PUBLICATIONS SECRETARY

We are very pleased and relieved to be able to announce that we have found someone willing to be our Publications Secretary in succession to Mr R. H. Harrison whose tragic death in April we announced in the last newsletter. The Council at its last meeting in October appointed Patrick Frazer. He will, as an officer of the Society, join the council and he will be subject to election at the next AGM.

As hitherto, members should send their orders to the Hon. Treasurer (Anthony Cooper, 68 Regent’s Park Road, London NW6), but all other orders should go to:

Patrick Frazer, 36 Old Deer Park Gardens, Richmond, Surrey. TW9 2TL (tel 01-940-5419)

HONORARY SECRETARY

Your Hon. Secretary has moved to the country, but that won’t prevent him from doing the job as long as the Society is willing to have an out-of-town secretary. His new address is:—

Hamilton’s, Kilmersdon, Nr Bath, Somerset.

Telephone enquiries can be directed to the Chairman, Peter Jackson (01-567-9744) or other officers of the Society (Anthony Cooper, Hon. Treasurer, 722-7063, or Ann Saunders, Hon. Editor, 455-2171). General enquiries by letter should be sent to the Hon Secretary, Stephen Marks, at the new address.

AN INDEX TO ‘AGAS’

The Society’s publication for 1979 (publication no 122) will be a volume forming an index to the celebrated wood-cut map of 16th-century London. This map, ascribed (wrongly) in the 18th century to Ralph Agas by George Vertue, was more probably produced by a certain Giles Godshed in 1562–3. For all historians of London, whether they be school-children or university professors, it is a fascinating and vital document. It shows the whole of the metropolis in bird’s-eye perspective.

The index we are publishing has been compiled by Adrian Prockter, Senior Lecturer in telecommunications and electronics at the South London College, and Bob Taylor, a practising chartered quantity surveyor. Those who have—or are—assisting in identifying further buildings on the map include Dr Caroline Barron, Howard Colvin, Victor Belcher, Philippa Glanville, and John Schofield. The volume is being edited by John Fisher, research assistant in the Print Room of Guildhall Library, and it is being published for the Society by Harry Margary in association with Guildhall Library.

When published the volume will consist of 37 pages of map, being supplemented by Braun and Hogenberg’s map of 1572 and (we very much hope) both sheets of the ‘Copperplate Map’. The index proper will consist of approximately 1,200 entries enabling the user to identify streets, lanes, courts, boats, and individual buildings. The result will be a veritable A—Z of Marian/Elizabethan London.

Incidentally, those who wish to know more about the ‘Agas’ map and the two maps related to it, should read Stephen Marks’ The Map of Mid Sixteenth Century London (LTS publication no 100, 1964), available from the Society, £3.

Ralph Hyde.
THE SURVEY OF LONDON

Dr FHW Sheppard, General Editor of the Survey of London, has contributed the following comments:

The article on the Survey of London which appeared in the Newsletter of November 1977 contained two points on which I should like to comment.

Firstly, there is the matter of the great changes which have taken place in the form and content of the Survey since the publication of the first volume. These changes have their roots almost in the origins of the project, for although our founder CR Ashbee's great cri-de-coeur was for a register of 'all that London yet possesses of historic or aesthetic interest', his friends on the Survey Committee, who (after the first volume) actually did the work, and the London County Council upon which the Committee depended for the cost of printing the volumes, very soon envisaged something much more elaborate than an annotated list of buildings. The five volumes published by 1914 show that everybody concerned already realised that buildings must be considered within their context; and once this had been tacitly accepted—for no firm decision ever seems to have been taken—the concept of listing was virtually replaced by one of studying the buildings. All later changes (i.e. enlargements) of content derive from this first fundamental change in the attitude of the 'founding fathers' of the Survey.

During the last fifty or sixty years, and particularly since 1945, gigantic strides have been made in the study of architectural history. Gone are the days when any large house built between 1660 and 1720 could be gaily attributed to Wren. Gone, too, are the days when 'architecture' was thought to have come to an end in 1800 and vast tracts of suburban London could therefore be totally ignored. And historical research has become infinitely more exact and systematic. So if it was to have any value at all, the Survey has had to take account of these great changes, just as, for instance, architects take account of corresponding social and technical changes when they design a new building. Successive volumes have therefore, I think, become more comprehensive in coverage and more thorough in preparation; and if recent volumes seem to bear very little resemblance to the original one, this is merely one more (tiny) example of the colossal extent of the changes which have occurred in all spheres of human activity since the beginning of the present century. Secondly, there is the question of the area to be covered by the Survey, and the selection of individual areas for publication. No parish outside the old LCC County of London has ever been published, nor are there any plans to do so in future. The 'founding fathers' of the Old Survey Committee—who were after all volunteers, preparing successive volumes as a labour of love—probably abandoned the East End in favour of Chelsea and Highgate because these were the districts where many of them lived, and where many fine buildings still stood, largely unrecorded. Perhaps to balance this, the LCC (which between 1912 and 1953 prepared alternate volumes) concentrated on more central areas—Shoreditch, Holborn, Whitehall, the Strand, Bankside. More recently the LCC and its successor the GLC selected areas primarily because they were architecturally rich and because buildings there were expected to come under threat of demolition in the not too distant future—hence the volumes on Spitalfields, St James's, Soho, and Covent Garden. Still more recently the GLC decided to make a foray into Kensington in recognition of the greatly increased interest in Victorian architecture, and because it hoped that the Survey would prove able to make a useful contribution to the promotion of this new interest. In 1973, however, this foray was interrupted—only temporarily—when the Trustees of the Grosvenor Estate unexpectedly offered the Council access to their hitherto little used archives for the preparation of two volumes on their Mayfair properties—an opportunity too good to miss, this being probably the architecturally richest residential area in the whole of London. When this work is completed the present intention is to return to Kensington.

So the Council's selection of areas is not haphazard, although it may seem so at first glance. Many areas with high claims to consideration remain to be done—Greenwich and St Marylebone are obvious examples; but if the standards demanded by modern historical scholarship are to be attained, the necessary research inevitably takes time. It should however, be noted that in addition to its work in the preparation of the current Survey volume the Council has for many years been recording buildings all over London, either by photographs or measured drawings, and much of this very large collection of material will be used in future volumes of the Survey. Similarly the Council's archivists are constantly gathering documentary material into the Record Office at County Hall, and this too will be (or already has been) used by the Survey.

HAND-BOOK OF LONDON REPRINTED


Of the many encyclopaedias of London, Peter Cunningham's Hand-book of London, Past and Present is one of the most useful. In 1849 his Hand-book for London was published by John Murray in two volumes, followed the next year by a much revised and enlarged text in a more compact single volume. After an introductory section of nearly forty pages which might have been the first part of a more conventional guide book the main information is contained on 567 pages of entries arranged alphabetically, stuffed full of literary references and the results of Cunningham's own researches, ending with a thorough index personarum.

The second edition of this work, that of 1850 has now been reprinted with a new introduction by Michael Robbins, Treasurer of the Society of Antiquaries and a member of the London Topographical Society. As he points out, London in 1850 was largely an old world London, before the great Victorian improvements and before the railways had made their most significant impact. Thus its value to us is enhanced by the author's familiarity with much that would soon be gone.

The printing has been done by The Scolar Press which specialises in facsimile reproduction and has made as good a job of this as ever.
TWO VIEWS OF LONDON

In the introduction to his Handbook of London (1850, recently reprinted, see notice above) Peter Cunningham has a section on ‘How to Enter London’.

The best way of entering London is by the silent highway of the Thames. Our ancestors understood this thoroughly. An ambassador to the Court, at Westminster or Whitehall, was, on landing at Dover, received by the governor of the castle and the mayor. His next stage was to the great cathedral city of England—Canterbury; from whence the route was to Rochester, where the noble castle, with the ships in the Medway, would fill his mind with lofty ideas of our strength. His third stage was to Gravesend, the entrance to the port of London, where he was received by the Lord Chamberlain of the King’s household, and by the Lord Mayor; here he took water in the royal galley-foist, or barge, was rowed towards London, and landed with careful ceremony at the Tower, where the chief nobility, who were waiting to receive him, conducted him in great state through the chief streets of the City to the King at Westminster. The house assigned to him was generally in the Strand; and when his embassy was over he was attended out of London in the same observant manner. Now it is somewhat different—Englishmen and foreigners enter London by the 5 main thresholds of the place—the London Bridge station, Paddington, Waterloo-Bridge-road, Euston-square, and Shoreditch. The traveller, on reaching London Bridge, obtains an admirable and almost instantaneous view of the Thames, with its busy shipping and noble bridges—the bustle of streets crowded with carriages, carts, and foot-passengers—the noble dome of St Paul’s Cathedral, the massive grandeur of the Tower of London, the well-proportioned Monument—commemorative of the Great Fire, with the fine steeple of Bow Church, St Bride’s, St Magnus’s, and St Dunstan’s-in-the-East, four of men’s most famous works. A drive of less than five minutes will take him across one of the noblest bridges in Europe, and throw him at once into the heart of the richest and largest, best lighted and best drained, city in the world. This is the only station affording a favourable view of London at first sight. The others are very bad.

William Cobbett (Rural Rides, 1830) is not so enthusiastic: his entry for January 8th 1822 reads:

In quitting the great Wen we go through Surrey . . . towards Croydon, between rows of houses, nearly half the way, and the whole way is nine miles. There are, erected within these four years, two entire ailes of stock-jobbers’ houses on this one road, and the work goes on with accelerated force! . . . What an at once horrible and ridiculous thing this would become. If this thing could go on only for a few years! And these rows of new houses, added to the Wen, are proof of growing industry, are they? But how is this Wen to be dispersed? I know whether it be to be done by knife or by cautic: but dispersed it must be . . .

SUBSCRIPTIONS

At the AGM in June it was decided to increase the annual subscription to £5 at the beginning of 1980, so you still have one year to go at £2.50.

THE QUEENS ROAD DIP

Philip Richardis, a member of the Society, has sent the following comments on an unanswered point in our latest publication.

A question posed in Priscilla Metcalf’s excellent monograph ‘The Park Town Estate and the Battersea Tangle’ prompts me to supply the answer and also to add some notes on tramway services in Queens Road which might be of general interest to members through the medium of London Topographical News.

The question is posed on p.52 in note 10 to chap.3 and concerns the date of construction and reason for the dip under the railway bridge in Queens Road. Members may wish to amend the last sentence of this note to read ‘the dip dating from the first double deck trams in Queens Road on November 6th 1927’.

The whole history of tramway operation in Queens Road is but lightly touched on in the paper, but is of considerable interest largely on account of the constraints posed by the above bridge restricting the service to single deck cars and the weight restriction on the old Chelsea Bridge precluding a Thames crossing.

The South London Tramways Company came into being in 1879; The 1/4 mile long Queens Road line was authorised by Act of Parliament in 1880 and was to run between the entrance to Battersea Park nearest to Chelsea Bridge and Lavender Hill. Services began towards the end of 1881 with special ‘low-built’ cars painted red and pulled by two horses, the route being traversed in ten minutes. The Company’s depot was situated on the south side of Ingate Place on the bend between the railway lines. The building, which housed 28 cars and 108 horses serving the other lines as well, still remains, being now known as the Atlas Plating Works.

In 1885 there were trials with a battery powered electric car in Queens Road but this was not a success. However the South London Tramways Company was taken over by the London County Council in November 1902 and plans were immediately commenced to electrify the system. The Queens Road line was re-opened for electric trams on January 25th 1909. The Queens Road depot was then disposed of as redundant, the four single deck electric cars operating instead from Jews Row, Wandsworth.

The Queens Road service had never been profitable on account of both the shortness of the route and the smaller cars. However the single deck cars now in use were the same class that had been built to operate the Kingsway Subway in 1906 and it was natural to try and exploit this fact by running through services from Queens Road via the subway right through to Highbury. This and other destinations were not a financial success either and, by the time that the LCC Tramway services were given route numbers in 1913, route 32 had settled back once more to its old limits of Chelsea Bridge and Lavender Hill.

By about 1925 plans were afoot to reconstruct the Kingsway subway to take double deck trams and to scrap the ageing fleet of single deckers. As a result the future of the Queens Road service 32 had to be reviewed. In the event it was decided that the road under the railway bridge should be lowered to accommodate the double deck cars that were now to become standard for the LCC fleet. As already mentioned therefore the ‘dip’ was duly opened for double deck
service on November 6th 1927 in fact some four years before the Kingsway subway reconstruction was to make the old and picturesque single deckers obsolete.

Queens Road was to see trams for only another ten years for in May 1937 the new Chelsea Bridge was opened thus enabling at long last London Transport to fulfil the original intention of connecting services north and south of the river. Accordingly the 56 year era of trams in Queens Road unceremoniously came to an end and the 137 bus arose like a phoenix from the ashes.

As a postscript to the above it is perhaps ironic to note that the old bridge which has proved such a stubborn obstacle for so long is approaching the end of its useful life. Soon British Railways intend to replace its rusting frame with a brand new reinforced concrete deck, giving a few more inches of headroom and doing away completely with the southern most two of the three double track spans, thus allowing more light onto the roadway. The Estate can heave a sigh of relief at not having to bear the cost of this owing to the foresight of their predecessors of 1878 in paying a £400 composition in lieu of the liability for repair!

NOTES AND QUERIES

Our newsletter is issued twice a year. Space is available for you to ask any questions relating to London topography or if you have items of interest to members or information about research in progress. Please write to the Hon Secretary, Hamilton’s, Kilmerston, Nr Bath, Somerset.

THE GARDEN IN THE CITY

There is an ever growing number of books and studies on urban history in general and London in particular. There is also a good deal written on the subject of garden history and on London parks and gardens in particular. But in neither the general nor the particular instance does there appear to have been a serious study made of the relationships between the ‘City’ and the ‘Garden’. I began to realize that these were worth such a study through my interest in the significance of the 'paradise garden' as a persisting representation of an ideal existence. The ideal evolved, I found, as an outcome of urbanization, and the reasons for this were deeply embedded in religious and psychological needs common to a wide range of early cultures and civilizations. So I decided to concentrate on this relationship between the ‘Garden’ and the ‘City’, with a general survey of the origins leading on to a more specific study of developments in the western world. But the real object of my research is the relationship as it has been manifested in the case of London. From the Middle Ages onwards it is possible to trace a significant course that only really becomes clear with the effects of industrialization. Yet it is also one which at all periods has illustrated the basic needs examined previously.

I am drawing on literature and on letters and journals as much as on historical and topographical evidence. For the real proof lies with the reactions of those who at different times and in different circumstances have experienced the life of the city and responded to the presence of its gardens and parks as a vital part of their experience.

This is a wide ranging topic for research and it presents many problems. I have found too much postive and even enthusiastic response to doubt the value of perseverance, but I shall be most grateful and interested in any comments or suggestions from other members of the London Topographical Society.

Brigid Boardman, 54, St James Park, Bath.

ACCOUNTS FOR 1977

In our last London Topographical News our accounts were printed and should have included our Hon Auditor’s certificate as follows:

I report that the above Balance Sheet and attached Income and Expenditure Account have been correctly prepared from the books and records of the London Topographical Society.

Allan Tribe, Chartered Accountant,
City Gate House, Finsbury Square, London EC2.
April 5th 1978.

If anyone wishes to have a copy of the accounts with the certificate the Hon. Secretary will supply it on request.

Issued by Stephen Marks, Hon. Secretary of The London Topographical Society

Hamilton’s, Kilmerston, Nr Bath, Somerset

7.4