

LONDON TOPOGRAPHICAL NEWS

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TWO IMPORTANT LONDON PANORAMAS: NEW PUBLICATIONS BY THE SOCIETY

Panoramas have always had a special place in the Society's affections: we have published no less than thirteen panoramic views in all, representing nearly 10 percent of our entire output. These include the very first publication, van den Wyngaerde's View of London; the Society's grandest, the Kensington Turn-pike Trust Plan; our best-ever selling Rhinebeck panorama; and two more this year to celebrate the Barbican *Panoramania!* exhibition.

One of these, Hollar's *Prospect of London and Westminster taken from Lambeth*, was ready for members to buy at the AGM this year. It consists of two versions of the same four-sheet view. The first is the British Museum's unique copy showing London before the Great Fire, which may well have been a proof for a publication that had to be abandoned because the fire had made it out of date. The second version was published about 1707, having been modified to take account of changes resulting from the fire. Hollar's panorama comes in paper covers and costs £8 (members' price £6).

Our very latest publication, rushed out at the last moment in time for the exhibition, is a full-size facsimile of the six-sheet aquatint print, published in 1792, recording Robert Barker's 360° show panorama of *London from the Roof of the Albion Mills*. This is one of the most spectacular London views, and rivals the Rhinebeck panorama in its scale and interest. It is printed in full colour, makes a view 11 feet long when assembled, and comes in covers with an introduction by Ralph Hyde and keys by Peter Jackson.

This publication is a joint venture with the Guildhall Library, with the Society providing half the finance and collecting half the revenue from sales. This unusual arrangement fulfils the key objective of getting the panorama published in time for the exhibition and it allows the Society to share in what we hope will be a considerable success. Because we did not have time to warn members about the publication advance, there is no discount because otherwise those members who buy copies at the exhibition would be paying more than others. However, all members can order copies of the Barker panorama from us at the special exhibition price of £12.

We have decided to provide a dust jacket to improve the appearance of our monograph by Hubert Pragnell on *The London Panoramas of Robert Barker and Thomas Girtin* (publication no 109). Members who already have copies will be able to buy dust jackets at the next AGM. The new-look monograph costs £6 (members' price £4.50).

In 1989, but not as the publication for issue to members, we hope to offer members a volume containing papers which were given at a one-day symposium held at the Society of Antiquaries on October 21st 1988 on the subject of building materials used in London. Interesting papers were read on bricks, stucco, terracotta and faience, carpentry, structural ironwork, and internal fittings. Negotiations are proceeding.

THE SOCIETY'S HONORARY AUDITOR

Allan Tribe has been auditing our accounts since 1975. His resignation was announced at the AGM in view of his move away from London. A vote of thanks for keeping an eye on the Treasurers over the years was passed by acclamation at the AGM; we shall not lose touch with Allan since he retains his honorary membership of the Society.

Allan very kindly suggested a replacement Auditor, and we are pleased to announce that the person he suggested, Hugh Cleaver, has agreed to take on the work. Hugh will be known to many members through his work in LAMAS.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BANKERS' ORDERS

Members are reminded that the subscription for 1989 falls due on January 1st 1989. Unless you pay by bankers' order, please send your cheque for £10 (US \$20) to the Membership Secretary (Trevor Ford, 151 Mount View Road, London N4 4JT; tel 01-341 6408) or the Treasurer (Roger Cline, 34 Kingstown Street, London NW1; tel 01-722 6421) before the matter gets overlooked. If you would like to pay

by bankers' order in the future, a note or telephone call to either of these officers will bring the appropriate forms to you by return of post.

POSTAGE: HOW TO SPARE US THE COST

Postage and packing of publications for members who cannot collect them at the AGM are becoming an increasing burden to the Society: this year they cost us about £2.50 per member. Those members who work or visit central London could help us by having publications delivered to their offices (which we do ourselves) or agreeing to collect from the Bishopsgate Institute in the City or from an office in Chancery Lane (the nearest we can manage to the West End). If you can help us in this way, please let Trevor Ford (address as above) know. The newsletters will continue to be posted to you in the normal way.

MILLS AND OLIVER'S SURVEY SPECIAL OFFER

This is the five-volume facsimile reproduction of Mills and

Oliver's Survey of Building Sites in the City of London after the Great Fire of 1666. Issued as publication numbers 97-99, 101 and 103 some twenty years ago, we now offering all five volumes to members for the bargain price of £10, including postage and packing within the UK; overseas £12 (£15 if not paying with a British bank cheque). This offer is open until January 31st 1989, after which the price will revert to the list price of £16 plus p&p. Orders should be sent to one of the Joint Publication Secretaries, Simon Morris (22 Brooksby Street, London N1 1HA; tel 01-609 0890) and Caroline Ryan (26 Advance House, 109 Ladbroke Grove, London W11 1PG; tel 01-221 8161).

STOW SERVICE, APRIL 19TH 1989

The Annual Stow Service and the Ceremony of the Quill will take place on Wednesday, April 19th 1989 at 12 noon in the Parish of St Andrew Undershaft, St Mary Axe, in the City of London. The speaker will be Dr John Kent, of the British Museum's Department of Coins and Medals, his subject will be 'Stow and the perception of coinage in late sixteenth century London'. All members and their friends are welcome to attend.

PANORAMANIA!

Barbican Art Gallery, London, until January 15th 1989, 10am to 6.45pm; Sundays and public holidays 12 to 5.45pm; closed December 24th and 25th. Admission: adults £3.50, concessionary rate £1.75, and half price on Mondays and after 5.30 on other days. Catalogue: see review under Book Notes.

Members will hardly need reminding that there is a spectacular exhibition at the Barbican Art Gallery, celebrating panoramas, dioramas, cosmoramas and otheramas in all their various and often glorious forms. This eagerly awaited event is here at last, organised by Ralph Hyde of the Guildhall Library. Do not be put off by the totally unsuitable picture (shades of Ben Hur) used on the publicity material; the exhibition itself is well worth seeing.

Panoromania! celebrates the bicentenary of the first true 360° panorama, a view of Edinburgh, which was displayed by its inventor Robert Barker in 1788. Three years afterwards he coined the word 'panorama' for his invention and later erected the world's first purpose-built rotunda in Leicester Square. Barker got so close to perfection with his first specification that panoramas and their buildings were essentially unchanged more than a century later.

Barker's achievement is recognised by one of the highlights of the show, a nearly life-size modern reproduction of his panorama of London from the roof of the Albion Mills.

From Barker the exhibition looks backwards to precursors such as the Bayeux Tapestry, Trajan's Column, Hollar's Long View of London and even fairground peep-shows, and forwards to the host of other popular variations and derivatives, right up to the present time. Along the way we are introduced to dioramas (where lighting effects are used to bring an extra dramatic dimension, for instance by transforming daylight scenes into night), cosmoramas (highly sophisticated versions of the peep-show seen through a convex lens), moving panoramas (very popular in London theatres in the mid 1800s), and, more recently, photographic panoramas.

The exhibition is at pains to establish the artistic credentials of this highly successful form of popular entertainment. Eminent artists such as Constable turned their hands to panoramic drawings, while Clarkson Stanfield and

David Roberts were employed in painting the great show panoramas.

Several smallish original panoramas are on show, including the circular *Battle of Trafalgar*, attributed to William Heath, which is housed in its own separate walk-in tent. Sadly, not a single full-size British panorama has survived, in contrast with some other more fortunate countries. A number were set on fire by their lighting effects (sometimes destroying the whole building as well), and the rest had no economic use once the public stopped paying to see them. Rather luckier was the French *Battle of Rezonville*, which was chopped up and auctioned off in separate pieces in 1896; three of the surviving tableaux are on display at the Barbican.

The heyday of the British panorama is recreated by using handbills, guides, prints, and preliminary drawings. Among these are Girtin's wonderful sketches for his panorama of London, re-assembled here from a number of different collections. Also here is the original of 'our' Rhinebeck panorama, on display in Britain for the first time. Most fun of all is the working scale model of Stanfield's moving panorama of Venice, complete with changing scenery, gondolas sailing by, thunder and lightning, night scenes, all accompanied by appropriate music.

Not surprisingly, London plays a big part in the exhibition. It was one of the favourite panorama subjects, along with Paris and Constantinople. Special treatment is also given to London panorama buildings, particularly Barker's double-decker rotunda in Leicester Square (it is still there, in its role as the French church), Thomas Horner's Colosseum, and Daguerre's Diorama (another survivor), the last two in Regents' Park.

The exhibition ends with a look at the renewed popularity of large painted panoramas, with loving restoration of the rare survivals and a positive boom in brand-new ones. London again has its own — Roger Hallett's panorama of Bath is on show down at the Thames Barrier — but it is rather depressing to find that most of the others are nationalistic celebrations of triumphs on the battle field.

Patrick Frazer

'OFF-BEAT LONDON': GEOFFREY FLETCHER

Having visited the Barbican exhibition you may have some energy left to take in an exhibition of the drawings and a few paintings of Geoffrey Fletcher, entitled 'Off-Beat London'. This is in the Whittington Room of the Guildhall Library until January 8th (Monday-Friday, 9.30-4.45). Geoffrey Fletcher's drawings are most familiar to us in columns of a newspaper, but seen uncompressed in their original format they give a lively picture of the City and Islington over the past forty years.

SPECIAL OFFERS FROM THE CLIQUE

It is now possible to buy books published by *The Clique* at reduced prices, thanks to a 25% discount offered to all bona-fide members of learned societies. The books in question are *Cole's Register of British Antiquarian and Secondhand Booksellers* and the five subject titles in the *International Rare Book Prices* series: The Arts & Architecture, Early Printed Books, Modern First Editions, Science & Medicine, and Voyages, Travel & Exploration. Each volume costs £13.50, post free in the UK. The Editor, Michael Cole, is also offering to help members with information and impartial advice concerning the acquisition of old books or the establishment of subject-related collections or libraries.

To take advantage of these offers, write to *The Clique*, 7 Pulleyn Drive, York, mentioning your membership of the London Topographical Society.

BOOK NOTES

Panoromania! The Art and Entertainment of the 'All-embracing' View, by Ralph Hyde. London: Trefoil Publications in association with the Barbican Art Gallery, 1988. 215 pages, many illustrations (36 in colour). Hardback £25; paperback available during the exhibition, £12.95.

This is much more than just an exhibition catalogue, being a scholarly and readable reference work covering the whole panorama phenomenon. There are separate chapters on each of the main themes of the exhibition, with detailed descriptions of the exhibits slotted in as examples illustrating the text of the chapters. This works very well.

The chapters cover precursors, the early years, the Regent's Park Colosseum, dioramas, the peep-show improved, moving panoramas, the panorama revival, photographic panoramas, and the panorama today. Coupled with a detailed chronology and a splendidly comprehensive bibliography, this is clearly going to be an essential reference book for anyone remotely interested in the subject.

It is full of fascinating detail about the problems of designing, painting and constructing panoramas in order to give the greatest possible impact. Panorama fashions came and went with alarming speed, making fortunes for some and plunging others into bankruptcy. Poor Thomas Hornor, whose death-defying exploits precariously perched above the dome of St Paul's gave London perhaps the most marvellous panorama of them all, died miserably in New York, penniless and possibly mad as well.

Much more successful was John Banvard, an American who took London by storm when he hit upon the idea of giving a lively and amusing lecture to accompany his moving panorama of the *Mississippi River*, which he claimed to be the largest picture ever executed by man. Britain's answer to Banvard was Albert Smith, who had a terrific success with his *Ascent of Mont Blanc*, and incidentally coined the word 'panoromania'.

There is surprisingly little overlap with Ralph Hyde's other panorama catalogue, for the exhibition *Gilded Scenes and Shining Prospects* at the Yale Center for British Art in 1985. That concentrates exclusively on views of British towns and is mainly concerned with relatively small-scale paintings, drawings and prints. The *Panoromania!* catalogue has a considerably wider scope, giving a worldwide vista and covering much more fully the entertainment side of the panorama.

One might make two slight quibbles about the catalogue. First, there are a number of manuscript corrections to the text (accents, punctuation, and even spelling). Obviously things got pretty desperate at the end! Secondly, as is so common with exhibition catalogues these days, the colour plates are rather variable. Some are fine, but one or two are travesties of the originals. In particular, George Scharf's lovingly drawn panorama of Ratisbon, so full of incident and detail, suffers terribly and comes out looking both garish and insignificant. All the more reason, therefore, for going to see the original as well as buying the catalogue.

Patrick Frazer

The Almshouses of London, by Clive Berridge. Southampton: Ashford Press Publishing, 1987. 84 pages, numerous illustrations (23 in colour). £9.95.

The book is divided into three sections, North-east London and South of the River, to which many of the almshouses

moved as land prices increased in the centre, and the City, Central London, Highgate and the West. There is a short final section of travel directions to some fifty of the existing almshouses, a (very) sketch map together with a list of sources and an index.

We have a brief account of the existing almshouses and some of those now demolished, with details of the architect and of the charity which set them up, including the rules governing admission and the behaviour of inmates. After a first reading right through the book, I emerged breathless from the sudden jumps of location within each of the geographical sections and from the unconventional prose ('It' and 'But' are favourite first words of sentences). There are plenty of facts, but no overall picture, nor any detailed study of a particular location. I missed an account of the development of the almshouse as distinct from other charitable institutions such as hospitals and workhouses. I missed plans of buildings or details of accommodation such as chapels, luncheon clubs and wardens.

There is a profusion of illustrations by the author, but whether due to his technique or that of the printer, many appear in David Bailey-esque gloom. The colour illustrations are clearer than the monochromes (duplicating some views), but the exigencies of book production mean that there are no captions nearby (there is a list at the start of the book), and they are displaced from the text they illustrate.

The book has a pleasant appearance and covers an interesting subject, but it would have been greatly improved with the help of an editor.

Roger Cline

Nairn's London, by Ian Nairn, revisited by Peter Gasson. London: Penguin Books, 1988. 262 pages, illus, paperback. £8.95.

Penguin's decision to reprint Ian Nairn's classic guide of twenty-two years ago is one of the happier side-effects of the current craze for retrospective 'nostalgia' of the 1960s. It was fascinating to dig out my battered copy of the original edition, now beige with age, and to compare it with Gasson's handsome version on cream paper with enlarged typeface and illustrations. It is remarkable how, a generation removed from that distant 'swinging London', Nairn's counterblast to the bland generalities of Pevsner is still so relevant today. Gasson merely needs to dot a few i's in Nairn's narrative — buildings gone, buildings castrated, buildings converted, horrors arisen. The infectious enthusiasm still shines through: Nairn really *cared* for the architecture he wrote about in a way which has not been equalled. Read him on Liverpool Street or Lululand: Nairn's London has an extra dimension of vision no other guidebook possesses.

The present, however, always intrudes. In 1966, the then stubby little paperback cost 8/6d. Almost a quarter of a century later its larger-format successor increased by 2,000%!

David Webb

London and beyond: Landranger Guidebook, historical consultant Felix Barker, series editor Peter Titchmarsh. Ordnance Survey and Jarrold Colour Publications, 1988. 208 pages, including maps and photographs. £7.95

London and beyond is one of the first batch of new guidebooks designed to complement their publisher's own maps, the Ordnance Survey Landranger maps at a scale of 1:50,000. Until this publication there was no doubt that Michelin's *Tourist Guide to London* was the easiest to consult and handle, and the most well laid out guide available. A new guidebook therefore has to be measured against this paragon; it also, of course, has to be different, which places

its compilers in a very difficult position when its rival is so good.

Apart from the usual preliminaries, the main sections are two alphabetical gazetteers of places of special interest in Inner and Outer London, a series of walks in Inner and Outer London, a journey down the river, and a central London atlas. It is copiously illustrated with colour photographs and extracts from Ordnance Survey maps at 1:25,000, 1:10,000 and 1:4,000.

There are many good things in it, but there are also several criticisms of this new guidebook which cannot be overlooked. It is so tightly bound that the pages of the atlas running across an opening lose detail in the centre. The two sections of gazetteer make it difficult to find quickly the entry you want, because these pages, occupying more than half the book, have no running headline. The division into the two gazetteers seems to be arbitrary and unhelpful, resulting in two possible places to look for further information when you follow one of the walks. The walks themselves are well marked out.

Michelin has very few illustrations, but it seems to be far more informative and much better laid out than the new *Landranger Guidebook*: much less searching is necessary for cross-references; every page has a headline; specially drawn maps, models of economy and clarity, show just what the guidebook needs; and maps which span two pages don't go right into the gutter. For my money, and less of it, I would stick with *Michelin*.

Americans in London, an anecdotal street guide to the homes and haunts of Americans from John Adams to Fred Astaire. London: Queen Anne Press/Macdonald, 1988. 320 pages, illus, maps, paperback. £7.95.

The idea is not new — William Kent produced a volume on similar lines in the 1950s — but Morton, whose book first appeared in the US in 1986, has managed to assemble a very agreeable cast of expatriates for his anthology. He arranges his selections by street or place, then chronologically, with a classified list by profession, and a series of maps grouping his famous names by area. Strong on literary characters, Morton is equally comprehensive on show-business celebrities, a welcome change from a diet of presidents and ambassadors. Morton quotes extensively from memoirs, diaries and letters; there is, unfortunately, no bibliography nor even any notes. Nonetheless, Morton's industry has been impeccable: did you know Richard Dana's description of Covent Garden? or that Lots Road Power Station was built by a financier from Chicago who also had a considerable hand in the underground railway?

Morton's eclectic choice of personalities happily mixes the quick and the dead. William Burroughs and Howard Hughes rate alongside Thomas Edison and Helen Hayes. The book can be thoroughly recommended as a fresh view of an old city.

David Webb

Paul Barkshire's Unexplored London, with foreword by David Bailey. Wheathampstead: Lennard Publishing, 1987. 128 pages, mainly illus. £12.95.

'Unexplored London' is not a good choice of title for a book which actually shows us many familiar sights, but apart from that mere quibble there is no criticism to be made of this collection of outstanding black-and-white photographs by a real master of his instrument, a 10 by 8 view camera. Paul Barkshire has made a speciality of photographing London, not its people or the bustle and activity of markets and streets, but the fabric and the light and dark in which it is seen. He has selected a hundred and

four views, grouped in sections such as 'River views', 'Beckoning views', 'Open spaces', 'Favourite places', and captioned them with an intriguing mixture of history, personal response, and technical detail. His introduction tells us how he came, through dedication to his purpose of recording London, to build up his collection, selling to many of the main libraries, including Guildhall Library, National Monuments Record, and the Victoria and Albert. If ever you thought that taking good photographs was just a matter of pointing the camera somewhere in the right direction and clicking away, this book will soon disabuse you, with its brief notes of long exposures, return visits to get the right light, films and development, and the sheer superb assurance and quality of the pictures themselves: this is no mere picture book, but the work of an artist, and highly recommended. It is a pleasure to know that this volume is to be followed in February by *Paul Barkshire's Other London*, going outside the central area of the present work.

Memorials of the Book Trade in Medieval London: the archives of Old London Bridge, by C Paul Christianson. Woodbridge: D S Brewer, 1987. 66 pages, 33 plates. £29.50.

This book is number 3 of the *Manuscript Studies* published by D S Brewer. A major concern, therefore, of the author is the study of the archives themselves of the Bridge House Estate as sources of information about the production of manuscripts and manuscript-books, chiefly in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He shows the use and costs of parchment and vellum; the use of paper, of which large stocks were kept between 1404 and 1460, and its possible sources and costs; techniques of binding; developments in handwriting; and superb examples of decorative penwork. The thirty-three plates chosen effectively illustrate the subject.

The archives of the trust, set up to maintain London Bridge and the properties from which the income required was derived, have long been known as a rich source for the history and topography of London, both for the detail and variety of the information they contain and for their volume. Christianson gives a brief introduction on the work of the trust and examples of its activities in, for instance, the occasional decoration of the Bridge with painted statues and images. But he has used the records particularly to add to what little is known of London stationers, the term which by the mid fifteenth century included the limners, scribes, text-writers and book-binders. The Bridge Wardens were themselves big employers of such craftsmen and frequently leased shops to them. Thus, between 1395 and 1554 66 stationers were among the tenants, the majority holding shops in Paternoster Row. Within its relatively small compass the book contains useful contributions towards the history of the medieval London book trade we hope to see one day.

Elspeth Veale

Reviews of several other books recently received have been held over for the next newsletter. These include the new edition of Sir John Summerson's Georgian London (Barrie and Jenkins), which was first published in 1945 and has gone through many editions since; it is intended that a longer notice will be prepared of this most important work.

Edited by Stephen Marks, Hamilton's, Kilmersdon, near Bath, Somerset, and issued by Patrick Frazer, Hon Secretary of the London Topographical Society, 36 Old Deer Park Gardens, Richmond, Surrey.