

**Notice of the Annual General Meeting  
Tuesday, 13th June 2000**

\*\*\* Tickets are required –  
please apply as soon as possible \*\*\*

The one hundredth Annual General Meeting of the London Topographical Society will be held on Tuesday, 13th June 2000, in the Picture Gallery at St James's Palace in the presence of our Patron, His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh.

We are delighted to be able to celebrate this milestone in the history of the Society in such a fitting way, but this will require some modification of our normal format. Not only will we be meeting about three weeks earlier than usual, but there will be no tea(!) and you must apply for personal tickets of admission. Smoking in the palace is not allowed, naturally enough, but please note that photography is also prohibited.

We are sorry about the tea, but it would have been quite impossibly expensive to provide it. There are many places in and around Piccadilly, from coffee shops to the Ritz, where members can indulge themselves before the meeting.

Doors will open at 5.45pm and the meeting will start promptly at 6.30. Please allow extra time for negotiating the inevitable security checks, but be aware that we will not have the usual range of things to do. You may want to bring something to read. It is considered polite for people to stand when His Royal Highness enters the room.

We are expecting to have three short talks: one by Andrew Ingamells about his screenprint panorama of London buildings, another about St James's Palace by Christopher Lloyd, Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, and a third by the Duke of Edinburgh himself. At present it seems likely that members will be able to roam through several of the fine rooms in the Palace after the meeting, but this will not be possible if another event is arranged for the same evening.

As usual members may invite guests to the AGM. We expect to be able to accommodate all requests but, if there is exceptional demand, we reserve the right to issue tickets to members only. To obtain your tickets fill in the enclosed request form and send it with a stamped addressed envelope to Patrick Frazer. There is full disabled access to the Palace but we need to know about any disabled members or guests in advance. Please apply for tickets as soon as possible – and certainly by the end of May.

**LONDON TOPOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY**  
**Newsletter**  
Number 50  
May 2000

Entry to the meeting will be from Marlborough Road. The nearest underground stations are St James's Park, Green Park and Piccadilly.

The annual publication will be distributed to members at the end of the meeting. Those who cannot attend will be sent theirs by post, probably in July or August. 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 99th Annual General Meeting
- 2 Annual Report of the Council for 1999
- 3 Accounts for 1999
- 4 Hon Editor's report
- 5 Election of officers and members of Council
- 6 Proposals by members
- 7 Any other business

Items 1 and 2 are published in this *Newsletter*.

– Patrick Frazer, Hon Secretary



## **100th Annual Report of the Council of the London Topographical Society for 1999, incorporating the Minutes of the 1999 AGM**

True to its objectives, the Society concentrated its resources on publishing material relevant to the study of London's topography. The AGM was held in Guildhall Old Library, thanks to the good offices of Ralph Hyde, and was as usual very well attended by members who came to collect their publications and enjoy the home-made tea organized by Joyce Cumming. At the end of 1999 there were 914 fully paid up members – an increase of about 3½ per cent – together with 3 Honorary members.

Members received two annual publications for their 1999 subscription. Ralph Hyde's *Ward Maps of the City of London* (publication No. 154) provides full details of all known ward maps, listing 110 printed and manuscript maps dating from 1720 to 1904. The illustrations include at least one map from each of the twenty-five wards. A *Map of the Ecclesiastical Divisions within the County of London 1903* (No. 155) shows parish and other boundaries in colour on a scale of two miles to the inch, with an introduction by Simon Morris.

The *Newsletter* was published in May and November, with articles on London Telephone Exchanges, Donald King's Thames Entertainment, Fitzhugh House, The Park Lane Hotel and Merton Priory.

The Society's web site generated a modest level of interest, and succeeded in attracting some new members and publication orders. It was decided to register a domain name – [www.topsoc.org](http://www.topsoc.org) – and encourage other sites to create links to the Society's. Since then, the number of visitors has increased substantially.

As usual the Council met in January, April and September to discuss publications and administration. It was decided to move the Society's stock of publications from the Bishopsgate Institute, where it was at risk from dust, floods and workmen, to the comparative safety of London Metropolitan Archive.

## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the London Topographical Society 1999**

The ninety-ninth Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at Guildhall Old Library on 7th July 1999. It was preceded by wine and refreshments in the new library, where members could also see a display of ward maps.

The AGM was attended by Mr Peter Jackson, the officers of the Society and about 270 members and guests. The Annual Report of the Council and the Minutes of the 1998 Annual General Meeting had been circulated in advance and were approved. The Hon Treasurer reported that the Society had

achieved a surplus of £4,000 in 1999. The Annual Accounts were adopted, subject to audit. The Hon Editor introduced the two publications for the year and described what was planned for the future.

At the election of officers, Trevor Ford stood down after a long and valuable term as Membership Secretary. The role of Membership Secretary will be assumed by the Hon Treasurer and Hon Secretary. The other 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, Penelope Hunting as *Newsletter* Editor, Patrick Frazer as Hon Secretary and Hugh Cleaver as Hon Auditor. Denise Silvester-Carr, who had been co-opted since the last AGM, and other members of Council were all re-elected.

After the business part of the meeting, there were talks by Ralph Hyde, about his *City of London Ward Maps* book, and by Simon Bradley, of *The Buildings of England*, about the Guildhall Library and its architect Sir Horace Jones. Members were able to visit the Great Hall and crypt.

.....



# Recovering the Rivers of London

by David Bentley

The prime reason for this exercise is to serve a new archaeological survey of the London region, *The Archaeology of Greater London*. This project is an archaeological database covering the 620 square miles that comprises Greater London. It represents the latest and most comprehensive attempt to catalogue and map the field of human occupation in the Greater London area.<sup>1</sup> It spans about 500,000 years, covering nine broad periods from the first appearance of Man in the Lower Palaeolithic to the Industrial Revolution. The London rivers have been mapped to appear on the topographical base-map, which, along with a selective plotting of London's complex geology, will help define patterns of settlement for all periods of the project.

*The Archaeology of Greater London* (AGL) updates and supersedes two previous surveys of London's archaeology: *The Future of London's Past* (1973)<sup>2</sup> and *Time on Our Side* (1976).<sup>3</sup> A large-format book of the project with maps at scales of 1:12,500 and 1:165,000 is intended and will be funded jointly by English Heritage and the Museum of London. It is also designed to be available on the web where it can be updated and modified as new information becomes available.

The locating and plotting of the rivers poses a real difficulty for the cartographer. Over such a long time-span, most rivers will have changed course, some more than others. Their flow volumes will have varied. Some rivers will have shrunk in length, some dried up altogether, especially among the chalky ridges of south London. These variable factors have not been taken into account here as in most cases the data are just not available to provide river plots customised to the different periods. With the exception of London's historic core, what has been produced is a compromise: rivers plotted

from post medieval map sources but with the earliest known historic courses imposed where they can be traced from the archaeological archive. Recent constructions such as Duke of Northumberland's River, The Lea Navigation, Grand Union Canal and The New River have been omitted.

## Numbers

The number of principal Thames tributary catchment areas which lie wholly or partly within London totals twenty-one, thirteen in the north and eight in the south. They are, from west to east: the Colne, the Crane, the Brent, Stamford Brook, Counters Creek, the Westbourne, the Tyburn, the Fleet, the Lea, the Roding, the Beam, the Ingrebourne and the Stifford; and to the south, from west to east: the Hogsmill, Beverley Brook, the Wandle, the Falcon, the Effra, the Peck, the Ravensbourne and the Darrent. Within these catchment areas, the total number of streams mapped to date is approximately 360, of which 273 lie to the north of the Thames and eighty-five to the south (fig 1).

Calculating the five Thames tributaries containing the greatest length wholly or partly within the Greater London boundary produced some surprising results. The longest is the River Brent at 36.2 kilometres, followed by the River Crane at 34.9 km, the River Lea at 28.9 km, the River Colne at 19.9 km and the Ravensbourne at 15.8 km. All but one rise to the north of the Thames.

## River names

The compilation of a river name catalogue is a major research exercise in itself. Historic as well as modern Ordnance Survey maps show scant regard for recording river names, especially for the minor streams and brooks. The problem exists for parish maps as well. This is perhaps surprising given that one of the important roles of parish maps was to define settlement boundaries, so often those of local water courses. No doubt most were known by name, but the great majority remain to be identified from documentary sources.

Where names were encountered during the plotting of the rivers, they have been noted, approximately seventy-five in all, and included in a list with the better-known major Thames tributaries. However these names do not appear in the AGL document. Sometimes rivers have different names along different parts of their course particularly at the tidal mouths of the larger tributaries, e.g. Bow Creek (River Lea) or Barking Creek (River Roding). Historic maps also show spelling changes through time, e.g. Ingerburn (1777) became Ingrebourne (1883).

## Sources of information

The quality of historic maps varies considerably, with later editions not always

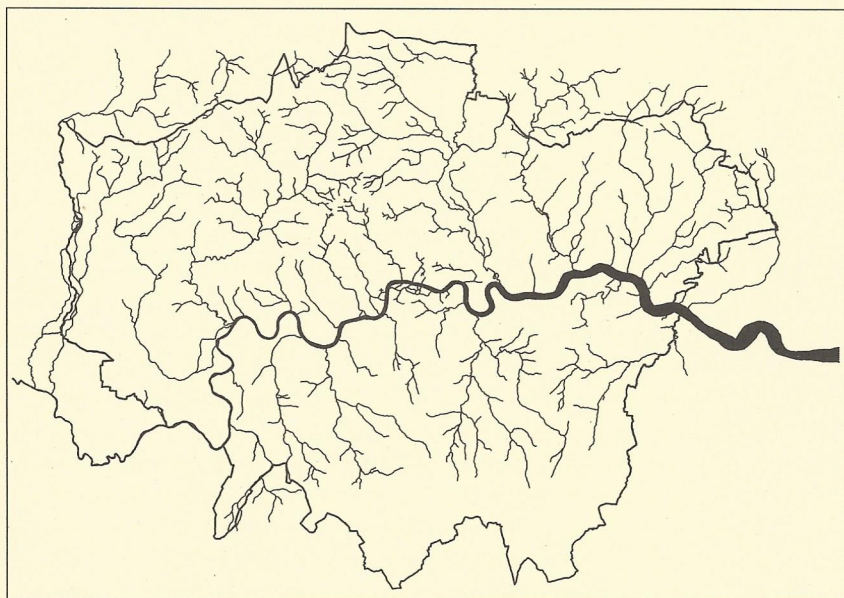


Fig 1. Map showing all 358 rivers and streams within Greater London, which have been plotted for the AGL project.



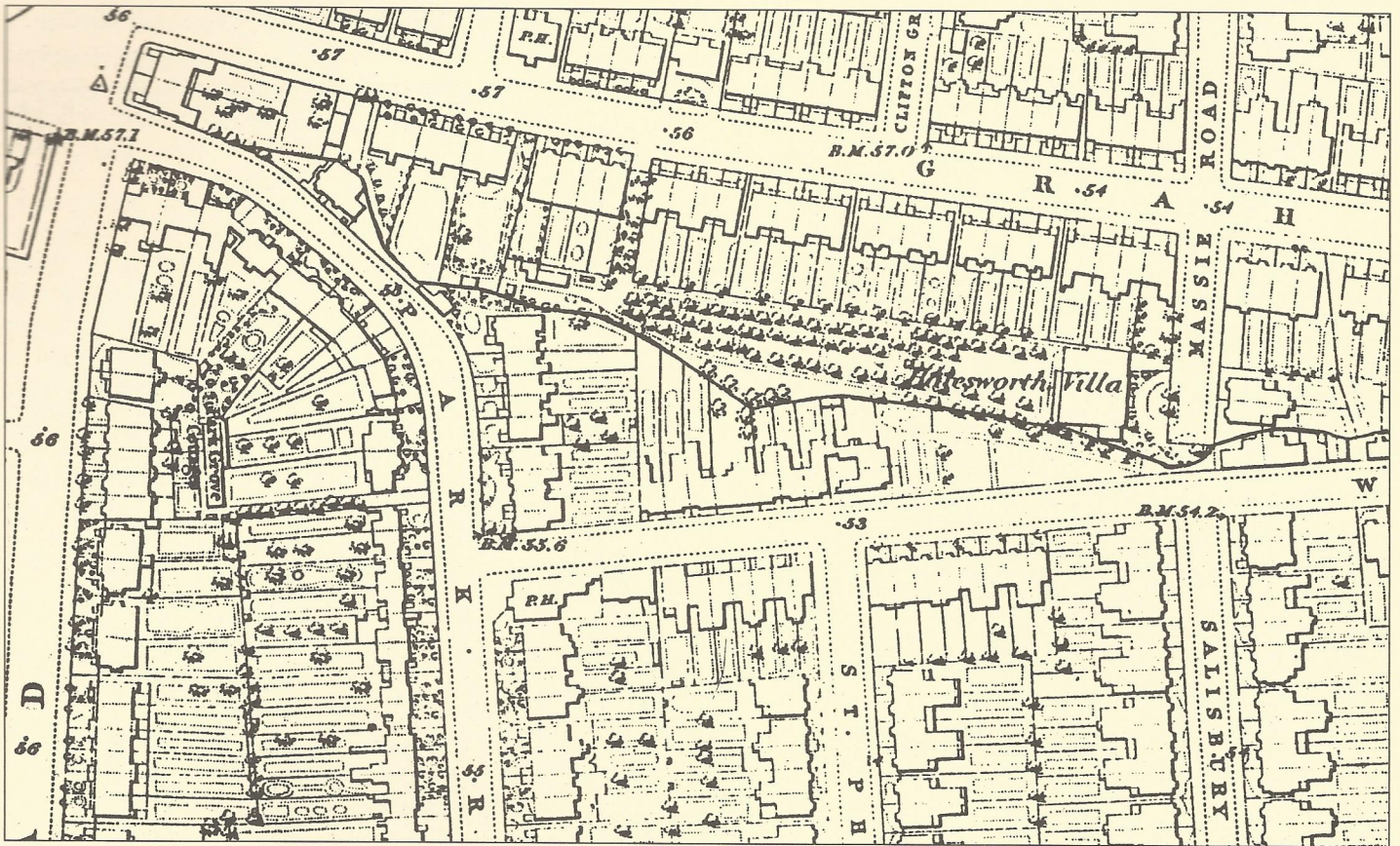


Fig 2. The course of the Pigswell Brook, completely covered over for the last 150 years, can be clearly traced between properties adjacent to the author's home in Dalston E8 (from Ordnance Survey 1870, the Godfrey edition).

improving on earlier ones. The following maps represent the primary cartographic sources referred to in this study: Rocque's *London Maps* (1741-45)<sup>4</sup> is good for outer and inner London, except for the historic core; Greenwood (1826)<sup>5</sup> is good for inner London and the miscellaneous parish maps covering much of London which are usually good for their area. Also very useful are the British Geological Survey's (BGS) six-inch map editions of 1933-36<sup>6</sup> which attempt to plot the ancient courses of many of the lost rivers of London onto large-scale maps of modern London. Unfortunately the BGS people never gave the sources of their work and by the time of the next major edition of the 1970s, all delineation of these courses had been dropped. Early OS maps are particularly useful for the detail they show. Although not terribly well-reproduced, the series of three editions of the OS in *The Village Atlas of London*,<sup>7</sup> each covering the whole of Greater London in the nineteenth century, have been used intensively. The earlier edition of 1822 maps the greatest area of open land, the later editions of 1862-80 and of 1902 reveal the speed of London's growth, but show more clearly those river courses which remain and, for the first time, include contours as well. Being in atlas form, it is easy to flick back and forth to clarify features.

The modern OS 1:25,000 maps were also used.<sup>8</sup> There are twelve sheets covering Greater London. These maps often clarify river courses only vaguely drawn on earlier maps. Fortunately at least part of many outer London rivers still survive above ground. The course of missing, subterranean sections can often be traced by examining the contours and pattern of modern properties (fig 2).<sup>9</sup> The

difficulty here comes when the ground is flat and the river is most likely subject to recent canalization.

## Methodology

The river courses have been located by a process of map regression, that is, identifying river fragments from the most recent maps then following their courses on earlier, less accurately surveyed historic maps which nevertheless show a more extensive pattern. Sometimes this process has to be done in reverse; picking up poorly surveyed historic rivers and 'progressing' them onto modern settlement patterns. This process ultimately led to the manual transfer of all preferred courses onto the 1:25,000 OS maps in blue ink. These maps were calibrated with the OS grid and the information digitized in Autocad one sheet at a time.

## Central London detail

The hardest task has been to establish a reliable course for some of the central London rivers. In those areas of ancient urban cover, i.e. the City, Westminster, Southwark and Lambeth most of the main tributaries are well-known, although a lack of modern, reliable sources has meant that their courses have tended to vary from publication to publication. The present body of work has, through archaeological and documentary research, sought to locate these lost rivers with a fair degree of certainty. They now often possess their own complex of tributaries as well. For more than thirty years archaeologists have been painstakingly recon-



structing the buried heart of Central London. The headline-grabbing archaeological discoveries of the post-war years have been paralleled latterly by the more mundane, but vitally important task of recording the 'natural' surface geology and morphology. As well as being historically one of the most occupied of areas, Central London is the most intensively studied geographical zone in the country. Not surprisingly a complex picture has emerged of hills and valleys, streams and river channels set within the tidal reach of the River Thames. To do justice to this level of data, it was decided to prepare central area maps for the AGL project at the larger scale of 1:12,500 for the Neolithic, Roman, Saxon and Medieval periods.

In 1962 *The Lost Rivers of London* was published which immediately became the standard text on this subject. Although it covers a smaller area than the present study and omits many of the smaller tributaries, it still stands as the best historic account of London's rivers.<sup>10</sup> In 1972 Marsden published a study of the physical and geological surface of the City which is cut by some of the many sub-tributaries of the Rivers Fleet and Walbrook.<sup>11</sup> This work was based on Marsden's personal observations carried out on excavated sites over the previous decade, supplemented by bore hole data. It represented the first attempt to model the City area.

One of the first pieces of research to adopt modern data collection methods was the plotting of hundreds of bore hole records of natural deposits in the North Lambeth area (Densum & Doidge 1979).<sup>12</sup> From this, the authors were able to attempt a contour map of natural, prehistoric land surface crossed here by the River Effra and a branch of The Neckinger. During the 1980s and 1990s the picture has gradually been refined with the increased pace of excavation and research.

In the late 1970s a remarkable document was unearthed: 'The Original Plan of Contours 1841',<sup>13</sup> a detailed map compiled from thousands of surveyed levels. It was the first attempt to represent morphology by the use of contours in the modern style for the City. Set at three-foot intervals, the plan was designed to indicate the gravity flows for the programme of sewer construction then under way. The main benefit for London's archaeology is the apparent close correspondence between the detailed 1841 land surface and what is known of its natural counterpart up to 7m below. It has provided a working model for the refinement of all those minor streams and river courses known to exist in the City but often only crudely plotted.

In North Southwark Sheldon combined excavation and bore hole data and began to piece together a most complex topography (Sheldon 1978).<sup>14</sup> It had long been suspected that most of North Southwark was represented by a pattern of low sandy islands cut through by a series of channels.

Perhaps the most exciting development of recent years has been the increasing definition of this complex of islands and channels through the plot-

ting of evidence from dozens of archaeological sites. These islands are not defined by Thames tributaries, but by braided channels of the Thames itself. When taken together these channels nearly treble the width of the Thames between North Southwark and the City to more than 1 kilometre in the early Roman period. Their importance has grown with the realization that the urban development of early South London cannot be understood without a clear picture of the patterns of these channels. For centuries their shape and size was affected by changes in the tidal flow of the Thames. Then due increasingly to human intervention, the islands gradually coalesced. From the late Iron Age onwards, the creeks and channels became narrowed by human reclamation. The process was hastened by a natural drop in tidal levels which occurred from the second century AD resulting in many of the channels silting-up altogether. By the tenth century virtually all surface trace of these lesser Thames channels had vanished. The picture presented in the AGL document reflects the latest thinking based on work currently underway in Roman Southwark.<sup>15</sup>

## Notes

1. *The Archaeology of Greater London*: An assessment of human presence in the area covered by modern Greater London (MoLAS forthcoming).
2. M. Biddle, D.M Hudson, C. Heighway, *The Future of London's Past* (1973).
3. J. Bird, S Kington, *Time on Our Side* (1976).
4. Rocque's *Map of the Environs of London* (1741-45).
5. Greenwood's map of London (1826).
6. *The British Geological Survey* (1933-36).
7. P. Fitzgerald, B.R. Bruff, *The Village Atlas of London* (1986).
8. Ordnance Survey Pathfinder Series.
9. Ordnance Survey of Dalston (1870), Godfrey Edition sheet 40.
10. N. Barton, *The Lost Rivers of London* (1962).
11. P. Marsden, 'The Birth of London' in *The Geographical Magazine* (1972).
12. R. Densum, A. Doidge, (1979) 'The Topography of North Lambeth' in *London Archaeologist* 3, 10 (1979)
13. The Original Plan of Contours (1841), drawn by Richard Kelsey, City Surveyor, in manuscript form. This drawing was transcribed and then edited by David Bentley (1979-80) and first published as the base for *Londinium: a descriptive map and guide to Roman London* (1983) by the Museum of London in conjunction with the Ordnance Survey.
14. H.L. Sheldon, *Southwark Excavations 1972-74* Part I (1978) 19-20, figs 2 and 4. Much of the credit for the Southwark topography within this volume should go to Alan H. Graham.
15. *Roman Southwark* (MoLAS forthcoming).



# Stepney Gasworks (Commercial Gas Company 1839-1946)

by Tom Ridge

The process which turned the docks into Docklands is sweeping around the canal network in Tower Hamlets. In October 1998, Bellway Urban Renewal applied for planning permission to build housing on the 8½ acre Stepney Gasworks site on the Regent's Canal. The application was not determined by Tower Hamlets Council and, as a result of an appeal by Bellway, a public inquiry was held in November 1999.



Stepney Gasworks from the air c.1931 with the four surviving gasholders along Harford Street, used for storing North Sea Gas until 1990; and the coal stores and retort houses alongside the Regent's Canal, disused since 1946 and demolished by 1957 (London Borough of Tower Hamlets).

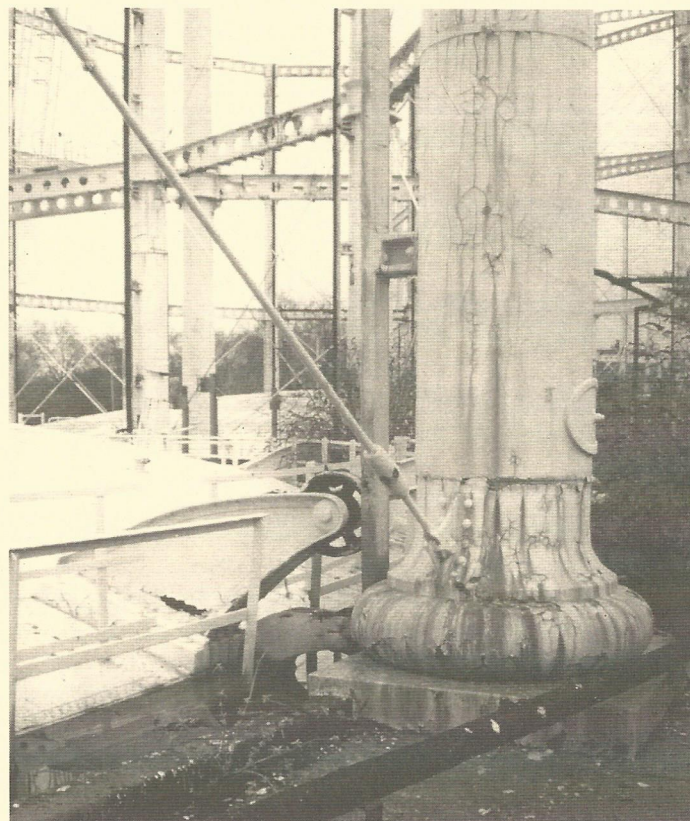
The inspector's report on the inquiry was sent to the Secretary of State in February and John Prescott will either allow or dismiss Bellway's appeal. Should he allow the appeal and grant planning permission, British Gas will make an immediate start on the de-watering and demolition of the gasholders.

Nos 2 and 3 Gasholder Guide Frames: (middle two of four on Harford Street) contain the oldest surviving guide frame columns in this country and probably the world. The hollow cast-iron columns were assembled in 1853-54 and heightened in 1892. Their column bases, together with the No. 1 bases, are also the only surviving 'single-order' column bases with enlarged toruses on hollow plinths with concealed holding-down bolts; in accordance with mid-nineteenth century architectural propriety. One of the No. 2 column bases may be seen through the short section of railings in the boundary wall on Harford Street. Each 1853-54 column shaft consisted mainly of three internally-bolted cylindrical sections; the top section was unbolted and replaced above two extra sections in 1892, when a third lift was added to the original two-lift holder. The heightened columns were connected by three new rings of perforated wrought-iron plate girders, the lower two rings being bolted to new cast-iron collars around the columns. The collars

bear the Commercial Gas Company seal of the White Tower on a shield. This unique arrangement of collars and girders makes each c.77ft-high column look like three separate columns on top of one another, as in the listed 'superimposed orders' type at St Pancras and Bromley-by-Bow. Three sets of diagonal bracing-rods were also fixed between each pair of heightened columns.

The campaign has proposed the retention of a representative portion of the No. 3 Guide Frame on its below-ground brick tank, in a landscaped area between two of the proposed four-storey blocks. It would consist of four columns cut down to about 28 feet and include four lower cast-iron collars and

three wrought-iron girders. This *in situ* preservation is also necessary because the Stepney gasholders survived the Blitz, thanks mainly to the bravery of the gas workers on fire watch; partly for this reason the campaign plans to have the representative portion dedicated as the Stepney Blitz Memorial. Bellway opposed the memorial at the inquiry and presented its own 'public art' proposal for four cut-down columns, ranging in height from 6½ feet to 13 feet, on a new lower surface; with some of the collars retained elsewhere in the landscaped areas.



Lower part of a hollow cast-iron Tuscan column in the No. 3 gasholder guide frame at Stepney with its 3ft-diameter shaft on a base comprising an enlarged torus, 5ft 4 inches across, and a 6ft-square plinth (Malcolm Tucker 1997).



No. 1 Gasholder Guide Frame (north): larger but otherwise almost identical to the Nos. 2 and 3. It was the third largest in London when built in 1863-64. It was enlarged in 1886.

No. 4 Gasholder Guide Frame (south): rebuilt 1925-26 by Samuel Cutler & Sons of Millwall on the Isle of Dogs, on the original 1851 below-ground brick tank.

Remains of Cast-iron Coal Tramway: three truncated columns and girders below Johnson's Lock which were part of a 24ft-high tramway constructed in 1872 and extended in the 1890s. Until 1912 coal for making gas was unloaded from canal barges into trucks which ran to the several coal stores. From 1912 to closure in 1946, the tramway carried coal brought by road from Wapping where it was unloaded from the company's own small fleet of colliers. Apart from a few surviving jetties on the Thames, the remains are now the only indication of a gasworks coal-handling structure in London and are the only remains of a coal-handling structure on the canals in London. Bellway has indicated that it will incorporate the remains in its proposed canal walkway but the campaign is concerned about their proper preservation.

Victory Bridge Wall (A): four-panel boundary wall built 1907 by LCC as part of its new Victory Bridge over the Regent's Canal; to be retained as part of a screen between Ben Jonson Road and the relocated gas governor.

Coal Store Wall (B): massive eleven-bay wall which is the surviving lower part of the south wall of a two storey coal store built 1853-54. Ten intervening piers have large oval wall-tie plates; iron tie-rods secured both north and south walls against the weight of coal in the store which was raised to three storeys and extended westwards in the late nineteenth century. This is London's only known remnant of a nineteenth-century gasworks coal store. The five eastern bays will be retained as part of a screen between Ben Jonson Road and the relocated gas governor, with an archway in the fifth bay for access to the proposed canal walkway.

Meter and Governor House Wall (E): five bays (with bricked-up basement window openings) between buttressed piers. The ground floor of the 1853-54 building housed the station meter which measured the volume of purified gas on its way to the gasholders; also the governor which kept the gas under constant pressure as it passed from the gasholders into the mains. This is London's only known remnant of a nineteenth-century meter and governor house. The campaign has proposed that railings are inserted into the five ground floor window openings and the wall retained as a screen between Ben Jonson Road and the front of the proposed employment training centre. Bellway is opposed to this idea and the wall will probably be demolished.

Head Office and Showroom Walls (F): two long bays and five short bays on either side of bricked-up entrance in splay wall on corner of Ben Jonson Road and Harford Street, remains of a two-storey

building erected in 1853-54. This is London's only known remnant of a mid-nineteenth-century gas company head office and showroom. There are only three surviving late-nineteenth-century gas company office buildings in London, two of which were head offices.

Store Walls and Gate Piers (G): nine-bay wall in Harford Street with short flank wall at southern end and gate piers at northern end; all built post-1894 when the store building was extended to the back of the pavement. This is London's only known remnant of a nineteenth-century gas company store; it probably served mainly as a warehouse for the adjacent showroom. The campaign has proposed that railings are inserted into the ground floor window openings in walls F and G, with new stone caps (matching those on the gate piers) on the intervening piers. This would make an attractive and useful screen between the heavy traffic on the adjacent roads and a safe courtyard in front of the proposed community health centre, with a pedestrian entrance in the middle of the splay wall on the corner. Bellway is opposed to this idea and walls F and G will probably be demolished.

The Coal Store, Meter and Governor House, Head Office and Showroom were all designed by a local architect and built in 1853-54 by John Perry, a Bethnal Green builder. His company built the brick exterior of Bethnal Green Museum (1871-72), now the Museum of Childhood, and the stone exterior of Tower Bridge (1886-94).

The Coal Store, Meter and Governor House, Head Office and Showroom were all built at the same time as the original Nos 2 and 3 gasholders. Walls B, E and F are therefore 'related contemporary monuments' associated with and mutually enhancing the value of the nationally important Stepney Blitz Memorial. The value of this group is further enhanced by the proximity of walls A and G and the unique remains of the cast-iron coal tramway. It is the only fully representative group of surviving nineteenth-century gas industry structures in London and is therefore the only place in London where schoolchildren and others can see evidence of the several stages in the production, storage and distribution of town gas, at what was the most important gasworks in the East End.

Whilst English Heritage informed the inspector that the Nos 2 and 3 gasholders at Stepney are of national importance, it failed to acknowledge the regional importance and value of walls A, B, E, F and G and the remains of the cast-iron coal tramway. Furthermore, it recommended that one of the guide frames is removed from its below-ground brick tank for retention within the development and subsequent scheduling as an ancient monument. However, the Save Stepney Campaign believes that, even if this were a practical possibility, relocation would be far too expensive for Bellway. It is also contrary to *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology & Planning* PPG 16 which makes a presumption for *in situ* preservation of nationally important archaeological remains.



All the evidence presented at the inquiry has now been considered by the inspector. In view of the government's brownfield housing policy, the campaign thinks it highly unlikely that he will ask the Secretary of State to accept English Heritage's advice. The campaign hopes that he will recommend the Stepney Blitz Memorial, rather than Bellway's 'public art' proposal, and also the retention of walls E, F and G and the proper preservation of the remains of the cast-iron coal tramway.

The gasholders and associated structures may be seen from Harford Street, Ben Jonson Road and the canal towpath between the Ragged School Museum and Johnson's Lock. The museum is open to the public on Wednesdays and Thursdays and the first Sunday afternoon in the month (020 8980 6405). There is also a small exhibition about the gasworks and the campaign's proposals at the Ocean Estate Community Hall (behind the flats on the corner of Harford Street and Ernest Street), open 10am to 12 noon on Mondays and Tuesdays and 2pm to 4pm on Wednesdays (020 7790 1294).

.....

## **Post-script on Merton Priory: Walter de Merton and Malden**

The November 1999 *Newsletter* contained a piece about St Mary's Priory by Mrs Sheila Fairbank which in her words 'opened doors' and for the time being plans to build a cinema on the site of the Priory have been shelved. Unfortunately there was an error in the first column of the piece: Merton is not recorded by Augustine but in the Merton Priory Records. Mrs Fairbank continues on Walter de Merton's connection with Malden:

Walter de Basing, as he was first known, the king's 'beloved clerk' was in holy orders by the late 1230s and *circa* 1240 he acquired certain manors including one at Malden, an ancient Christian site set on a hill five miles from Merton Priory. The site is now in the Greater London area with a Kingston postcode - KT4. The manor house survives with some seventeenth-century remains and it is reasonable to assume that it is on or near the site of Walter's manor. As this house became important to the history of Oxford it would be worthwhile to do a thorough archaeological investigation of the immediate area so as to ascertain exactly where 'The House of Scholars of Merton' originally stood. Much of the surroundings are still as they were in Walter de Merton's day and are still owned by his Oxford college which retains the right to appoint the vicar to St John the Baptist's parish church nearby.

In 1262 Walter de Merton assigned the management of his Surrey estates to Merton Priory. The money raised went to support his kinsmen and young men from the Winchester diocese in their studies at Oxford. As chancellor of England in 1258 and 1260 Walter was in a perfect position to build

up his many foundations.

In 1264 he set apart his estate in Malden to support eight young kinsmen who were to study at Oxford. Henderson in his *History of Merton College* (1899) notes that the foundation was in two parts: the *domus* in Surrey and the *congregatio* of the scholars of Merton at Oxford. The *domus* was to be used for the benefit of qualifying importune students for life and from 1265 onwards Walter de Merton began to purchase property in Oxford to be a permanent site for his scholars. The Surrey *domus* was eventually moved to Oxford in 1274 where it became part of Merton College.

I was told when I visited St John's church, Malden, that all paths led to Merton Priory. I would like to think that this was the case but have been unable to find evidence. Again, this could be a profitable subject for research.

On Sunday 25th June T.S. Eliot's 'Murder in the Cathedral' will be performed on the site of the Priory chapter house at Merton (3pm and 7.30, tickets at £10 and £5). This is especially poignant: St Thomas Becket trained at Merton Priory and T.S. Eliot studied at Merton College, Oxford.

— S.M. Fairbank

.....

## **News and Notes**

### **The String of Pearls Festival**

The necklaces of twinkling lights that illuminate the Embankment have been likened to strings of pearls. But they are not the only jewels on the Thames. Many of London's most important buildings are on or close to the river, and to celebrate the Millennium more than sixty pearls of another sort are opening their doors this year. Each of these 'building blocks of society' represents the great social, political, cultural and technological achievements of the last thousand years. Some, like Lambeth Palace, are rarely open to the public; others can be seen as part of the Open House scheme each September, and there are those which can be visited at almost any time but for this special year are mounting special programmes on a variety of themes.

The String of Pearls Festival programme ranges from lectures, exhibitions and a concert at the Public Record Office in Kew, to opportunities to see the newly-restored Queen Anne wing of the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, where Nicholas Hawksmoor's grand staircase has been exposed for the first time in 150 years. Guided tours through three of the Inns of Court - when some of the buildings will be open - have been arranged on most weekdays. An exhibition on how Parliament works is to be mounted in Westminster Hall from 1 August to 15 September when the Houses of Parliament open. At Horse Guards in Whitehall



visitors will be able to see the knee-hole desk used by the Duke of Wellington and look out of the window from which members of the royal family watch the Trooping the Colour. And on the Horse Guards Parade itself more than 1,200 servicemen will participate in a Royal Military Tattoo during the week 10-15 July.

Further information about the String of Pearls Festival is to be found on the internet: [www.stringofpearls.org.uk](http://www.stringofpearls.org.uk) and a booklet with the full programme is available at £1.50 from tourist information centres and bookshops.

– Denise Silvester-Carr

## **The Gerald Cobb archive**

Guildhall Library Print Room has just purchased the late Gerald Cobb's massive archive of cuttings, notes and photographs relating to the City of London churches. The archive comprises seventeen crates/boxes of material which will eventually be incorporated into the Noble and Photograph collections. Fortunately the archive is already arranged by churches and staff will do their best to make it available to readers. A prior appointment is essential.

## **Sir Christopher Wren**

A free Gresham College lecture will be held at the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly on Monday 23 October at 6.15pm. James W.P. Campbell (Michael Ventris Award Winner) will lecture on 'Architect as Engineer: Sir Christopher Wren, The Royal Society and Structural Carpentry in the late seventeenth century'. Wren occupied a unique position at the heart of the academic debate about science and at the heart of the building industry. Focusing on one particular craft, carpentry, the lecture will look at new evidence showing that Wren played a much greater part in controlling building technology than has been supposed – this had an important effect not only on his architecture but also on the building industry as a whole. Not to be missed. Refreshments will be served from 5.30pm.

## **Catching the Past**

From 1 to 25 June the Catching the Past exhibition opens at St Pancras Chambers, Euston Road (in front of St Pancras Station). This is part of a major history project undertaken by Camden History Society for the year 2000 and the exhibition will show how the area has been at the forefront of many important aspects of London's history. Enquiries to the project co-ordinator, Tel: 020 7372 5784.

## **Data Protection Act 1998**

There are currently some exemptions from the Data Protection Act as far as information used for mailing to members is concerned. However, it would

appear that members are entitled to object to having their names and addresses printed in the *London Topographical Record*. We have done this since the very first volume in 1900 and it would be a pity if we could no longer provide a definitive membership list. The early ones are now interesting historical documents in their own right. As far as we know, publication of the list has never caused any problems but members who want their names and addresses suppressed should inform the Hon Treasurer. The next *Record* is due to be published in 2001.

## **Out-of-print publications exchange**

We were overwhelmed with requests for the few copies of Lockie's *Topography of London* which we advertised in the last *Newsletter* and we are sorry that many members were disappointed. One member suggested establishing a system to enable members to sell unwanted out-of-print publications to those who want to build up their collections.

We would be happy to set up a books-for-sale page on our internet site. Members should write to the Hon Secretary with details of any publications they wish to sell. They must be published by the LTS and be out of print. Our site is currently receiving about ten visits a day so there is a reasonable chance of attracting purchasers. Please note that we cannot take any responsibility for the actual transaction and will neither guarantee that the seller will receive payment nor that the purchaser will receive the publication. Given the high level of internet fraud, sellers may wish to receive payment before despatching publications.

Please give an indication of condition and state whether the price includes postage or not. Members can choose whether we publish their name, address and/or telephone number, or whether they would rather hide behind a box number. Sellers have a clear moral obligation to inform the Hon Secretary as soon as they have sold a publication, so we can keep the list up to date.

## **Or why not try abebooks.com?**

The Hon Secretary has fallen in love with abebooks.com, an internet site which makes it possible to search a claimed 18 million secondhand books at 6,000 dealers around the world. In a matter of minutes he located and bought several books which he had despaired of ever finding, after twenty years of fruitlessly visiting bookshops and reading through catalogues. There is also bibliofind.com, which covers most of the same dealers, but this does not seem quite so nice to use. Both sites allow you to search by title, author, publisher, keyword, etc, or by a combination of these, and both permit the buyer to contact the seller directly by email, telephone, fax or post.

Not long ago abebooks.com was listing eleven LTS publications for sale. Prices vary but the most extraordinary were Mills & Oliver's Survey for \$200



(we still have copies available for £16) and Stephen Marks' Sixteenth Century Plan at \$95 (only just out of print at £4). It's nice to know that the book trade values our publications so highly.

## Accounts

The Accounts for 1999 are still in preparation. Members who would like to inspect them in advance of the AGM are asked to send a s.a.e. to the Hon Treasurer (address on the back page of the *Newsletter*). The audited Accounts should be published in the November *Newsletter*.

.....

## Book Reviews

### Legal London. A Pictorial History

by Mark Herber. Phillimore 1999. 132 pages, profusely illustrated. Index. £16.99 hardback.

In 1971 an exhibition was held in the Great Hall of the Royal Courts of Justice called 'Legal London'. No exhibition of pictures illustrating the history of the Courts or the legal profession had ever been staged before and its catalogue, richly illustrated, was the first book to deal with the subject. Until now there has never been another and the present book covers even more ground. In fact it is difficult to think of any aspect of legal London that it does not cover, from Inns of Court to prisons and police to crime and punishment. Perhaps that is its weakness. By trying to deal with so many subjects it is understandably unable to cover any in depth.

The author is a solicitor well-versed in the intricacies of the law both civil and criminal and is in a unique position to steer us through the complications of the legal system. And this he does with a simplicity which even I could understand.

Of great value too is his ability to explain in simple terms the lineage of the Supreme Court and to sort out and differentiate the various minor courts – Common Pleas, Requests, Hustings, Exchequer, Star Chamber, Admiralty and the obscure Church Courts – the Court of Arches and Prerogative Court of Canterbury. All these, and some of which I have never heard, are here described and explained.

A large section deals with the Inns of Court. These, of course, are well-known and each has a library devoted to it but it is useful to have their histories outlined here in one volume.

But it is the chapter on Inns of Chancery that I found most interesting. My knowledge of these obscure bodies has so far been rather vague but in a single phrase Mark Herber explains what purpose they served. "The Inns of Chancery," he writes, "can be considered as junior or preparatory Inns." And here they all are. In addition to the obvious Staple Inn and Furnival's Inn we have Sergeants', Clement's, Lyon's, Barnard's, Clifford's and even long-vanished Inns like Thavies, Strand and St

George's get a mention.

The section dealing with Prisons is equally useful. As well as the obvious gaols, the more obscure compters are identified and located without, unfortunately, the advantage of a map. Details from Rocque's 1746 map are clearly reproduced as end papers and frontispiece but it would have helped if the relevant buildings could have been indicated in some way. The sites of the Inns of Court and other famous legal establishments are already well-known; here an opportunity has been lost to point out the locations of the more obscure Courts of Chancery and those hidden-away compters.

In an attempt to cover everything dealing with the law some subjects get very short shrift indeed. Crime itself is represented by a mere two pictures – a well-known photograph of Dr Crippen in the dock at the Old Bailey in 1910 and an engraving of Mary Aubrey chopping up her husband in 1687. With so many subjects dealt with in such a perfunctory manner, it seems a little unbalanced to devote no fewer than nine pages to portraits and biographies of twenty-seven lawyers, most of whom are bewigged Victorian judges quite unknown to the average reader.

Though the history of the Police is dealt with briefly in the text, pictorially they are dismissed in three photographs showing twentieth-century policemen standing in a group, sitting on horses and jumping into the Thames. No attempt is made to picture Bow Street Runners or Sir Robert Peel's 'Peelers'. This is, after all, a pictorial history and it must stand or fall on its illustrations. And here, I am afraid, it falls.

The days of identifying pictures as "from an old print" are surely over and it is unforgivable today in a book of this quality to rely so heavily on *Old and New London* for illustrations instead of using the original engravings. Too often do we find "based upon a print of 1808" or "based upon a print by Rowlandson". The illustration showing the execution of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators is doubly annoying: "This drawing from *Old and New London*" reads the caption, "is based upon a print of 1795". This 1795 print had, in turn, been based upon a contemporary print of 1606. Above it on the same page, a picture of Smithfield burnings from *Old and New* is actually a copy of a wood-cut from Fox's *Book of Martyrs*.

However, we must be grateful to Mark Herber for giving us a concise, overall picture of London's law at work. A subject largely neglected, in spite of the fact that, to quote the blurb, "London has been home to more lawyers, for more centuries, than any other city on earth." That is one of the many facts that make this book a good read and, with the aid of an exhaustive index, a useful work of reference. One fact, however, is distinctly dubious. "Traitors' Gate was removed from the Tower in Victorian times and purchased by Phineas Barnum." I thought we had disposed of that myth a long time ago.

– Peter Jackson



## Brief Book Notices

**Streets of Old Holborn** by Steven Denford and David Hellings from the Camden History Society. 96 pages, 30 illustrations, 7 maps. £5.95 + 85p post and packing from Sheila Ayres, 1 Daleham Gardens, London NW3 5DA.

An historical overview of Holborn and notes on the Inns of Court are followed by seven routes/walks around Holborn. Simple directions, plenty of information about buildings, monuments, the odd market and past inhabitants, all drawn heavily from Dr Caroline Barron's "admirable *The Parish of St Andrew Holborn* to which we owe a particular debt of gratitude". The maps in this booklet (which would suit a visitor to London) are simple, purpose-drawn plans showing historic boundaries and there is an essential map of the walks on the back cover. All very professionally presented.

**Memories of Highgate from a keeper's lodge** by Liza Chivers from the Hornsey History Society, The Old Schoolhouse, 136 Tottenham Lane, London N8 7EL. 1999. 48 pages, illustrations, map. £4.95.

Liza Chivers' account of her life at Queens Wood Lodge, Highgate between the wars has proved popular enough over the past seventeen years to go into a reprint. Mrs Chivers herself died six years ago, and the lodge has recently been converted into an ecology centre, but her account of life in a largely rural Highgate still exerts a charm, helped by a splendid collection of contemporary postcards. A welcome addition to the Society's series of historical pamphlets.

**London's Lea Valley. Britain's best kept secret** by Jim Lewis. Phillimore 1999. 124 pages, illustrations, maps. £14.95.

Jim Lewis's account of the industrial development of the Lea Valley, on the borders between London and Essex, is divided into a series of short chapters with rather cringe-making titles. The range is wide – food, sewage, television, gunpowder, aircraft. The detail tends to be brief and breathless, about enough for an average school essay, though each chapter has a brief bibliography. Indeed, the whole approach seems to be aimed at the intelligent sixth-former, and Mr Lewis has attempted to pack too much into too little space. The illustrious chapter on women in the Lea Valley seems to have strayed in from a totally different volume.

The period range is from the seventeenth century to the present, but the main periods are Victorian and early twentieth century. The survey does have the virtue of being up to date, ending with the Lea Valley Business Centre in 1998.

– David Webb

**Westminster History Review 3** (1999) available from City of Westminster Archives, 10 St Ann's Street, London SW1P 2XR. 48 pages. £3.99.

**Camden History Review 23**, The Camden History Society (1999), available from Camden Local Studies Centre, Holborn Library, 28-32 Theobalds Road, London WC1X 8PA. 30 pages. £5.95.

**Hornsey Historical Society Bulletin 41** (2000) from The Old Schoolhouse, 136 Tottenham Lane, London N8 7EL. 40 pages. £3.00 + 75p post and packing.

**Twentieth Century Buildings in Hackney** by Elizabeth Robinson (1999) from The Hackney Society, 21 Sanford Terrace, London N16 7LH. 120 pages. £11.50.

Local history continues to flourish as these publications testify. The *Westminster History Review* is of wide interest with articles ranging from coffee-houses to council housing. The most intriguing piece, by Alan Cox, is about the Chinese Collection on view for a few years in the mid-nineteenth century and entered through a brightly-painted pagoda on the south side of Knightsbridge. This article arose out of research for volume xlv of *The Survey of London* and is the sort of spin-off researchers delight in and for which the *Westminster History Review* now provides an outlet.

The *Camden History Review* performs a similar function for the entire borough, embracing Hampstead, St Pancras and part of Holborn. This issue has attracted articles on Camden coal-hole-covers and the King's Cross Lighthouse – good pieces of original research that might not otherwise have seen the light of day.

The *Hornsey Historical Society Bulletin* balances topography, architecture and biography with personal reminiscences, notes and queries and book reviews. The contents reveal strong local support for what is a very active society.

Similarly, who would have undertaken to publish a monograph on *Twentieth Century Buildings in Hackney* had it not been the local society? "Underrated, long-suffering Hackney" is on the verge of a renaissance as the City's tentacles probe Shoreditch and Hoxton. Regeneration can already be seen in the redevelopment of Wick Village, the Holly Street Estate and the exclusive Sutton Square. There is renewed interest in the historic architecture of Hackney and its conservation and the area's traditional association with the furniture trades is being revived while "trendy" designers congregate around Hoxton Square. Elizabeth Robinson's book provides a fresh perspective on the social history and development of Hackney as well as an assessment of fifty of the best twentieth-century buildings in the borough.

.....



## **The officers of the London Topographical Society**

### **Chairman**

Peter Jackson FSA  
The Vane  
The Avenue  
Northwood  
Middlesex HA6 2NQ  
Tel. 01923 829 079

### **Hon Treasurer**

Roger Cline MA LLB  
Flat 13  
13 Tavistock Place  
London WC1H 9SH  
Tel. 020 7388 9889

### **Publications Secretary**

Simon Morris MA  
22 Brooksby Street  
London N1 1HA  
Tel. 020 7609 0890

### **Hon Editor**

Mrs Ann Saunders PhD FSA  
3 Meadway Gate  
London NW11 7LA  
Tel. 020 8455 2171

### **Newsletter Editor**

Mrs Penelope Hunting PhD FSA  
40 Smith Street  
London SW3 4EP  
Tel. 020 7352 8057

### **Hon Secretary**

Patrick Frazer MA MSc  
36 Old Deer Park Gardens  
Richmond  
Surrey TW9 2TL  
Tel. 020 8940 5419

New membership enquiries should be addressed to the Hon Secretary, Patrick Frazer. Correspondence about existing membership including renewal payments, requests for standing orders and covenant forms and the non-receipt of publications (after September) should be addressed to the Hon Treasurer, Roger Cline. The Honorary Editor, Ann Saunders, deals with proposals for new publications.

Registered charity no. 271590

The Society's web site address is: [www.topsoc.org](http://www.topsoc.org)

### **ISSN 1369-7986**

The *Newsletter* is published by the London Topographical Society and issued by the Hon Secretary, Patrick Frazer, 36 Old Deer Park Gardens, Richmond, Surrey TW9 2TL.  
Editor: Mrs Penelope Hunting.

Produced and printed by The Ludo Press Ltd, 373 Earlsfield Road, London SW18 3DG.  
Tel. 020 8870 3414. Fax 020 8874 7689.