Notice of the Annual General Meeting
7th July 1999

The ninety-ninth Annual General Meeting of the London Topographical Society will be held on Wednesday, 7th July. We shall be serving tea from about 5.45pm and the AGM proper will be held at 6.30.

We are privileged to have been granted the use of the Old Library, Guildhall, London EC2 (not to be confused with the 'new' Guildhall Library in Aldermanbury) for our AGM. The Old Library was designed by Sir Horace Jones (1870–72) and now provides a magnificent reception room. This is an ideal setting for the launch of Ralph Hyde's book on the City Ward maps (see page 2). Details of the arrangements at the AGM have still to be confirmed but you can be sure of an interesting and worthwhile meeting.

As usual, the annual publication will be distributed to members who attend the meeting, while others will be sent theirs by post, probably in August or September. Please write to the Hon Secretary if you would like to nominate anyone as an officer of the Society or as a member of Council, or if you wish to raise any matter under item 6 of the Agenda.

AGENDA

1 Minutes of the 98th Annual General Meeting
3 Annual Accounts for 1998
4 Hon Editor’s report
5 Election of officers and members of Council
6 Proposals by members
7 Any other business

Items 1-2 are published in this Newsletter.

– Patrick Frazer, Hon Secretary

99th Annual Report of the Council
of the London Topographical Society for
1998, incorporating the Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting 1998

The annual publication issued free to members during 1998 was The Whitehall Palace Plan by Simon Thurley. This monograph describes and analyses a coloured manuscript plan of the Palace. The publication incorporates large-scale reproductions of both the plan and an engraving by Vertue of a near-contemporary survey of the Palace.

In October the Society established an Internet web site to provide information about its activities and membership, as well as describing and illustrating its publications. LTS Toplog, a calendar of forthcoming London anniversaries, was launched in the November Newsletter. As usual, two issues of the Society's Newsletter were published and the Council held three meetings to discuss publications and administration.

At the end of 1998 there were 882 fully paid up members – an increase of about 3% – together with four Honorary members.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
of the London Topographical Society
1998

The ninety-eighth Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at the Banqueting House on 1 July 1998. The Society's traditional welcoming tea, with home made cakes, was organized by Joyce and Donald Cumming.

The AGM was attended by Mr Peter Jackson, the officers of the Society and about 260 members and guests. The Annual Report of the Council and the Minutes of the 1997 Annual General Meeting had been circulated in advance and were approved after noting that it had been suggested that any publication on CD-ROM should be additional to conventional publication on paper. The Hon Treasurer
reported that the Society achieved a small surplus in 1997 and ended the year with a healthy net worth. The Annual Accounts were adopted subject to auditing.

The Hon Editor described how two possible publications for 1998 had fallen through, but the situation had been rescued by Simon Thurley who had written the publication on Whitehall Palace over Christmas. In addition the Society had reprinted two of its most successful publications: the Rhinebeck Panorama and Booth's poverty maps.

The officers were all re-elected, viz: Peter Jackson as Chairman, Roger Cline as Hon Treasurer, Ann Saunders as Hon Editor, Simon Morris as Publications Secretary, Trevor Ford as Membership Secretary, Penelope Hunting as Newsletter Editor, Patrick Frazer as Hon Secretary and Hugh Cleaver as Hon Auditor. The other members of Council were all re-elected. The Chairman announced that Joyce Cumming had been appointed as an honorary member in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the Society.

Proposals from the floor included the establishment of an Internet site for the Society, a suggestion which received strong support. In addition, David Crawford proposed the creation of a calendar of significant forthcoming London anniversaries. It was agreed that Council would discuss how these ideas could be taken forward. After the business part of the meeting, Ann Saunders gave a talk about the art and architecture of the Banqueting House, with particular emphasis on the Rubens ceiling.

Cakes and Ale

Once again, Mrs Joyce Cumming is in charge of the catering for the AGM. The meeting is attended by ever-increasing numbers of members, so let all those who can bake a cake ply their skills - every sandwich, sausage roll, sponge cake, fruit cake or gingerbread is welcome and will certainly be consumed. Cake-makers step forward please!

AGM Raffle

The Society has commissioned Andrew Ingamells to produce a special limited edition print of London buildings through the last millennium and this will be the publication for the year 2000 (at least for those members who are paid up by 1 January 2000). Members may have seen "London Engraved", an exhibition of Ingamells's earlier works at Guildhall Library, from which a print of Lost London is offered by Roger Cline as the prize for the AGM Raffle this year. The print was priced at £300 at the exhibition and since all copies of the limited edition have now been sold, it should be worth more.

We hope you will buy tickets for the raffle either at the AGM or in advance from Simon Morris, our Publications Secretary. Tickets cost £2 each.

Note from the Hon Treasurer

I have not got the excuse of moving house this year but I am afraid once again I have not managed to prepare the Accounts for 1998 in time to include them with this Newsletter. I hope to have them by the AGM and any member requiring a copy in advance is asked to send me a stamped addressed envelope.

Publications for 1999

This year's publication is a carto-bibliography of the Ward Maps of the City of London compiled by Ralph Hyde. Back in 1967, Ralph published a list of seventy-five of these valuable and informative representations of individual enclaves for The Map Collectors' Circle, but as the years have passed he has discovered more and more examples, so our volume has 110 entries preceded by an Introduction which is both learned and readable. For each ward a map is reproduced. This is going to be an indispensable research tool and the Society is proud to be the publisher.

In addition, it is hoped to offer members a bone-bouche in the form of a colour map of the ecclesiastical parishes of the City of London (1903). This will be a great boon to family historians.

Please note that the Society's publications are no longer being sold at the Bishopsgate Institute. The storage facilities there are unsatisfactory and the entire LTS stock is to be moved to better accommodation at London Metropolitan Archives. Orders for the Society's publications should be sent to Roger Cline (address and phone number on the last page of the Newsletter) who has nobly volunteered to deal with orders.
London Telephone Exchanges
by
Simon Morris

"Are you Flaxman 2815?"
"Yes."
"I've got a call for you. You're through."

Until some thirty years ago the old London telephone exchanges were an integral part of daily life in the capital. Prior to the introduction of automatic dialling, the voice at the other end of the telephone when you picked it up would have been that of the operator, as Nancy Mitford recalled in the excerpt just quoted from The Pursuit of Love (1945).

You knew the name of your exchange as well as that of your postal district or the number of your bus.

"What's the telephone number here? 1129 isn't it?"
"No", said Miss Gorringe, "3925."
"Regent?"
"No Mayfair."

(Agatha Christie, At Bertram’s Hotel, 1965)

At a time when Londoners are facing their third enforced alteration to dialling codes since 1990, this article looks back at the evolution of the London telephone service from a user’s perspective. From 1985 until 1967 the exchanges were known by names rather than, as now, by numbers, and there is much to interest the topographer in the story of how these names were chosen, how subscribers reacted to them, and how they were shown on maps.

The origin of the Service

The telephone came to London in 1879 when the Telephone Company, founded to exploit Bell’s patent, established its first exchange at Coleman Street in the City. By the end of that year there were 200 subscribers served by two City and one West End exchange. The Edison Company set up in competition in the same year and they amalgamated to form the United Telephone Company in 1880.1

The United Company’s List of Subscribers, dated 20 July 1881, is probably the oldest surviving London telephone directory.2 It lists some 1,000 subscribers and mentions that 6,000 calls were being made each day. The great majority of subscribers were merchants, bankers and lawyers served by five exchanges in the City, one in Southwark and one in the West End. As the location of the exchanges suggests, the telephone was largely a business tool, and there were few private subscribers. Furthermore, telephones were normally only available during business hours; as late as 1889 the London exchanges were open from 9.00 am to 7.00 pm Monday to Friday, and 9.00 am to 5.00 pm on Saturday, although the two West End exchanges of Westminster and Heddon Street were open twenty-four hours a day, apparently for the benefit of MPs.3

The attractions of a telephone to a businessman were manifold:

"The saving of time and the advantage of having almost face-to-face communication by a Merchant or Manufacturer between his Residence, his Counting House, his works or his Vessels in the Docks, in addition to being able to recognise the voice of the speaker, and thus know that the employee is in attendance at his work, is immediately apparent..."

wrote the introduction to the United Company’s List of Subscribers.

Despite these advantages, the Bank of England held out against installing a telephone until 1902, while Schroders insisted that they were not listed in the telephone directory since incoming calls would distract from business.4

The concept of a telephone service was sufficiently novel to require a detailed explanation. Dickens’s Dictionary of London patiently explained that a subscriber rang his exchange and, on being answered by one of the attendants, gave the number he wanted and was at once connected with the wire of the other subscriber with whom he desired to communicate. Etiquette was important. The 1900 Directory exhorted users to be as polite to the operator as they wished her to be with them, while the 1920 Directory printed homilies like “SPEAK DISTINICELY; NOT LOUDLY” at the head of each page.

There was a certain mystique about the exchange and its operators:

"The National Telephone Company recruit their operators from the ranks of bright, well educated, intelligent girls... with pardonable feminine vanity the majority of the young ladies wear gloves while operating, to better maintain the contour and complexion of their busily worked fingers..."

Needless to say, operators were dismissed upon marriage.5

The London telephone service continued to expand rapidly, and by 1890, when the United Telephone Company was absorbed into the Glasgow based National Telephone Company, twenty-one London exchanges serviced over 5,000 exchange lines and nearly 1,500 private lines, such as between a warehouse and a showroom. The service was also becoming more accessible to the public with the introduction of public call rooms in shops, or kiosks in the streets, which passers-by could use at the price of 2d per call.

The long shadow of state intervention, which was to last until the privatization of British Telecom 100 years later, fell over the nascent telephone service in 1881. In that year the Government obtained a court order that the private telephone system infringed its pre-existing monopoly on telegraphy. The Government granted the United Telephone Company a licence to service the London telephone area — 5 miles around St Paul’s — for thirty-one
years, expiring in 1912. Indeed the United Company’s telephone directories stated in large letters on their front cover “Under Licence from the Postmaster General”.

The National Company, and its well-spoken operators, enjoyed a licensed monopoly in London until 1902 when the Post Office opened a competing telephone service. It allowed the National Company to continue exploiting the Eastern Metropolis and Central area, but restricted the National Company from further development in the Western Metropolis. In 1912 the Post Office, which had 53,000 lines served by thirty-three exchanges, acquired the National Company’s 75,000 lines and sixty-two exchanges. The number of exchanges may have multiplied tenfold since 1880, but as Figure 1 (dating from 1916) shows, subscribers were still concentrated in the City, West End and adjacent parts. Central, the Post Office’s main City exchange, had over 13,800 subscribers; exchanges in prosperous residential areas such as Kensington, Mayfair, Hampstead and Paddington each had over 4,000 subscribers. Those in areas such as Islington and Dalston, with a mixture of residential and light industrial subscribers, had between 3,000–4,000 each. Demand fell outside the centre; Stratford had 885 lines, Ilford 718 and Romford only 240.

At first a telephone number was simply a number and no more. While numbers were allocated in tranches to the various exchanges, it was not until 1895 that a telephone number was known both by a number and also the exchange name. Nearly all exchanges were named after the area they served, and in 1916 only a few had a made-up name. Of these, North, East and Western are descriptive of their location in relation to the City while only Hop, in Southwark, named after the hop factors’ rooms, makes a topographic allusion.

The inter-war telephone boom

In 1912 the number of subscribers stood at 95,000; by 1918 it had tripled to 275,000 and by 1930 there were nearly 700,000 lines. As London grew during the interwar period so too did demand for the telephone, which seems to have been in the order of 1,000 new lines each week during the 1930s. Increasing numbers of business and private households required access to the telephone network, and the spread of telephone exchanges to cater for their requirements reflected both the growth of the new suburbs and the spread of business away from the City to the West End. Growth was to an extent hindered by shortage of manpower and materials during the Great War. This situation persisted until 1920, but from then onwards every few months saw the opening of a new exchange. Figure 2 shows the location of London telephone exchanges in 1920.

Growth in demand can be discerned not only in the City and the West End, but also in outlying areas. Minories opened to relieve Avenue and London Wall exchanges in the City in September 1921, but such was the rate of growth that it was itself supplanted by Royal in November 1922. Clerkenwell and Chancery opened in 1920 and 1921 respectively to relieve City and Holborn exchanges, with Temple Bar providing still further accommodation in 1928. Hop, until 1926 the sole exchange in inner South London, was augmented in that year by Waterloo, Rodney for Walworth and Reliance for Oval. Increased business usage in the West End led to Mayfair subscribers being transferred in 1921 to two new exchanges – Langham and Grosvenor. Victoria, one of the most congested exchanges, was relieved by Sloane in 1925.
The new residential suburbs participated in this growth. New exchanges opened to serve Mill Hill in 1925, Cricklewood in 1927, Muswell Hill and Ilford in 1928, South Harrow and Kenton in 1929. Demand also increased in the older, inner suburbs: Maida Vale exchange opened in 1922, Palmers Green in 1925 and Fulham in 1929. Ten years later, Palmers Green was London’s fastest-growing telephone exchange and needed three new exchanges to relieve the pressure: Winchmore Hill, New Southgate and Ponders End.

While new subscribers would be allocated a number on the local exchange, existing subscribers were often shunted between exchanges, and some may have had the misfortune to have been transferred more than once. Broadway exchange, for example, was opened to relieve Stratford in March 1920, but both were succeeded by Maryland exchange in April 1922. Minories lasted barely a year before it was subsumed into Royal. Hampstead seems to have been a particularly volatile exchange: a number of subscribers were transferred to Golders Green in 1923 only to be handed back again two years later, while others were hived off in 1931 to the new Kentish Town exchange.

Some users welcomed the change – a correspondent to The Times thought that Langham operators got fewer wrong numbers than their Mayfair counterparts, but for most users this must have been a considerable nuisance, and a business customer objected to the cost of reprinting stationery at one week’s notice when his number was changed from Mayfair 5557 to Langham 7400. There was no chance of redress as the Directory contained the stern warning

“The Post Office reserves the right to alter exchange or number and the Postmaster General is not liable for any loss or inconvenience”

and one can sense the correspondent’s frustration, if not resentment, in having to deal with an apparently insensitive Government department.

The new exchanges were usually sited in the areas which they served, although Colindale and Edgware exchanges were for a while accommodated at distant Maida Vale exchange. The areas served by these new exchanges were at first extensive. Bishopsgate, when opened in 1922, covered Whitechapel, Bethnal Green and Haggerston. Speedwell, based in Golders Green, at first extended to Child’s Hill, Hendon and Finchley. However, as user density developed and new exchanges were created, areas shrank: North exchange, newly automated in 1935, served 2,200 subscribers in 1.5 square miles in Islington. Winchmore Hill exchange was planned to cover 2 square miles of Enfield and Palmers Green, while Mountview would cater for 4,940 subscribers living in 3 square miles of Hornsey.

Once opened, an exchange remained associated with its particular area and moves were unusual. Two exceptions were Fitzroy, which moved from Bloomsbury in the 1930s to Hornsey in the 1950s, and the peripatetic Kelvin which in forty years moved from Kensington via Clerkenwell to South Clapham.

How users viewed the service

There was, to judge from the correspondence columns of the newspapers, an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the operation of the London telephone service. Langham exchange might have got more right numbers, but it also provided more crossed lines. One user wrote to say how he had been good enough to butt into a threatening conversation between a bookmaker and an indebted punter, to point out that unpaid bets were unenforceable at law. Another, the Rector of Rotherhithe, was concerned about costs. Although calls within a 10 mile radius of Oxford Circus from exchanges within 5 miles only cost 1d, he was a small user and so his calls (perhaps including line rental) averaged 10d each; another correspondent estimated his calls at 3 shillings each. Costs were still a bone of contention ten years later. The MP for Kingston asked for the 10 mile call radius to be extended to the new Elmbridge exchange in Surbiton, but this was refused on financial grounds. Concerns over the quality of service were not misplaced; a delegation from the London Chamber of Commerce was informed in 1922 that, notwithstanding improvements since 1918, there was still over 3% of calls connected to wrong numbers, and 20% not completed on subscribers’ first demand.

The incidence of wrong numbers at a time when calls were still manually connected underlined the importance of exchanges bearing distinctive names. At first this objective was attained by naming each exchange after the area it served, but by 1920 the most obvious names had been used up, and names of sub-districts or of local streets were taken, such as Latchmere for Battersea, and Chancery for Holborn. A name such as Speedwell (for Golders Green) called for an explanation, and the Post Office explained that a large number of names which were indicative of the district had been considered, but were rejected because of liability of confusion with other exchange names.

This approach may have worked in most cases, but the scope for confusion was considerable. Indeed, subscribers were expected to have a theatrical versatility when it came to pronunciation: the preface to the 1930 Directory called for one to be pronounced "WUN" and three as "THE-R-REE". Despite such instructions "Hop" exchange serving Southwark sounded all too like "Park" exchange serving Kensington, and the residents of Kensington (though, oddly, not those of Southwark) were quick to air their grievances. The name of "Hop" should be changed, wrote one disgruntled subscriber of Kensington; a neighbour concurred.
saying he was tired of being rung up in the small hours in mistake for a garage in Bermondsey which bore the same number. Three years later the problem was unresolved; a correspondent who was proud to belong to the race of “Parkers” called for the odious “Hoppers” to be abolished. He was rung up four or five times a day in error for the corresponding Hop number, but had complained without avail because, when he had his line watched by the supervisor, the operators were more careful. Yet another correspondent proposed that the exchange name be changed to “Beer”, perhaps because he was constantly disturbed by callers seeking to report Southwark drunks to the Police. Other telephone users also suffered from misdirected calls: Hampstead could be – and was – confused with Wanstead and Hounslow, while Putney sounded rather like Rodney.10

**Naming the automatic exchanges**

The problem of exchanges which sounded too alike – certainly when pronounced in haste – became, with the advent of automation, a more complex issue to address. Together with the growth in demand for the telephone, this resulted in increasingly ingenious names being adopted for new telephone exchanges. An automatic exchange was one where a caller could dial a number directly without needing to speak to the operator and where, as at present, the state of the line was indicated by different tones such as available, engaged or unobtainable. Epsom was one of the earliest automatic exchanges, operating from as early as 1912, and by 1920 many of the great cities such as Leeds and Derby had automatic exchanges. London, however, did not, possibly because of its size and the legacy of two competing systems only recently having merged. The first automatic exchanges, Holborn and Bishopsgate, did not function until 1928, although planning began much earlier and Langham exchange, which opened in 1921, began its numbering at 1,000 in order to facilitate automation without needing to change individual numbers. From March 1926 one, two and three digit numbers were abolished so that, for example, Gerrard 13 became Gerrard 0013. This must have come as a particular blow to Selfridges who had for many years prided itself on being Gerrard 1.

Converting an exchange to an automatic working was a major exercise. First, each subscriber’s equipment at the exchange required alteration. Then, subscribers had to be instructed in the techniques of dialling, and to understand the meaning of the different tones. In 1936, for instance, 80,000 home visits were made to subscribers to demonstrate methods and tones, while advertised public demonstrations were held for several weeks at affected exchanges.

London used the “Director” system which required the first three letters of the exchange name to be dialled and in preparation for automation it was necessary to alter a number of exchange names so as to ensure that the first three letters of the name were not numerically equivalent to the name of any other exchange. Figure 3 shows a contemporary dial and how numbers and letters inter-related. Calling HAMmersmith, for example, involved dialling the same numbers as Hampstead (426), and Hammersmith was therefore changed to Riverside. Dialling the letters SUtton transmitted the same signal as dialling PUTney, so Sutton subscribers were transferred to two new exchanges, Vigilant and Fairlands. PURley was equivalent to STReatham, so Purley was converted to UPLands. Similarly, Hornsey was changed to Mountview, Bromley to Ravensbourne, Dalston to Clissold and East Ham to Grangewood in order to avoid confusion. New exchanges were also given distinctive names such as Froshiberg for Earls Court, Gladstone for Cricklewood, Fairchild for Croydon and Tudor for Mill Hill. Figure 4 shows the London telephone exchanges in 1930; compared with the 1920 map, growth is noticeable both in the centre and the 5 to 10 mile ring.

Determining a suitable name for a new exchange was a difficult business, and the Post Office explained that it normally considered about thirty alternatives before making a final choice.11 Uplands was selected for Purley after discussion with the municipal authorities because the exchange was situated on Purley Downs and, incidentally, adjacent to the Downlands exchange. Christening the Acton exchange was particularly troublesome. ACTon was unacceptable because it was equivalent to BATtersea, as was the town council’s suggestion.
of OAKtown (a reference to its original name and coat of arms), because dialling “0” communicated with the operator. Eventually the happy compromise of ACOrun was adopted. DEEpwater seemed a splendid name for a new exchange in the City before City financiers pointed out that it had unfortunate connotations.

The chosen exchange name had to be phonetically distinctive when used by callers from manual exchanges, numerically distinctive when used by callers from automatic exchanges and, very important, acceptable to the local subscribers. Famous men, it seems, were a safe bet. Indeed the Post Office telephone department had a “poets’ corner” with ARNold in Wembley, BYRon at Harrow and WORdsworth for nearby Cricklewood. Both public and staff joined in the fun: FLAxman exchange in Chelsea contained a selection of his sculptures in the vestibule, while POPesgrove exchange was decorated with Pope’s bust. Such names were often apposite: HOWard commemorated the prison reformer who had associations with Ponders End, as had LIVingstone with Norwood and MACauley with Battersea (although strictly speaking he lived in Clapham). Topographic allusions were also made: Iford had VALentine after Valentines Park; North Finchley had HILLside as that was its situation. SILverhorne described Epping Forest adjacent to Chingford (which had to alter because it clashed with Chiswick).

All of this amused the leader writers of The Times no end:

“A pretty fancy has played over the naming of the new telephone exchanges in London”

they wrote. Were the names deliberately chosen with a touch of poetry so as to convey an inappropriate illusion, they wondered? Was Kentish Town really so far from London to deserve the name GULiver? And, as for the poets, WORdsworth was an excellent choice for Cricklewood – after all, it was a good way towards the Lake District. But how about a GLEndower, so that subscribers might call up spirits from the vasty deep? Fortunately this suggestion was ignored.12

The public was alert to these name changes and sometimes came up with their own suggestions. One Earls Court resident objected to the proposed Frobisher, saying that it was an awkward three syllable name. Furthermore, there were already enough “sailor” exchanges (like Rodney), so why not use Hunter, a surgeon who had associations with Earls Court? This was not acted upon, although Hunter was later used for the Marylebone area.

More seriously, subscribers were sensitive to the social nuances of exchange names. When the Post Office suggested BETHnal Green for that district’s exchange, the borough council was happy but subscribers objected with such vigour that it was suggestive of slums that, on the eve of opening, the name was changed to the numerically equivalent ADVance. Similarly a number of Bloomsbury resi-
The solution to the naming problem was All Figure Numbering. Between March 1966 and October 1967, all London exchange names were converted to numbers. In many cases, at least in the inner area, the exchange numbers were the numerical equivalent of the first three letters of the name like 222 for ABBey, 485 for GULLiver and 837 for TERminus. Users of these numbers would have continued as before. For many other exchanges the conversion was more radical. ACOrn, for example, became 992 and SPEedwell 455. Indeed, the whole point of the exercise was to obtain numerical combinations previously unattainable.

Up to the early 1970s, when the old routings were disconnected, a user could dial either CHI (the old name) or 994 (the new number) for an exchange like Chiswick, and such was the familiarity with the old names that in 1970 one-quarter of calls were still being made to exchange names.

Notes
1. The history to 1912 is taken from F.G.C. Baldwin, History of the Telephone in the UK (1925).
2. This Directory, and the others quoted from, is held in the Guildhall Library's extensive collection.
6. Most of the data in these and the following paragraphs is taken from The Times. Rather than list over sixty individual references, only particularly significant ones are stated and the rest can be traced by looking in The Times Index under Telephones: Exchanges for the year in question.
11. Ibid, 18.4.1936.
14. This section is based on data in London's Telephone Exchanges.

I am grateful to Kate Jones for the quotations, and to Catherine Lomas for photographing the maps.

Donald King's "Thames" Entertainment

by John Earl

Some time ago I acquired the manuscripts of two "musical lectures", written in a large, clear hand in bound folio volumes. They are undated and neither has a title page nor indication of authorship, but it is clear from internal and external evidence that they were written by Donald William King in the 1850s and revised from time to time thereafter. King (1812-86) was an actor and tenor vocalist. He sang in opera at Drury Lane and elsewhere and was appointed principal tenor at the Foundling Hospital in 1845, but seems to have been best known as a ballad singer on the concert circuit. He was also a member of a society or group of friends calling themselves "the Constellations", holding harmonic meetings at the British Coffee House in Cockspur Street.

The first lecture, about Charles Dibdin, actor, dramatist and composer of sea songs, was called The Ocean Bard. The second, perhaps of more interest to members of the London Topographical Society, was entitled Up the Thames, or a Land and Water Progress of Local and Descriptive Recollections.

I have also recently acquired a handbill which quotes newspaper reviews of both lectures. This is dated 1857, but references in the original text, taken with a number of amendments inserted on pasted slips indicate that Up the Thames was probably written about 1853/4 and remained in King's repertoire for at least fifteen years, since the last revisions are dateable to 1868/9. His notes show that he had, at an early stage, reduced the length of the lecture to one hour and ten minutes "without songs". There were eleven songs (named at various points in the manuscript, but not written at large) so, allowing for a short interval, the duration must have been about two hours. King did not use magic lantern slides, relying entirely on his ability to paint pictures in words, admittedly rather overblown at times. Neither did he take encores – a surprising self-denial for an artist conditioned by applause in theatre and opera house.

King's progress up river from the Nore, "broken by occasional landings at some of the more remarkable sites on shore" begins to have London interest when he reaches Gravesend, "a place dear to cockney recollections – to fun, flirting and first love... on long, lazy, lounging, listless afternoons" (he confesses to a love of alliteration) a place recently touched by "the hand of improvement... in stucco-compo, lath and plaster and other forms of modern art". Rosherville Gardens and its "palace of enchantment where ten thousand may dance or twenty thousand dine" is, inevitably, described in glowing terms, but there is also a surprising reference to Gravesend's "vast theatre" (where was it?) and to Tully's Bazaar, another favourite place of
Thames and the distant Surrey hills from his bedroom window as he dressed to go to the Chapel Royal, presumably as a chorister, on Sunday morning. “All has changed. The smallpox in the shallop, the skiffs, the funny and wherries have disappeared, and instead of the solitary steamer (Sundays only, to Richmond) “hundreds of them are conveying their tens of thousands and landing them daily on piers built almost in the middle of the stream, while the stairs at which a number of smartly dress’d watermen ‘used for to ply’, those at the Savoy, Fox under the Hill, Hungerford and Whitehall... are almost forgotten”.

He recalls the annual revelry of the race for Dogget’s Coat and Badge starting at the Swan Tavern alongside old Hungerford Market, “as dirty and wretched a place as could well be imagined”, where a greasy pole was climbed for a leg of mutton. A reference at this point to Brunel’s “beautiful suspension bridge” is deleted. The substituted passage has him deploring the erection of “another mass of brick wall by the London, Dover and Chatham Railway (sic), which has deprived us of the magnificent view of London from Waterloo Bridge”. By way of counterbalance, the dismissal of Westminster Bridge, “about which the less said the better” is replaced by a reference to “the beautiful bridge of Westminster”.

King, who saw the old Houses of Parliament burn down in 1834 and had “ever since seen the new ones in course of building”, wonders how long works will continue, “in conjunction with repairs already necessary”. His office, he says “is not that of a critic” but he nevertheless ventures the opinion that Barry and Pugin’s work might have made a sugar decoration for “some gigantic Twelfth Cake” where it would be “more in place. For our foggy, smoky and (blank) atmosphere we require grandeur and breadth of outline and not elaborate detail and prettiness which nobody can see. All the crevices (sic)... are already filled up with soot, but as there is good in all things... will form a house of refuge large enough to receive all the distress’d sparrows of London”.

Passing the “low-lying, Dutch-looking shore of Lambeth” and the “repulsive prison house of crime” at Millbank, he looks sadly at the Vauxhall Gardens, now in final decline, but demanding “some slight mention before they are swept away from sight and memory to make room for cheap and nasty dwellings which the building mania of the age has judged to be the most appropriate for the workers and artizans of our great community”. The end actually came in 1859, necessitating yet another amendment to the text.

After Chelsea Hospital and Cremorne, King notes the new Battersea Park and, distantly, “the flashing
domes of the Chrystal (sic) Palace” at Sydenham. At Battersea Bridge he remembers the drowning of several of the Constellations Club members while rowing up river to their summer dinner which he, King, had been unable to attend. A tablet to their memory, he says, is in old Chelsea church. He then offers “Nan of Battersea” as a pretty song “not without some application to the subject”.

Fulham (pencilled aide memoire in the margin: “Pottery”), Putney, “Barnes Elms”, Chiswick, Syon, Richmond (another obvious cue for a song), Twickenham, Pope’s Villa and Kew are all passed, on the way to Windsor, where the tour ends. Also described are Teddington, “the last unimproved rural village to be found on this side of the encroaching, ever growing metropolis” and Hampton Court, beyond which “the sound of the thrasher’s flail... and lowing of cattle are heard”. Egham, “once famous for its postings and its train of long stages” is noted as a place “fallen into sleep” by the coming of the South Western and Great Western Railways.

The other (Dibdin) lecture called for comparatively little amendment during its continued use but in one place the name “Panopticon” (in Leicester Square) has been amended in pencil to “the Alhambra”.

This kind of lecture – it was really a one-man entertainment – was not uncommon. King’s friend, fellow vocalist, songwriter and music publisher, Edwin Ransford (1805-1876) for example, also toured with solo “concert entertainments”, but manuscripts for such shows seem to have had a low survival rate. Donald King was no historian but he was probably a reliable reporter, writing of London and the Thames in a time of change which, to him, must have seemed rapid. The most radical transformation to the River, however, the building of the Embankments, is not mentioned by him, having started only during the very last years of currency of his Thames lecture. Indeed, the visual disruption caused by this massive engineering project may have deterred him from attempting any further updating of his text.

King’s literary style was, perhaps, a touch flowery and anecdote-studded, but its reading has to be imagined “live”, with the delivery of a practised actor who could slip effortlessly from spoken word into piano-accompanied song.

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Fitzhugh House, Mile End Old Town, Stepney 1738-1849
by Derek Morris

John Rocque’s surveyors accurately recorded a large house on the south side of the Mile End Road in the hamlet of Mile End Old Town but little has subsequently been recorded about its origins and the subsequent development of the site. The house can be clearly seen opposite the Trinity and Vintners Almshouses, at the top of sheet 7Bc of the Society’s A to Z of Georgian London, illustrated below.

Mile End has long been popular with merchants and mariners, many of whom had strong connections with Trinity House and the East India Company.1 Amongst them was Captain William Fitzhugh, who between 1714 and 1730 made several voyages to Batavia, Madras and Calcutta in the Derby. In 1713 he had married Mary Pyne and it was his widow who had the new house built to show her wealth, for she held £9,000 of East India stock in 1738. Perhaps she also had a feeling that if others were to follow her lead, Mile End might rival Hampstead or Richmond?

Isobel Watson has described the pre-nineteenth century development of Mile End Old Town and pointed out the important role of Edward Lee, one of the prominent landowners.2 It was from Lee that Mary Fitzhugh purchased the Little Field, which had an area of 3 roods and 24 perches.3

It is not yet known who built the house but, given the size and specification for this unique house, one candidate must be John Bartholomew, who was Master of the Tylers’ and Bricklayers’ Company in 1742. His son, also John, lived and worked in Mile End Old Town from 1745 to 1775 and was elected Master of the Company in 1763 but “desired leave to fine”.4 John Bartholomew Jnr was involved in several developments in Whitechapel and Mile End Old Town.

On 7 August 1738 Mary Fitzhugh, widow of St. Dunstan’s, Stepney, insured with the Hand-in-Hand Insurance Company “a brick house on the south side of the Road a little beyond the turnpike at Mile End... standing clear of all other Building, her Dwelling House”. The house was 41 feet by 51 feet and had three storeys and a pediment, leaded windows, eight rooms wainscoted with right wainscot and two rooms with deal. There were seven marble chimney-pieces and five made of Portland stone, which was also used for the staircase.5

The significance of this house was shown by the insurance value of £1,800, more than double that of any other house in Stepney including the famed houses on the east side of Stepney Green. Later the insurance value was increased to £2,000. Other houses in London, which by virtue of similar insurance values confirm the significance of the Fitzhugh House, were those of Sir William Heathcote on the north side of St James Square, insured for £1,300; Lady Isabella Finch’s house in
Hill Street on the west side of Berkeley Square was “fitted up in a grand manner” and insured for £2,000; Simeon Gideon, the famous Jewish financier of Lincoln’s Inn Fields, insured his house for £1,500. By the end of 1744 Mary Fitzhugh had built coachhouses and stables on the west side of the yard and these were insured for £300. Built entirely of brick they measured 76 feet by 22 feet.

Fitzhugh House, with a rack rent of £60 in 1780, was occupied over the next 100 years by a series of important merchants and a widow, as follows: Simon Rogers (1745-52), son-in-law of Mary Fitzhugh; Mary Rogers (1753-55), widow of Simon and daughter of Mary Fitzhugh; John Henderson (1756-62), with stock valued at £200; George Higgenson (1763-67); Boyce Tree (1768-80), a malt factor who was Master of the Grocers’ Company in 1778; Capt John Thompson (1781-87), ropemaker and factor, who insured his household goods, apparel, plate, china and glass for £1,000 in 1781 and regularly enjoyed the social life of Bath, where he died in 1787.

Samuel Liptrap (1788-89), a prominent starchmaker from Whitechapel, and an Assistant in the Distillers’ Company in 1777; John Liptrap (1790-99), starchmaker and son of Samuel; William Sims (1805-1824), a distiller. Between 1824 and 1846 the land tax registers are missing for Mile End Old Town but it is clear from the available maps that Fitzhugh House maintained its prime and separate position throughout this period, whilst the surrounding land was being developed.

The house had been owned throughout this period by the Fitzhugh family and finally about 1849, Thomas Fitzhugh, of Plas Power, near Wrexham, Denbighshire, began to negotiate for the development of the estate with William Sykes, a timber merchant from Osborne Street, Whitechapel. In 1852 Fitzhugh demised and leased unto Sykes a parcel of ground on the south side of the Mile End Road on which 15 messuages had been “lately erected... called or known by the name of Sykes’ Terrace”. Sykes was to hold the land for eighty years from 29 September 1849 and after an initial payment of £160 the annual rent was £180, payable quarterly. Sykes then developed the west side of Jubilee Street, formerly Mutton Lane, and shortly afterwards infilled the site with Lisle Street and Cecil Street.

Fitzhugh House and those of other merchants along the Mile End Road and around Stepney Green demonstrate the wealth of the residents of the hamlet in the middle of the eighteenth century. However, no-one else was to build a house of such prominence as that of Mary Fitzhugh. The next major development in Mile End Old Town was Assembly Row (1765) where the rack rents were between £16 and £26. Later, in 1777, the famous Revd Samuel Brewer of the Stepney Meeting insured for £700 his new house on the south side of the Mile End Road, which had a rack rent of £30 but again this did not rival the house of Mary Fitzhugh.

Notes
3. Middlesex Deeds Register MDR 1737/1, nos. 77, 78, London Metropolitan Archives.
5. Guildhall Ms 8674, vols iv, iv, Hand in Hand Policy no. 64367.
6. Guildhall Ms. 8674, Policies 68455, 69846, 70925.
8. Guildhall Ms. 11588, vols vii, viii.
10. Greenwood 1824, 1825, 1826; Cross 1835; Crutchley 1846.
12. MDR 1855/1, no. 488, London Metropolitan Archives.
News and Notes

Eltham Palace and Courtauld House

Eltham Palace and Courtauld House re-open on 16 June having been closed for eighteen months while English Heritage, which took over the property in 1995, undertook a major restoration costing £2 million. The palace, redolent of the Plantagenet and early Tudor monarchs, fell into disrepair in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the splendid Great Hall, built by Edward IV between 1475 and 1490 survives, its hammerbeam roof one of the best in the country. The bridge built for Richard II is still intact and the moat, which the "little princes in the Tower" and their sisters knew, remains, though the only evidence of the Tudor west wing where Henry VIII and Elizabeth I were schooled is the sunken archaeological remnants.

Stephen Courtauld and his wife Virginia were given a Crown lease in 1933 and permission to build a house on condition that they restored the Great Hall. The home they created is probably the finest – and only – example of a large country house in the art deco style in England, most other interiors of the period being public buildings such as Claridges. The furniture and carpets specially commissioned for the rooms were removed when the Courtaulds left Eltham during the war, but English Heritage, using archival material and photographs taken for Country Life in 1937, invited Donegal Carpets to recreate the Marion Dorn carpet in the entrance hall (the original is in the V and A) and the Mulberry Company have matched original textiles for the new curtains, chair covers and sofas. Fortunately, the wood panelling in the hall with its unusual marquetry pictures of Italy and Stockholm was left in situ, and sculpted window shutters and the false painted plaster ceiling beams in the drawing room are also still in place.

From a topographical viewpoint, the growth of London can be appreciated from the west lawn of the palace. The royal hunting grounds – Middle Park and Horn Park, for instance – were only developed this century (nearby roads bear their names) but patches of woodland and fields are still to be seen as the suburbs stretch towards the City. Old St Paul's, a solitary landmark in the distance 400 years ago, and its domed successor were gradually encroached but it is easy even now to identify the cathedral among this century's forest of tall buildings.

Eltham Palace and the Courtauld House will be open from 16 June, Wednesday to Sunday 10am-6pm (5pm in October, 4pm November to March). Tel 0181 294 2548.

- Denise Silvester-Carr

London Triumphant

In 1943 a book entitled London Triumphant made its appearance. Its publishers were Studio Publications, and it was an instant best-seller. Text and illustrations were the work of a quiet but now very angry topographical artist, Sydney R. Jones. Jones was born in Birmingham in 1881, studied at the Birmingham School of Fine Arts, and until the outbreak of the Great War worked in an architectural partnership in Birmingham. In the war years he saw service in Ireland and France. Afterwards he convalesced in Lincoln's Inn, and then worked for a spell from chambers in New Court, Middle Temple.

Jones's speciality was rustic England. He toured the country with Frances, his wife, and sometimes with a mysterious young art student, Anthony, recording in perfectly magical pencil drawings English villages, quirky cottages and manor houses. Drawing houses is ridiculously easy, he assured his readers in How to Draw Houses. "There are one or two tricks that you have to know. I will explain these to you. Then you will be able to draw houses just like me." If only!

His other great passions were London – particularly the City – and the Thames. He recorded streets, churches, banks, livery halls, and the inns of court, incessantly. In the spring of 1939 he embarked on his most important work, a huge bird's-eye view of London as seen from the roof of the Lloyd's Bank situated between Lombard Street and Cornhill. He continued work on it throughout the summer months. War was expected, and the artist noticed barrage balloons being positioned in the skies around London. At 11 o'clock on Friday 1 September, hearing shouting from King William Street far below, he looked down from the parapet and saw newspaper vendors in a state of excitement. With the aid of his glasses he could make out the wording on the bills on the railings of the Scottish Provident Institution. They proclaimed "HITLER INVADES POLAND".

Jones finished off his drawing, made a final descent from the roof, and walked home to his studio and house by Chelsea church, asking himself as he walked through the familiar streets and past the buildings he so loved what Fate might hold in store for them.

In an air raid in 1941 his house and studio were destroyed. Several neighbours were killed. His beloved Frances died. And much of the City shown in his vigorous bird's-eye view of 1939 lay in ruins. "London triumphant" were thus the enraged artist's words of defiance and challenge. They were a war-cry.

In 1944 an exhibition of the drawings for London Triumphant and its sequel, Thames Triumphant, was held in the war-damaged Guildhall Library, in the Basing Street entrance and up the stairs. During the 1950s Jones presented these drawings to Guildhall Library. He died in Oxford in 1966.

An exhibition in the Print Room at Guildhall Library runs until 14 May (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm). It consists of sixty of Jones's finest etchings and drawings selected from the Sydney R. Jones Collection. Ralph Hyde, the former Keeper of Prints and Maps at Guildhall Library and organizer...
of the exhibition, is anxious to hear from any member who might be able to remember Sydney R. Jones. He is also keen to know of any more Jones drawings lurking in public and private collections. If you can help please contact Ralph at The Coach House, 185 Herbert Road, London SE18 3QE tel. 0181 317 2968.

**Forthcoming exhibitions, RIBA Heinz Gallery**

From 3 June to 24 July the Heinz Gallery, 21 Portman Square, London W1 will mount an exhibition on London’s Town Halls; the architecture of local government 1840-2000. Over ninety purpose-built town halls remain in the capital, ranging from modest Victorian vestry halls to multi-million pound megastructures designed in the wake of local government legislation in the 1960s. The exhibition will tell the story of the town hall through a new survey by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England and will feature drawings, architectural models, art works and ceremonial objects.

Sir Albert Richardson 1880-1964 is the subject for an autumn exhibition (9 September to 23 October). Well known for his nostalgia for the craftsmanship and material culture of Georgian England, one of Richardson’s best buildings is Bracken House for the Financial Times, now a listed building. Exhibitions at the Heinz Gallery are free and uncrowded, telephone 0171 307 3628 for details.

**Parliamentary History Conference**

The sixth conference, on Parliamentary buildings and their use: Dublin, Edinburgh and Westminster, will be held at the Institute of Historical Research, Senate House on 19 July 2000. The focus will be on the topography and architecture of the parliaments and how the buildings were used. Four papers will concentrate on Westminster. If you wish to be on the mailing list for details please write to Dr C. Jones, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU.

**Huguenot Society Conference**

“From Strangers to Citizens: integration of immigrant communities in Great Britain, Ireland and the Colonies 1550-1750” will be hosted by the Huguenot Society between 5 and 7 April 2000 at the Dutch Church, Austin Friars in the City. This will be an international conference on the integration of Dutch, Flemish, French, Germans, Italians, Jews and Wallons who all found a refuge here in the post-Reformation period. Details from the Huguenot Society tel. 0171 937 1402.

**An erroneous tie**

A member of the Society, Mr B. Lawrance Hurst, purchased a silk tie at the Building Museum, Washington DC (see below) He writes: “I am not sure from whose map it is taken, and would suggest it as a Society tie or even annual publication, but for the error where a piece of the Middlesex Street/Houndsditch area has been repeated to introduce an interesting(?) diagonal street pattern on the western side of Finsbury Circus”. Any comments?

**London images on the net**

Last July, as LTS members who regularly visit the Guildhall Library’s Print Room will know, the Corporation of London launched its Data Imaging System – COLLAGE. Suddenly 31,000 of the Guildhall Library and Art Gallery’s paintings, prints, maps, and drawings – a huge swath of their holdings – could be viewed on screen. There were lots of advantages. You could examine large numbers of images very rapidly, you could find what the Library had on your particular topic more easily, there was far less hauling of cumbersome solander boxes, and the originals, being handled less, were going to be better preserved for future generations. If you needed to see the originals the staff were still delighted to get them out for you.

Virtually every reader was enthusiastic. Even elderly readers, after tuition from my helpful staff, soon got the hang of COLLAGE and appreciated its benefits. The resolution of the images, everyone agreed, was remarkable. You could enlarge them – sometimes several times – compare them with other states of the image,revolve them for easy reading, save them into ‘portfolios’ for next time you came in, or print them out, either as quick reference black and white copies (50p) or as colour photographs (£5.50 for an 8 x 6, up to £17.50 for an 18 x 12).

And now, not just readers in Guildhall Library, but the whole world can access COLLAGE, for on 4 January the system went on-line on the Internet. If you are researching the topography or history of London at 2 o’clock in the morning in Alaska, Perth, or Singapore, you can, in the comfort of your own home, summon up the Guildhall Library and Art Gallery’s rich holdings in a trice. Here is the number you need: http://collage.nhnil.com.

Have fun. But remember, COLLAGE on the net does not include the items that are still in copyright, and there are areas of our collection – portraits, photographs, and ephemera for example – that have yet to be added to the system. If you do not find what you are after therefore, carry on writing to us, or pay us a personal visit. Our address is: Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London EC2P 2EJ (tel: 0171 332 1839).

— Ralph Hyde
Scrapbook

The Society needs a volunteer to keep the scrapbook up-to-date. The task is not onerous but it is important. Reviews of our publications, mentions in the press – all are worth retaining, with a careful note of the source. Offers of help to the Hon Secretary, please.

Peter Ackroyd’s London

A hawk-eyed member of the Council spotted an article in The Guardian of 26 March about the author Peter Ackroyd. An illustration of Ackroyd showed him perusing the open pages of The A to Z of Regency London (LTS publication no 131). According to the journalist John Cunningham, London is Ackroyd’s elixir, “his magic potion”. The successful biographer studies London history and topography and walks its streets as part of his research: “he is probably more familiar with the alleys of Cheapside than Thomas More”, the subject of Ackroyd’s most recent book. Peter Ackroyd, it is time you joined the LTS!

Book Reviews

London: A History


LTS members will be more aware than most people just how many books there are on the history of London. This city must have been written about more often than any other world city. Therefore, is there room for another general history? Having read Francis Sheppard’s latest account, the answer has to be a resounding “yes”! He has been writing about London throughout his career, but his most significant contribution was as General Editor of the Survey of London, a post he held for nearly thirty years. Although a life studying the fabric of London’s past would have provided the ideal qualifications for writing this book, not many authors could have marshalled the extraordinary amount of evidence, bringing together research into documents, archaeology and even place names, yet producing a lucid, readable and entertaining text. In addition, London: A History is well illustrated with maps and carefully chosen plates – the last a reproduction of an advertisement for the sale of County Hall in 1986, a poignant reminder of change.

The book is divided into six parts, each with its own introduction and bibliography. The latter, initially, a little confusing to consult until one becomes familiar with the layout, which is entirely logical when one considers the vast number of references required. The six sections, which for another author might each constitute a book, are entitled “Londinium”, “From Londinium to the Chartered City of London c.400-c.1530”, “The Genesis of Modern London 1530-1700”, “Augustan and Georgian London 1700-1830”, “Metropolitan and Imperial London 1830-1914” and “The Uncertain Metropolis 1914-1997”. The author insists that he has not undertaken “original research”, but has been dependent upon the works of others, many credited in the body of the text. This may be too modest and what he has made of previous research is new and refreshing. In the earlier sections, he makes good use of recent archaeological discoveries, for example, to explain the establishment of London in the Roman period – there was no previous settlement – and its raison d’etre as a river crossing. Intriguingly, there is no clear origin for the name.

One of the themes of Dr Sheppard pursues throughout the book is continuity. The layout of the Roman town influenced the development of the city thereafter and continues to do so to this day. For instance, the discovery in 1987 of the site of the Roman amphitheatre, which probably remained an open space and place of public assembly after the Roman period, was the very site where a thousand years later the first Guildhall was built. As Dr Sheppard explains, the oval shape of the amphitheatre is still apparent in the curving course of Aldermanbury, Gresham Street and Basinghall Street. Another example is the Roman fort, which also influenced the present street pattern. Perhaps because of the lay of the land, the fort was inside the walled city (apparently unusual in the Roman Empire) and this area was later to become the site of the palace of the Saxon kings. The walls themselves, parts of which still survive, were perhaps the most helpful contribution to London’s longevity. After the Battle of Hastings, the author (possibly Guy, bishop of Amiens) of one account of events described London as “a great city... protected on the left side by walls, on the right side by the river, it neither fears enemies nor dreads being taken by storm”. It was Edward the Confessor who moved the royal palace from within the walls to a new site at Westminster, adjacent to his newly rebuilt Abbey, and thereby created the other main focus that has given London its dual nature. The seat of royal power and government became distinct from the economic centre.

Continuity is also important in understanding present-day administration, for as Dr Sheppard says “The modern Corporation of the City of London can trace its lineage further back into the mists of time than any other secular institution in the land except the monarchy”. Its stability over centuries endowed the Corporation with great power and influence. In the Middle Ages no monarch could hope to succeed for long against the opposition of the City. During the Civil War, it withheld its support from Charles I, which was a major factor in his downfall, and Charles II could scarcely have been restored without City help. At this time the ancient religious rivalries were transformed in London into political parties – the names Whig and Tory both originating as terms of abuse – which dominated national events in the next two cen-
turies. The City's effectiveness was reinforced by the London press, which emerged at the end of the seventeenth century, in successful campaigns, for example, against Walpole's Excise Bill in 1733. This spawned the wonderful headline "No Slavery – No Excise – No Wooden Shoes" (the symbol of the supposed enslavement of the people of France, believed to have been brought about by the excise duty there). Even today City institutions remain almost a law unto themselves and the City maintains its own separate police force. When the Metropolitan Police was founded in 1829, Sir Robert Peel confessed that he was "afraid to meddle" with the Corporation.

Dr. Sheppard is adept at placing London in context. Not only does he demonstrate its influence in national affairs, but also throughout he draws comparisons with Paris. This was the only European city of comparable size, also founded by the Romans, where instructively the differences far outweigh any similarities in its history and development. Although the author gives a broad sweep of London's history and outlines every major event, he does not dwell on areas well known or well covered elsewhere. For instance, he describes the Great Fire and its aftermath in a very few paragraphs, but devotes much more space to the provisions made for the poor, insane, sick and orphaned and to the administration of the suburbs. By illuminating the historical background, he gives fascinating insights into present-day problems, such as a government for greater London. He tells us much about radicalism in London, from Wilkes to the Gordon Riots, and that there was some sympathy for the American rebels in their war of Independence. Interestingly, people of the "middling sort" (perhaps not exactly today's middle class) were an increasing proportion of London's total population and this new type of society proved to be a model not just for "provincial England but for Europeans and Americans". The failure of Chartism in 1848 may be attributed to a lack of support in London, although that is where its principles had been established in 1780. Probably as a result of improved economic conditions and political stability, London's radicalism declined in the early nineteenth century. This coincided with the huge growth of greater London and its transformation into the hub of an expanding empire. The term "metropolis" with reference to London begins to be used in the 1820s.

The sheer size of the capital has always impressed visitors. In the middle ages it was, in Dr. Sheppard's words, "three times as large as Bristol or York, enclosed by landward walls 2 miles in length, and the skyline dominated by St Paul's and a forest of church towers and spires. Here was something totally different from anywhere else in the land". However, this was as nothing compared with London at the time of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897. Here then was "the capital city of the Empire on which the sun never set and which extended over a quarter of the land surface of the entire globe – the nodal point of the world economy and the nascent world system of production".

Continuity in trade is another thread followed by Dr. Sheppard. Numerous trading companies flourished in Tudor and Stuart times, and the Hudson's Bay Company, set up in London in 1670, survives to this day. It remains the oldest merchant trading company in the world. The longevity of other firms is also impressive. For instance, banks founded in the early nineteenth century by Baring, Schroder, Rothschild and Peabody all survive. Interestingly, these were all foreigners attracted to London because of its relative immunity from the disruptions caused by the Napoleonic wars. Dr. Sheppard gives succinct histories of banking and insurance, as well as, among other topics, religion, education and leisure activities, notably the theatre. Although he describes the role of the Inns of Court, it would have been instructive if he had written more about the legal profession in London. However, it would be churlish to present this as a criticism, for it is the mark of a good book to leave one wanting more. And there is so much more that is included, for example, unexpected insights from Lenin on London music halls, Hippolyte Taine on prostitution and Elizabeth Bowen on the blitz.

Francis Sheppard has the enviable ability to sum up a complex subject in a succinct phrase or sentence and he displays an admirable grasp of facts and figures. In his valedictory chapter, the author provides a good deal of food for thought – not least for the prospective mayor of London. This book is subtitled "A History", as one volume cannot provide everything, but if you read no other history of London, read this one.

— Stephen Croad

London 4: North

The fourth in the series of six volumes for Greater London covers the area between Edgware Road and the Lea (spelt variously Lee/Lea) valley, fanning out north from Holborn and Finsbury. This is virtually an encyclopaedia, with introductory essays, fullsome descriptions of important buildings, perambulations, glossary, sources and further reading.

At the beginning Bridget Cherry's introduction gives the essence of north London "through the ages", highlighting gems and trends, types and styles, art and design in a flowing narrative. The essays by Eric Robinson on Geology and Building Materials and by Joanna Bird on Prehistoric and Roman Archaeology are repeats of those in London 3: North West (1991): this was worrying.

Turning to favourite buildings and haunts, it was most satisfying to find a plan of the British Museum showing the scheme for the Great Court on the site of the former British Library reading
room. Flicking to the new British Library, can it really be "Britain's only major public building of the later c.20"? If so, it warrants a better photograph.

Looking at the origins of the Geffrye Museum, formerly Ironmongers' almshouses, there is no doubt that Burford - and Hassault - were the builders (1712-14). However a query hangs over the planting of eighty (ninety, according to the Ironmongers' Company's history) lime trees in the garden. It might also be noted that the garden behind the Museum has recently been laid out as "garden rooms" with plants appropriate to the period of the rooms within (if visitors need enticing further, there is a good restaurant in the new extension).

The many plans of buildings are a great asset, explaining graphically the mysterious interior of Sir John Soane's Museum, for example, the assorted dates for Bruce Castle and the grand plan of Alexandra Palace in 1874. What is more, the sources for the plans, figures and maps can be found. LTS members who came to the AGM in 1996 (St John-at-Hackney, with visits to Sutton House and St Augustine's Tower) will wish they had been armed with this volume, which contains a reconstruction of Sutton House and an ample description written by LTS Council member Victor Belcher.

The incongruous arrangement of photographs places Kenwood "the finest c.18 country house in North London" (no argument with that) on the same page as the gasholders in Goods Way, St Pancras, "the most impressive array of gasholder frames anywhere" (not qualified to argue with that). Statements and juxtapositions such as these continue the noble tradition of Pevsner.

-- Penelope Hunting

Villas and Mansions of Roehampton and Putney Heath


The author describes this work as an interim history, making immediately available material that will be subsumed in a full history of Roehampton now in progress. Roehampton became a popular location for out-of-town villas in the eighteenth century, not only for City merchants but also for MPs and peers. It started as early as 1620, when David Papillon, a Huguenot, began to develop land there, selling houses to George Heriot, the court jeweller, and Sir Richard Weston, then chancellor of the exchequer. Serious development, however, came only in the second half of the eighteenth century. By 1796 Putney was the third most fashionable parish in London's environs, and between 1800 and 1860 there were never fewer than six titled occupants - primarily summer residents - of the villas. Just as road improvements were related to the initial growth, so railways in the later nineteenth century are associated with Putney's loss of social exclusivity, though at the same time a number of owners enlarged their properties and became full-time residents, notably George Newnes, the newspaper and periodicals publisher, J.D. Charrington of the Blue Star Line, and Hugh Colin Smith, sometime governor of the Bank of England.

After a short historical introduction and location maps, Gerhold provides a brief source-referenced history of each of the villas complete with an image or images, and a table showing owner, occupier and occupier's profession. These are well-indexed. Many of the villas have been demolished, one swathe falling to redevelopment for blocks of flats in the 1930s, others post-war, but some have survived, principally in educational use. Notable are Roehampton Great House (Weston's), rebuilt by James Wyatt and much enlarged and altered since, now the Froebel Educational Institute (part of Roehampton Institute); Roehampton House (Archer 1710-12 and Luyens 1911-14), now part of Queen Mary's Hospital; Sir William Chambers's Manresa House, 1761-63, and Sir Robert Taylor's Mount Clare, 1771-73 (both University of Greenwich); and The Friary (Gothic Revival, 1803 and c.1840), a private nursing home.

Some slight confusion about female titles apart, this is a valuable research tool for social and architectural history, as well as topography, and we look forward with keen anticipation to the full history of the district.

-- M.H. Port

Dr Langdon-Down and the Normansfield Theatre

by John Earl. Twickenham Local History Society 1997. 40 pages, numerous illustrations including four pages of colour. £7.

John Langdon-Down was the physician who distinguished Down's Syndrome from the general range of mental ailments. As superintendent to the private Earlswood Asylum, near Reigate, 1858-86, he developed his ideas about treating the mentally ill, and in 1868 was able to set up his own "training institution" at Teddington. Normansfield, designed by Rowland Plumbe, was progressively extended until in 1891 it was able to accommodate 200 patients. It offered a pleasant, comfortable home for patients "whose background had conditioned them to comfort". In 1951 it was sold to the North-West Metropolitan Hospital Board, but in the 1990s fell victim to the "Care in the Community" concept and the government's desire to realize property assets. This has left uncertain the future of Normansfield's most interesting building, its Entertainment Hall, now listed Grade II*.

Built in 1879 at a contract price of £3,678, the Hall measures internally 60ft by 35ft, and seats some 300. Its severe chapel-like exterior gives no promise of the richness within: an open pine roof, of which the roof trusses "follow no established form", and a professionally-equipped theatre. Its
elaborate polychromatic proscenium has proscenium doors similar to the pattern of Georgian theatres, unique for its date. John Earl suggests that its design (Plumbe was no theatre architect) may possibly have been taken from the old Richmond Theatre demolished in 1884. The rich painting of the proscenium includes some beautifully executed birds and plants on the doors, and over them symbolic figures of Comedy and Tragedy, Painting and Music. The raked stage, 35ft wide, has a depth of about 20ft 9 inches, and affords one of only two surviving examples of the common Georgian system of scene-changing, with grooves that enable flats to be drawn into and from the wings. The unrivalled collection of some eighty flats depicts a variety of stock scenes: the painting is of high quality. The theatre also possesses six of the original portraits of ancestors for the first production of Gilbert and Sullivan's Ruddigore at the Savoy Theatre (now temporarily in the Museum of London). One hopes that the 1997 proposal by the Regional Health Authority to run the theatre and its ancillary accommodation as a self-contained unit in the redevelopment of the Normansfield site for housing may be realized.

— M.H. Port

**The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Politics in London 1576-1649**


*The Theatrical City* grew out of an interdisciplinary course at the University of Chicago; its concerns were history and literature in London at the end of the sixteenth and during the first half of the seventeenth centuries. Sixteen scholars have participated, some young, some more experienced. The plays analysed are Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, John Marston's *The Fawn*, Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* and Philip Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, to which are added *The Root and Branch Petition and the Grand Remonstrance*, as delivered to Charles I, and John Milton's *Eikonoklastes*. Each item is discussed in a pair of essays, one from the historical, the other from the literary angle, though no hard-and-fast line is drawn between the two approaches.

Though the results are often exceptionally interesting and thought-provoking, this *Newsletter* would not normally be the place in which to review such a book, were it not that the opening section is devoted to John Stow's *Survey of London* with the first essay by Ian Archer, on "The Nostalgia of John Stow". London was growing, and changing, as fast in John Stow's day as it is in our own; Stow, writing in 1598, did not like all that he saw. The times were uncertain; the queen grew old and the succession was not established; the threat of the Armada had passed but another attempt might still be made; there was warfare in The Netherlands and in Ireland; during the 1590s crops had failed throughout Europe; the population of London had probably more than doubled with an influx of incomers and increasing numbers begged on the streets. The old charities, provided by philanthropic citizens and administered by the church, had vanished fifty years before in the cultural revolution of the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI. When there was a mean-fisted, skin-flint Lord Mayor like Sir John Spencer in 1595, then times were bad indeed, and Stow looks back to the London of his youth with justifiable nostalgia.

Archer analyses the *Survey* and points out that, although Stow is undoubtedly still intensely proud of his city, he ignores the explosion of charitable provision of all sorts that right-minded citizens had bestowed on their less fortunate fellows during Elizabeth's reign. Dr Archer had only eighteen pages at his disposal, but they are filled with serious research and discussion; Lawrence Manley's accompanying essay, "Of Sites and Rites", is equally fascinating.

The absurdity of such a specialized book is unlikely to make it a popular purchase, but it is on the open shelves in the Guildhall Library, that most excellent haven of peaceful study, for all of us to consult freely.

— Ann Saunders

**Grinling Gibbons and the Art of Carving**


In addition to its thoroughly scholarly approach and wide scope, David Esterly's book is a very good read. The reader is introduced to the story of Grinling Gibbons (1648-1721) with a vivid scene – the diarist John Evelyn's account of how "walking the fields of his parish of Deptford one day... he happened to glance in the window of a poor isolated cottage by the wayside... Inside was a man with a chisel". This book takes us from Gibbons's first notice in England as a carver of talent, and leads us by degrees through the development and rich flowering – literally – of his style, to his honoured maturity. The text is lucid and evocative, the illustrations well chosen and a delight to the eye, illuminating both the text and the art of the carver. Photographs show not only a wide range of designs and finished work, but also of carvings undergoing conservation, where the detail of dismantled sections allows the reader an insight into the processes of production.

The inclusion in some depth of the technical side of the subject is one which the author, a lime wood carver himself, is ideally placed to provide. Part III of the book deals specifically with Gibbons's techniques, giving this appreciative layman, at least, a totally new perspective on the finished work of art. The explanations are technically very clear and at the same time interestingly tied in to Gibbons's art
at different stages of his development, and to the broader background of the artists and patrons among whom he worked.

Parts i and ii are less unusual but equally stimulating. The first deals with Gibbons the man. Since what is known about him has been subjected to pretty well as much underestimating as he himself gave to his designs, some of the story is necessarily conjectural and there are times when the conjectural links seem a little thin. But the whole gives a lively picture of the difficulties encountered by a young artist with a strong sense of his own worth as he seeks to recommend himself to the higher echelons of society, whose patronage he needs but whose thoughts may too often be elsewhere. In Gibbons's case, his problems were compounded by the need to tread delicately around the Catholic/Protestant question. David Esterly's account of Gibbons's progress is liberally sprinkled with contemporary quotations and anecdotes, a lot of them from John Evelyn who, after that first meeting, determinedly claimed the honour of being the first to recognize and promote Gibbons.

Part ii, the longest section of the book, deals chronologically and artistically with the three main types of commission that Gibbons undertook - the carved surround, the trophy, and architectural embellishment. Esterly's argument is that over time, the lavish, eager profusion of the earlier carvings mellowed eventually into a more finely designed and considered symmetry which Esterly finds more satisfying. This is to some extent a matter of personal taste; it could also be argued that the finest of the earlier carvings have an excitement that the later productions cannot match.

This is an admirable book - clear, knowledgeable, extensive, well organized and lively. It seems a pity to bring in a couple of small technical quibbles - the lack of a separate list of illustrations and the lack of chapter numbers at the chapter headings.

LTS members might like to know that although a lot of Gibbons's commissions were at country houses, Gibbons lived in Ludgate Hill and in Bow Street, was a member of the Drapers' Company and was buried at St Paul's, Covent Garden. Some of his London work has disappeared but much is still to be seen, notably at Hampton Court, at St James's Piccadilly, at St Paul's Covent Garden, at Kensington Palace and at the Royal Exchange.

- Gillian Healey

**Batty Langley's Gothic Architecture, 1747**

The most original of the Langley publications has been published in facsimile by Monmouth House Books at £38 to include post and packing in the UK. B. and T. Langley made an imaginative attempt to formalize Gothic into orders akin to the classical system in a book that was much in demand and influential - Lacock Abbey springs to mind. Available from Monmouth House Books, Llanfihely, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire NP7 8SN.

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