to commence the restoration of the monuments and memorials designed by Sir John Soane, including his own burial tomb at Kings Cross. Soane's monuments have not received the protection they deserve and some have been utterly neglected in spite of their exceptional quality. The Soane Monuments Trust has been formed in order to protect and restore the numerous exquisite tombs and monuments by Soane, many of which are decaying in London churchyards. The Trustees include Miss Dorothy Stroud, Assistant Curator at the Soane Museum for many years. If you can help, a cheque payable to The Soane Monuments Trust and sent to The Treasurer, The Hon. Piers Gibson, 25 Sumner Place, London SW7 3NT would be greatly appreciated. Additionally, the Trustees would value support in terms of attracting media or local authority attention to this cause – please contact Robin More Ede, 21 Bruton Place, London W1.

P.S. The model room at the Sir John Soane Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields has been re-instated and is open by special request.

### The John Stow Service

The Annual Stow Service and the Ceremony of the Quill will take place on 25th April 1990 at 12 noon in the church of St Andrew Undershaft, St Mary Axe in the City of London. The speaker will be Dr Vanessa Harding of Birkbeck College University of London, and her subject will be 'The Living and the Dead in Elizabethan London'. All members of the London Topographical Society and their friends are welcome to attend.

### Unidentified Building

When I was making the keys to Barker's 'Panorama of London from the roof of the Albion Mills' (LTS No 139) one building defied all my attempts to identify it. It appears on the skyline just above the Temple, and is clearly a large and important building. Yet a careful examination of maps of the 1790s reveal no such building along the sightline.

To make matters worse, the very same building appears in the watercolour made from a similar spot by Thomas Girtin in about 1800. This can be seen on plate xi in *The Panoramas of Robert Barker and Thomas Girtin* by Hubert J. Pragnell (LTS No. 109, 1968).

Luckily I am not alone in my bewilderment; friends and colleagues have also drawn a blank. The nearest suggestion has been the Foundling Hospital but it is not in quite the right place and it looks nothing like it. If any members know what the building is I will be most happy to hear from them.

Peter Jackson,  
17 Blandford Road,  
London W5 5RL.

### **Paperback value**

*The Art and Architecture of London* by Ann Saunders is now available in paperback, with notes which update the original edition of 1984. Phaidon £12.95.

### **The Publications sub-committee**

The London Topographical Society now has a Publications sub-committee. This energetic band of Council members is investigating the marketing of the Society's publications with a view to increasing sales. Plans are being laid for a new, illustrated catalogue and price list of LTS publications, which would be circulated to members and interested non-members.

As an article in the September issue of *History Today* points out, the LTS exists primarily to publish, and obviously if sales increase there will be more money available to finance more publications. The article in *History Today*, by the way, is most gratifying. Richard Cavendish paints an accurate picture of the LTS, its foundation, history and aims – and he is actually rather complimentary.

### **The art and architecture of gardens**

An exhibition with this title opens at the Heinz Gallery, RIBA Drawings Collection, 21 Portman Square, London W1 on 9th November and runs until 16th December. It will feature some hundred original drawings, from as early as 1609, and it runs in conjunction with the publication of Jane Brown's book *The art and architecture of English Gardens* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson £40), the culmination of the author's forages into the RIBA Drawings Collection, which have been most rewarding. On the same theme, Jane Brown will give a lecture at the RIBA, 66 Portland Place, London W1 at 6.15 pm on 21st November. The subject is to be 'The architect in the garden 1890-1990'. Please apply to the RIBA Bookshop or the Events Office for tickets, telephone 01-580 5533.

### **Post-war London**

Henry Grant, a freelance photographer working in London after the Second World War, recorded the many dramatic changes that were then taking place, in terms of new buildings and London life. An exhibition of his photographs will be held at the Museum of London from 5th December 1989 until 25th February 1990.

### **Vice Presidents**

It was formally announced at the AGM on 14th September that the Society has two new Vice Presidents, Miss Irene Scouloudi and Mr Stephen Marks. They have both served as Council members of the London Topographical Society for many years, indeed Miss Scouloudi must hold a record, having been a member of the Society for fifty years and a Council member for forty-two years. Stephen Marks was the Hon Secretary between 1966 and 1983, and of course edited the *London Topographical News* from 1975 until May 1989.

### **From London to Budapest**

Some of the Society's facsimiles have recently been on display in Budapest. Dr Helen Wallis reports that while visiting an exhibition in Buda Castle she was surprised and delighted to find some of the LTS facsimiles displayed

in the vestibule. Exactly how these publications found their way to Buda Castle is a mystery.

### **Extra-illustrated pennant**

Previous issues of the *London Topographical News* (nos. 16 & 18) have described copies of London books which were extra-illustrated by Charles Goss, librarian of the Bishopsgate Institute from 1987 to 1941.

A much earlier and more spectacular extra-illustrated London book was sold fairly recently for £44,000 (estimate £20–30,000) at Sotheby's. This six-volume set of Thomas Pennant's *Some Account of London* was well illustrated with prints and a few watercolours, but what made it really special was a total of 98 grey wash drawings by George Shepherd, dated between 1808 and 1819.

According to *Shepherd's London*, by LTS Council member John Phillips, George Shepherd's drawings were in demand as extra illustrations for standard works and most extra-illustrated copies of Pennant contain some. In particular, there are a considerable number in the magnificent copy prepared for Henry Fauntleroy (the banker hanged in 1824 for stealing money from his customers by forgery). This copy is now in the Soane Museum.

### **What use is a map?**

There is plenty of time to see this enjoyable new exhibition at the British Library, since it will be on display until the end of 1990. The selection of seventy items from the Library's collection illustrates the many different uses to which maps have been put over the centuries.

Only a few of the maps on display are hugely valuable or beautiful, since the idea is to see maps from the consumer's viewpoint, rather than the mapmaker's. The seven sections focus on maps for travellers, for public administration, to meet military needs, for defining property, for leisure, to convey knowledge and news, and in the service of business.

In these broad sections there is room for a great variety of map material. There are maps on cigarette cards, beer mats and postcards. There are maps for motoring, cycling, orienteering, mountain climbing and mining. There are maps scratched on birchbark by North American Indians and World War II 'escape and evasion' maps printed on rayon for easy concealment.

London maps include several Underground maps, as well as maps for insurance, water supply, road works and calculating cab fares. As the organizers say, 'cartography is the hub of a many-spoked wheel, reaching out to touch life at almost every point'.

There is an illustrated booklet to accompany the exhibition, price £2.95.

### **Ragged School Museum**

This little known museum occupies buildings that once housed the largest 'ragged school' in London. Situated at 48 Copperfield Road London E3, by the East London Stadium, the Ragged School Museum claims to be the only museum in the East End about the East End and the history of education and youth provision in London. The Museum's History Club organizes evening lectures (£1 for six talks, unwaged free). Information from the Secretary of the Ragged School Museum Trust, 46–8 Copperfield Road, Bow, London E3 4RR.

## Hornsey History Society

Anyone with a particular interest in Hornsey should investigate the Hornsey History Society, which is based at The Old Schoolhouse in Tottenham Lane. For a modest subscription members may attend a programme of meaty lectures – for instance Mary Kennedy will talk about The Caledonian Market on 13th December, and Anthony Quiney will speak about The Terraced House on 14th February 1990. Local walks and social events are organized, newsletters and bulletins issued and at present the Society is campaigning hard for the conservation of Hornsey Church Tower, so as to bring it into community use. Ken Gay will be pleased to answer enquiries, telephone 01-888 8891.

## LAMAS programme of meetings

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, LTS members are entitled and encouraged to attend LAMAS lectures. They are held in the Museum of London's lecture theatre, starting at 6.30 p.m. Refreshments are served from 6.00 p.m. in the foyer to the lecture theatre.

8th Nov	Huggin Hill Baths	John Maloney
6th Dec.	The historical treasures of Whitehall	Peter Lawrence
17th Jan.	Barking Abbey	Ken MacGowan
21st Feb.	Annual General Meeting†; The Bridge and its Influences	
		Presidential address
14th March	New light on Roman London	Nicholas Fuentes
18th Apr.	The Middle Saxons: Middlesex from c400 to c850	Keith Bailey
16th May	Pepys and his music in London, a talk and recital on virginals	Christine Brown

† the AGM starts at 6.15 p.m. with refreshments from 5.30 p.m.

## Contributions please

Members are invited to contribute to 'News and Notes,' also to submit articles (with simple black and white illustrations) to the editor of the London Topographical Society's *Newsletter*. Typed copy should be sent to Dr P.S. Hunting, 40 Smith Street, London SW3 4EP. The deadline for the next *Newsletter* is 14th March 1990.

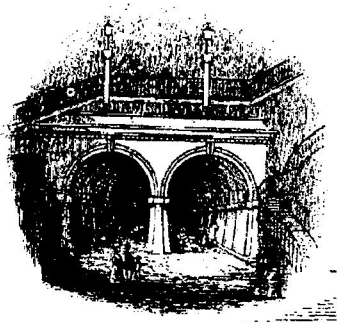
The newsletter is now being produced in a different manner; we hope to enlarge it with articles such as that by Simon Morris in this issue. If you wish to submit an article, it would be helpful, ensure accuracy and generally simplify things if you can send your article on computer disc. A copy saved in ASCII format, as well as one in your word processor's own format, should be included, with a note about what computer and word processing program you have used. In descending order of desirability, the following disc formats can be considered:

- Apple Macintosh 3.5 inch
- MS-DOS format 3.5 inch
- some CP/M formats 5.25 inch
- MS-DOS format 5.25 inch
- Apricot 3.5 inch (SS/DS)

Please contact the editor if you have any questions. If you haven't a computer, don't let that discourage you from writing for the newsletter!

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Editor: Dr Penelope Hunting.



The mouth of the Thames Tunnel, a vignette from *Collins' Illustrated Atlas of London*, 1854, reprinted in The Victorian Library series published by Leicester University Press, 1973.

Produced for the London Topographical Society by LTS member, Duane Lakin-Thomas, who runs a small Macintosh computer-orientated business located in Cambridge.