London and Middlesex Archaeological Society
44th Local History Conference
Saturday 21st November 2009
10am–5pm
City of London School for Girls, Barbican

Open-air London: Pleasure, Parks and Protest

Woodlands and Commons
by Dr Colin Bowlt, LAMAS Archaeological Committee

The London Square: Islets in our Desert of Brick, Slate and Mud
by Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, Gardener, Historian and Gardens Adviser to Hampton Court & Kensington Palaces

Common People, Common Land: a History of London’s Open Spaces as Places of Protest
by Michael Berlin, FLL Birkbeck, University of London

The Pleasure Gardens of London: a Creative Use for Open Spaces
by Katrina Burnett, with Kate Semmens (Sop.) and Steven Devine (Harpischord) from Finchcocks Musical Museum

The Conference will be introduced by Prof. Caroline Barron, President of LAMAS, who will also present the Annual Local History Publications Award.

There will be displays of recent work and publications by Local History Societies.

Tickets (includes afternoon tea): Non-LAMAS members £10. Members of LAMAS £8. Available by post: Local History Conference, 24 Orchard Close, Ruislip, Middx. HA4 7LS, enclosing cheque (payable to LAMAS) and a stamped S.A.E. In view of the currently uncertain postal situation you are recommended to book tickets by email and pay on the day, contact: annhignell@waitrose.com

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2009

The 109th Annual General Meeting of the London Topographical Society was held at the City of London School for Girls on Wednesday, 15th July 2009. It was attended by about 330 members and guests.

After Penelope Hunting welcomed members to the meeting, the annual report for 2008 was approved, as were the minutes for the 2008 AGM.

Roger Cline, Hon. Treasurer, introduced the accounts, which had been audited and approved. He said that the annual subscription had remained unchanged since 1992, but there was nevertheless a healthy surplus for the year. The first payment to the British Museum for cataloguing the Crace Collection would be made next January. There were no questions from the floor and the accounts were approved.

Ann Saunders, Hon. Editor, reported that the annual publication, Simon Thurley’s book about Somerset House, had taken nearly seven years to complete. It concentrated on the building’s architecture, something that no one had done before, tracing its development in a series of brilliantly drawn ground plans. She thanked Graham Maney for organising the printing and for helping in many other ways.

The publication for 2010 would be the next volume of the London Topographical Record. Subjects for possible future publications include Westminster Palace plans, Stationers Company almanacs and an index to Ogilby’s very political map of London.

The Society’s officers were re-elected, viz: Penelope Hunting as Chairman, Ann Saunders as Hon. Editor, Roger Cline as Hon. Treasurer, Bridget Cherry as Newsletter Editor, Simon Morris as Publications Secretary, Patrick Frazer as Hon. Secretary and Hugh Cleaver as Hon. Auditor. Two new Council members, Mireille Galinou and Robin Michaelson, had been co-opted during the year.
They were formally elected, as were all the existing Council members.

Following the business meeting there were two talks. Anna Maude spoke about her work cataloguing the Crace Collection, which is being funded by the Society. The British Museum has thirty-eight portfolios of views of London compiled by Frederick Crace, who was keenly interested in London topography and who died in 1839. Wishing to illustrate every significant building in London, he employed several artists, most notably Thomas Hosmer Shepherd. All the Crace images will be made available on the internet free of charge, and Anna Maude showed members a wide-ranging series of illustrations from the collection. [See further p.4, 5 & 6]

Elain Harwood then gave an illustrated talk about the Barbican development, which had opened exactly forty years ago and included the City of London Girls School where the AGM was being held. The area had been occupied by the rag trade and, during the Second World War, the bombed buildings burned very nicely. As a result, the local population fell by 95 per cent. The post-war development was designed by Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, three lecturers at Kingston School of Art, who were very well travelled and much influenced by Le Corbusier. As well as the City of London School for Girls itself, over 2,000 residential flats were built, with 150 different types of flat. Only a small site was available for the Barbican Centre, which had to be built deep into the ground to provide the necessary space.

- Patrick Frazer, Hon. Secretary

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**Out and About:**

**Future Events**

**London's Country Houses** are the subject of a Georgian Group symposium on Tuesday 10th November, 9.30-5.15 at 6 Fitzroy Square W1. £60 including lunch. Speakers will include Caroline Knight, author of a recent book on the subject (see Reviews p.16). Book online at www.georgiangroup.org.uk

**London's parks and open spaces**, the subject of this year's LAMAS conference on Saturday 21st November, are increasingly attracting further research. Those who wish to pursue the subject may be interested in the **London Parks and Gardens Trust lectures** at the Garden Museum, Lambeth on Mondays, 6.30pm: £7, (£6 for members). 14th December: The Metropolitan Gardens Association, by Joyce Bellamy; 11th January: South London Botanical Institute by Roy Vicker; 8th February: Gorden Cullen and London's Townscape, by Alan Powers; 8th March: Valentine's Mansion Ifford, by Nigel Burch; 12th April: Lodgges of Hackney by David Solomon. The useful summaries of the LPGT's inventory of open spaces throughout Greater London are now available on their website (www.londongardenstrust.org).

One of the many functions of parks may be commemoration. The fame of the tiny **Postman's Park** in the City of London, tucked away off King Edward Street near the former General Post Office rests on the unique series of Royal Doulton tiled memorials to 'heroic self-sacrifice', recalling those who lost their lives by saving others, created by the artist G. F. Watts in 1887. Should you visit this delightful retreat you will find that a new memorial has been added, after a gap of nearly 80 years, in the style of the older ones. It commemorates Leigh Pitt, who died in 2007 while saving a boy from drowning in a canal.

**The Victorian Society winter lecture programme** includes several talks with London themes: Mon 16th November: **London Board Schools**, by Elain Harwood is sold out but some tickets may be available at the door. The theme in the New Year will be the 1880s. Lectures are at the Art Workers Guild, 6 Queen Square. Tickets £8 in advance or £10 at the door. See www.victoriansociety.org.uk for further details.

The further one goes back in time, the more myths develop. Untangling those has fascinated John Clark, until recently Senior Curator of the medieval collections of the Museum of London. His talk, **Shaky Foundations: the legendary origins of London churches** on Thurs 10th December 2pm, at the Guildhall Library is now fully booked, but another version of it will be given at the Museum of Fulham Palace on 10th March 2010, 2pm; £6 including tea. He will be investigating the reliability of such claims as Southwark Cathedral ’Here since 606'; St Pancras Old Church 'Site of prayer and meditation since AD 314', and St Peter Cornhill 'founded by King Lucius in AD 179'.

**Historic Views of London**, an exhibition, based on Anne Saunders’ book, will be held at the recently restored Headstone Manor, Pinner View, Harrow from 14th January – 18th April 2010.

**The Blitz and Its Legacy**, a conference organised by Dr Mark Clapson (University of Westminster) and Professor Peter Larkham (Birmingham City University) will be held in London, 3rd – 4th September 2010.

Further details from M.Clapson@westminster.ac.uk or peter.larkham@bcu.ac.uk . The conference will offer a wide range of approaches, setting post-war London in an international context, and including speakers from USA, France and Japan. Among the varied topics promised will be bomb damage, tube shelters and evacuation, the fire service and civil defence, and approaches to rebuilding and replanning in London, provincial cities and abroad.

The **Annual General Meeting of the London Topographical Society** will be held on July 7 at Wesley's Chapel, City Road
Notes and News

Subscriptions
LTS subscriptions are due for 2010 on 1st January 2010. Most of you are well-trained and pay by standing order or have already paid in advance for next year. We intend to enclose with this Newsletter an invoice for those others who are due to activate payment for 2010, so to continue your membership there is no need to take any action except to check the enclosures with this Newsletter and to act on any invoice you find. Institutions using subscription agents will of course receive invoices directly from those agents.

Changes of address
An increasing number of publications come back to us marked 'Gone Away' or 'Not called for'. Do please tell us as soon as you know when you are moving home (or office if we deliver publications there). If someone is unlikely to be home when the parcel delivery is made, please give us an alternative address where parcels can be taken in.

Publication for 2010
Volume 30 of the London Topographical Record will be publication No. 169. Library cataloguers should ensure they enter both numbers in their series catalogues, to avoid spurious claims in future years.

Circumspice
What is it, where is it? Answer on p.9.

Obituaries

Peter Marcan 1951-2009
Peter Marcan died of a brain haemorrhage in the summer. He was not a member of the Society, but became known to many of us as publisher of Local History directories, reprinter of classic books on the East End or seller of secondhand local history books (not to be confused with our member Peter Whetman who issues professional book catalogues and happily is still with us).

Peter had trained and worked as a librarian in the East End, but over the last 25 years had started his listings of visual arts and local history organisations, all done without the benefit of a word processor. I first encountered him when he telephoned to ask for details of the Camden History Society and for sample publications; we got talking and I became a customer for the local history booklets he had collected off other societies. The first order arrived so badly packed that I insisted on going to collect future orders, but never managed to be invited inside his flat – we always met on neutral territory. I was amused to be acknowledged in his latest Local History Handbook as ‘that indefatigable book collector’.

- Roger Cline

Dr Joan Schmitzter
Joan Schmitzter, who died on 19th September 2009 aged 84, was a member of the LTS for some 20 years. She was a founder member and later chairman and president of the Hornsey Historical Society, whose growth and development owed much to her imaginative and far-sighted approach. Her own research and publications set a high standard; her training as an historian always made her aware of the wider interest of local subjects, demonstrated by her exemplary history of the pioneering nineteenth century school of St Michael’s Highgate. The school’s involvement in horticultural training was neatly paralleled by Joan’s longstanding ecological interests, developed well before such matters became widely popular. Joan had the ability to inspire others by her enthusiasm, combining scholarly excellence with energetic practicality. Among her numerous other publications on aspects of Hornsey and Highgate was a history of the Infant School in Tottenham Lane, Hornsey, and it was due to her that the abandoned building was rescued to become the home of the Hornsey Historical Society.

- Bridget Cherry
Cataloguing Crace

Thanks to a grant from the London Topographical Society, the Crace Collection of London Views is currently being catalogued on to the British Museum’s Online Database. For anyone interested in London topography this is an exciting development, as it makes a rich and wide-ranging selection of London views readily available for anyone to peruse and download in digitised form. In this article I hope to provide an overview of what the collection is, the sorts of images one might expect to find, and thus the quite specific London that this remarkable selection of views presents.

According to his son, John Gregory, Frederick Crace’s interest in London Topography and passion for collecting views of London stemmed from his position as Commissioner of Sewers, providing him with frequent opportunities to consult old maps and plans of London. From what was initially a developing interest in the planning and fabric of London became, by the last decades of his life, a full-blown obsession with illustrating ‘every building of note in this great City’. The result is what is now known as the Crace Collection: a huge selection of around 6000 prints and drawings of views of London, filling 38 portfolios covering the period between the mid seventeenth century and 1859, the year of Frederick Crace’s death. These views were all collected, arranged, and mounted by Crace, whose care and dedication over the presentation of these images ensured that the collection has remained intact, as Crace wished, and except for the small minority that have been removed for special exhibitions, the images are displayed on the same mounts in the same order as that devised by Crace. The portfolios are arranged according to area, with three initial portfolios documenting general views, often of more epic dimensions, followed by five on the Thames (one of which is focused entirely on London Bridge) before London is carved up and represented in sections from Kensington Palace to Vauxhall Gardens. Within the portfolios the arrangement is roughly chronological, thus providing a coherent structure through which to view the collection.

What this collection meant to Crace is, of course, impossible for us to answer. We are left only with the words of his son, who, in the introduction to the catalogue he compiled to accompany the collection, tells us that through these views we can witness the ‘gradual development of the city’, as well as the ‘habits of the people and occurrences of the time’. One must be careful in assuming that these views act as a window to the past – that what we see in the images is what London was like. It is essential to recognise that this collection documents the image of London, not London, and that changes to the views over time have as much to do with developments in artistic tastes, topographical interests, the art market, constraints on the printmaker, and altering perceptions of the city (to name a few), as with structural and architectural alterations. Over the period covered many different factors influenced what and how London was illustrated. Clearly, the scale of the collection limits what can be covered in this article, but by looking more closely at a few key moments in the development of the pictorial iconography of London, I hope to show the complexity, value and scope of this collection.

Many of the images in this collection were originally made for topographical series or books, which were each designed to serve a variety of purposes, and to cater for specific audiences depending on the style and time of the work. Some of the earliest views in the collection are those by Wenceslaus Hollar, whose series of ‘Prospects’ from the mid seventeenth century influenced a long tradition of London illustrations. While Hollar is a relatively frequent feature in the collection, the large bulk of the earlier prints date from the early to mid eighteenth century. On the whole, these prints conform to a similar style and subject matter, which is no surprise, as printmaking was a commercial business, and artists and publishers produced prints to suit the demands of the market. The re-building of London after the Great Fire of 1666 promoted interest in the new architectural splendours of the city, and the early eighteenth century development of the West End as an elegant residential quarter, with grand squares and houses, made it a fashionable topic for printmakers. The series London Described published by John Bowles in 1731 is a good example of the style of print produced at this time, focusing as it does on the squares, palaces and new architectural features of London (see fig.1). The prints are competently engraved by Sutton Nichols.
and are often shown from a bird's-eye view. Many of these plates were re-issued in the 1754 edition of Stow's Survey, showing their enduring popularity to mid-century. By this time, a plethora of bird's-eye or perspective views of familiar subjects were being produced in London, the focus shifting slightly depending on what new feature or area was in fashion. Figures are often included in the views, but they are invariably elegantly dressed, and detached from any sense of purpose, provided purely to please the eye. If one was to believe the London presented to us by mid-eighteenth century topographical printmakers, it would be a prosperous, grand, organised, clean and perpetually sunny city, completely devoid of crime, dirt, rain, beggars and drunks. That is not to say that these views are not of interest, as they do show us those aspects of the city people were proud of, and wanted celebrated, as well as documenting areas and buildings that would later be changed or destroyed. But one must be aware that we are looking at an image of London created by the printmaker to appeal to the market, which evidently desired to view an elegant, structured and wealthy city in its topographical prints, and any corner of the city that did not conform was simply ignored.

The second half of the century brought about key changes to the pictorial iconography of London: on the one hand, the impact of Canaletto on the London view became apparent, as the traditional topographical view lost appeal in favour of a new, more artistic way of looking at the city. Rather than approaching topographical views as one might a map, Canaletto took care over the composition, introducing new lower viewpoints, so allowing foreground figures to provide interest and scale, as well as placing more emphasis on the sky, and the light that falls on the scene. The development of the technique of aquatint, which enabled printmakers to mimic the effect of watercolour, also encouraged the more artistic style of illustration. A good example is the work A Picturesque Tour through London by Thomas Malton from the 1790s, which utilised the aquatint technique and is an altogether more luxurious publication than those produced earlier in the century. The other vital change to the visual depiction of London at this time was the change from the architectural to the picturesque. As the pace of London's modernisation quickened towards the end of the century a sense of nostalgia for and a desire to record London's medieval buildings seeps into prints. Many of the old timber framed structures were being knocked down in quick succession to make way for improvements, and a number of series were published around 1800 that focused on these old buildings. Robert Wilkinson's Londina Illustrata, and John Thomas Smith's Antiquities of London are good examples, and illustrations from both feature frequently in the collection (see fig. 2). Earlier in the century there was little interest in the run-down aspects of the city, and if the vogue for the picturesque had not developed, then many of London's medieval buildings would have been demolished without being recorded. This again highlights the importance of recognising the intentions and perceptions behind the production of the prints. It was clearly not the case that London's medieval heritage did not exist in the early eighteenth century, but one can see that it was of little interest to the market for topographical prints, whereas by the end of the century whole publications were dedicated to hastily recording these ancient buildings before they were lost.

Another development around the same time was the increasing care taken over the human interest of the prints. By 'human interest' I simply mean the inclusion of humanised figures, made to look like real people one might expect to find on the streets of London in the early nineteenth century. Figures had been included earlier of course, but they rarely added anything to the composition; they were simply staffage. In Rudolph Ackermann's publication of 1808, The Microcosm of London, the artist Thomas Rowlandson was employed purely to detail the figures in the views, while the topographical background was drawn by Pugin. While this is a vibrant collection of prints of exceptional quality, it is the work of Thomas Hosmer Shepherd that I wish to focus on here. Shepherd was a prolific topographical artist working in the first half of the nineteenth century, who features more than any other artist in the Crace Collection. Adams praises him for the human interest he introduces into his illustrations, and it cannot be denied that a wide range of figures can be found in the average Shepherd view. However, Alex Potts highlights a different aspect of the city.
Shepherd’s work that brought on a further change to the tradition of illustrating London, namely the introduction of a structurally different conception of how the cityscape should be ordered. She produced the illustrations for two epic series of London views, entitled Metropolitan Improvements: London in the nineteenth century, and London and its Environs in the nineteenth century, both from around 1830 (see fig. 3). These series were produced to celebrate London’s modernity, and so record those aspects that promote London as the epitome of the modern metropolis. Again, the well-off areas and more troubling corners of the city are ignored, but the change comes in the structuring of the views. Rather than a static view of a particular subject, Shepherd shows us the flow of life through the streets; the views don’t stop, but seem to constantly pull our gaze towards the next street, beyond the limits of the view, emphasising how vast the city had become and the sense of constant movement through the network of streets connecting the different points of interest. Indeed, for Shepherd it appears that the streets themselves are the points of interest, as architectural features often seem to take a secondary position. At the risk of labouring the point, previous to Shepherd’s views London was obviously not the picture of serenity as suggested by Malton, and one should not assume that it was only in the nineteenth century that traffic invaded the streets. What had changed were peoples’ perceptions of the city. The idea of a modern, industrious and economically successful city had become more popular, and this is reflected in the images produced. Rather than focusing on the elegant squares and palaces, Shepherd’s views celebrate London’s magnificence by emphasising the size, modernity and constant bustle of the city.

Clearly, it is important to know where these images came from, and why they were created, to understand what it is they depict. However, by bringing together, re-ordering, mounting and presenting these images to us as a collection, Crace has again altered their meaning and function to accord with his own image of London. The limitations and constraints placed on printmakers from different ages are important to understand, but once their work is placed in a collection alongside images from different times, created for different audiences and to make different points, their meaning is fundamentally altered. For example, Potts’s impression of the steel engraved Shepherd views comes from flicking through the series and watching the streets unfurl, but in the Crace Collection this dimension of the series is lost, and the images are made to stand amongst other quite different illustrations of the same subject, creating a unique visual history of London. Since there is no text accompanying the Crace Collection, the images do not serve as illustrations to a textual history of London, as do the extra-illustrated Pennants; this is something more personal. Crace commissioned hundreds of watercolours from Shepherd illustrating the more mundane, or overlooked areas of the city for which he could find no other image, or that he wanted shown from a different angle. These watercolours were made especially for Crace, and they point to his ambition to show the London that he knew, not just the London the printmakers and their publishers were prepared to show, or the London described in the various ‘histories’.

As well as the watercolours and other drawings, which are numerous and by many artists other than Shepherd, the collection is full of one-offs and oddities that inject some life and colour, taking it beyond the changing pictorial iconography of London. Fires, riots, executions, firework displays, frost fairs (perhaps the only recognition of any sort of weather in London!), construction, celebrations, satires, processions, portraits with topographical backdrops, architectural designs, photographs and tickets all serve to heighten the vitality, richness and scope of the collection. For example, Crace has collected a number of prints by William Hogarth, whose inclusion in a topographical collection emphasises the importance of topography to his satire. Hogarth often set his satirical scenes in identifiable London locations, using the reputation of the areas and landmarks shown to make points about the society that inhabits them. Gin Lane is a good example, as it shows a scene in the slum of St Giles, with the well known church spire of St George’s, Bloomsbury in the background. The church is shown beyond piles of rubble and ruins, acting to both identify the location and to suggest that the good of the church is inaccessible to those stuck in the mire of Gin Lane.

There is of course far more to see than the little that I have discussed in this article. The complete
collection will be catalogued soon, and all of the images will be online, available for anyone to download free of charge. The process of cataloguing does itself re-contextualise the images, separating them from the collection as records to stand alone amongst the vast number of images already catalogued on to the online database. As has been said, without knowing where the prints have come from it can be difficult to understand why they present what they do, and so the process of cataloguing is useful, as where appropriate it links the images to the series or book they were originally created for. However, in their detached form, it can be difficult to see them as part of a collection. It is important to remember that while many of the prints did once serve a different purpose, their function now is to be part of a rich and varied collection that draws from all aspects of a loosely categorised genre of London topographical illustrations, to create the image of London as seen by Frederick Crace.

**Accessing the collection online**

Accessing the collection online can be a bit complicated, and so what follows is a brief guide to finding and downloading the images from the collection. Firstly, you must find the online collections database on the British Museum website. This can be done via the link: www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database.aspx or through the 'Research' section of the website. If you simply want to browse through all the Crace images, then enter 'Crace' as a search term, and all of the images that have been catalogued so far will appear for you to skip through. If you want to search for something more specific, then you will need to go to the Advanced Search page, select Category People, enter 'Crace' and click on the adjacent arrow. You will then be thrown into another page where you should tick the box next to either Frederick Crace's name or John Gregory Crace's name, then click on the arrow beside 'Add selected terms to your object search'. This takes you back to the earlier page where you can enter a specific search term, such as 'Covent Garden', or 'London Described', then click on the arrow beside Search for objects. Abbreviated records will appear. Clicking on the top line of the record or the thumbnail image takes you to the full catalogue record and a larger image. There are digital images of nearly all the prints (the only exceptions being those too large to scan) and they can be downloaded and used free of charge in non-commercial publications – just click on Use digital image and follow the instructions.

Anna Maude began cataloguing the Crace Collections in April 2008 after volunteering in the Department of Prints and Drawings. She studied history at Oxford followed by a Masters degree, with distinction, in the History of Art and Visual Culture.

3. See Sheila O'Connell 'Curious and Entertaining – Prints of London and Londoners' in *London 1753*
5. See Alex Potts, 'Picturing the Modern Metropolis: Images of London in the Nineteenth Century' in History Workshop, No. 26 (Winter, 1988), pp. 28-56

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**The Survey of London in Woolwich**

After the completion of its 46th and 47th volumes, on Clerkenwell, the Survey of London has crossed the Thames to examine two parishes south of the river, Woolwich and Battersea. In providing a detailed chronicle of London's development the Survey's mission has, since its very first publication, been to conserve through informing the expert and the public to help them make decisions on the metropolitan historic environment. This is perhaps part of the reason why since 1956 the Survey has prioritised parishes north of the river, where various developments have brought about tremendous change in the physical appearance of London. Another explanation is the Survey's focus on estate development in the West End, in the volumes dating from the 1950s to the 1980s. Now the Survey is examining some of the social and architectural changes that have taken place south of the river, particularly in the riparian districts, by examining two such parishes: Battersea up-river and Woolwich down-river.

Woolwich and Battersea are apt companions as they compare and contrast with each other particularly well. As well as their riverside locations both parishes are suburban, and have shared some common demographic aspects – notably both have significant industrial histories and histories of political radicalism. They were both described by their assessor in 1900 as the most likely locations in London from which the worst trouble could arise. These similarities make their differences all the more remarkable.

Whilst Battersea was a more established and typical nineteenth-century suburb, an expansion from the centre of London, Woolwich was already by then a thriving satellite town with a 'thumping self-centred vitality' and a long tradition of artisanal independence. This sense of strength and uniqueness was well deserved and the massive military establishments of the Royal Dockyard (founded 1512) and the Royal Arsenal (emerging from an ordnance storage depot, created in 1671, into one of the largest factories in the country) drew thousands of skilled workers and labourers to the
town, which in turn made Woolwich an ideal location for private industry, such as Siemens, founded in 1863. Whilst many prospered from the military and industrial presence in Woolwich there was also extreme poverty. This combination produced a strong, socially minded town that saw the creation of the Woolwich Equitable Building Society (1847), London’s only free ferry (1889), one of the earliest polytechnics (1890) and a remarkably exuberant suite of municipal buildings from the beginning of the twentieth century. The presence of the Arsenal also led directly to the formation of two particularly noteworthy institutions by its workers: the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society in 1868, which built on a century’s worth of local experience in co-operative trading and which at its height in the 1970s had more than half a million members; and Arsenal Football Club in 1886.8

Whilst the latter of these institutions decamped north of the river in 1913, the RACS maintained a powerful presence in Woolwich. In 1902 it began rebuilding its Central Stores on the south side of the town’s commercial centre, Powis Street, creating a vast department store using moulded terracotta in a conservative Italian Renaissance style. As the Society continued to grow through the 1920s and ’30s it expanded across Powis Street and in 1935 decided to build a new Art Deco emporium there to provide up-to-date facilities for its members, designed by the RACS architect S.W. Ackroyd. Work began in 1938 despite the approach of war. A continuous cantilevered canopy, made possible by its modern steel structure, and full-width first floor windows emphasise the horizontal, whilst the vertical towers provide a powerful frame to the composition. In the larger east tower a long vertical window displays the wrought-iron railings that spell out in their design ‘co op’ and illuminates the store’s main staircase.

In addition to bringing wealth and employment to Woolwich, the presence of the military also saw the construction of some extraordinary military institutions that found a unique architectural expression. The huge military presence interwove with the strong-minded town, firstly along the river. Later, as the town became too crowded for any further expansion, the military moved uphill and on to Woolwich Common to the south, where the air was thought to be healthier. Here the military had room to spread, building the Royal Artillery Barracks, begun in 1774-7 and enlarged in 1802-6 to make the longest façade in Britain. As the military moved to higher ground it drew the town with it, drawing development up the natural amphitheatre in which the town had been centred.

On the opposite side of the common at the southern foot of the parish was another remarkable military institution, the Royal Military Academy (1803-6). This had existed as a professional military school since 1741, amongst the Arsenal’s buildings, but at the turn of the nineteenth century the pressure of expanding numbers of cadets required an expansion of accommodation. The architect to the Board of Ordnance, James Wyatt, produced a design that provided the facilities required with little architectural conceit – classrooms, offices, separate accommodation and exercise space for officers, cadets and staff, and service buildings in a

8 Woolwich Royal Arsenal Cooperative Stores, elevation and plan as proposed in 1937, drawn by Gemma Bryant, 2008, based on architect’s plans and archive photos, © English Heritage
picturesque composition with a turreted focal point that echoed the White Tower, the headquarters of the Board. The brick-and-render Academy could hardly recreate the aura of a stone fortress, yet the massive corner turrets create an impressive centrepiece that also manages to give the impression of a Tudor gatehouse. This enabled Wyatt to bring a building which evoked a great keep into the ‘curtain wall’ of the Academy, putting its grandest feature on full display rather than encircled by defensive structures that would have undermined the overall impact. Instead, a discreet eighteenth-century motif, the ha-ha, and a waist-high brick wall defended the Academy from intruders, and the wider world from cadets.

The presence of the Academy in Woolwich is particularly fortunate for those studying the parish’s history, as the young gentlemen cadets who were taught to survey and draw landscapes and buildings naturally practised on the surrounding parish. A sizeable number of maps and topographical views survive, not only from cadets but also from their expert teachers such as Paul Sandby.

Also associated with the Academy was Captain William Gosset, RE, a member of the Ordnance Survey team who during the 1850s created an impressive 10ft to the mile map of Woolwich, one of only 35 towns surveyed at this scale. Created in response to the 1849 Select Committee on Army and Ordnance Expenditure, this map of Woolwich was used by the local board of health to plan sewers and water supplies. Delicately coloured copies of these maps were used by the Borough until their deposit in the Greenwich Heritage Centre last year. They provide an extraordinary wealth of information about Woolwich at this date.

Much of the prosperity and employment brought to Woolwich by the military and industry departed in the 1960s and Woolwich became badly run down. There had been a strong local commitment to social housing, and a generally good relationship with the LCC led to the construction of a variety of housing estates in Woolwich, both by the Borough and the LCC, sometimes replacing obsolete military buildings. The St Mary’s Comprehensive Development Area was the only CDA seen through by a Borough rather than the LCC, and Morris Walk on the west of the parish was the LCC’s first experiment with industrial heavy concrete panel techniques.

In recent years a gradual eastward shift in London’s centre of gravity, with initiatives ranging from Thames Gateway to the 2012 Olympics, has brought intense development pressure, with the promise of genuine improvements to Woolwich. From the redevelopment of the Arsenal and the Royal Military Academy into luxury accommodation to the demolition and rebuilding of former council estates, change has once again come to Woolwich. Amid such change, the historic richness of Woolwich is not nearly as well known as it should be. The Survey of London seeks to remedy this, providing the necessary historic understanding to help this important piece of London’s built historic environment not only to survive but also to flourish in the twenty-first century. Research, writing and drawing are well in hand, and publication through Yale University Press is anticipated for 2012.

Lorna Coventry

Lorna Coventry worked for the Survey of London in 2008-9 and is now completing her PhD at Oxford.


Circumspice (see p.3)

The solution to this issue’s puzzle photo opportunistically follows the article on Woolwich, for these cast-iron standing figures (15 in all) are part of the changing scene at the now rapidly regenerating Woolwich Arsenal. They amuse and bemuse visitors at the point where the broad and triumphal Number One Street arrives at Woolwich Arsenal pier. They are the work of a Wiltshire based artist, Peter Burke, who trained as a jig and tool designer with Rolls-Royce. He calls them The Assembly.

At its peak, the Royal Arsenal employed some 70,000 people as well as creating a vast amount of secondary employment through suppliers and services. The closure of the Arsenal in the 1970s was a devastating blow to a once prosperous town. Its redevelopment offers Woolwich its best chance of recovering its lost prosperity: the actual development is bringing in jobs and the restored and converted listed buildings within the complex are providing attractive riverside homes for people with very welcome spending power. Altogether developer Berkeley Homes is producing 1,200 houses and flats, 55% of them by refurbishment of existing buildings. A quarter of the units are stated to be ‘affordable’. Some of the new build rises rather startlingly, steel-framed and seven storeys high, from among retained buildings, but they are clad in gun metal grey, which somehow works visually and is appropriate for a former munitions factory.

The development has come on apace in the last 12 months; Thames Clipper commuter services from the new pier and the DLR extension to Woolwich Arsenal must have helped. Even more of a boost in the longer term is the recent go-ahead for a Crossrail station within the actual development, promising rapid connections to Canary Wharf, central London and Heathrow. Berkeley and the borough last year agreed a rejig of the development master plan in order to accommodate the line and the station. But the Crossrail boost is longer-term: it isn’t due to open until 2017.
Two Footnotes to Somerset House

To Simon Thurley’s most detailed and elegant study, *Somerset House, the Palace of England’s Queens, 1551-1692*, 2009, I would add the following footnotes.

1. Regarding the portrait reproduced in colour (p.20) ‘traditionally identified as the Earl of Arundel [as also on p.v: *recte* Surrey, as p.23] but recently suggested as being Edward Seymour Duke of Somerset’: the sitter has long been known to scholars as Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (died 1547), and my article on the portrait’s artist (forthcoming) will confirm this identification. Here, we need only note that the ‘H’ held by two *putti* over the peer’s head was the initial of ‘Henry (Howard)’ not ‘Edward (Seymour)’.

2. Dr Thurley refers in passing (p.33) to building works at Arundel House, in the Strand. The ‘store and provision (duty-free) London port book of 1565 records, under 28th August 1565, that Sir Thomas Gresham brought over from Antwerp ‘1 gallery of stone for my Lord of Arundel’ [with] certain other stones for performance of his gallery and gate’.


   — John Bennell

John Bennell is a member of the LTS; he has specialised in research on Tudor history.

Frank Auerbach: London Building Sites 1952-62

The Courtauld Gallery, Somerset House 16th October 2009 – 17 January 2010

Frank Auerbach’s paintings of London Building Sites stem from the first 20 years of his career. Born in Berlin in 1931, he was sent to England when he almost eight, leaving behind his Jewish parents who perished in Auschwitz. The war years were at boarding schools in Kent and Wales and then at art schools in London where he was able to witness the devastation and rebuilding of the city.

The building sites were always a mess and the first of this group of 14 paintings, in Earl’s Court Road, is an interplay in orange and yellow with ladders, trestle tables and two workmen in red, but it is difficult to pinpoint any particular point of identity. It is painted thickly, as are all the works, and is the most colourful. The darkest is a vision shrouded in black of workmen under Hungerford Bridge, with ghostly figures and two of the railway arches looming out of the gloom. Auerbach acknowledges that the original work, one in his Shell Building series, was dramatically altered three years later when ‘he repainted the whole thing in black and white from top to bottom... in a day!’ It is the most awe-inspiring of the series and best seen from a distance.

Each work is deeply encrusted in paint, up to an inch, and, in trying to achieve the result he wants, the weight, heaviness and sombre colours tend to obscure the subject matter. They have chasms of mud, scaffolding and the sheer weight of the painting means that the topographer has no idea of where he is. There are however a small selection of his working drawings which have survived and they give some indication of the chaos of the building sites.

The pity is that these paintings are being shown in the small second floor rooms devoted to exhibitions. Close up, even at 12ft away, they fail to capture the imagination of this topographer, but when viewed from a distance Hungerford Bridge and the muddy yellows, browns and greens of the two Oxford Street Building Sites do make some sense.

   — Denise Silvester-Carr

Changing London

On the occasion of the recent reopening of the restored Neues Museum in Berlin, its architect David Chipperfield mused that in contrast to the situation in Berlin, there was a regrettable lack of lively debate about what kind of city London should be. Some future schemes for London, however, should provide plenty for discussion. The first of these concerns the famous victim of the early 1960s, the ‘Euston Arch’. This 70ft Grecian propylaeum by Philip Hardwick formed the entrance to the world’s first mainline terminus in a capital city, celebrating the dawn of a new era of transport. Its destruction in 1962, despite widespread protest, became a potent rallying cry for the youthful Victorian Society and for the developing conservation movement. Many myths developed around the stubborn belief that its remains had somehow survived. The indefatigable Dan Cruikshank has now unravelled the story; the whole arch was not saved by the demolition contractor, as some had hoped, but much material from it was acquired to fill a hole in an east London waterway. The current need to raise these stones in connection with work on the Olympic Park, together with proposals for the rebuilding of the 1960s Euston Station, has spurred the Euston Arch Trust to put forward bold plans for an ingenious and practical re-creation of the lost monument on a site between the surviving lodges on Euston Road. Detailed drawings made shortly before demolition could ensure that the exterior was faithful to the original, while the interior space...
above the entrance could be adapted for modern needs. See www.eustonarch.org for more details.

A new landmark for Westminster? At the Reformation the great rebuilding of Westminster Abbey which had begun in the thirteenth century was still unfinished. The western towers were completed in the eighteenth century by Nicholas Hawksmoor, but various schemes for a spire or cupola over the crossing remained on paper. The present low concrete cap to the crossing dates from postwar repairs following bomb damage. In September a small exhibition (viewable on the Abbey’s website) announced an ambitious vision for the future, including not only new educational and visitor facilities and an exhibition gallery in the triforium, but more challengingly, a new crowning feature over the crossing, to be completed in 2013 to mark 60 years since the Coronation. More detailed proposals may emerge next year.

After the burst of improvements to London museums at the time of the millennium, we now seem to be entering a new phase of curatorial ambitions. Government funds in support of an entirely new building for the National Film Theatre on the South Bank have just been announced, also for The British Museum’s purpose-built area for special exhibitions and conservation workshops. Potential damage both to the Museum’s existing buildings (altering elevations within the Great Court and excluding light from the great stair of the Edward VII wing) and to the townscape of Bloomsbury (the impact of a tall building on Malet Street) has aroused fierce opposition, led by the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee. The initial application, by Rogers Stark Harbour, was rejected by Camden Council, but a revised scheme is under discussion. Government funding will also support an extension to the Tate Modern, which has found that its huge exhibition spaces within the former Bankside power station do not meet all its needs. A prominent, curiously angular extension to the south, will form a rival (and controversial) landmark to Sir Giles Gilbert Scott’s iconic Bankside tower. The design, by the same architects responsible for the conversion of Bankside, Herzog and de Meuron, was given planning permission by Southwark Council in April this year. Different conservation issues are raised by the prospect of the Design Museum’s undertaking to move into the empty Commonwealth Institute on the edge of Holland Park. This would preserve the ‘tent in the park’, the remarkable postwar exhibition building, but the landscaped space in front is to be sacrificed to expensive blocks of flats, and the extent of alterations needed for the interior is unclear. Finally, an ingenious interior scheme for Sir John Soane’s Museum can be studied in a special display in the museum: ‘Opening up the Soane’. Detailed records and original surviving furnishings make it feasible to restore the second floor, later converted to offices, back to their original form as Soane’s bedroom, bathroom and model room.
Somerset House.
The Palace of England’s Queens, 1551-1692
by Simon Thurley, London Topographical Society

This is, for the London Topographical Society, an exceptional publication. The format is familiar, a body of primary material prefaced by an interpretative essay; but here Simon Thurley has written not merely an essay but a full-scale monograph, both an architectural history of Somerset House over the two and a quarter centuries of its existence and an exposition of the contrasting ways in which it was used by its successive possessors, from Protector Somerset to Catherine of Braganza, and then on, briefly, to its demolition in the mid-1770s.

The primary visual record of the palace provided by the Catalogue consists of only 41 items, but they extend from Anthonis van den Wyngaerde’s panorama of London from the river, c. 1544, which provides a glimpse of the episcopal inns on the site before new building began, to the measured plans and elevations of the palace made by Office of Works staff in advance of demolition and poignant views of it being taken down. Between them, and taken together with the rich documentation here for the first time fully plumbed, they provide quite a thorough record of the plan and external appearance of the palace as they developed to serve the requirements first of Protector Somerset, then successively of Anne of Denmark and Henrietta Maria. Interiors, on the other hand, with the exception of the Catholic chapel, went unrecorded. Anne of Denmark’s state rooms, in particular, must have been splendid, and it is tantalising that even excavation in the 1990s brought so little to light—though Claire Gapper’s discussion here makes the most of the few surviving fragments.

Simon Thurley’s great strength as an analyst of English post-medieval English palaces, and as a leading proponent of the new discipline of ‘court studies’, is his ability to reconstruct, primarily from documentary evidence, palace layouts and in particular sequences of state apartments. Here ten reconstruction plans and a dramatic bird’s-eye view demonstrate his skill and help to explain the changing requirements of successive owners. Protector Somerset, though he left the palace far from finished, fixed one of its key characteristics, the contrast between the Great Court, with its classical show front on the Strand making a statement of royal power along the processional route from Westminster to the Tower of London, and the Inner Court set back with its riverside gardens in privacy behind shops and tenements. Anne of Denmark finally brought the palace to completion in 1609-13, magnificently enhancing the state apartments to create an independent, female power centre, and at the same time a setting for her preferred lifestyle of retirement. Henrietta Maria as queen in the late 1620s and ‘30s introduced French court etiquette, in particular the concept of the state bedroom, and a splendid Catholic chapel. In the early 1660s, as Queen Mother, she developed the then novel court social practice of the ‘Circle’, requiring another new suite of state rooms and a new state stair. Catherine of Braganza, who lived at Somerset House only as Queen Dowager from 1685, also made the palace chapel a focus for Catholic worship in London. Thurley shows how the Catholic chapel at Somerset House from the 1630s to 1688 was both a well-conceived and splendid setting for Catholic worship for members of the Court and for a wider public, and also a flashpoint for anti-Catholic protest.

Architecturally Somerset House was important too. Here Thurley is more controversial. He plays down the originality of the Strand front as a classical design in the late 1540s, rightly drawing attention to earlier uses of classical forms, in particular pilasters, over the previous 30 years. But he is wrong to suggest that Pevsner, for example, claimed that it was ‘the first building in England to display a range of features loosely identifiable as “renaissance”’. Pevsner’s formulation is in fact rather different; for him the Strand front marked ‘a truer understanding of the Franco-Italian Renaissance than had previously existed in England’. By this he meant that here first a complete façade was controlled by classical motifs integrated with one another by proportional relationships, which is,
as Thurley himself points out, indeed the case. Where Thurley takes the debate a step further is in identifying Serlio as the source for the geometrical patterns on the Strand front chimney shafts. Serlio undoubtedly exercised a broader influence on the design, if not the conception, of the façade.

One of the palace's most tantalising puzzles is the identity of the architect of the river-facing Great Gallery, built for Henrietta Maria in 1662-4 and the most imposing piece of classical design in the palace. The principal contenders are John Webb and Hugh May, Webb being the favourite. Thurley argues for May. However, this would make the Great Gallery May's first known architectural work, which might give one pause. More significant is Thurley's misinterpretation of Webb's petition for the Surveyorship of the Works in 1669, which in listing his works makes no reference to Somerset House. The achievements Webb mentions are surely not intended as an exhaustive list of royal commissions during the 1660s, but only those carried out for the king, chosen to emphasise the architect's versatility: the preparation of Whitehall in 1660, Greenwich Palace, fortifications at Woolwich and new discoveries in 'scenical art' at the court theatre at Whitehall. The petition can be read as Webb's reproach to Charles II for ingratitude, and in that context mention of work for the Queen Mother would have been irrelevant. Webb surely remains the most likely designer of the Great Gallery.

But these are points of detail. In his main endeavour, to reveal a lost palace and its workings, the author has succeeded triumphantly.

— John Newman

**Discovering London's Buildings, with twelve walks**


**Discovering London** is an attractive-looking publication, printed on glossy paper with a large number of colour illustrations. The arrangement of the contents seems a little unusual, with a series of chapters on building types followed by twelve walks in various parts of London exploring the built character of different areas, taking up the idea of Pevsner's perambulations. It must be said at once that this is a fairly heavy soft-back book, slightly smaller than A4 size, which would not be at all convenient to take on a walk. On the other hand the walk entries could easily be photocopied.

From the introduction one might imagine this was a book about building conservation. The landmarks of the history of building preservation in London — the legislation, the high-profile demolitions and the foundation of the various architectural preservation societies — are counted off in a way which clearly signposts the preservation sympathies of the authors.

The main part of the text is the typological chapters which cover such well-known areas as The London House, The London Flat, London Churches, Commercial London, government buildings and open spaces, with a compendium chapter called 'Servicing London' which covers the London Underground, shops, pubs and schools. The typological coverage of these chapters is not complete. There is nothing for instance on hospitals, nor on municipal buildings and precious little on above-ground railways.

The individual chapters are a pleasure to read — well informed, up to date with recent research, speculative, discursive in places and with a clear individual voice which is not above making ironic references to the follies of public bodies like the Department of the Environment, the Greater London Council or English Heritage. For each type there is a good historical account which in most cases is brought up to the present day. This is particularly valuable in the case of types such as flats and offices, which are the common currency of most people's daily experience.

After a while the thought occurs that the chapters read like good lectures. Given that both the authors teach or taught at the University of Westminster this seems a likely provenance. One lecture characteristic is that all the discussion and references are in the main text. There are no footnotes. This occasionally makes for heavy going, but only occasionally.

Sometimes the individual enthusiasm of the authors is evident in the uneven coverage of some of the subject areas. In the chapter on churches for instance, Hawkmoor and the churches built under the Fifty New Churches Act of 1711 receive much more coverage than the far greater number of Commissioners' churches built under the 1818 Act by architects like Nash, Soane, Smirke and a host of less well-known designers. Of course Hawkmoor's individual genius merits attention and most of his churches are landmark buildings, but Commissioner's churches are dotted all over London and are beginning to be revalued, thanks to Professor Michael Port's continuing attention. It would have been good to see them presented as more than just a jumping-off point for Pugin's polemics.

The chapters on London Houses and London Flats in particular are somewhat disadvantaged by one of the characteristics of the study, which is that the treatment of the buildings is almost wholly external. There are few descriptions and hardly any illustrations of interiors and no, or rather just one, plan. While the omission is understandable it is nevertheless regrettable with building types like the London terrace house, where the external appearance often gives no clue to the nature of the accommodation inside.

Inevitably the twelve walks which follow the typological chapters are also predominantly external in their coverage. Each has a map and a short introduction to the area followed by a series of
descriptions of individual buildings whose locations are marked on the maps. The descriptions are pithy and informative but the introductions are really too short to give any sense of the development history of the areas being inspected.

The book concludes with an excellent bibliography which contains supplementary guidance on further reading for the subject areas of individual chapters. Once again perhaps, Discovering London is betraying its origins as a teaching tool, but one can only envy the students who had teaching like this.

– Neil Burton

Lived in London.
Blue Plaques and the stories behind them

The London Blue Plaque Guide

Londoners will be familiar with the ceramic discs commemorating the great and the good, but perhaps less so with the fact that some early examples of the 'blue plaque' scheme were neither blue nor circular, as is demonstrated by the delightful end papers and splendid illustrations of Lived in London. To do justice to this mammoth volume, you need leisure and a lectern (as well as two inches of tall shelf space when you can bear to put the book away). In contrast, Rennison's paperback, now in a third edition, can be slipped into a pocket. The London addict really needs both. Each provides mini biographies of their subjects; Rennison is easy to use as a quick reference book if you only want to know the address and the main biographical facts. His brisk accounts are listed alphabetically by name, and there are even some extras, as plaques put up by 'unofficial' bodies are included. The text of Lived in London, English Heritage's 'official' history, by a variety of authors, is lively but more discursive and answers more questions; when, where and why your subject lived where he or she did, what the house was like, with some indication of the character of the neighbourhood. Subjects are grouped together within somewhat arbitrary geographical areas, which is rewarding in the parts of inner London where blue plaques cluster thickly, although makes less sense elsewhere. The maps and the imaginatively chosen illustrations do much to enhance armchair explorations. A wander round different parts of Kensington reveals three different homes of W.M. Thackeray (unusually, all with plaques, against the usual rule forbidding repetition); two views demonstrate the contrast between his magnificent final residence in Palace Green and his simpler house in Young Street. Not all the sites are illustrated, but there are portraits and the fruits of labour: Anna Maria Garthwaite's Spitalfields silk embroidery, an 1858 photo of the incomplete Great Eastern looming over a miniature top-hatted Brunel, and an abstract relief made from Thames driftwood by Kurt Schwitters, a resident of Barnes in the 1940s, indicate the variety. Many others will delight the topographer, with their details of London shown in old and new photos, sketches and paintings.

Commemorative plaques were first proposed by the MP William Ewart in 1863 and from 1867 a select number were erected by the Society of Arts. In 1901, under the championship of the enthusiastic London historian Sir Laurence Gomme, clerk to the LCC, the County Council took over; in 1986 responsibility passed to English Heritage. An introduction describes the processes behind the scheme – from research and selection to creation and unveiling, and the basic principles which have remained constant: the need to establish the authenticity of the abode, no fulsome praise, no plaques to living people. It also mentions how the criteria have altered – not just through the inclusion of outer boroughs after the creation of the Greater London Council in 1965, but by a gradual broadening of approach in deciding who might be 'deserving of national recognition'. The LCC, encouraged by Gomme, did much to promote women. During the course of the twentieth century categories such as scientists, inventors, social workers, foreigners and sportspersons were added to the politicians, writers and artists who predominated in the first selections. It would be interesting to pursue these changes further, but rather infuriatingly the indexes do not lend themselves easily to this approach: Lived in London has an appendix which lists names by area with date of plaque erection, but surnames are not alphabetical and professions are not given; the general index has broad headings such as education or fine arts giving long list of names – but without date or place. Rennison's handy paperback has a list of names by professions, and another arranged under postal codes – but with no dates for the erection of plaques. Neither book is explicit about how many plaques exist or were erected (which owing to demolitions and war damage is not the same thing). The Lived in London appendix lists 799 plaques (according to this reader's count) plus another 26 put up in 2005-8 which were too late to be incorporated in the body of the book and, regrettably, have no biographical detail. Rennison has managed to include these recent additions, but tells us that the total is 'close on 800'. The additions since 2005 (a wonderfully varied range, from Edward Ardizzone to Cetshawo King of the Zulus), have now been joined by a quirky set put up in 2009 – as one can learn from English Heritage's website. They are Fred Russell, father of modern ventriloquism, Sir Harry Seagrave, racing pioneer, Sir Jack Cohen, founder of Tesco, and Doctors Innes Pearse and Scott Williamson, founders of the Peckham Health Centre. Lived in
London is unlikely ever to become a paperback, but it would be a treat to have some slimmer supplements in due course to cover these and future subjects.

— Bridget Cherry

**Secret London: An Unusual Guide**


London’s fascination does not always stare you in the face. Unlike Paris or Rome our past is often seen not in obvious monuments but in trivia. Forget the British Museum and the National Gallery but look instead at the Giant Scribble, a large metal anomaly of twists and turns, on the roof of the visual art building at Goldsmiths’ College in New Cross or arrange a visit to the Pet Cemetery in Hyde Park which was founded in 1880 by George, Duke of Cambridge when his wife’s dog was killed. These are two of the 200-odd stranger than fiction curiosities that the authors have sought out for *Secret London*. The guide book reveals many hidden treasures and good advice is given about opening hours and how to get there.

Along Wapping High Street you will come to Execution Dock, site of many infamous hangings – Captain Kidd was one – where the rope was shortened for the drop to break necks, and the condemned would ‘dance’ as they strangled. Or take a trip to Folgate Street in Spitalfields to visit an authentic eighteenth century house. The late Dennis Severs filled the dilapidated house with chipped antiques and bric-à-brac so visitors can immerse themselves in the decaying world of a Huguenot family of silk-weavers. In Smithfield you will see a small statue of a fat baby boy high on the corner of Cock Lane and Giltspur Street. This is the Golden Boy of Pye Corner and it marks the limits of the Great Fire of 1666. And note too, another fat boy just across the street – the whale-like statue of Henry VIII with an eye-catching cod piece stands above the entrance to St Bartholomew’s Hospital. No matter where you go in London you will find something you probably didn’t know, though I suspect London Topographers know more than most. Whether it is Twinings Tea Museum in the Strand or the Cab Shelters all over town, with *Secret London* in your hand your eyes will be opened.

— Denise Silvester-Carr

**Whittington to World Trade Centre, the City of London and its Lord Mayor**


Sir John Stuttard, who served as Lord Mayor from November 2006 to November 2007, has written this superb book on the role of the Lord Mayor of the City of London, based on his personal experience. He analyses how the position has developed since its founding in 1189, by way of Richard Whittington, right down through the centuries to Sir John himself as the 679th holder of the office (earlier Lord Mayors sometimes served more than once, and sometimes for more than one year, if anyone is quickly checking on the mathematics). Sir John explains the nuances of the role very lucidly, and it is clear that he entered into his year of office with great relish, and much preparation. By background an accountant, he spent all his working career at Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PWC), including opening up their office in China, so he had travelled widely before becoming Lord Mayor, and well understood the role of the Lord Mayor as the ‘supremo’ of the City in continually promoting London as the world’s leading financial centre. Lord Mayors nowadays spend three months of their year travelling all over the world – with the rank of a Cabinet minister – and Sir John visited 23 countries.

The Lord Mayor is also Chancellor of City University, Chief Magistrate of the City of London, Admiral of the Port of London, a trustee of St Paul’s Cathedral, and head of the City Lieutenancy. If he dies in office, he is entitled to be buried in St Paul’s Cathedral, and no Lord Mayor has claimed this privilege for over 150 years! As is well known, the City of London, in conjunction with the Livery Companies, has been instrumental in introducing phrases which have become part of the wider language. Expressions such as ‘tenterhooks’, ‘bury the hatchet’, ‘the cap fits’, and ‘sixes and sevens’ come to mind immediately, but Sir John describes an interesting little-known private ceremony. The Silent Ceremony takes place in Guildhall on the day before the Lord Mayor’s Show, when the new Lord Mayor is sworn in and entrusted with the City’s seals and regalia. Subsequently, the incoming and outgoing Lord Mayors travel back by car to Mansion House. In the few minutes they are together in the car with the City Swordbearer, the Swordbearer passes the key of the Great Seal of Christ’s Hospital to the outgoing Lord Mayor, who then presents it to the new Lord Mayor, who gives it back to the Swordbearer to look after. The Swordbearer acknowledges this saying “My Lord Mayor, I will keep it under my hat.”

To become Lord Mayor, one has to have served as Sheriff, be an Alderman and Liveryman of one of the 108 Livery Companies. Contrary to public belief, it is not necessary to have been Master of a Livery Company, though it is very unusual not to have been a Master. Sir John falls into this rare category, being currently Master of the Glaziers’ Company, three years after having been Lord Mayor. Such a penetrating book as this has been long overdue; it makes an entertaining and informative read, and relates how the centuries-old traditions of the City of London have adapted to the twenty-first century.

— Robin Michaelson
Vanished Coaching Inns of the City of London  

Douglas Woodward has gathered together an attractive collection of illustrations, mostly in colour, of the City’s eighteenth and nineteenth century coaching inns in this brief paperback. The text is a perfunctory set of linking captions, but the subject gives an opportunity to reproduce some of the Guildhall/LMA’s collection of watercolours and early photographs, most notably the paintings of this society’s former chairman Philip Norman. A large selection of these was published by Norman in his 1905 volume ‘London vanished and vanishing’ which is unaccountably missing from Woodward’s bibliography. Other artists represented include James Pollard, Thomas Shepherd and Richard Schnebbelse. The Dickens connection is played up in full, and this attractive exercise in London nostalgia should appeal to all lovers of old City buildings.

— David Webb

London Country Houses  

In the space of a few miles along the M4/A4 road between Heathrow and Hammersmith it is possible to skirt the parkland of Osterley, vault above the treetops of the cedars in the grounds of Boston Manor, descend down a slip road to a toy fort gatehouse to a former entrance to Gunnersbury Park and further on rumble past the walls of Chiswick. They represent an unusually distinguished but, as this book shows, by no means uniquely dense group among the many houses built outside London over several centuries by courtiers, financiers, aristocrats, merchants and others, which were gradually enveloped by the relentless spread of Victorian and inter-war suburbs. Over 100 examples are detailed here, some in the hands of the National Trust, others belong to English Heritage, more are in the ‘care’ of local authorities or businesses and institutions while a very small number are still private dwellings. To have the history of so many of them brought together in a single volume is exceedingly welcome. The title, however, immediately requires explanations and definitions. But what is ‘London’ and where does it stop? Here it means the M25 rather than contemporary or pre-existing administrative boundaries, which the author confesses is ‘arbitrary but practical’ but inevitably excludes some houses which were a few feet further west or east would have otherwise qualified for inclusion. Furthermore, ‘country house’ conjures up a particular idea of a landed estate with the house at its centre and it is true that a small number of houses, those built at the very limits of the area covered by this volume, e.g. Denham Place and Moor Park in the west and Chevening in the south-east, were almost of this type. But this book is really about the diverse range of medium-size buildings erected as second homes by patrons for whom proximity to the capital’s court, political and mercantile centres was as vital as the ability to beat a quick retreat from them. Each house is described individually and quite fully, supported by a large number of illustrations (photos, engravings, plans) that are invaluable. The arrangement is by historic parish, an approach that is frequently helpful in explaining the original setting of the houses and their subsequent abandonment in the face of creeping suburbanisation. Also included are a few significant ‘lost’ houses such as Colen Campbell’s Palladian villa at Fosses Cray. One unsatisfactory peculiarity is a division into ‘major’ and ‘minor’ houses, which derives from the format set down by the publishers. That might work well enough in the county volumes of Phillimore’s English Country Houses series (e.g. the three volumes for Gloucestershire published to date) but is not some rule-breaking to be permitted? It makes little or no sense for the houses described in this volume and is rendered pointless by the absence of any discussion of this relative status. Indeed, in spite of the considerable merits of this book, what is really needed is a more generous introduction in which the architectural, cultural, social and financial context for the houses can be fully developed. Instead it briskly covers landscape, building materials, house plans, with a longer piece on gardens, followed by a single chapter on the social context and another on the destruction of the houses (over the course of several centuries). While this is on the one hand impressively concise, it feels disjointed and a larger format would have allowed the many interesting themes touched on here to be explored in the detail they deserve and would have brought out much more of the excellent research which informs the entries on the houses.

— Charles O’Brien

The London Friends Meetings  

This reprint of the standard nineteenth century history of London Quakerism comes with an instructive new introduction which sets the book in the context of history writing on London and on Quakers, both past and present. Recent research may have thrown doubt on Beck and Ball’s estimate of 10,000 Quakers in late-seventeenth century London (a figure of c.7-8000 is suggested), but there were certainly enough to provide plenty of...
stories about the prolonged struggles to establish permanent meeting places at a time when toleration of nonconformity was in short supply. The introduction observes that the book’s interest in the missionary activity of early Quakers, and the efforts to maintain discipline in the organisation in the 1760s, were topical issues in the 1860s, especially among more evangelical members. Among these was the co-author, William Beck. He seems to have been the driving force behind the book, and as an architect had a special interest in Meeting Houses. The book drew on a tradition of sometimes rather hagiographical writing on early Quaker history, but through the labours of T.F. Ball it also made innovative use of the copious manuscript material available from the administrative records of the Society of Friends in London and Middlesex.

This edition includes numerous interesting illustrations of old meeting houses; a few of these, such as Uxbridge and Wandsworth, still survive today, but most have disappeared. For the London topographer the later chapters will be of particular interest, with their detailed descriptions of individual meeting sites, their buildings and subsequent alterations, and the often dramatic events associated with them. They also throw light on the interaction between city communities and those of the London-dependant villages and small towns around the metropolis. The concept of greater London is not a twentieth century invention.

— Bridget Cherry

The Samuel Bakers, tradesmen of Kent in the 18th and 19th centuries
Available from the author, 26 Wellington Park, Bristol BS8 2IT

The relevance of this attractively produced piece of family history to the fabric of London is the Samuel Baker who was born in 1761 and died in 1836. Opportunities in the expanding metropolis, together with some lucky breaks, could be the making of an enterprising provincial tradesman. Son of a Rochester clockmaker and silversmith, Samuel Baker trained as a carpenter, working for Rochester Cathedral and building barracks for the Royal Ordnance. His fortune changed when he was engaged to rebuild the church of Strood, near Rochester, designed by Robert Smirke. His son Samuel married Smirke’s daughter in 1816. London commissions from Smirke followed, and the firm prospered, becoming well known for developing a novel form of concrete foundation for rescuing shaky building projects – first the Millbank Penitentiary, and then the Custom House. In 1822 the younger Samuel and his brother George formally joined the firm, by then described as timber merchants, builders and brickmakers; they opened a London office, and their numerous works (usefully listed in an appendix) included Smirke’s British Museum. Before this was completed the older Samuel had retired to Rochester, where his monument in the Cathedral eloquently testifies both to his talents and energy and to his benevolence to his native city. The firm continued into the later nineteenth century under George Baker, with a varied workload all over England, but sadly was bankrupted in the 1870s through the unanticipated costs of the terracotta work at Waterhouse’s Natural History Museum.

— Bridget Cherry

Covent Garden and Soho, The Illustrated A-Z historical guide
by Richard and Sheila Tames, Historical Publications, 2009, 192pp, numerous colour and black and white illustrations, paperback, ISBN 9781905 286317, £14.50

The prolific Richard and Sheila Tames have produced an enjoyable compendium of historical notes relating to an area that can be roughly defined as south of the eastern part of Oxford Street and north of the river. This is theatrical. London’s entertainment district, and the book succeeds in entertaining with notes on such Soho and Covent Garden characters as Thomas Killigrew (1612-83), founder of what was to become the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, or the extraordinarily named playwright Clemence Dane (actually Winifred Ashton, 1888-1965), and buildings from the House of St Barnabas in Greek Street to Centre Point. It is not a book for anyone wanting a systematic history of the area: accessible and reliable information is readily available in Pevsner’s London, volumes 4 and 6, and in the useful publications to which the Tameses give references in many of their notes. The alphabetical arrangement of subjects is clearly designed for those who wish to dip in and find random morsels. The seeker after bite-sized chunks of information will find much that is satisfying, but will often find interesting material only by chance: an account of Mrs Meyrick’s 43 Club in 1920s Gerard Street appears as the second half of a note on John Dryden who had lived at the same address more than 200 years earlier; the note on Old Compton Street gives a history from its elegant beginnings around 1680 until the coffee-bars of the 1950s, but the reader will not learn that the street is ‘now the epicentre of gay London’ unless he happens upon the note on Homosexuality. Maps inside either cover are frustrating in naming only the major streets and sites, so that the reader who does not already know the area will well have to consult another map to locate many of the places mentioned in the text. Two walks, however, are well thought out and cover the territory efficiently. There is an excellent range of illustrations from reproductions of old prints to contemporary photographs.

— Sheila O’Connell
John Farrer, the man who changed Hornsey

The title of this book is intriguing; what exactly did John Farrer change, was it the village, the parish or the district of Hornsey and when did he change it? The title alone is enough to make you open the book, but the cover pictures of the Three Compasses public house in Hornsey High Street and the original drawings for its re-building encourage you even more.

John Farrer was an architect and surveyor who worked in Hornsey, and elsewhere, between 1878 and 1930, and many examples of his buildings still stand in their original condition, as the numerous photographs and elevations that illustrate the book clearly show. Hornsey in the 1870s had already undergone tremendous change; the parish had divided into several smaller ones, South Hornsey had become an autonomous district with its own Local Board of Health, whilst the population of the remaining Hornsey Local Board area was increasing rapidly. Speculative housing developments were gathering pace in order to meet the growing housing need. By 1894 Hornsey was administered by an Urban District Council, which from 1903 was governed by a Borough Council with its own Charter. None of these changes was the work of John Farrer, but his architectural designs did much to help determine the modern day character of streets in Hornsey Village, Crouch End, Muswell Hill and the Hornsey side of Highgate.

By 1920 the landscape of Hornsey Borough had completely changed from the rural appearance of the northern part of the parish in 1870. Streets had spread rapidly in every direction and Farrer had been busy laying out 19 estates and designing houses on 62 streets. Although something has already been written elsewhere about some developers, such as John C. Hill and James Edmondson, Janet Owen set herself the task of bringing Farrer out of the shadow of these ‘big players’ in Hornsey’s development by blending the story of his life with that of his work in Hornsey. This mix of biography with architectural and building history makes for a very engaging and instructive read. The story of Farrer’s life and career shows him to have been a man quick to learn and responsive to the changing attitudes and circumstances of the late Victorian and Edwardian society. The use of original plans and elevations combined with present-day photographs of his buildings is very effective in illustrating the range and style of Farrer’s work. It is this blend of personal and professional history in the social context that makes Janet Owen’s account of the development of Hornsey’s built environment unique. She also itemises the volume of Farrer’s work in Hornsey, thus placing him amongst the ‘big players’ who created the new landscape of Hornsey.

This well researched book, which provides extensive footnotes to sources used, is highly readable and beautifully presented, and it is an important addition to the accounts of the suburban development of the parish of Hornsey. The nine pen portraits of builders and developers who were some of Farrer’s principal clients begin to bring to light details of other players who helped create the new landscape. It is studies like this that help to build up a picture of the way that speculative development in Hornsey played its part as the parish and its villages changed into a London suburb. The book is not only an attractive publication, it is a shining example of the way more, much needed, research on Hornsey’s development could be carried out.

— John Hinshelwood

The Blackest Streets, the Life and Death of a Victorian Slum
To Paradise by Way of Gospel Oak, a mansion flat estate and the forces which shaped it
by Rosalind Bayley, 2009 Camden History Society; 104pp, paperback. ISBN 9780904491784, £8.50

These two engrossing books are both concerned with flats built at the end of the nineteenth century – but flats of a very different character. At this time, as London’s population soared, flats were regarded as an acceptable form of housing both for middle class Londoners and for the poor evicted from slum property. The Blackest Streets refers to those of deepest hue in Booth’s poverty map, the notorious cluster of the Old Nichol in Bethnal Green, which was to be rebuilt as the LCC’s Boundary estate. But the book is less a discussion of the rebuilding than of the character of the residents who were displaced, explored through an impressive range of sources. Memorable among these are the reminiscences of Alfred Harding, born 1886, which were taped by Raphael Samuel in the 1970s. The details of Harding’s extended family, involved in activities from cadging and matchbox making to market trading and shopkeeping, graphically illustrate the complex networks of East London kinship. Other aspects of social life are explored through the workings of the Poor Law, revealing the appalling lethargy of the self-interested members of the Bethnal Green vestry, while the impact of do-gooders and the church are epitomised in the extraordinary figure of Father Jay who ran a boxing club in the basement below his church of Holy Trinity. This is a seriously researched book, with endnotes and long bibliography; its combination of scholarship and lively writing has deservedly led to its appearance in paperback a year after its first publication.

The mansion flats of Lissenden Gardens at the foot of Hampstead Heath are less well known. This piece of local history is more than a simple chronicle of the author’s quest for information about her home; it achieves the promise of its title,
an explanation of how and why this group of flats built and managed by the Armstrong family developed in a particular way. It was the combination of low rents, low maintenance and laissez-faire paternalism (together with access to the Heath) which attracted particular types of tenants. Local loyalties developed, and when the estate was put up for sale in the 1970s, an active residents group promoted acquisition by Camden Council and sensitive restoration which enabled residents to stay put. The account draws effectively on oral reminiscences of those stirring years. Both these books are worthy additions to the research demonstrating that the history of individuals is crucial for an understanding of London’s topography.

- Bridget Cherry

Guardians of the Heath,
A chronicle of battles fought by the Blackheath Society from 1937-2008

Guardians of the Heath was written 20 years ago to commemorate the Blackheath Society’s 50th anniversary, but was left on the shelf before being dusted down and brought up to date for publication to celebrate – almost on time – the 70th anniversary. The author was the late Felix Barker, journalist, writer on London and Blackheath Society member. Another journalist and local resident, Tony Aldous, has brought the story up to date with extracts from the annual reports to chart more recent battles. So the book is in two parts. The first is an engaging evocation of the characters involved in the formation and first 50 years of the Society and the battles they fought; the characters leap from the page, particularly the post-war chairman, Professor Jack Bullocke with his ‘sturdy’ figure and ‘booming voice’. At times Barker’s chronology seems a little shaky but Aldous has made few editorial inventions. The second section consists of notes useful to a researcher keen to chart the development of London’s heritage battles and the role of amenity societies, as well as to Blackheath residents who wish to pin down exactly when legendary local events actually occurred. Readers will need to refer to their own maps to discover where any of these battles occurred for they will find none in the book.

The publication of such a volume now seems particularly apt. The battles entered into by the Blackheath Society, founded to resist the despoliation and neglect of the Heath, the destruction of its backdrop of Georgian buildings and the over-development which threatened the visual character of both Heath and Village, are still being waged. Language about the value of the historic environment and the significance of setting may have become more standardised, but the aims of preserving distinctive local character and a sense of historical continuity are the same. Barker told the story as military episodes, highlights (in his words) being the Great Motorway Scare, the Span War, and the Montpelier Row Conflict. The battles are essentially local but are closely related, of course, to the national story of post-war planning and the conservation movement. In 1962 Fevsnner, Summerson, Frederick Gibberd and Maxwell Fry all rallied to support the retention of Montpelier Row, damned by the inspector at a public inquiry into its demolition; the Row’s value was not its monumentality but its characteristic Georgian consistency and importance as an element in views across the Heath.

The early battle narratives are the exciting part of the book. The later episodes tell of a slow war against attrition and of the doggedness needed to keep up that war. Local residents will recognise continuing ‘bees in the bonnet’, as Barker puts it, notably the bee of the A2 tea hut and associated parking, which seems to have begun buzzing in the 1970s. One detects in these later chapters Barker’s gentle – and amusing – mockery of what could be seen as petty concerns; no wonder the Society’s management committee, who knew well the value of constant vigilance in heritage matters, were ambivalent about publication.

Despite its topicality, this well-designed publication seems destined for a life as ‘grey literature’. Privately published by the Society and lacking an ISBN, it seems unlikely that it will find its way into library catalogues beyond Lewisham and Greenwich and so to wider readership. That is a pity, for the story told in Guardians of the Heath contributes to a wider understanding of how localities have been shaped in the twentieth century by the ideals, prejudices and sheer hard work of local amenity societies, their influential leaders and their loyal members.

- Elizabeth Williamson

Lost London 1870-1945
by Philip Davies, Transatlantic Press/English Heritage, 2009, will be reviewed in the next Newsletter. An exhibition based on the LCC’s spectacular photographs reproduced in this book will be held at Kenwood House from January – April 2010.

The next Newsletter will be published in May 2010. Contributions should reach the Newsletter Editor by April 16
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