

Newsletter No.99
November 2024

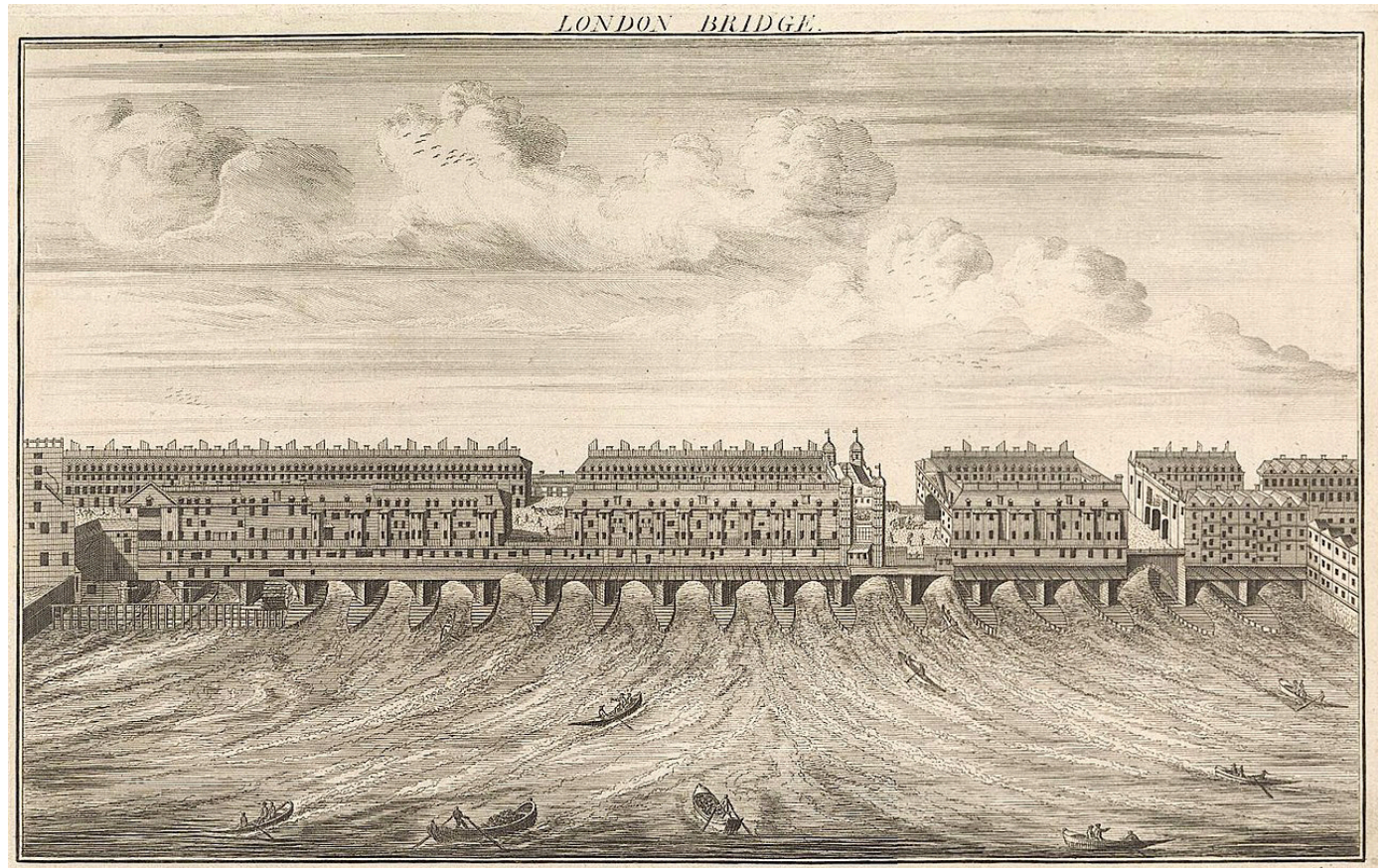


Image: The Old London Bridge by William Henry Toms, c.1730. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

The Perils of Old London Bridge: Travails faced by the Watermen of the Thames

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Lost Gardens of London, a new book by Todd Longstaffe-Gowan reviewed
And a selection of other book reviews

The London Topographical Society was founded in 1880 for the study and appreciation of London.
Registered charity No. 271590

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Enquiries

New membership enquiries and changes of address should be sent to the Membership Secretary, John Bowman.

Enquiries about non-receipt of publications should be made to the Publications Secretary.

Enquiries about, or payment of subscription renewals or enquiries about ordering publications from the backlist, should be made to Roger Cline, roger.cline13@gmail.com.

Proposals for new publications should be passed to the Editor, Sheila O'Connell. Books for review and other material for the Newsletter should be sent to the Newsletter Editor, India Wright.

Any other queries to Mike Wicksteed.

Newsletter Contributions

The Editor welcomes contributions to the newsletter. Have you unearthed any interesting nuggets of information concerning London's topographical history? Do you know of any quirky historic London locations? Or would you like to review a book? Please email isw28@cam.ac.uk to discuss contributions.

The Society remains true to the vision of its founders by making available maps, plans and views illustrating the history, growth and topographical development of London at all periods, and by publishing research in its annual publications.

Publications Delivery

Distribution of the annual publication is now complete, and any member who has not yet received the 2024 publication, *The Southwark Fire Court*, is requested to contact the Publications Secretary.

Many thanks to members who collected the publication at the AGM or kindly volunteered to distribute the publication in their neighbourhood. The cost of postage depends on the size and weight of the publication, and this year we only needed to post 450 copies. By handing out 750 copies at the AGM and through volunteers we have saved over £3,500, which is a worthwhile contribution to our future publications.

A note from *The Editor*

I am pleased to welcome you to the November 2024 edition of your London Topographical Society Newsletter. With a brief glance, you will have noticed that a few things have changed. Firstly, I would like to highlight that the Society now has a new Patron, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, following the passing of our former Patron HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. Many of the Duke of Gloucester's Patronages are related to architecture and conservation, both areas in which the Duke remains deeply interested.

A new era in the Society's Patronage has coincided with a change in Newsletter Editor. At July's AGM, long-standing Editor, Bridget Cherry OBE, stood down after sixteen years and I was voted in as the new Editor. During her tenure, Bridget transformed the newsletter into an engaging publication replete with colour images and I would like to thank her for entrusting its next phase to me.

I have modified the layout, but maintained the same editorial tone, including scholarly articles alongside news items, book reviews and events listings which may be of interest to members. As part of this shift, a new logo has been introduced which highlights the Society's heritage ahead of our 150th anniversary. Your thoughts and feedback would be greatly appreciated, and as ever, any suggestions for content you would like to see in the newsletter or contributions are most welcome.

Another new development, due to popular demand, is the introduction of a bi-annual members visit which will be advertised in the newsletter and take place in the following month or so after publication. Our over-subscribed members' visit to Mercers' Hall in June was very well-received by those able to attend, such that a theme for our visits was born: Livery Company Halls. The next LTS members' visit will be to the Tallow Chandlers' Hall in January 2025, turn to page 5 for more details.

Regarding the Society's other publications, *The A to Z of Regency London* published in 2023 received a favourable review in the Washington Map Society journal *The Portolan* by Francis Herbert. The Society's annual publication for 2025 will be Volume 33 of the *Record*, bursting with new research on London's evolving topography.

Lastly, I would like to bring to your attention to some potential forthcoming changes to the subscription. Please see page 8 for further information.

India Wright

Former Newsletter Editor, Bridget Cherry OBE (left) and new Newsletter Editor, India Wright
Photo: Mike Wicksteed



News & Notes

The 2024 Annual General Meeting

Right: LTS members fill St Lawrence Jewry for the 2024 AGM. Photo: Simon Morris

The 123rd Annual General Meeting of the Society took place on Wednesday 3 July at St Lawrence Jewry. The Grade I listed church provided a splendid setting in which to host the 160 members who were in attendance. The meeting was preceded by an hour-long organ recital by James McVinnie who started a year-long residency at the Southbank Centre in March. Committee Member, Geoffrey Tyack introduced the meeting with a talk about Sir Christopher Wren's design of St Lawrence Jewry and Cecil Brown's post-war restoration.

The minutes of the AGM will be published in the May 2025 newsletter. Bridget Cherry OBE stood down as Newsletter Editor after sixteen years' service. She was voted in as a Vice President of the Society and remains a Trustee. India Wright was voted in as the new Newsletter Editor.

A highlight of the meeting was the presentation by Professor Caroline Barron



of the Ann Saunders Essay Prize to Martin Rose, for his essay titled 'The Close on Tower Wharf'. The work made use of several different sources (map views, hearth tax returns, wills etc.) to reconstruct the buildings and the inhabitants of a small cluster of houses at the east end of Tower Wharf. These buildings emerged in the late sixteenth century and were pulled down a century later. Martin also wrote about the community that inhabited the buildings and compared their prosperity, or lack of it, with people who lived in other parts of London. The essay will be published in the 2025 issue of the Society's Record. It is hoped that others will be encouraged to submit essays for the 2025 prize (for details see p.6).

This year's publication on the Southwark Fire Court was available to be collected by members, who were treated to a compelling talk by the author, Jay Tidmarsh. The book charts the 52 disputes that unfolded following a devastating fire which swept what is now known as Borough High Street in 1676, revealing the complexities of property ownership and local regulations and the wider, political implications of a fire that affected the only route into London from the south.

The next AGM will be held in July 2025.

Professor Caroline Barron presents the Ann Saunders Essay Prize to Martin Rose. Photo: Simon Morris



Visit to Mercers' Hall

Right: Entrance to Mercers' Hall on Frederick's Place EC2.
Photo: India Wright

On Friday 7 June a group of thirty members enjoyed a tour of Mercers' Hall and their exhibition examining the importance of Cheapside, kindly facilitated by LTS member Charles O'Brien. Curator and Heritage Manager, Liza Geffin, led a thoroughly enjoyable tour through the building, charting key moments in the Livery Company's history. We learned that the Mercers' Hall is the only livery hall with its own chapel, and that the chapel was built on the site of the church built on the site of Thomas Beckett's birthplace and home. The Mercers' second hall was destroyed on the last night of the Blitz and rebuilt in 1954. During construction, a late fifteenth-century statue of Christ was discovered, with its feet, hands and crown of thorns struck off. Perhaps damaged during the reign of the Protectorate as idolatrous, the statue would quite possibly have been looked upon by figures such as Thomas More during his time as a Mercer.

The Mercers' Company are planning to open a dedicated Archive Centre imminently, incorporating a small education space which will host talks by guest speakers.



*The
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1880*

Next Members' Event *Tallow Chandlers' Hall*

The next members event will be a visit to the Tallow Chandlers' Hall in January 2025. Of the six remaining post-Great Fire livery company Halls, the Tallow Chandlers' is the best preserved and most evocative of the period in which it was built.

The Tallow Chandlers' Company was formed in about 1300 and received full livery status from Edward IV in 1462. The Company has been based on the same site in the City of London since 1476.

Date 20 January 2025, 11am
Booking please email India Wright at isw28@cam.ac.uk to book a place

Their present hall was built following the destruction of their original hall during the Great Fire. Having survived the Blitz, it remains largely unchanged displaying a marvellous array of original architectural detail.

We will be privileged to be accompanied by architectural historian Anya Lucas, an expert on Livery Halls, who will be able to provide additional insights into the historic use of the hall and its lavish interior details.

John Earl

Obituary

John Earl worked at the LCC as a building surveyor, repairing LCC-owned buildings such as the Trinity Almshouses and Ranger's House, but then left the LCC which enabled him, with John Betjeman, Spike Milligan and others, in the early 1960s, to take a leading role in the campaign to save Wilton's Music Hall from demolition by the LCC; when he returned to the GLC Historic Buildings Division soon after it was formed in 1965 he then cared for Wilton's as best he could and GLC funding allowed. At GLC/HBD he worked on the historic buildings input into the Greater London Development Plan, headed one of the statutory protection groups and ended up in charge of the section (I was his deputy) which looked after such miscellaneous matters as recording, the Survey of London drawings office, blue plaques, research and anything else which didn't fit easily into either statutory protection or works to the GLC's historic buildings. Through all this time he maintained his special interest and expertise in theatres, writing the chapter on 'The Preservation Game' in *Curtains!!!, or A New*

Life for Old Theatres, 1982. When the GLC was abolished in 1986, John moved to be the first paid director of the Theatres Trust and saw its development into the forceful body it is today. When a new version of *Curtains* was published by the Trust in 2000 as *Guide to British Theatres 1750-1950: A Gazetteer*, John wrote the London entries and edited the whole; his successor commented in the preface that the book 'reflects the fruits of a distinguished career in building conservation and a forty-year study of theatre building'. After retirement from the Trust, John continued to work for historic theatres, including writing the conservation plan which was the basis for the rescue of Wilton's with a large grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. He also took a leading role in making the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, his professional body, take an informed interest in historic buildings, writing a guide *Building Conservation Philosophy* in 1997 and published by the College of Estate Management.

Frank Kelsall

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Ann Saunders Essay Prize 2025

At the suggestion of members, the Council of the London Topographical Society decided to fund a prize in honour of Dr Ann Saunders (1930-2019). Ann was an enthusiastic and distinguished historian of London and for 35 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 no more than 8,000 words including endnotes and should include an additional abstract/summary of about 200 words. Further information is available on the LTS website in the About Us section.

Amicable Contributors

Aviva Insurance Maps

The LONDON TOPOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

Aviva is inviting people to help map entries from historical policy registers using a new digital tool, developed in collaboration with Cambridge University. It provides extracts of digitised policy entries with automatic transcriptions produced using a handwriting recognition tool, helping users identify, and then map, policy details.

The original documents date back to the Hand in Hand Fire and Life Insurance Society, the oldest of Aviva's heritage companies, with policy registers dating back to 1696. Mapping these historical policies will help Aviva's specialist archive team learn more about their earliest customers, as well as providing information for historians and adding to our understanding of how London looked hundreds of years ago. Aviva hopes to make the completed maps publicly available in the future.

The tool works by randomly allocating users one of the first 3,240 policies, which relate to addresses in London. The first postcodes were not introduced until 1959 and many

houses in the registers did not have numbers, so using details of the parish, road names and other geographical markers (such as 'west of the Tower') extracted from the policy entry, users can navigate a historical map of London and mark the exact or approximate location of the policy, as well as amending an automated transcription of the policy wording. Once entries have been validated, Aviva's archive team will extract the corrected transcriptions together with the coordinates for the location of the property, providing a picture of the inhabitants and insurance of historical London.

This follows more than two years of work to digitise 150 volumes of historical Hand in Hand policies, covering around 550,000 entries. The details required for working out the insurance premium and identifying the individual property provide a unique window onto London in this period.

The tool can be found on <https://amicablecontributors.com>.

AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) PhD Studentship

The fabric of London: two centuries of fire insurance policies

Applications are invited for a doctoral studentship offered by the Open-Oxford-Cambridge AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership, starting in October 2025. The studentship will be based in the Faculty of History at the University of Cambridge. The successful applicant will work on a collaborative project co-supervised by Professor Amy Erickson (ale25@cam.ac.uk) and Dr Alexis Litvine in the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure (CamPop) and Ms Anna Stone, Archivist at Aviva Group.

Aviva and CamPop have digitised fire insurance records from the late seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century (see above). The CDA holder will have scope to develop their own project with these sources. One option would be to focus on building history and the materials of construction. Another would be to concentrate on economic history and the ownership patterns revealed by the policies, with a prosopographical study of property owners. Further details of the project can be found here: <https://www.oocdtp.ac.uk/cam-cda-erickson-aviva>

Council to Review the Subscription Rate

A note from Mike Wicksteed, Hon. Secretary/Treasurer

It has been evident for some time that the Society needs to increase the member's subscription rate. The current £20 rate for UK members (or £18 if paid by standing order) was set in 1991 and hasn't been increased in the intervening 33 years. £20 in 1991 is worth over £60 today, and inflation has reduced the value of our subscription income by two-thirds.

The Council is considering increasing the rate from 2026.

Over the years our two main income streams have been subscriptions and book sales. Sadly, income from book sales has been falling for some time whilst the costs of providing members with an annual publication have, unsurprisingly, risen. As can be seen from our more recent annual reports, most years our income is no

longer covering expenditure – overall our assets are diminishing by around £20,000 annually.

Thanks to some excellent financial management by Roger Cline, the Society currently has a comfortable surplus of funds. This will provide us with a financial cushion for a short while to consider how best to manage subscriptions for the future.

After reviewing the subscription rate at its meeting in January the Council will advise members of its decisions in the May 2025 Newsletter. The issue will be on the agenda for discussion at next year's AGM.

In the meantime, the subscription rates for 2025 will remain at the current level.



Members with Standing Orders

The Society has had the same bank account for over 35 years but it has been run successively by National Girobank, Alliance & Leicester and Santander as the earlier banks were taken over by the later ones. At each takeover, the new bank kept the same account number but allocated their own sort code.

Santander has until now been happy to process your standing order payments set up with the sort code of one of the earlier banks but has now announced it will only process payments using the current sort code of Santander (09-01-55).

What we'd like you to do

Please check your LTS Standing Order as soon as possible. If it's not made out to sort code 09-01-55 then please email me (roger.cline13@gmail.com) or send me a letter or postcard (c/o Flat 13, 13 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SH).

We will then email you or write to you setting out how your new standing order should pay the 2025 subscription. The rate for 2025 remains unchanged at £18.

Today, please, before you get engrossed in the rest of the newsletter!

Locating London's Past

Version 2.0 of digital mapping tool launched

The LONDON TOPOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

Tim Hitchcock and Bob Shoemaker recently announced the launch of a substantially updated version of Locating London's Past, the website which allows you to map a wide body of digital resources pertaining to early modern and eighteenth-century London onto John Rocque's 1746 map.

The site has been completely rebuilt, in the process correcting a number of small errors in the original implementation, and it is much more user-friendly. The enhancements allow more comprehensive mapping of the data than was possible on the original site, and have substantially increased the number of place names from the Old Bailey Online and London Lives which are mappable. For

a full list of the changes, go to What's New.

They have extended their sincere thanks to the London Topographical Society for their generous support of the project. The Society's contribution enabled significant technical and content improvements to the Locating London's Past website, enhancing its utility as a public and academic resource. Tim and Bob are also grateful to Jamie McLaughlin (software engineer), Sharon Howard (Data Manager) and Louise Falcini (additional geocoding) for their invaluable contributions.

Happy mapping!

www.locatinglondon.org

Right: A coloured version of John Roque's 1746 map of London, depicting the neighbourhoods of Mayfair and St James, with portions of Soho. © Londonist/ Matt Brown



John Roque

In Vivid Colour

Members may be interested in this online coloured version of John Roque's 1746 map of London by Matt Brown of the blog, Londonist: Time Machine (<https://londonist.substack.com>). He is releasing a new coloured sheet every two months.

Readers may recall that Andrew MacNair has digitally redrawn Roque's (1746), Ogilby and Morgan's (1676) and Horwood's (1799) maps which can be obtained from Andrew via admacnair@aol.com. In 2026 the LTS will be publishing both Rocque's map of London and Westminster and his other map of London and ten miles around, with an introduction including recent research on Rocque by John Montagu with Laurence Worms and Ashley Baynton-Williams, and indexes by Roger Cline.

The Great House of Grub Street

Dorian Gerhold unravels the identity of a mythologised London mansion

Two prints by John Thomas Smith showing an ancient half-timbered mansion near Grub Street (now Milton Street), in the northern part of the City, are among the most frequently reproduced views of old London houses [Figure 1]. The mansion stood in what he described as Sweedon's Passage. Almost nothing reliable is known about it, and its exact site has never been identified. This note seeks to remedy that.

Smith described the mansion as follows:

of all the houses I ever inspected, in London, none were so substantially built. The timbers were oak and chesnut, and used in the greatest profusion. The lower parts of the chimnies, on the ground floor, where [sic] of stone, in some instances blocked up, and in others considerably lessened. The rooms had been contracted, as the wainscot-partitions, in three instances, divided the ceilings, which, when whole, must have been ornamented in a regular manner, as large masses of the cornice were visible in some of the modern closets. Upon an examination of the upper part of the house, it was discovered that a portion of the building towards the north had been taken down. [...] The house was let out in tenements to poor people, and latterly became a great nuisance. A filthy old woman, who sold Duke Cherries on sticks, and well known in the streets of London, occupied the upper wretched hole or loft of the staircase, for several years. This house was taken down in March, 1805.¹



Figure 1: One of J.T. Smith's prints of the house in Sweedon's Passage, drawn in 1791 and published in 1811, described as the north-east view (i.e. the mansion seen from the north-east). (© Trustees of the British Museum, 1880,1113.4027)

Smith recorded a local belief that the mansion had been occupied both by Sir Richard Whittington and Sir Thomas Gresham, and referred to it as Whittington's Palace, though he was doubtful about the Whittington story. In the caption to one of the prints Smith provided the wording of an inscription on the front of the houses which had replaced the mansion: 'Gresham House / once the residence of / Sir Richard Whittington / Lord Mayor 1406. / Rebuilt 1805.' Smith probably exaggerated in his drawing the way that the mansion leaned in different directions. The unusual staircase tower looks like an addition to the original building.

¹ John Thomas Smith, *Ancient Topography of London* (1815), pp.41-42.

Sweedon's Passage does not appear on the contemporary maps covering the whole of the City, but Rocque's map of the 1740s shows Sweeting's Passage, evidently the same alley, heading east from Butlers Alley, which linked it to Grub Street, as far as Moor Lane and beyond. In John Lockie's *Topography of London* (1813) it is recorded as Sweedland Passage.² More helpfully, on a plan of the late 1870s relating to clearance of slum property, Sweden's Passage is a short alley extending just from what had been Butlers Alley to Moor Lane (C in Fig. 2). This gives us the approximate location of the mansion. Smith confirms this by stating that a large seventeenth-century house in nearby Hanover Court (F in Fig. 2) 'stands a few yards west from where the old mansion, called Whittington's Palace, in Sweedon's Passage, stood'.³ In the land tax lists the whole area is referred to as Butlers Alley.

The inscription quoted in Smith's caption provides the crucial clues. With that information, we can turn to the land taxes to see what changed in 1805. Under the Butlers Alley heading there are eight tenements belonging to Mr Pretty in 1804, there are only 'ruins' in 1805, there are six or more properties called Whittington Place in 1806, and the same properties are known as Gresham Place by 1807. The mansion in Smith's view was therefore replaced by Gresham Place. Gresham Place is shown on the map of the late 1870s, with eight houses facing each other across a court (B in Figure 2). Smith's direction of view indicates that the old house was on the west side. Having pinned down the site, it is possible to identify the building itself on Ogilby and Morgan's map of 1676 [Figure 3] and on Horwood's map of 1799. In 1676 it stood in a courtyard, probably entered from Moor Lane. A coachhouse belonging to the house is recorded in 1660.⁴ As Smith indicated, only part of the mansion survived when he drew it. It is also now possible to plot what remained of it in Smith's time on the present-day map, showing that it stood

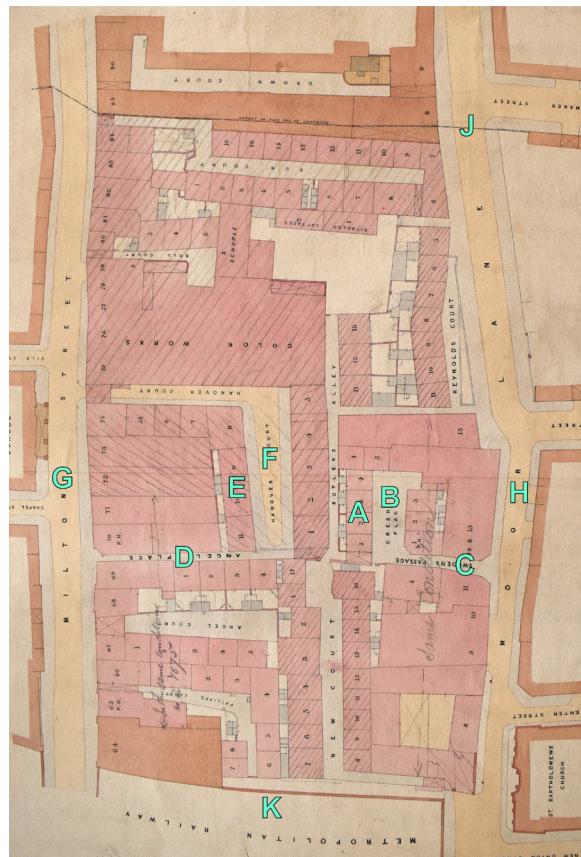


Figure 2: The plan drawn of the area in the late 1870s, just before slum clearance. Key: A – site of the great house; B – Gresham Place; C – Sweden's Passage; D – Angel Place, formerly part of Butlers Alley; E – site of the seventeenth-century house; F – Hanover Court; G – Milton Street, formerly Grub Street; H – Moor Lane; J – northern boundary of the City; K – Metropolitan Railway. (The London Archives, City of London, COL/PLD/PL/05/009)

on the north-east corner of what is now the Barbican Estate, at the junction of the present Moor Lane and Silk Street (Fig. 4).

For the mansion's history, the crucial clue comes from Chancery proceedings of 1719. In 1716, John Olley, the surveyor who drew hundreds of detailed plans of London properties for the City Corporation, leased land known as the Starch Yard and built ten houses there, which became known as Hanover Court (F in Figure 2). Olley's borrowings resulted in a lawsuit, in which it was recorded that the landowner was Sir Thomas Clarke of Brickendon Bury, Hertfordshire.⁵ Tracing Clarke's landholding backwards in time reveals that both the

² Republished as London Topographical Society No. 148 (1994).

³ Smith, *Ancient Topography*, pp.66-67.

⁴ TNA, C 5/44/72, schedule to answer.

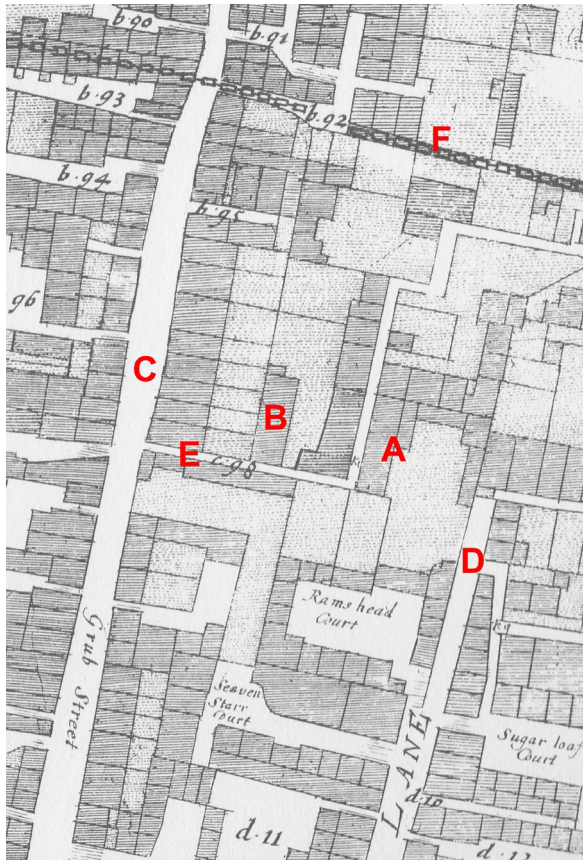


Figure 3: A detail from Ogilby and Morgan's map of 1676. Key: A – the great house; B – seventeenth-century house later forming part of Hanover Court; C – Grub Street; D – Moor Lane; E – Butlers Alley; F – Northern boundary of the City.

Starch Yard and what was described as 'the great house' in Grub Street were part of a large landholding and belonged successively to the Fraternity of St Giles (to 1548), Alderman Sir John Gresham and his descendants (1550-1653), Edward Greene (1653-74), and Sir Edward Clarke and his son Sir Thomas Clarke (from 1674).

Confirmation that the great house was the house replaced by Gresham Place comes not just from the Gresham connection but from the fact that in 1674 the house was described as partly over Butlers Alley, and was held

with the brick wall on the south side of the alley and the posts or supports on which the house stood, as the successor buildings in 1880 also extended over the alley.⁶ On Ogilby and Morgan's map, probably based on surveying of several years earlier, Butlers Alley turned left when it reached the great house, whereas by 1674 Edward Greene had evidently extended it through the house, creating what was later known as Sweedon's Passage.

The Fraternity of St Giles, which owned a hall between Grub Street and Whitecross Street, had a large landholding extending as far west as Redcross Street, though not necessarily contiguous. The fraternity was dissolved in 1548, and the land was sold to Sir Edward Gresham in 1550.⁷ So, while the Whittington connection was fanciful, the Gresham connection was real, but the connection was to Sir Thomas Gresham's uncle and his descendants rather than to Sir Thomas. Sir John was from a minor gentry family in Norfolk and made money as a merchant and financier in London. He was a member of the royal household and was Lord Mayor in 1547-48.⁸ He bought an estate at Titsey in Surrey in 1535. There was no mansion recorded on the Cripplegate lands purchased in 1550, and the mansion was evidently built subsequently by the Greshams, though there seems to be no evidence of any of the Greshams living there themselves. Clearly the area was still sufficiently attractive in the late sixteenth century for it to be worth building a large house there. In the 1630s and 1640s the Greshams contributed to the deterioration of the mansion's surroundings by letting out land in the Butlers Alley area for building.⁹ The one known occupant from the Gresham period is Robert Mainwaring, a colonel in

⁵ TNA, C 11/2368/2; Dorian Gerhold, London Plotted: Plans of London Buildings c.1450-1720 (London Topographical Society No. 178, 2016), pp. 12-13.

⁶ TNA, C 54/4410, Nos. 4 and 6; Fig. 2.

⁷ Mary D. Lobel (ed.), The City of London from Prehistoric Times to c.1520 (British Atlas of Historic Towns, vol. 3 (1989), p.87 and Map 3; Calendar of

Patent Rolls, Edward VI, vol. 3, 1549-51, pp.422-23.

⁸ <https://www.greshams.com/archives/history-society-lectures/> (accessed 21 June 2024). For the descent of the property within the Gresham family, see TNA, C 7/280/61, plea.

⁹ Based on the names and length of leases in TNA, C 5/491/7, schedule to answer.

¹⁰ TNA, C 8/535/51, bill; Cromwell Association Online Directory of Parliamentarian Army Officers.

the parliamentary army, who died at the house in 1652.¹⁰

In 1653 Sir Marmaduke Gresham, a great-great-grandson of Sir John, sold part of the Gresham property, including the great house, to Edward Greene. Greene worked in the 1650s for the Drury House trustees dealing with the confiscated estates of Royalists, and was later a Cheapside silkman.¹¹ Greene may have occupied the mansion himself at first, but from 1660 or early 1661 it was occupied by Alderman John Ireton, who had been lord mayor in 1658-59 and was closely involved in republican politics in the 1650s. Ireton was imprisoned in November 1661 for alleged plotting, and the lease passed to a Mr Kiffin until 1663 and then to Colonel John Birch, a former parliamentarian officer who had a distinguished parliamentary career after the Restoration.¹² In 1666 the house was empty.¹³

Following the Great Fire, the Goldsmiths' Company acquired a lease of the great house, presumably as temporary accommodation for goldsmiths displaced by the Fire. After the Goldsmiths' lease expired in 1671 the house was subdivided, at first into two dwellings and then three. In 1674 the occupants were Edward Lawrence, with six hearths, Robert Perrot, also with six hearths, and Elizabeth Garbutt or Garbert, with two hearths, paying rent of £20, £14 and £5.16s.0d respectively.¹⁴ This gives us the size of the mansion as a whole, which had fourteen hearths, making it a substantial but not massive house. Evidently, by the 1670s, once most of the City had been rebuilt after the Fire, there was little demand for a large old-fashioned timber house in an area dominated by alleys of small houses. It was probably Greene who, in addition to subdividing the house

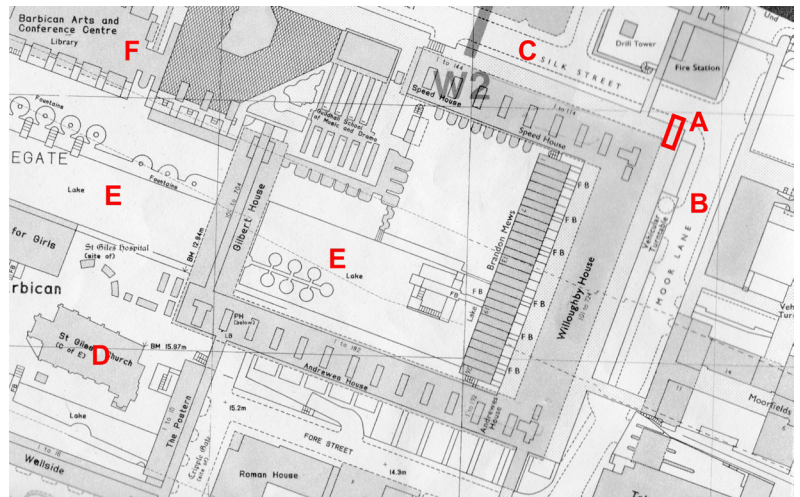


Figure 4: The site of what remained of the great house in Smith's time marked on a modern Ordnance Survey map. Key: A – approximate site of the great house (edged in red); B – Moor Lane; C – Silk Street; D – St Giles Cripplegate church; E – lake; F – Barbican Centre.

and extending Butlers Alley through it, demolished the north part of the house and built on its courtyard. He also built the large house in Hanover Court, if the date of 1653 noted by Smith on a waterspout correctly identifies the date of construction.¹⁵

In 1674 part of Greene's property, including the great house, was bought by Edward Clarke (later Sir Edward), a silkman and merchant. Clarke was Lord Mayor in 1696-97, and purchased an estate at Brickendon in Hertfordshire in 1682. On his death in 1703 the property passed to his son, Sir Thomas Clarke.¹⁶ By 1711 what remained of the great house had been subdivided into six dwellings, and eventually there may have been ten. The last owner was John Stevens Pretty of Hoxton Square, Shoreditch, described as a gentleman, who inherited the house from his father in 1798.¹⁷ He demolished it in 1805, building Gresham Place on the site.

¹¹ TNA, C 8/535/51; TNA, C 5/44/72, bill; TNA, C 7/280/61, bill.

¹² TNA, C 5/44/72, schedule to answer; Robert Latham and William Matthews (eds.), *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* vol. 2 (1970), p.225.

¹³ Matthew Davies et al, *London and Middlesex 1666 Hearth Tax* (British Record Society, hearth tax series vol. 9, part 2, 2014), pp.1288-89. The empty house had 14 hearths, as the great house did in 1674.

¹⁴ TNA, C 5/491/7, schedule to answer; TNA, C 54/4410, Nos. 4 and 6; TNA, E 179/252/23.

¹⁵ Smith, *Ancient Topography*, p. 66.

¹⁶ TNA, C 54/4410, Nos. 4, 6 and 7; Wikipedia, entry for Edward Clarke; TNA, PROB 11/471/401.

¹⁷ Ancestry website, London land taxes; LMA, catalogue entry for DL/C/0435/057/001 to 003; TNA, PROB 11/1852/131.

The Perils of Old London Bridge

Robin Imray recounts the travails of Watermen and Lightermen working on the Thames



In *London Bridge and its Houses, 1209–1761* (London Topographical Society, 2019), Dorian Gerhold deconstructed a host of records, plans, and surveys, to reconstruct the buildings of the bridge and the stories of those who lived and worked on this fabled crossing. This essay looks beneath, at the watermen and lightermen who laboured through its arches.

For 550 years London Bridge not only spanned the Thames but divided it too. Few ships could pass until the latter part of the eighteenth century when the medieval

Figure 1: London Bridge. Drawn by S. Owen Esq. / Engraved by W. Cooke. / London: Published May 1. 1809, by Vernor, Hood & Sharpe, Poultry, & W. Cooke, 2, Clarence Place, Pentonville. 1977,0611.193 (© The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence)

bridge was transformed. In 1761 its houses were demolished and the two central arches were joined to create a wider span, known as the Great Arch. However, this alteration to the arrangement of the piers not only weakened the structure of the bridge but did

¹ Report from the Committee on the State of London Bridge, (London: Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed, 1821), p.57

² The London spy: the vanities and vices of the town exposed to view, by Ned Ward; edited with notes by Arthur L. Hayward. (New York: Cassell, 1927), p.41

little to quell the danger posed to river traffic passing between its eighteen remaining piers. Mounted upon huge pediments, termed starlings, the narrowly spaced piers of old London Bridge channelled the river's flow such that when the tide was in full spate water gushed through the openings creating waterfalls five feet high, or sometimes considerably more.¹ A growing catalogue of fatal incidents affecting the community of watermen (ferrying passengers) and lightermen (carrying goods) who worked the river, along with their passengers and other river users, led to mounting public pressure for a replacement bridge. Following a design competition launched in 1799, a new structure was put in place by 1831, sited 30 metres west of the medieval bridge. This article delves into historical records to provide a snapshot of life on the Thames and the perils of navigating the old London Bridge.

For many years London Bridge was the most significant factor in the daily working lives of the watermen and lightermen who earned their living on the river Thames. The threat to life posed by the bridge was such that Watermen would often drop their passengers on one side of the bridge so that they could walk safely to the other side while the boat's crew 'shot' (went through the piers of) the bridge. Lightermen could not drop their cargo off and pick it up again so they had to go through the perilous arches, cargo and all.

A few images give an idea of the danger. Samuel Owen's print of 1809 [Figure 1] shows a couple of wherries which have shot through the centre arch. They are caught plunging down the falls, while a one-manned sculler has survived into the turbulence below. Where art pictured these horrors, words evoked the sounds: In his *London Spy* of 1698 Ned Ward conjured the noise of water rushing between the starlings. 'We turned down to Thameside, where the frightful roaring of the bridge waterfalls so



Figure 2:
Old London
Bridge, c.1794,
Joseph Mallord
William Turner,
Album / Alamy
Stock Photo

terrified my ears that I could hear no voice softer than a speaking trumpet.² Later, in the mid-eighteenth century, Thomas Pennant described, 'The street on London Bridge, narrow, darksome and dangerous; frequent arches of strong timber crossed from the tops of the houses [whose inmates] soon grew deaf to the noise of the falling waters, the clamour of watermen, or the frequent shrieks of drowning wretches.'³ To these were added the sounds of the waterwheels clanking away at both ends of the bridge.

A 1794 painting by JMW Turner [Figure 2] shows how the starlinged arches looked to a waterman approaching them from downstream. Even in the calm conditions he depicts, they loom ominously high, emphasising the narrowness of the passages between. Whichever way the water was going through the bridge, it would also have carried quantities of debris – tree trunks brought down by storms, timber broken free from a lighterman's raft, flotsam from a wrecked vessel. Any of this could jam up the narrow arches. And then there was ice. The overall effect of the narrowing of the flow by the bridge was to slow the Thames above it. So in the colder winters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it could freeze, leading to the frost fairs hosted on the Thames in that era. One instance

³ London: Being a Complete Guide to the British Capital, by John Wallis (London: Sherwood, Nealy & Jones, 1814), p.387

⁴The Gentleman's Magazine, 17 January 1789. p.174

occurred in the winter of 1788-89, the *Gentleman's Magazine* reported that 'from Putney to Rotherhithe, was one continued scene of merriment',⁴ but added that 'the miserable inhabitants that dwell on both sides of the river [mostly people dependent on the working Thames for their livelihoods] were destitute... children pining for want of bread.'

After the fun and misery of the freeze came the dangers of the thaw. Breaking ice gathered at the bridge piling up, and then it crashed through the arches, creating mayhem in the pool below. A report in the *Gentleman's Magazine* described how on Saturday 17 January 1789, as ice floes buffeted his ship, 'The captain of a vessel lying off Rotherhithe, the better to secure the ship, made an agreement with a publican. A small anchor was carried on shore, and deposited in the cellar, while another cable was fastened round a beam in the house. In the night the ship veered about, and the cables holding fast, carried away the beam, and levelled the house with the ground. Five persons asleep in their beds were killed.'⁵

With the horrors of waterfalls, logjams, ice and thaw it is little wonder that there was pressure to rethink the bridge. As the eighteenth century became the nineteenth, with public and commercial demand for action mounting, a succession of House of Commons Committees examined the question of replacement. Some of the best descriptions of the bridge's perils come from witnesses. In one session in 1820, seventeen were called across five days: four were watermen, two shipwrights, and one an ex-superintendent of the bridge water-works. The rest were in the coal trade, as merchants, barge owners, or lightermen. Coal had become the largest business on the river with the growing city needing huge amounts. In 1815 *The Tradesman* magazine reported 2,196 coal barges working on the Thames.⁶

Most witnesses had an interest in seeing the bridge improved so it would be surprising if their evidence wasn't coloured. Even so, their stories paint a picture of most extraordinary danger. The following selections are given at unapologetic length, edited to clarify the narrative and explain the sailors' terms.⁷

Samuel Pegge, an above-bridge coal merchant, thirty years in the trade, tells of seven barges lost to the bridge in just one incident in 1814:

Saturday evening, about half-past six o'clock, in the Martha barge, laden with coals, while driving up [coming upstream] with several other barges, heard a confused noise of men upon and under the bridge: "Keep your barge to the southward"; "Keep to the northward". The lighterman put the barge's head to shoot the Great Arch, but was prevented from going through by Messrs. Johnson's barge and a quantity of ice. She sunk with seven others.⁸

Overall he was unequivocal, 'It is not safe for loaded craft to go downwards at any time of the tide...they are liable to catch the starlings, especially at what the bargemen call a horsing-water: the barges are liable to lodge upon the starlings.' 'Horsing' is a word that recurs in the evidence. It is the watermen's and lightermen's term for the point at which the dropping water level is just above the top of the starlings, still obscuring them, but dangerously shallow, causing white waves to 'prance' on the surface. As Turner's depiction showed so clearly, the starlings were much larger than the bridge piers themselves, encasing them. In the large centre arch, the distance between the piers was seventy-one feet, while the width between the starlings was just forty-six. So there was a shelf twelve feet wide atop each starling on either side of the arch. The next largest had only sixteen feet between starlings.

⁵The Gentleman's Magazine, 17 January 1789, p.82

⁶The Tradesman or Commercial Magazine, Vol. V. London, February 1815, p.138

⁷Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons and Command, Volume 5: Minutes taken before the Select Committee appointed in session, 1820, to inquire into the state of London Bridge

John Drew, a master lighterman, made no bones about the demands the bridge made on a lighterman, 'What length of practice, in your opinion, is necessary to qualify a man to navigate a barge through London Bridge? At least seven years, after he is capable of taking charge of a craft under ordinary circumstances.' So two years' experience was needed, on top of the usual apprenticeship.⁹

Anthony Nicholl, a wharfinger from Dowgate, explained the financial risk, 'In April we shipped sugar, tea, wine, clover seed, tobacco, all sorts of merchandise, and the barge was sunk.' When asked whether he would insure goods under such circumstances he replied, 'I have attempted it, but from the apprehensions entertained of the bridge, I have not been able to succeed. A premium was asked of five per cent, which I considered enormous.'¹⁰

Life as well as money was at risk. George Bean, a Tower Stairs waterman, recounted a tale of how uncertainty over the state of the tide led to disaster:

'The last Sunday in May 1818, I came through the bridge; I thought it was flood on the other side.' You were above bridge? 'Yes; it was the latter end of the ebb; just before the tide turned I went through and the boat sunk immediately; my grandson I had in the boat, about five years old: the child was drowned.' Is it difficult to ascertain the difference between ebb and flood tide at that time? 'Yes', How many years experience have you had? 'Upwards of forty' This was an error in judgment? 'Yes', It was a mistake? 'Of course it was a mistake.' There's an anger, it seems, at this last question, and in its answer a sadness that he must have lived with forever.¹¹

One of the most substantial witnesses was Edward Sells, of Bankside, about whom Gillian Tindall has written in *The House by*

the Thames. Sells had been a waterman and had held various offices in the Company of Watermen and Lightermen. Now he was a well-known coal merchant: In your opinion, is the quantity of craft working through the bridge, more considerable than it was twenty years ago? 'I should think at least one-third increase.' Does that greatly augment the risk? 'Very considerably.'

He explains that at low water, when the tide begins to turn, barges up and down the Pool of London begin to work towards the bridge, wanting to make the best of the incoming tide. Those downstream catch the turn first, so get carried up towards those nearer the bridge. They bunch up. But then a lighterman rowing out from among moored ships up near the bridge causes another to avoid him, which has a domino effect in the crowd. Someone loses way and stops, dead in the water, without time to regain control before he is too near the bridge to avoid an accident. 'I have no hesitation whatever' he says 'in stating, that [even] without wind, or frost, or fog, owing to the construction of London Bridge, and the great number of craft passing through, it is impossible to prevent accidents.'¹²

These witness statements build a picture of how the river trade worked. Samuel Pegge talks of seeing a group of barges coming upriver at night, 'which could be perceived by the fires they had made on the coals.' In a work environment so full of peril, open fires on top of coal barges were probably a trivial risk.¹³

Joseph Hall mentions the effect of ice on the market value of goods, explaining that when the river froze and the bridge was blocked, 'there is always ten shillings between the price of coals below bridge and above.'

One of the most extraordinary claims comes from Richard Till, ex-superintendent and

⁸ Parliamentary Papers, p.6

⁹ Parliamentary Papers, p.11

¹⁰ Parliamentary Papers, p.13

¹¹ Parliamentary Papers, p.19

¹² Parliamentary Papers, p.20

¹³ Parliamentary Papers, p.6

long-time secretary to the company which ran the bridge waterworks, the tide-mill wheels built into the northern arches which supplied the city's drinking and washing needs:

Is it your opinion that the arches are not of sufficient capacity to receive the trade of the port of London? 'I think the arches are by no means sufficient for the craft.' It appears then that the bridge answers the purpose of a weir, to pen up water, for the use of the water-works? 'When they widened the arch, it was an agreement with the proprietors that one or more of the [other arches] should be dammed up.' The securing of water for the water-works appears to be the primary object to which the other is secondary? 'Yes; certainly.' So supplying water – even the filthy water of the Thames – took precedence over the safe transport of goods and people.¹⁴

Perhaps a final word should go to Samuel Bloomfield, a waterman who lost his childhood friend, Frank Rolls, to the bridge:

Do not the accidents frequently happen from want of attention on the part of the

watermen? 'Oh, no; you cannot go fairly into the arch; it is all happy-go-lucky if you get safe.' [p.32] So even those with a great deal of experience weren't guaranteed safe passage through this fearful obstacle.¹⁵

Finally, after six centuries, it was stories such as these which brought the bridge down. Its replacement, designed by John Rennie, opened in 1831. Five higher, wider, more generous, arches acknowledged the changing nature of river trade and traffic. Oars gave way to paddle wheels; steam took power over tide. New docks took ships off moorings in the river to unload their cargoes securely alongside wharves. Rennie's bridge was superseded in 1973 and many of the docks filled in. The tide of course still runs strongly, but the bridge no longer splits the Thames it simply crosses it. The defining obstacle now is the Woolwich barrier, capable of stopping tide and flow entirely. London's river may have been tamed but one old description of it lingers: 'liquid history' – ever-changing, ever renewing, both itself and the city it passes through.

¹⁴ Parliamentary Papers, p.28

¹⁵ Parliamentary Papers, p.32

City church, St Benet Paul's Wharf. Built by Wren and Hooke, 1677-1683. Photo: India Wright



The Friends of the City Churches seek a new editor for Skyline

The Friends' newsletter, Skyline, is published three times a year and they are now seeking someone to replace their long-serving editor. Would anyone be interested in discussing this opportunity? If so, please email Clive Cutbill at: clivecutbill@london-city-churches.org.uk, who will be glad to provide more details and to put you in touch with the existing editor who would, of course, be glad to provide initial guidance and mentoring to any aspiring successor.

For more information about the organisation visit www.london-city-churches.org.uk

Book Reviews

A selection of the latest London-related releases

St Giles-in-the-Fields: The History of a London Parish

by Rebecca Preston and Andrew Saint

*Brown Dog Books, 448 pp, £27.50,
May 2024, 978-1839527456*

Reviewed by Sheila O'Connell

The first church of St Giles-in-the-Fields was built 900 years ago to the west of the City of London. Its L-shaped parish now stretches from the junction of Charing Cross Road and Oxford Street to halfway up Tottenham Court Road, and eastwards as far as Lincolns Inn Fields encompassing the northern part of Covent Garden. Rebecca Preston and Andrew Saint have structured their history of the parish in chronological chapters with some diversions to focus on particular subjects.

By the 17th century, St Giles was a desirable suburb with grand houses in Great Queen Street and Lincolns Inn Fields, including embassies of France, Spain and Portugal. By 1700 the population of the parish was more than 20,000 and the separate parish of St George's Bloomsbury was created in the area to the north-east taking in much of the estate of the Dukes of Bedford that was to be developed into attractive Georgian streets and squares.

The older streets and alleys near St Giles's church were far less desirable. The church itself had

been rebuilt by 1627, but within a century had decayed and the present church, designed by Henry Flitcroft, was built in the 1730s as part of the campaign to provide churches for growing parishes. The 'Rookery of St Giles' with its poverty-stricken, largely Irish, population was notorious. In 1751 Hogarth set his famous print Gin Lane there. Preston and Saint describe efforts to help their poor parishioners by the St Giles Vestry, sometimes working with neighbouring St George's, and by charitable institutions; from 1855 the Metropolitan Board of Works took over much of the responsibility of the parish vestries. Part 3 of the book 'The Dark Side: and Aspects of Reform' gives a useful explanation of the development of London's local government. Housing conditions slowly improved: flats in the Model Lodging House for Families in Streatham Street (1849; renamed Parnell House) and the Peabody Buildings in Wild Street (1881) remain popular. Schools for the poor opened from the middle of the century: the huge National School on the corner of Endell Street (1860) survives as a St Mungo's hostel. In 1891 the churchyard, closed for burials in 1855, opened as a place of recreation.

Today the most obvious features of the 19th-century improvements are the broad streets that were cut through the slums to ease

Correction: A review of David Leboff's London Underground Station Encyclopaedia appeared in the last newsletter (May 2024). Capital Publishing supplied the ISBN of an earlier edition in the review copy, the correct ISBN is 978-1-85414-489-8.

traffic flow: New Oxford Street, Endell Street, Charing Cross Road, Shaftesbury Avenue, and Kingsway. Along and behind these streets were major commercial businesses: the breweries of Hucks, Meux and Combe; Comyn Ching, the ironmongers; Hansard, the printer; Yardley and Pears, soap-makers; Crosse and Blackwell, grocers and food-canners; Lambert and Butler, cigarette makers; the Bosch Magneto Company.

Those who remember the 1970s won't have forgotten the Covent Garden Area Plan by which 36 hectares would have been comprehensively redeveloped. Gordon Taylor, Rector of St Giles from 1949-99, was one of the local leaders who succeeded in saving much of the historic area, and in doing so signalled a change in public attitudes from a desire to rebuild the urban environment to one which saw the value of conservation. Since then the area has become identified with the leisure industries – former warehouses colonised at first by small theatres and craft workshops have been taken over by commercial enterprises creating a tourist hub in the centre of London. This is nothing new – for centuries St Giles has been a place of entertainment with pubs, music halls, night clubs and theatres, and many of its inhabitants have serviced the entertainment industry in one way or another.

Walking through the streets of St Giles today, it takes an effort of imagination to recall either the squalid 18th-century rookery or 19th-century industry and charitable endeavour - this detailed study is an important contribution to London history and the authors are to be congratulated, as are the former Rector, Alan Carr, and the Parochial Church Council who initiated the project. Let's hope that other parishes will follow their example and tell the history of their churches in the context of the people living and working around them and the ever-changing face of London.

Liberty Over London Bridge: A History of the People of Southwark
by Margaret Willes
Yale University Press, 304 pp, £20,
February 2024, 9780300272208
Reviewed by Simon Morris

Walk south over London Bridge and, nestling in a cat's cradle of railway lines and overlooked by the thousand-foot high Shard, you reach one of London's finest buildings - the ancient Southwark Cathedral. Margaret Willes tackles her subject from three angles, making good use of the Cathedral as a hub to hold the reader's attention. Indeed, the book's chapters radiate like spokes from the Cathedral, with many individuals and circumstances introduced by reference to a burial, memorial or stained glass in the Cathedral. First, as the title suggests, this book has a human focus and is centred on the people who lived in Southwark - the paupers and citizens as well as the earlier princes, bishops and abbots. Next, as the first thorough modern history of Southwark, it walks us thematically

through two millennia, with an emphasis on the mediaeval period to the nineteenth century. And thirdly, without being ecclesiology, it relates the history of the Cathedral as the heart of Southwark life over eight centuries, commemorating the families and individuals who made Bankside.

Southwark, as the author explains, is too often overlooked. While one-third part of the classic description of "The Cities of London and Westminster and the Borough of Southwark", it is frequently reduced to a small part of London histories, mentioned as the home of bear baiting, brothels and the first railway terminus. All true but, as the author points out, there is a great deal more to be known and, by focusing on the City's Altrano, we gain a clearer understanding of this historic node south of London Bridge.

The scene is set when we are introduced to later Roman Southwark, featuring the first London Bridge and recent discoveries of a magnificent mosaic and a large mausoleum suggesting the opulence of this settlement. After the Romans departed the Norsemen left their mark, with the names of Canute, Tostig and especially Olaf still resonating today. Then came the Norman conquest, and the chapter entitled Mansions of Southwark begins with the screen behind the High Altar showing William of Wyckham between Archbishop Becket and Cardinal Beaufort. This was when Southwark was a smart suburb, and the mansions of the wealthy survived well past the Reformation until 1600, by which time courtiers had departed to the West End, prelates no longer commanded palaces and abbots

had altogether disappeared. This opulent suburb received the City's avaricious gaze but resisted all attempts at incorporation assisted, we are told, by an extraordinarily complex land ownership pattern resulting from it comprising five separate manors.

The Cathedral's memorial to Chaucer's friend John Gower appropriately opens the chapter on the mediaeval Canterbury pilgrimage. This commenced at the Becket Chapel on London Bridge, while Chaucer's Canterbury Tales began in the Tabard Inn, one of the many hostelries lining Borough High Street at a time when it was a travellers' terminus. A further reminder of the rich ceremonies and traditions that disappeared with the Reformation is the description of the annual festival of St John the Baptist, when all Southwark was decorated in flowers and greenery.

The Cathedral is central to the description of parishioners and incumbents during and after the Reformation. Prebendary John Rogers was tried for heresy in the Cathedral and then burned at Smithfield while Lancelot Andrewes, the celebrated scholar who was last resident Bishop of Winchester, lived a less troubled life and is buried in the Cathedral. Religious controversy was a constant threat to order, and disturbances over the Laudian controversies threatened civil order in Southwark no less than the Gordon riots did in Westminster 150 years later.

Secular Southwark is amply covered, from theatres to brothels, from brewers to businessmen, and all linked back to the Cathedral. Shakespeare, who was a resident as

well as a stakeholder in the nearby Globe Theatre, is commemorated in a stained glass window, as is St Mary Magdalene who appears on the alter screen. Merchants and other substantial residents such as Richard Humble the vintner and John Trehearne, Porter to King James I, are introduced through their monuments. The presence of both Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals made Southwark a medical district, although the absence of their founders from the Cathedral and the presence of memorials to Oliver Goldsmith, once a local apothecary, and to Lionel Lockyer, an unqualified purveyor of dubious proprietary remedies, shows the random nature of who gets remembered in a church.

The book finishes with the railway age, using Dickens' valuable descriptions of contemporary Southwark to show the impact of industrialisation and poverty, and completes the narrative with a quick look at modern Southwark. Well-written and engaging, *Liberty over London Bridge* makes a signal contribution to our understanding of this important borough.

The Victoria History of Middlesex: St George Hanover Square
by Francis Boorman
University of London Press,
170 pp, £14.99, May 2024,
9781912702848
Reviewed by Michelle Behr

This year marks the 300th anniversary of the historical parish of St George Hanover Square which encompassed the London neighbourhoods of Mayfair, Belgravia, Pimlico, part of Hyde Park and to the Thames. Included in the Victoria County History's

Shorts Series, this well-timed and meticulously researched book by Dr Francis Calvert Boorman on St George Hanover Square makes an impressive contribution to the Victoria County History project.

The book covers from the parish's creation in 1724 under the Act for Building 50 New Churches to its incorporation into the newly formed Metropolitan Borough of Westminster in 1900. This area began as largely undeveloped fields along the western edge of London and rapidly transformed into the affluent neighbourhoods seen today. The parish was initially overseen by the vestry, a unit of the local government, whose responsibilities were to provide for the poor, policing and maintaining the streets. As the major landowner, the Grosvenor Estate determined the pace of development. Mayfair was the first area developed with rapid urbanization spreading westward.

The author paints a vivid picture of the parish through a series of thematic treatments that describe the rapid development of the area, the local government of the vestry and the wider economic, political and religious life of the parish. The book, filled with colourful historical references, explores the development of the estate with Grosvenor Square conceived as the grand centrepiece. The history of the parish can be traced through the place-names of its streets and houses such as the market that still bears Edward Shephard's name today. It was considered daring in the late 1740s when Lord Chesterfield moved from Grosvenor Square to his new house facing Hyde Park since views over the park were generally avoided. Rotten Row was considered a well-maintained

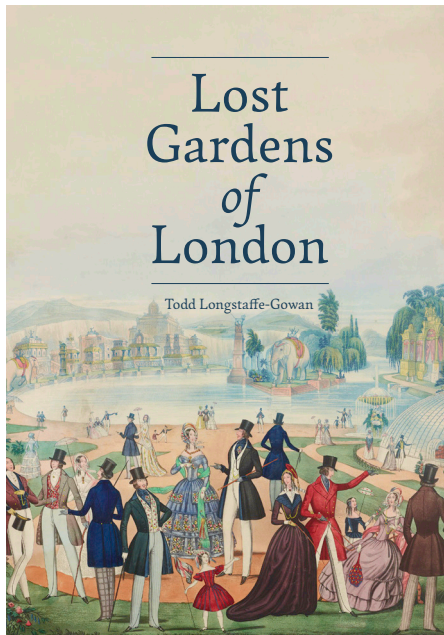
street described in 1740 as 'perfectly straight and so wide that three or four coaches can drive abreast', whereas Park (or Tyburn) Lane was primarily poor and muddy, with a wall separating it from Hyde Park.

The book describes the economic life of the parish, dominated by the demands of its rich residents. Hostelries were scattered across the entire parish, even taking corner sites in the most fashionable areas. The author explores the local government of the vestry that was considered to be 'by far the best governed parish in the Metropolitan area' as well as institutions such as charities and schools. Several hospitals and medical facilities operated in the parish, the largest of these was St George's, now based in South London, which originally occupied Lanesborough House at Hyde Park Corner.

The parish's wider political life and famous residents are covered, including the well-known Duchess of Devonshire who was vital to Charles James Fox's victory in 1784. While Speaker's Corner in the northeast corner of Hyde Park was officially created in 1872, the author points out that free speech had long been associated with this area formally called Tyburn and connected with the final words of people hanged in the 18th century. Finally, Boorman writes on the religious life of St George's parish. The church of St George Hanover Square was consecrated in 1725, unsurprisingly the parish brought a rich and fast-growing congregation as the area developed. When St George's sought a new revenue stream in 1777 the vaults under the church were let to wine merchants. This

practice ceased in 1805 when the bishop of London made clear he thought the practice a profanation.

Offering a glimpse into the history and life of St George Hanover Square, this indefatigable work will be an excellent source of reference to anyone interested in London or local history.



Lost Gardens of London by Todd Longstaffe-Gowan
Modern Art Press, 272pp, £25,
October 2024, 978-1738487806
Reviewed by India Wright

It is the transitory quality of gardens that makes them so alluring and poignant. As Humphrey Repton stated 'the pleasure derived from a garden has some relative association with its evanescent nature. We view with more delight a wreath of short-lived roses, than a crown of amaranth, or everlasting flowers'. And so, this account of London's lost gardens, woven together by quite possibly the most qualified author on this topic, Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, is beguiling to read.

Gardens are vulnerable, fleeting and ever-changing and they are especially so in a metropolitan context. London's rampaging development from the late seventeenth century onwards has meant that parks, gardens and green open spaces have for centuries succumbed to the depredations of new roads, street-widenings, railways, new buildings or they have simply been 'swallowed up by suburbia'. Today, many are now known solely through the eyes of topographers, artists or writers or through the 'echoes of surviving elements that attest to their former presence.'

Longstaffe-Gowan guides us with poise through the key facets of this tale, starting with riverside gardens. Thomas Fairchild remarked in 1722 that 'the part of London next the River Thames...from the Temple to the Palace of Westminster...was the most salubrious part of town in which to garden'. Gardens such as the one seen at Essex House in Wenceslas Hollar's map of 1666 depict formal designs incorporating open knots and fret-patterned beds, basins and fountains arranged across a series of terraces, seemingly modelled on the Italian sixteenth-century *giardini*. The elaborate garden depicted at Essex House was 'absolutely destroyed' by developer Nicolas Barbon in 1675 for his mixed-use development of residential streets with commercial premises towards Fleet Street and wharves at the riverside. There a precedent was set for the eventual redevelopment of this valuable riverside land and the disappearance of its gardens.

Alongside chapters on the more curious additions to London's green space such as aviaries,

menageries, and mounts, the author of *The London Square* provides a synopsis of the fruition and value of the quintessential London landscape: the London square. Describing how the disappearance of Endsleigh Gardens to Friends House and the destruction of Mornington Crescent Garden for the behemoth Carreras Cigarette Factory, spurred the appointment of a Royal Commission on London Squares in 1927, in turn galvanising the London Squares Preservation Act (1931) campaigned for by The London Society. A decade later The Georgian Group was formed to press for the preservation of the built fabric which surrounded the squares and what was at the time endangered Georgian architecture more widely.

No account of London's lost gardens would be complete without a foray into the spas and pleasure gardens which once dotted the capital. The author provides an overview spanning from their emergence in the seventeenth century up until the twentieth, leading with an account of perhaps the best known example, Vauxhall Gardens.

For those familiar with the subject matter the material covered in this book is perhaps well-trodden ground. However, it is Longstaffe-Gowan's skill at weaving in a multiplicity of contemporary references and the rich collection of rarely-seen images which make this book an essential addition to the shelf of anyone with an interest in the topography of London.

Event Listings

Forthcoming events relating to the topography of London

EXHIBITION

27 September 2024 – 19 January 2025, 10:00-18:00

Monet and London. Views of the Thames

The Courtauld Gallery

Friends: Free / Adult: £16 / Student: £8

See London through Monet's eyes – discover his remarkable Impressionist paintings of the Thames, a stone's throw from where they were made. To this day, they have never been the subject of a UK exhibition.

To book visit <https://courtauld.ac.uk>

EXHIBITION

23 October 2024 – 2 March 2025

Lost Gardens of London

Garden Museum

Friends and Patrons: Free / Adult: £15 / Senior citizen: £12

Our next exhibition Lost Gardens of London will reveal the secret history of some of London's most beguiling forgotten gardens.

To book visit <https://gardenmuseum.org.uk>

VISIT

2 November, 12:30-14:00

All Saint's Church, Putney Common

Victorian Society

Ticket price £15

All Saints' church, Putney, was opened as a chapel of ease in 1874. Designed by G E Street, the interior is richly polychromatic and the many Morris & Co windows are of outstanding quality.

To book visit <https://www.victoriansociety.org.uk/events/>

TALK, IN-PERSON

5 November, 18:30

Lost Interiors of London,

speaker: Steven Brindle

Hatchards, Piccadilly

SPAB Members £5/ Non-members £10

Join leading historian and conservationist, Steven Brindle, for an exclusive book launch and talk about the lost historic interiors of London. As we will discover, interiors tell us so much about both everyday lives and the extravagances of London's high society. In his illustrated talk, Steven Brindle highlights some of the stunning photographs from the archives of Historic England commissioned by the proud creators of the lavish Victorian drawing rooms and libraries, as well as the fashionable Arts & Crafts and Art Deco apartments – and even Oriental-style interiors meticulously created by those recently returned from India, when it was still under British rule. *To book visit <https://www.spab.org.uk/whats-on/lectures/london-group-talk---lost-interiors-london>*

TALK, ONLINE

12 November, 18:30

The Early Topography and Buildings of London Zoo,

speaker: Oliver Flory

The Georgian Group

Members £5/ Non-members £7

The 1.2 million modern annual visitors to London Zoo today, regardless of extensive modernisation, visit a zoological garden laid out within original boundaries of the early 19th century, amidst the harmonious surrounds of Regent's Park.

To book visit <https://georgiangroup.org.uk/events-2/>

CONFERENCE

15 November, 09:00-17:30

Public Art: Aesthetics in the Public Realm

Royal Institute of British Architects

Tickets £55 (including lunch & goody bag) / Students & Young Artists £15

Heritage of London Trust will bring together contemporary artists and designers including Thomas Heatherwick CBE, Hew Locke, Anya Gallaccio and Turner Prize-winning architects Assemble for a thought-provoking event examining the social function of public art through time.

To book visit <https://www.heritageoflondon.org/conference>

[heritageoflondon.org/conference](https://www.heritageoflondon.org/conference)

TALK, HYBRID

15 November, 13:00-14:00

London's Periodical Architecture: Digital Humanities and the Built Environment, 1700-1750,

Speaker: Matthew Lloyd Roberts

Paul Mellon Centre

Free

In recent years, large-scale digitisation of early modern periodicals has revolutionised the searchability of collections of ephemeral print culture. The paper will explore this shift by presenting material newly discovered by these methods relating to church building in London in the first half of the eighteenth century.

To reserve a place visit <https://www.paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk/whats-on/forthcoming>

CONFERENCE, HYBRID

16 November, 10:15-17:30

London & Middlesex

Archaeological Society 58th Local History Conference: Fashion, Clothing and Textiles in London History

Wilberforce Room, London Museum Docklands

*In-person & online price £17.50 /
In-person on the day price £20*

The Society organises a local history conference each year in November. Join fellow London enthusiasts for this exploration of all things fashion in the capital. Details of the programme can be viewed online at the link below.
To book visit <https://www.lamas.org.uk/conferences/20-local-history.html>

TALK, IN PERSON

19 November, 18:30

How do you solve a problem like public toilets?

Donald Insall Associates, 12 Devonshire Street, London W1G 7AB

The London Society members £7.50 / Non-members £15

The London Society is hosting a forum dedicated to addressing the pressing issue of the lack of accessible public toilets which disproportionately impacts the elderly, disabled, families with young children, and those with health conditions.

To book visit <https://www.londonandsociety.org.uk/event/talk-how-do-you-solve-a-problem-like-public-toilets>

TALK, HYBRID

19 November, 19:00

Lost Gardens of London, speaker: Todd Longstaffe-Gowan
Garden Museum

In-person price £20 / Online Price £8.00 or members one-off no charge

Todd Longstaffe-Gowan's talk will focus on and celebrate the evanescence of London's vast and varied garden legacy, and will provide insights into his forthcoming exhibition Lost Gardens of London which will open at the Garden Museum in October 2024.

To book visit <https://londongardenstrust.org/winter-lecture-series/>

TALK, ONLINE

20 November, 19:00

The Mosaics of Westminster Cathedral, speaker: Peter Howell
Victorian Society

Ticket price £6

This talk will examine the decorative interior of Westminster Cathedral, particularly the mosaics.

To book visit <https://www.victoriansociety.org.uk/events/>

TALK, HYBRID

21 November, 19:30

Street name plates of Camden: An illustrated talk, speaker: Simon Morris

Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre

Members free, non-members £2

Simon has cycled round every street in the London Postal Districts (some 3,000 miles), and photographed pre-1920 street name plates. He will talk about the historic street signs of Camden – where they are, how they were put up, and how residents reacted to them, placing them in a broader London context.

For more information visit <http://www.camdenhistorysociety.org/events>

TALK, ONLINE

9 December, 18:00

'Rewilding Arcadia': 21st-century solutions to manage increasing flood risk along the river Thames, speaker: Jason Debney, Co-ordinator Thames Landscape Strategy

London Gardens Trust

£8 / Members one-off discount, free

The new initiative – Rewilding

Arcadia – explores ways in which nature-based solutions can be used to manage the functioning floodplain that includes protected parks, gardens and open spaces.

To book visit <https://londongardenstrust.org/winter-lecture-series/>

TALK, HYBRID

11 March, 19:00

'Great Estates: Models for Modern Placemaking', speaker: Sarah Yates

Garden Museum

In-person price £20 / Online Price £8 or members one-off no charge

An exploration of all of London's historic and contemporary Great Estates from medieval origins right through to the Royal Docks and Queen Elizabeth Park

To book visit <https://londongardenstrust.org/winter-lecture-series/>

EXHIBITION

From 4 April 2025

Secrets of the Thames

London Museum Docklands

Check website for further details as they are released

The River Thames has been a centre of human activity for over 10,000 years. Below its waters lay lost or discarded items, from the ordinary to extraordinary, that paint a picture of Britain's past. Secrets of the Thames will recreate an experiential foreshore studded with cases of mudlarked objects. The exhibition will include many never-before-seen finds that have recently joined the museum's collection, revealing surprising stories that continue to inform our understanding of London.

For more information visit <https://www.londonmuseum.org.uk/newly-announced/>