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Notes and News

2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

It will probably come as no surprise that the Society’s Council has decided to cancel the 2020 AGM which was to have been held on 30 November in the Great Hall at King’s College, London. The pandemic has thus achieved something two World Wars could not: throughout both wars the Society’s AGMs were held regularly.

There are several reasons behind the Council’s decision, the foremost being the unlikelihood of the venue being made available to us on that date by King’s who are currently re-assessing their postgraduate teaching planning requirements for 2020/21. The second key reason is the Government’s latest COVID-19 rule limiting gatherings such as our AGM to six people and which will most likely still be in place on 30 November.

We have been in contact with the Charity Commission who have confirmed we may cancel or postpone the AGM for this year. The Council has therefore decided to roll over the elections and business to the 2021 AGM which has now been booked at King’s College for Monday 5 July 2021. Among the council officers, a significant change is that Anne Ramon will be taking over as Treasurer from Roger Cline. We are grateful to Anne for taking this task on, and we are delighted that Roger has agreed to remain on the Council.

It is good news that our publication programme has forged on undeterred, thanks to our hard working editor Sheila O’Connell, and our weighty 2020 publication, London Parish Maps to 1900, is now being delivered (see below). This began as a catalogue conceived by our former council member, the late Ralph Hyde, former Keeper of Maps, Views and Prints at the Guildhall Library. After his death in 2015, the LTS determined to complete his work, and under the supervision of Simon Morris volunteers drawn from LTS members revisited archives across London and beyond, documenting maps of the City and of the parishes within the old London County Council area created in 1889. Sheila is now busy with our publication for 2021, volume XXXII of the London Topographical Record.

As has been customary the Record will include a list of members with their addresses. Anyone who does not wish to have their name and details printed, let me know.

This Newsletter appears earlier than usual, in order to give notice of the decision to postpone the Society’s AGM to next year; the cooperation of our contributors and printer is much appreciated. The content reflects the strange times we are living in. The unfamiliar scene of an almost empty City full of instructions to almost non-existent travellers is vividly presented by our secretary Mike Wicksteed (p.8). But now, to encourage more people to take up walking, a new footpath map of central London is available (see p.5). With the reduction of physical human contact, alternative means of communication become all the more valued. It has been most encouraging to receive emails from members, suggesting new material and commenting on matters in the last issue. Many responded to the query about the mysterious ‘Eye of London’ (see p.6 for the explanation), and many more to the appeal for help with deliveries (see below). We now have a wide range of expertise and practical help to draw upon: our membership at time of writing stands at 1267, each week bringing several new applications. Our new website continues to develop, making more of our older publications available (see p.3). We also welcome exchange of information with the London Historians group (see p.5) whose online material is a valuable resource, particularly when physical access is restricted. Further suggestions for the Newsletter are always welcome.

Delivering this year’s publication

The lorry came early one morning all the way from Wales – even the delivery note was in Welsh – and offloaded a giant cubic pallet of well-wrapped books weighing nearly a tonne onto the pavement outside the Treasurer’s house, returning the following week to do the same outside the Publication Secretary’s house. Over six hundred books, each weighing well over two kilos take a lot of heaving down to storage basements, and up again when they need to be handed out. And this is where our members have really helped – a bevy of volunteers have between them distributed nearly all of these copies in their districts. This is massively helpful, as local by-hand delivery is more careful than relying on the Post Office or a courier as members can be contacted to check if they are in, and copies wrapped and left in a safe place or with a friendly neighbour rather than just thrown into a doorway. It is also more responsive, and we have received several reports of members having moved so that we can retain the book until we know where to redirect it. Most important, this saves us thousands of pounds – this year’s publication has cost nearly £10 per copy to pack and post.

So, a massive thanks to everyone who has helped by taking in one or more boxes of books to hand out to nearby (and occasionally distant) members. Please let me know if you would be prepared to do the same next year; unless you say otherwise, I will be in contact again next summer. In the meantime, will all members please do three things:

Please send your current email address and mobile/land telephone numbers to the Membership Secretary. We often do not have up-to-date ones, and these can be helpful so we can check if you are in before we come round to deliver the annual publication. We won’t publish these or use them for any other purpose.

Second, please do advise if you move house. On several occasions this year we have turned up at

– Bridget Cherry
Spending our money

The London Topographical Society, as well as publishing works of topographical interest, also fulfills it charitable obligations by regularly assisting organisations with financial grants for London-related historical projects with a topographical focus, often providing the opportunity for employment and training. Here is a list of grants made over the last ten years.

2009-2012: Four annual grants, each of £10,000 to the British Museum for cataloguing their Crace Collection views of London.

2012-14: Three annual grants, each of £11,000, to the British Library for cataloguing their Crace Collection London maps.

2012: A grant of £880 to the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) to conserve a photographic collection of London views.

2015: £11,356 to the Guildhall Library for conservation work on the library’s Tallis Collection.

2015-17: Three annual grants, each of £10,000 to the British Film Institute (BFI), for digitisation and cataloguing short historical films about London. (Examples can be seen on our website).

2016: £1,756 to the London Metropolitan Archive (LMA) for assistance in conserving their Visscher 1616 Panorama.


2019: A grant of £1,472 to the London Metropolitan Archive (LMA) for conservation of drawings of London by the artist William Alistair Macdonald.

In 2019 we also spent £8,234 on our own project – building our website – to provide an expansive educational database of London history for our members, students, researchers and the general public.

– Mike Wicksteed

MEMBERSHIP LIST

The London Topographical Record will be published in 2021, and as usual it is intended to include a membership list, but we need members’ consent for inclusion in it. Most members have already indicated whether or not they wish to be included.

But: if your address label for this Newsletter has a row of asterisks ***** on it, we do not know your wishes. The default is therefore exclusion. If you wish to be included (either name and address or name only), please contact John Bowman (details on back cover) in writing (email or post) by 31 December.

The Newsletter Editor welcomes suggestions from readers for items in the Newsletter. The deadline for contributions to the May Newsletter is 16 April 2021. For contact details see the back page.
With Tony Aldous’ retirement from contributing his long-running and much-enjoyed Circumspece feature, which invited members to locate and name quirky current features of London’s topography that he illustrated, David Crawford is filleting his bookshelves for images of once major structures that have long since disappeared for members to try and identify.

So, which once prominent London structure is shown here in the last stages of its demolition? As a further test, where in London would you find, today, the surviving fragment also shown? Answers on p.15.

**Obituary**

**Stephen Powys Marks**

Vice President of the London Topographical Society

Stephen Powys Marks, who died aged 88 in May 2020, became closely involved with the LTS from around 1975, when the affairs of the Society were in a bad way, and did much to establish the Society in the form it is today. He became a highly efficient secretary, encouraging new members (including our Treasurer Roger Cline), attracting them by the sale of older LTS material, and organising satisfactory storage of the Society’s publications. He established the *Newsletter* in 1975 – the first issue (called the preliminary issue, now no.00 on our website), announced the appointment of Ann Saunders as editor of the society’s publications – and he continued as the *Newsletter* editor until 1989. The early *Newsletters* are all available on the society’s website, as is his history of the society, published in vol 24 of the *Record* (1980). He was also very active in the Camberwell Society (he lived in Camberwell Grove) and edited a facsimile reprint of Blanch’s History of Camberwell in 1976. He became a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1979. His own notable collection of London topographical material is now held by Texas University. After he moved with his family to Somerset he concerned himself with local conservation and green issues and also with Powys family history and the Powys Society, for which he acted as publications manager.

Historical topography was only one aspect of his activities. His grandfather was the architect Albert Powys, secretary to SPAB; his mother trained as an architect under Clough Williams Ellis, and following the family tradition, he studied at the Bartlett School of Architecture, developing a strong interest in conservation. In the 1980s, when he was a much respected planning inspector, his most famous case was the celebrated enquiry into Lord Palumbo’s proposal for a building on Mansion House Square by the modernist architect Mies van der Rohe, when his recommendation of refusal was accepted by the government. Earlier, he was an influential Conservation officer for Westminster City Council and was responsible for many of the reports on the newly formed conservation areas created after the Civic Amenities Act, which marked the shift from the post-war belief in wholesale rebuilding toward the desire to preserve the best of the past. One outcome of this new approach was the formation of ASCHB, (Association For Studies in the Conservation of Historic Buildings,) whose Transactions Stephen edited from its inception in 1976.
A New Footpath Map

In 1854, 400,000 people walked into the City of London every day. These walks were not the final leg of a journey from a mainline station, they were the entire commute. Londoners and visitors still love to walk, but we walk much shorter distances. The average walk-all-the-way trip across London is less than 1km. This has got to change. Walking more and further is critical to tackling our health, pollution and climate crises, and to avoid contagion and relieve pressure on roads and public transport.

London Living Streets and Urban Good, with funding from TfL, has launched Central London Footways: a printed and online map that will prompt Londoners and visitors to walk longer distances (20 to 30 minutes) on everyday journeys. We were supported by an Advisory Group, including Dorian Gerhold from the London Topographical Society. The map connects London’s important destinations, mainline stations, and green spaces. This is about getting people from A to B, but in the most enjoyable and healthy way possible. What will be especially pleasing to LTS members is that the network of routes will take them along historic streets, avoiding polluted, often Victorian, main roads, and providing wonderful views of the capital’s many remarkable buildings.

The map also aims to create new ways of looking at walking. It shows how quickly journeys can be walked: Euston to the British Museum through leafy Bloomsbury in 19 minutes, compared to 17 minutes by taxi and 16 by public transport. It seeks to join up the many new public realm improvements, for example from Trafalgar Square to the Museum via low traffic Seven Dials and traffic-free Princes’ Circus. Footways will make sure Londoners make the most of these transformations. And it aims to encourage exploration on foot of streets containing thousands of listed buildings as part of day to day journeys.

For a digital version of the map, and to find out where to obtain a free copy: https://footways.london/. Maps can be sent to members’ homes for a small fee.

– Emma Griffin and David Harrison

Who are the London Historians?

The London Historians group recently celebrated its 10th anniversary having been founded by LTS Member Mike Paterson in August 2010. Its original aim was simply to create a network of like-minded individuals who were London history aficionados without necessarily having a strong academic background, although the group certainly counts a good number of professional historians among its members. Other members include qualified London guides, genealogists, authors, historic novelists and, like many LTS members and Paterson himself, enthusiastic amateurs.

The Ann Saunders Essay Prize

At the suggestion of members, the Council of the London Topographical Society has decided to fund a new prize in honour of the late Dr Ann Saunders (1930-2019). Ann was an enthusiastic and distinguished historian of London and for thirty-five years the Society’s Honorary Editor and in that capacity helped many scholars, both young and old, to achieve publication of their work.

A prize of £1,000 will be awarded annually depending on the response and at the discretion of the Council.

It will be awarded for an original and unpublished research essay on the topography, development or buildings of London in any period.

Submissions are to be between 6,000 and 8,000 words including endnotes and should include an additional abstract/summary of about 200 words.

* Entries should be submitted as hard copy and as a Word email attachment.
* They must be accompanied by the name and address/contact details of the author.

Submissions for the prize will be considered for publication by the Society in the London Topographical Record, at the discretion of the Society’s Honorary Editor.

Entries for the prize should be sent to our Hon. Secretary, Mike Wicksteed, by 1 January 2022. Please email your Word entry to him (mike.wicksteed@btinternet.com) and he will provide an address to which your hard copy version should be sent. The prize winner will be notified in time to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Society in London to be held in the summer of 2022.

Questions relating to entries should be addressed to Council Member Caroline Barron (c.barron@rhul.ac.uk)
So what does the group get up to? London Historians publishes a monthly email newsletter comprising member news, editorial, articles, special offers and competitions. It also runs an active blog to which members are encouraged to contribute.

COVID-19 issues notwithstanding, the group has a monthly pub meet-up in addition to several other events each month which are usually guided walks, talks evenings and heritage site visits. Highlights of the year include the prestigious Annual Lecture in September and the Big Quiz, normally held in May. Currently LH is conducting most of its member events via Zoom, even the pub meet-ups! Not ideal, but needs must.

Today London Historians has over 700 members, comprising mainly Londoners but also with a healthy constituency from as far afield as Australasia and North America. Many LTS members already belong to London Historians but the group is always keen to welcome more. To that end it would like to offer LTS members a £10 discount on joining, that’s to say £29 instead of £39. This also includes a £150 discount on life membership. You can do this at the special web page www.londonhistorians.org/LTS. If you have any questions, please contact Mike at mike@londonhistorians.org.

Query answered – the Eye of London

This is a short note to express my gratitude to all the LTS members who enjoyed ‘a bit of a puzzle’ and sent in various suggestions to help decipher the origin of ‘the Eye of London’. In summary: the expression ‘the Eye of London’ is indirectly linked to John Stow. It was coined by Edmund Howes, the man who revised and issued new editions of two of Stow’s works after their author died: Summarie of Englyshe Chronicles and The Annales of England.

The Annales was first published by Stow in 1592, and he went on to produce two more editions. However, the phrase ‘the Eye of London’ does not appear in any of these editions. Howes expanded and updated Stow’s work, producing new editions in 1615 and 1631. It is the 1631 publication, which contains the relevant phrase: “After the Royal Exchange, which is now called the Eye of London, had been builded two or three years, it stood in a manner empty...”. This book is online at Google Books and Internet Archive. I recommend the latter – there are some real problems with pagination on the Google Books version. The quote is on p.868.

However, the text does not explain what precisely is meant by ‘the Eye of London’. Enter LTS helpful member John Bowman who sent me the OED definition:

b. Applied (frequently as a conventional epithet) to a city, country etc. which is likened to an eye, variously imagined as a shining or pre-eminent exemplar or as a channel through which a place sees or is seen.

Then follows twelve examples of the phrase in use. The closest in date is as follows:

1622 R. Harris Gods Goodnes, 16: If goodness must be acknowledged there, must it not in England, the face of Europe; in London, the eye of England?

Heartfelt thanks to: Clive Beautiman, John Bowman, Hyeyun Chin, Matthew Hillier, Rodney Leary, Ruth in London, Anthony Smith, Richard Woolard, Gerry Zierler and of course... Bridget Cherry!

– Mireille Galinou

Volunteering for the London Metropolitan Archives during COVID-19

David Gaylard has been a part-time volunteer at the LMA in Farringdon for almost ten years, working on a wide variety of interesting projects. Here he describes a new scheme which was developed to allow staff to work at home.

When it became obvious that the archives would need to close for some time during lockdown, a project was put together by the LMA’s Digital
Services team in the week or so before the closure. The project involved checking and enhancing the descriptions attached to the LCC photographs in the LMA ‘Collage’, soon to be renamed the London Picture Archive. The inadequate descriptions containing only addresses have been extended and will be fully searchable online, making the archive much more useful. For the fuller descriptions of the views illustrated here, enter the Collage reference number on the website collage.cityoflondon.gov.uk.

The original descriptions, compiled by the LCC staff for office purposes, and containing only addresses, were completely inadequate for historical research.

The images included in the project come from Series 01 of LCC photos (catalogue reference SC/PHL/01), which focus on buildings and locations rather than people or other subjects. The images in Series 01 are physical photographs which have been scanned and are available on the Collage website.

In this there are about 96,000 images grouped in 695 boxes (80-200 images per box), arranged alphabetically by metropolitan borough, and alphabetically by street within each box.

The earliest image is of Trafalgar Square, taken in 1855 (Collage 141184) and it is believed that there are about 1,000 images dating from the nineteenth century. Many photos were also taken of buildings damaged during WWII and, more recently, when they were about to be demolished or redeveloped.

I chose to do Barnet, which covers from Hampstead all the way out to Elstree. I grew up on the borders of Hadley and New Barnet and knew the sort of confusion that can exist within just the ‘Barnets’. Perhaps unsurprisingly, no one else was working on this area.

Having read the detailed instructions on how to approach the project, I was sent one of the digital ‘boxes’ as an Excel spreadsheet. This shows the current information associated with an image – the catalogue number, existing title and description, the date and sometimes its GPS latitude and longitude.

The detailed description of the image is usually scant, with just the address of the subject and its name, if it has one. A few of the addresses are wrong which is where any local knowledge comes in. Usually my first port of call is Google Street View to locate it and see if the site was still extant. If it is, you can add accurate GPS coordinates from Google Maps. If it isn’t and the site is old enough one can use the National Library of Scotland online georeferenced OS 25" series to search for it and give its coordinates.

However, many of the images record places, streets and buildings that no longer exist: buildings since destroyed, demolished or redeveloped or streets that have been renamed or which gave way to new developments or open spaces. Tracking them down can be a proper detective job, as they won’t appear on a simple Google Maps search. This is where old OS maps and street atlases come in useful.

A good example is Burgess Park in Camberwell, one of the largest parks in London, carved out of densely built-up area, some of which sustained bomb damage. There are many images showing buildings which were demolished for its creation, some bomb damaged, some perfectly fine, such as Collage 55722.

Describing the image itself is rewarding and we are asked to include any details such as people, animals, cars and every-day objects as well as shop names and advertising. Most of the images I have done are from the 1960’s and 1970’s and it is a

Great Wild Street, Holborn, Kingsway Scheme. 1902, Collage 72278. Kingsway Scheme was a major redevelopment of the area in the early 1900s, culminating in the creation and opening of Kingsway, 1905. Great Wild Street still exists, renamed Wild Street, but the buildings have been replaced. © Collage London Metropolitan archives

Byam Street, Fulham, on the corner of Querrin Street, 1969, Collage 61184. Behind is Fulham Power Station with its four smoke-spewing chimneys in full blast. The formerly coal-fired power station was partly demolished in 1978 for redevelopment, and partly adapted for The Big Yellow Storage Company. The houses still exist. © Collage London Metropolitan archives
shock to see adverts such as ‘Craven “A” will not affect your throat’. There are also the, then, common signs for Luncheon Vouchers and Green Shield stamps in restaurant and shop windows, also long-gone typewriter and record shops. I do wonder if my younger self might suddenly appear in one the images!

Apart from describing the image, research is then needed from the Historic England website to see if the subject is nationally listed and then any local listings for conservation areas. These, together with Pevsner and local history websites, can often add interesting detail to the description. A good example of this is Collage 88500 of the New Royalty Kinema on Brixton Hill and where the expanded caption now includes the information that, ‘It finally closed as a cinema in 1957 and featured on the front of a Led Zeppelin album The Song Remains the Same’. Equipped with this knowledge one can make some sense of the later appearance of the building, as shown on Google Street view: the fabric of the Kinema is still there, minus some decorative features, run down and with added graffiti. (The ground floor is apparently ‘The Tami Gospel Centre’ and above a rather forlorn sign reads ‘South Beach Bar’). Of course, many scenes include nothing of national interest and some are purely architectural, such as a flight of stairs or timbers inside a loft. In these cases, one’s powers of description are sorely tested!

As of the end of August, with 40 people working, 212 boxes have been completed, out of 695 (approximately 27,000 images out of 96,000) since the work started in March – so there’s still a very long way to go.

Now that most LMA staff have returned to the office and their usual duties, the pace will slow down. This is therefore an ideal opportunity for anyone who is interested in London and its history and wants to pass on their knowledge, to get involved in a fascinating project.

For details of how to get involved, please contact Dorota, an archivist at LMA, at Dorota.Pomorska-Dawid@cityoflondon.gov.uk.

A walk through the City

Our Hon. Secretary, Mike Wicksteed, explores the City in lockdown. He used an app on his phone called Relive which cleverly mapped his 5.3-mile route on Google Earth adding in photos he took en route. We can’t relive his Relive route but here are some of his photos and his write-up about the walk (see also the cover picture on p.1).

Thanks to the pandemic, I hadn’t been up to London for five months so I decided to go for a walk around the City to see what it was like. It was obvious that people were avoiding the place and tourism was at a minimum: the Centre for Cities was reporting only 13% of London office workers had returned to their desks.

The chosen day approached, a sunny Thursday in late August, and I felt slightly apprehensive about venturing out of our ‘safe’ bubble in Tandridge, Surrey. As a 70+ I’d experienced the same feeling when deciding to leave home do my first supermarket shop, having a post-lockdown haircut and especially going for a COVID-19 test at Gatwick Airport in early May when the motorways and the airport had been eerily empty (tested negative).

One concern was how crowded the trains might be. In the event the 10:20 from our small Caterham terminus was almost empty and I had a carriage to myself and my facemask both ways.

On arrival at London Bridge and descending into the vast and rather beautiful new passenger hall beneath the platforms, I was immediately struck by how few people were around. Signs everywhere reminded travellers to wear masks and to keep socially distanced: some, in the case of a few wooden benches, sported an appalling pun ‘I will chair-ish when you can sit on me again’.

On arrival at London Bridge and descending into the vast and rather beautiful new passenger hall beneath the platforms, I was immediately struck by how few people were around. Signs everywhere reminded travellers to wear masks and to keep socially distanced: some, in the case of a few wooden benches, sported an appalling pun ‘I will chair-ish when you can sit on me again’.

Outside I headed northeast through a narrow chasm of glass, the complex of modern office blocks leading towards the southern river embankment. Few people were about; I counted about 25 or so between HMS Belfast and City Hall and they were well spread out.
Up the steps leading to Tower Bridge, hoping not to encounter anyone coming down as the two-metre rule certainly wouldn’t work. On the bridge a white line had been painted down the centre of the pavement with signs telling pedestrians to walk to the left depending which way they were going. Took me back to my 1960s childhood in Auckland, New Zealand where similar lines had been painted on the pavements of Queen Street, then the city’s prime mile-long shopping venue, to separate the crowds of shoppers. Same idea – different reason.

From the bridge I looked across to the Tower, goldily glistening in the sunlight and along the whole of its river frontage there was but a single person. I headed over to Trinity House and the splendid but rather overlooked memorials designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and Edward Maufe to commemorate the 36,087 merchant seaman who died during the two world wars with no known grave. A couple of men sat reading in the sun.

Leaving, I came across something I hadn’t noticed before; a small set of plaques set in the ground marking the site of the Tower’s scaffold where so many noblemen had been executed, the last being the Earl of Kilmarnock and Lord Balmerino in 1746. Their final sights would have been of the Tower and the river, now obscured by the memorials.

Venturing down an empty Crutched Friars in the shadow of Fenchurch Street Station I headed for Dunster Court and the attractive home of the Clothworkers, now occupying their sixth building on the site since 1456, the fifth having been destroyed by the Luftwaffe in 1941.

Towards Bank, the streets around the Lloyd’s Building and the Gherkin were almost empty of people and vehicles, the latter being predominantly buses and bicycles. Most shops were shut as were many cafes and eating establishments. The usually bustling Leadenhall Market was empty of lunchtime diners and drinkers, while over in the Royal Exchange two lone women propped up the Fortnum & Mason bar outnumbered by security staff at the pandemic-designated entrance and exit at either end of the building respectively.

Passing the Bank of England I set off towards St Paul’s via Guildhall. The City Centre (closed) on Basinghall Street contains a 1:500 scale model of the City including all buildings that currently have planning permission, giving the viewer a peek at the City’s future skyline. I wondered what the future might hold for the proposed and recently built office towers.

As if to emphasise that thought, more of the same – a lot of them. Modern office blocks and streets with a few pedestrians, bikes and the occasional taxi until I reached the west end of Cheapside where it was a little busier but not to any great degree given it was now well into lunchtime.

A solitary young woman sat in St Paul’s garden peacefully eating what looked like homemade sandwiches – Mr Johnson would have preferred her to have patronised a Prêt. The steps to the Church’s main entrance were queueless, something I hadn’t seen for many years. On Ludgate Hill, I
noted sadly that Hardy's sweetshop had closed its door for the last time.

Turning eastwards I headed back to the station via Southwark Bridge to find the usually crowded Borough Market almost empty.

Back on the train, musing over the experience, I was pleased I’d ventured out and although it wasn’t ‘Day of the Triffids’ in some places it hadn’t been far off. What really struck me was the dearth of office workers. Should they continue to stay away what will become of the office towers rising over the City’s historic skyline and their multitude of dependant small shops? Had I witnessed the start of a workplace revolution?

– Mike Wicksteed

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The Calendarium Londinense

Ken Gowers introduces a revival of a twentieth century tradition.

The Calendarium Londinense in its current format was started by the artist William Monk in 1903, although there had been a ‘London Almanack’ published annually by the Stationers’ Company throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with a similar layout of text relevant to the year beneath a topographical engraving.

William Monk was born in Chester in 1863, and was the son of the gunsmith William Henry Monk, whose family business still exists to this day. He studied art at Chester School of Art, and had a studio on Eastgate Row North in the centre of Chester. From 1887 to 1888 he attended the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, where he first began to practise etching, after which he returned to Chester. In order to further his career as an artist, he moved to London in 1892, where he worked in the Hogarth Studios, Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square. He lived in Hampstead, but later moved to Amersham.

In 1894 William Monk was admitted to The Royal Society of Painter-Etchers as an Associate Member, and in 1899 he was elected to full membership. For a while he part owned and taught in the Berry Art School, but by the time he started the Calendarium Londinense in 1903 he had sold his interest in the art school, in order to concentrate on his own artistic output. In 1933 he returned to live in Chester.

William Monk produced the Calendarium Londinense annually until his death in 1937, with a different etching of a London scene each year. The 1938 version was published posthumously, using one of his etchings.


The demise of the Calendarium Londinense was reported by Ralph Hyde, a previous member of the London Topographical Society, in the Print Quarterly in 2000, but fortunately it was subsequently rescued by Jason Hicklin.

Unfortunately, the production of the Calendarium Londinense is no longer regarded as a viable commercial proposition. The original editions by William Monk were of 250 prints, but this has declined to a theoretical 100 prints, although the actual uptake has only been between 20 and 30 in recent years. However, it does appeal to certain art
collectors, and there are a select few complete collections of the Calendarium Londinense from 1903 to the present day.

The current artist is Ken Gowers, who is attempting to revive the fortunes of the Calendarium Londinense. His first attempt was the pictured 2020 version, featuring the Houses of Parliament. The 2021 edition will have an original etching of a lesser known London landmark, St Michael and All Angels, Ladbroke Grove, a church with unusual architecture and an interesting history, which commemorates its 150th anniversary in 2021.

For those unfamiliar with the technique, etchings are produced by the action of acid on a metal plate, most commonly copper. First of all, the copper plate is covered by a layer of a mixture of wax, resin and bitumen. The image is then drawn into the wax using a needle, thus exposing the desired lines. The plate is next immersed in an oxidising acid solution, typically ferric chloride solution, so that the acid attacks the plate where the metal is exposed. The tone is produced subsequently by depositing a powder of pine resin or bitumen on the surface of the plate. The plate is heated to melt and harden the powder. When the plate is immersed in the acid, the metal is attacked between the grains of the powder, thus forming discrete pits in the surface. These pits and the previously etched lines are able to hold ink during printing.

The printing is achieved by covering the metal plate with ink, wiping the excess off the surface, and putting the plate, covered with a piece of dampened paper, through an intaglio printing press under considerable pressure, so that the ink is forced from the etched metal plate on to the paper, creating the desired image.

The calendar, printed under the etching on the Calendarium Londinense, is produced by printing from a machined magnesium block, using the same ink but reduced pressure.

The 2021 Calendarium Londinense, as is traditional, will be printed on handmade English paper, using an intaglio press manufactured by George Mann and Company of Leeds (illustrated), which probably dates from about the time William Monk initiated the Calendarium Londinense.

The calendar is available from:
Ken Gowers, 8 Edinburgh Way, Chester CH4 7AS. (krgowers@gmail.com) at a price of £35 (including postage and packing).

References


The long battle to save the Smithfield Market buildings from redevelopment began in 2005. The fate of the Smithfield General Market area one of the few remaining corners on the fringe of City retaining its Victorian character and scale, was uncertain until a public enquiry in 2014 resulted in victory for the conservation campaign led by SAVE. A solution for the future of the buildings was found in 2015 by making the site available for a new home for the Museum of London. Planning permission was granted in June 2020 for the transformation of the site, claimed as ‘one of the largest cultural projects happening anywhere in Europe’. It is designed to attract 2 million visitors a year, and will form part of what has been
designated as a ‘cultural mile’ from Faringdon to Moorgate. Of the cost, £27 million has been found, a further £43 million is needed.

The Museum will occupy the old General Market building by Faringdon Street, dating from 1879-83 by Sir Horace Jones, and the huge space of the Listed Poultry market (1962-3 by T. P. Bennet & Sons) with its remarkable shell concrete dome, together with the smaller adjoining buildings of the Fish Market and Red House (1866-99), which had the earliest surviving powered cold store. Work is planned to start next year. The architects are Stanton Williams, and Asif Khan, together with Julian Harrap as conservation architect. The theme linking the various displays is ‘Time’—our time, past time, imagined time, temporary time, and within the basements below the General Market, ‘Deep time’ (the repository for the London collections). Atelier Brückner has been appointed as Lead Designer for the Past Time galleries.

The aerial view shows the new pedestrian ‘campus’ which will be created around the General Market; beyond it is the Poultry Market with its shallow concrete dome. Both the spacious interiors and the undercrofts and railway tunnels below should provide scope for spectacular museum displays, while retaining the character of the buildings.

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**St Katharine’s before the Docks**

*Derek Morris and Ken Cousins continue their exploration of the diverse character of the East London waterfront, and the negotiations that preceded the creation of St Katharine docks.*

On 30 October 1825 the last service was held in the church of the Precinct of St Katharine by the Tower, and within a month the St Katharine Dock Company began the destruction of the Hospital with its fine fourteenth century church, over 1,250 houses, warehouses, taverns, and shops and the displacement of some 11,300 people.¹

The Minute books of the Chapter of the Royal Hospital of St Katharine, enable us to trace their negotiations with the developers, and allow a better picture to emerge of the trades in the Precinct before the West Dock opened in October 1828 and the East Dock the following year.² The Chapter was concerned with the control of local affairs, and the administration of their many estates in the south of England. As a result its Minutes are far more varied than found in a conventional parish vestry. The Court Leet meetings in October, dealt with the elections of constables, beadles and headboroughs.³

The unusual feature of the negotiations was that the dock company faced an organisation that held the freehold of hundreds of properties and, as a Royal Peculiar had, since 1148, enjoyed the patronage of Queens, supported by a charter that gave the Chapter absolute freedom from all authority, other than that of the Lord Chancellor, in both ecclesiastical and civil matters.⁴

**Merchants and Trade**

The Precinct escaped the Great Fire of London and benefited in 1663, when the City Corporation, in response to the problems created by the congestion at the Legal Quays, licensed some twenty-one
'Sufferance wharves' in St Katharine's and Southwark for the unloading of imports on a 'temporary' basis. In St Katharine's, one wharf was known as the Great Wharf, and another as the Little Wharf. In 1764 a Committee of merchants led by Sir Alexander Grant, a wealthy plantation owner and navy supplier, was formed to carry out a scheme for making Free Quays in part of St Katharine's and the Chapter agreed and supported them in the matter of granting them new leases. By 1800, the Precinct was a crowded mixture of merchants' houses, shops, taverns, workshops, lodging houses, brothels, and hundreds of poor-quality houses, together with a small dock, capable of receiving vessels of 300 tons, with a lime wharf and a dung wharf. From time to time the Chapter called for the widening of streets but there had never been a plan to establish an estate to compare with that around Leman Street or Well Close Square. Also in the Precinct were the King's barge house and the King's warehouse, where tobacco had to be unloaded, until the opening of the Tobacco Wharf in the London Docks, in January 1805. The dominant industry was warehousing together with a range of trades including watermen, lightermen, ship agents, block makers, brewers and distillers. Unusually, a printer and stereotype founder, Charles Evelyn Knight, in 1822 insured for £600 the French and Italian bible plates in his dwelling house. There were no sugar refineries, no large timber yards, no ship builders or ropeworks, which were common in the adjoining parishes of Wapping and Whitechapel. From the 1770s until 1826, the most important warehouseman was William Mashiter, who with his partners, leased the Iron Gate and the Foss Side warehouses. Mashiter's wealth enabled him to move to Romford and to buy other estates in Essex, a typical practice for East London merchants. The large Iron Gate Thames-side, brick and timber, warehouses were three-storeys high, and insured for £3,000 in 1782. The Foss Side, brick warehouses were insured in 1790 together with two houses, for £3,500. Between 1781 and 1823, thirty-eight merchants have been identified, who between them took out 80 Sun policies on stock in Mashiter's warehouses. Valuations varied from a few hundred pounds to £24,000, and reveal the wide range of goods stored there. The majority of the insurers were London merchants but a Bristol merchant, two nail manufacturers in the Midlands, and two Birmingham merchants have so far been found. Although 'merchant' is the most common occupation there were also ropemakers, wine and brandy merchants, tallow chandlers, ship owners, soap makers, sugar refiners, an ironmonger, and an oil merchant. A wide variety of goods were insured, including ashes, flax, hemp, potash, wine, cotton, sugar, coffee and 'merchandise and stock'. Goods arrived on ships from Russia, north America, the Caribbean, as well as the coastal trade. Frequent insurers between 1788 and 1808 of flax and hemp in Mashiter's warehouses were Christian and Philip Splidt, ropemakers of Cable Street. In 1802 they insured for £12,000, flax per the Lively Lonestriania, from St Petersburg. At the same time they insured flax in other London warehouses, thus spreading their risk. Before the opening of the West India Docks in August 1802 and the East India Docks in August 1806 Mashiter's most important client was John Kymer, merchant of Bush Lane, who in 1800 insured for £24,000 sugar and coffee, in Mashiter's warehouses. It was because of his loss on warehousing goods from the East and West Indies when the new docks were opened on the Isle of Dogs, that in 1807 Mashiter claimed 'losses' of £98,277-16s-0d and was awarded £18,000. This was one of the largest claims, submitted to the Commissioners of Compensation. The St Katharine Dock Company and the Hospital The possibility of building wet docks in St Katharine's was first raised by William Vaughan in 1793, and again in 1796 by the City Corporation. On Christmas Eve, 1796, the Master, the Hon. Stephen Digby, waited on Queen Charlotte and raised the problems raised in converting the Precinct into Wet Docks. The Queen directed the Solicitor General, William Grant, to communicate with the Master of St Katharine's, and subsequently, Mr Tyrrell, the City Remembrancer, attended a Chapter meeting to discuss the Solicitor General's legal opinions. Digby's meeting with the Queen confirms the strength of the links in the 1790s between the Hospital and the Court. However, nothing came of this proposal and the West India Docks were developed in the Isle of Dogs. The 21 year monopoly granted to the proprietors of the West India Docks was due to expire in 1823, and this led the shipowner and dock developer John Hall to form the St Katharine Dock Company. The promoters were merchants, bankers, ship owners and city businessmen, particularly those with Baltic trade interests. They collected subscriptions to the value of £1,089,600. For Francis their proposals to develop a new dock close to the City, were not part "of a planned growth but a furious competitive scramble designed to make profits for the company shareholders rather than to benefit London and the country as a whole". Important in the subsequent negotiations was General Sir Herbert Taylor, the one-time private secretary to King George III, who had been appointed Master of the Foundation of St Katharine in 1820. He was also an MP for the City of London. These two positions had put him in a superb position to secure what Pudney has loosely referred to as 'personal advantage'. 
The discussions between the Hospital and the dock company began on 7 February 1824 when Messrs Hall and Hardwick attended a Chapter meeting, and this led the Master to further discussions with the Lord Chancellor, as the Official Visitor of the Hospital. 17

From the Hospital’s long-term point of view there was the need to be compensated for their loss of the fines and fees they had derived from their property in the Precinct. It is not yet clear how the promoters agreed with General Sir Herbert Taylor that £127,000 was a fair compensation. It was Lt. Colonel Stephenson, the Surveyor General of H. M. Works and Public Buildings who, in August 1825, estimated that the St Katharine Dock Company should pay £36,000 for building a church and other premises for the Hospital upon the site proposed in Regents Park. 18 For those who thought that the Hospital should have remained within the East End, the large villa and stables built by Taylor in a charming situation was considered by some to be entirely unsuited for the Master of St Katharine’s, and have been described as “more or less almshouses for well-off people”. 19

The Master probably realised that the Foundation could not resist the commercial pressures for development. From as early as 1775 many of the estates in the Precinct were described as consisting of “many small, old and ruinous houses in St Katharine’s Lane and other inferior parts”. 20 The situation was summarised in 1791 by one leaseholder, who told the Chapter that 21

having considered the circumstances and situation of the premises… the deadness of which together with the many empty houses all about the Precinct is so discouraging thereby [I] shall decline all thoughts of renewal of the lease.

Clearly, investing £127,000 in four per cent annuities would enable the Master and Brothers to lead a more gentlemanly and comfortable life in Regents Park, rather than in the crowded and rundown Precinct.

A future paper will examine the dealings between the Dock Company and the small property owners and their occupants. The Company probably felt that dealing with these owners would be a trifling problem, but in the event the negotiations continued until May 1826. 22

Many records of the St Katharine Dock Company are now retained at the Museum of London Docklands. These include the date, address and description of the property, the title, price and names of the vendor and purchaser. At the LMA can be found a Survey and Valuation of the estate of St Katharine’s Hospital next the Tower, which contains details of some 55 leases, which in many cases can be linked to the land tax and the Sun registers. 23

In summary, this exploration of the negotiations between the Royal Foundation and the St Katharine Dock Company has revealed how different the Precinct was from other riverside parishes, and that for local historians, a great wealth of information on properties and occupations has survived.
The main image, of The Last of the GPO – an etching by Sir Henry Rushbury (1889-1968) – shows the demolition in 1912 of the final section of the postal service headquarters building that was designed by Sir Robert Smirke and completed in 1829. Grecian in style, the main façade of the 120m long and 24m deep structure was embellished with three ionic porticoes, the central one, as seen here, surmounted by a pediment. The second image is of a surviving capital from the lost building, now standing at the Vestry Museum in Walthamstow. It was bought at the time of the demolition by a local stonemason, Frank Mortimer, who presented it to the then borough council.

The Rushbury drawing was reproduced in 1927 in Disappearing London by E Beresford Chancellor, published by The Studio Journal with Geoffrey Holme as editor as a pictorial record of just 12 prominent scenes that no longer existed. Chancellor, who wrote widely on London's history and died in 1937, prefaced it with the words: “Improvements which connote, of course, demolition more or less wholesale, may be said to occur in London approximately every hundred years”, and continued later: “just now we are in the midst of one of these phases in which the cacoëthes aedificandi [building mania] has apparently reached its Nth power”.

He compared the site’s later expansion with the successive peregrinations of the Bank of England (represented in another illustration). He noted that “with the increase in population, it is obvious that those centres of activity which depend on the public for their existence should necessarily require larger staffs and more room”.

Born in Birmingham in 1889, Henry Rushbury arrived in London in 1912 and became an official war artist during the later conflict. Chancellor describes the scene shown here as one of his “beautiful and spirited etchings”. In January 2017, the Royal Academy of Arts published Sir Henry Rushbury – A Catalogue Raisonné by his daughter, Julia Ramos, her son Tod Ramos (both also artists) and Felicity Owen, an historian specialising in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century art. It described him as “a forgotten master of twentieth century British art whose drypoint technique produced extraordinary effects of atmosphere”.

In the course of kindly granting the LTS permission to use this image, Julia Ramos drew my attention to one interesting feature – the turbanned onlooker (likely a Sikh) with his back to the viewer. (There had been a Sikh presence in Britain since the mid-nineteenth century).

She went on to recount how, from 1912 onwards, her father “made many drawings of the architectural changes to, and destruction of, major London buildings”. One of these was Clifford’s Inn, which lost its raison d’être in training law students in the early twentieth century and was finally demolished in 1934 (the nineteenth-century gatehouse survives).

Another was St Olave’s Church in Bermondsey. This was pulled down, she said, “with the corroboration of the Church of England despite protests in the 1920s. Thus, as Henry said: ‘beginning the work that was subsequently pursued by the Luftwaffe’. He always despaired of the destruction of Old London and the opportunities missed after the end of the second world war.”

Her own work (as Julia Rushbury) includes her mid-1950s oil painting of Cadogan Place in the Snow, made in her 20s. It is another depiction of demolition in progress, following earlier Blitz damage, in this case to make way for the 18-storey Carlton Tower Hotel (1961), designed by Michael Rosenauer and noted in Pevsner as “an early case of a hotel tower”.

At the time, she was living nearby in a flat in one of a row of late-Georgian terraced houses that gave onto Sloane Street, a number of which were temporarily occupied by Hungarian refugees from the occupation of their country by Soviet Russia. Local people, she remembers, “were extraordinarily kind” and brought them food and clothing.

– David Crawford
Reviews

edited by Andrew Saint. Published for the Bartlett
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Only the impish fates of publishing could have arranged for the definitive history of Britain’s premier shopping street to be released in the midst of a pandemic that closed virtually all the world’s shops. From 23 March to 4 June 2020, Oxford Street and much of central London was a wasteland. Even in August, as I write, the halting recovery has hardly begun to bring things back to how they had been before lockdown. Oxford Street might now be off the ventilator but it still needs oxygen, and looks likely to need it for some time. The lovely photograph by Chris Redgrave that makes up the cover to this magnificent volume, of a sunlit Oxford Circus with packed pavements, busy public transport and bustling shops, looks now like a nostalgic keepsake rather than a historical record of the street as we are likely to know it for some time to come.

This is the fifty-third volume published by the Survey of London since its first, on the parish of Bromley-by-Bow, in 1900.¹ The Survey is unique to London. No other city in the world has nurtured such a careful chronicling of its architectural legacy, both those survivals that can be seen today and those past buildings that have made way for them. Over the years the survival of the Survey itself has often been thrown into doubt but its astonishing virtues have won such wide recognition that some institutional patron has always stepped in to preserve this publishing miracle from inanition. Its strength rests on the careful sifting and sorting of facts drawn from original documents – deeds and wills, family correspondence, estate records, rate books, ground plans and architects’ drawings. Great attention has also been paid to the illustration of buildings through measured drawings and the enormous legacy of topographical prints and photographs that have accumulated over the past five centuries into what must surely be the most extensive visual record for any city anywhere. From the 1950s, in what we might call a ‘social turn’, the Survey began to pay attention to how buildings were used by Londoners as well as how they came to be built. But underpinning all the Survey’s work was a traditional respect for the building blocks of London’s complex topographical palimpsest – its parishes. So generally the parishes of inner London outside the City have provided the framework for the Survey’s slow-moving jigsaw, filling the gaps in our knowledge of how London came to be what it is today.

Very sensibly, the parish has been abandoned as the basis for this new volume, edited by Andrew Saint, the distinguished London architectural historian who has been at the Survey’s helm now for several years past. Oxford Street is over a mile long and forms the boundaries of a handful of parishes. Despite that, the street has managed to stamp its own unified character on London’s often chaotic local government. It made sense, then, to treat the street as a single historical identity. The result is the most thorough historical investigation of a single street ever attempted, serving as an inspiration to urban historians across the United Kingdom to attempt something similar for Glasgow or Edinburgh, York or Birmingham.

The volume itself is as comprehensive, clearly written and beautifully presented as we have come to expect from this illustrious stable. The brilliant introduction fully reviews the social history of the road to Oxford, one of London’s great ancient highways. Along the way we get a brief history of Tyburn and its ‘hanging tree’, the difficulties of financing highways maintenance in a period when private profit outweighed any notion of public good, and the vexed problem of inventing a suitable road covering to accommodate the great increase in traffic as London’s wealth and population outstripped all bounds. Most of all, though, we are given a history of Oxford Street as a shopping centre, emerging almost full blown by the end of the 1780s such that, even then, its glories became one of the wonders of Europe. This introductory survey is illuminated by a fine gallery of ‘Oxford Street in Old Photographs’. There then follow detailed explorations of the street’s buildings and what preceded them. Often thesemovingly reveal just what Oxford Street – and London – has lost in architectural exuberance as well as a richly diverse shopping experience, especially since 1940. I’ll give just one example but there could be many others. The ‘dour seven-storey affair’ built in the 1950s for C&A and presently occupied by GAP at 376-384 Oxford Street was built on the site of a Queen Anne-style extravagance dating from 1906. It was home to the Times Book Club: when it opened the store was besieged by so many eager customers that the doors could only be opened hourly ‘for two or three minutes at a time’ to ration the number of browsers allowed in.

Oxford Street is as representative of London as Piccadilly Circus or Trafalgar Square. Across the world it is as much a symbol of retail consumption as Fifth Avenue or the Champs Élysée, but with this big difference: Oxford Street is more plebeian than these famous rivals, less swanky, more (and this is no slur) suburban. No one is made to feel uncomfortable strolling through Oxford Street because they are not wearing the right shoes or carrying the right accessories or sporting the wrong body shape. It is a temple of consumption where the consumer and not the retailer is the god to be
celebrated. Like it or loathe it, Oxford Street is accepting rather than rejecting, demotic not snobbish. This side of the street’s history is recognised too in this exemplary urban history, not least in an appendix on ‘Oxford Street Pubs’.

– Jerry White

1. The ‘Monograph Series’ on individual London buildings began with a volume on the Trinity Hospital almshouses, Mile End, in 1896; the latest of these, number 18, was published on the Charterhouse in 2010.


This book might escape the attention of London Topographical Society members. It would be a pity if it did. As the title does not reveal, it is in large measure about London, and even where it is not its findings are heavily derived from maps, though strictly the subject is toponymy not topography. Readers might know Laura Wright as a broadcaster, for ‘Word of Mouth’ on Radio 4, and conversations with Robert Elms on BBC Radio London. She has also published extensively on aspects of language, including the development of place names. She is a one-off, a highly original scholar who combines imagination and archival rigour with an engaging writing style. Reading this book is like listening to a good radio broadcast, albeit one that is scrupulously referenced. It is conceded that house naming has become unfashionable, but no matter, its history, which charts a passage from the classy to the déclassé, is addressed with panache. The book pops with anecdotes and apothegms. The title refers to a case study, detective work that led from London to Scotland. But first the arrival of the railways, suburban growth saw a revival of house naming, particularly for large villas. Wright classifies nineteenth- and twentieth-century house names in six categories: the transferred place-name; the nostalgically rural; the commemorative; the associative upwardly mobile; the fashionable or faddish; and what she calls ‘pick & mix’ or neological invention. The Wandsworth Road and Finchley Road supply evidence from the 1840s. London accents are introduced, in particular the long-lost transposition of v and w, as in Dickens (‘And you know what wittles is?’), with the example of Whipp’s Cross, a corruption from Phypps Cross. Another diverting explanation is of the transfer of the word ‘Court’ from a dominant application to slum yards to a descriptor of mansion blocks as being due to Jonathan T. Carr, the property developer who introduced it in Kensington Court Mansions and Whitehall Court Flats in the early 1880s. From London the usage transferred to New York.

With all this and more as background, the history of the house name Sunnyside is tackled as a chronological regression, taking twentieth-century seaside and bungaloid omnipresence as more or less read. First known uses in London suburbs (Swiss Cottage, Hornsey Lane, Peckham Rye and Lower Clapton) from 1858 to 1869 group as being for prosperous businessmen who were Nonconformists with Scottish connections, and prosopography illustrates links that spread through the 1870s. The house name is tracked back to the eighteenth century in northern England and linked to Quakers, and then explained as having come to prominence through Washington Irving, whose New York home called Sunnyside was famous in the 1850s. Irving’s choice of the name is linked to his connection to Sir Walter Scott, and a sixteenth-century farmhouse called Sunnyside near Abbotsford is discovered. Widespread use of the house name in Scotland is shown to have twelfth-century origins and to derive from the sunny side concept as part of Scottish land law and the open-field system, deriving from solskifte, a Nordic practice of dividing land by ‘sun-shift’. This gets over-garments, while innuendo and wordplay are noted as having been common. The importance of inns on arterial roads leads to a discussion of the impact of stagecoach names on places and to a fascinating hypothesis on the origins of the name Soho, in use by the 1630s, and accepted as derived from a hunting call. But Soho was not a hunting ground. Rather, the use of such calls, ‘Tally-ho’ is another example, as names for coaches that traded on their speediness is adduced to suggest that London’s Soho and Soho in Birmingham might have been the two ends of a stagecoach route. The early general history section concludes with an explanation of the decline of names for premises other than grand houses and pubs as being part of the effect of the improving Acts of 1762 onwards that replaced shop signs with street numbering. This applied to central districts, but after the arrival of the railways, suburban growth saw a revival of house naming, particularly for large villas.
arcane: ‘the sunny four oxgangs of the shadow plough third part lands’ (p. 129). Further, other Scottish places called ‘Greens of X’ are shown to have a strong distributive correlation with Sunnysides (in north-east and south-west Scotland), Wright noting that Scottish Gaelic gritan means sun or sunlight. This return to the medieval has fallen a long way from Lower Clapton, but one hardly notices. The saga is absorbing, and both meticulously detailed and usefully summarised. A concluding gazetteer of around 200 Scottish and northern English Sunnysides is, somewhat eccentrically, illustrated with small map extracts – Tally-ho.

— Peter Guillery

City of Beasts by Thomas Almeroth-Williams Manchester University Press, 2019, 309 pages. 978 1 52612 635 1  £25

It is well recognised that cities, and especially London, owe a lot to horses. As long ago as 1893 William Gordon’s Horse World of London narrated a dozen different ways that Londoners depended on horses to get about their daily lives. The 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic published eight large, but largely ineffective, volumes on how the London must adapt to horseless carriages. FML Thompson’s 1970 inaugural lecture at Bedford College, Victorian London: The Horse Drawn Society, raised the intriguing thesis that the city’s growth was limited by its inability to provide adequate fodder to accommodate even more horses. More recently McShane & Tarr’s The Horse in the City (John Hopkins 2007) has examined how horses shaped the economy and society of American Cities.

Almeroth-Williams’ City of Beasts considerably enhances our understanding of the topical subject of how animals make towns. He examines how animals shaped Georgian London and shows how Londoners in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had a close relationship with animals entirely surpassing anything today. He takes an earlier focus than the works just mentioned, and also a more detailed one by giving separate consideration to the mill horse, the draught horse and the sports horse. He also broadens the subject of review beyond horses to include chapters on dogs, cattle and sheep but not, alas, on cats.

Most importantly, he has examined the evidence afresh and has some startling and important points to make that change the way we view how animals impacted the making of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century London. Horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and dogs were, as the Author states, increasingly ubiquitous in the metropolis. But, more than ubiquitous, they were positively central to daily existence. Whether we look at the eleven pig keepers and slaughterhouses adjacent to Smithfield fined for emptying waste into Turnmill Brook in 1773, or the fourteen cowkeepers clustered together in St Saviours, Southwark close to the breweries that produced the waste mash that fed them, we see an ecosystem of manufacturers, producers and consumer that were an integral part of the Georgian cityscape. In other words, more than just extras on a human cityscape, animals were essential for its effective functioning at nearly every level.

It has often been suggested that the Industrial Revolution somehow passed London by, with the real action taking place in the coalfields and iron works of the midlands and north of England. The Author suggests quite the opposite, pointing out that the city’s mill and draught horses, labouring to generate power in brick making, brewing or tanning factories and operating mills and other machinery on a small but efficient scale, were as much integral to the industrial revolution as Boulton & Watt’s famed steam engine.

As for the other animals the sheep, the cows and the pigs were largely just driven to market. But they have more than a trot-on role and we read how small-scale cow- and pig-keeping offered a first step to independence to many poor city dwellers. The way these animals were treated also tells us a great deal about how Georgian Londoners related to and handled them, both kindly and cruelly. The Author emphasises that drovers were all too often ignorant, poorly paid and over-worked rather than naturally brutal. Dogs were in a different class, having an active agency in offering protection and security to their human masters. And then we have the show horse, the smart animal kept at the riding stables and paraded around Hyde Park on a fine day.

— Simon Morris

The rise and fall of London’s Ringways 1943 – 1973 by Michael Dnes, Routledge 2020, 141 pages 978 0 36736 157 0  £65 Amazon (and twice as much elsewhere)

This short but informative book, really an expanded essay in five chapters, is spun out from the Author’s Cambridge University MPhil. Dnes clearly finds roads interesting as his day job is Head of Roads Investment Strategy at the Department of Transport.

Anyone who has ever driven around London’s main road network must have wondered – why? Why is there an elevated Westway but until recently no Eastway? Why can you whizz from Blackheath to Hackney Wick at the speed of light (in my dreams) yet crawl along Holland Road to achieve only a short motorway spurt past Westfield? Why is there a North Circular but no real South Circular? The Author gives us a pretty good steer on most of these conundrums, and indeed more.
The story begins with Alker Tripp, an erudite Assistant Commissioner of Police, who recognised the destructive effect of even 1930s traffic and proposed that new developments were modelled to keep traffic out of residential areas. This notion gained traction, and he worked with the celebrated Professor Abercrombie whose wartime County of London and Greater London Plans were meant to shape post-war redevelopment of a London where what remained after the blitz was viewed as obsolescent at best. Abercrombie proposed concentric rings of motorway roughly three, six and twelve miles out from Charing Cross, all connected by giant radials. But there was no money in Austerity Britain to contemplate such massive civil engineering; all we have from the next decade is a widened Park Lane, a Hammersmith Flyover and a botched (and recently remodelled) Elephant and Castle.

Then came the GLC, which in 1965 announced the Motorway Box, followed the next year by a proper (meaning motorway) South Circular and even a prototype but closer-in M25. The next eight years were the plans’ undoing. The greatest opposition focussed on the inner Box, crashing on the north from Hackney Wick through Islington, Camden, skirting Hampstead and then turning south past West Kensington and Chelsea Basin to Clapham Junction before heading east through Brixton and Blackheath and then back up to Hackney Wick.

The Author narrates how the Box was overwhelmed by multiple problems. First, and the Author’s greatest revelation, there never was a proper unified plan for this massive project but, instead, a series of unconnected sectional sketches. It therefore lacked coherence and was never properly costed in terms of land, money or even practicality. Next, the planners made the gross mistake of pitting themselves against the inner London intelligentsia. Clustered in the gentrifying inner suburbs, they formed an articulate and influential resistance, led in Camden by my late cousin the architect Hugh Morris whose ‘Stop the Camden Motorway’ campaign was one of a myriad of local groups based on civic opposition. The only completed side of the Box runs through the Greenwich Peninsula, crossing under the Thames by the Blackwall Tunnel and up the lower Lee Valley. Poorer, less articulate and more industrialised, these districts offered no real opposition. Lastly, the future had already arrived. The unconnected Westway elevated motorway from Wormwood Scrubs to Marylebone Road opened in 1969 to massive local protests as residents experienced the noise, dirt, pollution and physical severance resulting from such an intrusion. The coup de grace came when Labour re-took the GLC in 1973 and, in a reversal of its earlier policy, cancelled the entire project.

It is probably just as well that London never got its act together and built these roads, otherwise we would have ended up with a dystopic motopia, a London segmented into urban ghettos ringed by thundering corridors of traffic – in fact, just like the districts cut apart by the few urban motorways that were actually built. So next time, enjoy your traffic jam – it’s far better than what might have been.

– Simon Morris

Victoria Tower Gardens, the history, creation and planned destruction of a London Park
by Dorian Gerhold, 2020, 64pp. A4 format booklet available from 19 Montserrat Road, Putney, London SW15 2LD

The debate over the future of Victoria Tower Gardens, directly south of the Houses of Parliament, has been simmering since 2016, when it was announced that the park would be the site for the National Holocaust Museum and Learning Centre. Westminster Council rejected the proposal in February 2020; the case was called in and is to be considered at a planning enquiry in October. The last section of this booklet details how without any public consultation, ‘by decree of the Prime Minister, a large part of a long-established and heavily used London park, explicitly protected by statute, was to be taken for a government building project’, and describes how this major proposal would radically alter the character of the gardens.

The scholarly account of the pre-history of the gardens in the first part of this well-produced and attractively illustrated essay will fascinate topographers. It throws much light on the early development of an area which until the thirteenth century was part of the river. On part of the land there was a slaughterhouse and mill, (possibly a tide mill, though this is debatable) belonging to Westminster Abbey. The land belonging to the Crown was sold from the end of the sixteenth century and developed gradually with houses and wharves. In 1750 the medley of buildings and industry is shown on Rocque’s map and in Canaletto’s view of Westminster.

The gardens were created in two stages: from 1867, after part of the site was cleared for the new Palace of Westminster, and after 1900 when wharves remaining to the south were swept away. The first stage was funded by W. H. Smith (newspaper retailer and MP) as a recreation ground for the public (especially children). The southern part was opened in 1914, supported by the LCC and the new Westminster Council, and in the 1920s provided with a drinking fountain and large sandpit designed by Philip Tilden – hugely popular, as can be seen from a photo of 1933. By then the more formal part of the gardens had been embellished with Rodin’s Burghers of Calais (1914), and a statue to Mrs Pankhurst (1930) The Buxton Memorial drinking fountain formerly in Parliament Square was added in 1957.

Whether the twenty-first century will see these gardens, intended as a local amenity, transformed as the setting for a national memorial hangs in the balance.

– Bridget Cherry
London Topographical Society

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