

# CITY HERITAGE SOCIETY

## ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2008



Unilever House, and the City

### **Ann Woodward**

We are very sorry to report the death of Mrs. Ann Woodward, our long-serving, dedicated Events and Membership Secretary. Retiring in August because of ill-health, we were devastated to hear that she died the Sunday before Christmas, and our thoughts are with our President, Douglas Woodward, founder of City Heritage, at the time of his great loss.

In September, members had generously wanted to give her a gift, and I asked Peter Luscombe, a new member, water-colour artist and architect, to paint her a picture of Guildhall, where she and Douglas had celebrated so many happy occasions together. I understand she was very pleased with the gift and with all the good wishes from so many members, which helped to sustain her in her time of illness.

### **A Momentous Year**

This has been a momentous year, not only for City Heritage, but, as we have heard repeatedly in the press - for all of us, and particularly for the City, and the Financial Sector. As we have forecast for several years, the number of people working in the City will not increase to fill the many new offices in the 'Square Mile.'

We did not predict the sub-prime mortgage crisis in America which has led to the general world financial crisis, but we did question the financial viability of building high-rise sky-scrapers in the City which might never be occupied. In Douglas Woodward's last Annual Report as Chairman in 2007, he asked 'Will all the new buildings ever be filled?'

In fact several of these have gone 'on hold', including the 'Cheesegrater' building. The 'Walkie-Talkie' building is being resubmitted - we hope with a less offensive, less over-bearing, much shorter central 'tower'.

The flurry of building activity in the City over the past few years has reached its peak. One can walk all the way from Guildhall to St. Paul's along streets bordered with glass and chrome buildings - and one can count the number of individual 'front doors' on one hand. We used to be a 'Nation of Shop-Keepers' and through trade, first in commodities and then in finance, we used our ingenuity, trading every day, face-to-face in the streets among human-scale buildings in the City, to build up London as a leading Trade centre, and now - still - a leading world financial centre.

## Change In Attitude - Enhancing Heritage In The City?

Tall buildings and 'no front doors' may indeed have led the way to our present deterioration into a faceless City with communication only by e-mail, and fewer chance meetings in the 'Square Mile'. The recession has brought about a thoughtful change in attitude, and it may be that the future is good for enhancing heritage in the City, and there will be more sensitive adaptation of existing,

historic buildings, rather than their destruction to make way for high-rise tower blocks.

We have evidence, in fact, that our comments favouring the retention of historic buildings, and the use of traditional materials for new proposed buildings, which we make to the City Planners are being taken more seriously. In several cases, we detect that heritage is 'winning the argument'.



St Mary Aldermary

## Planning and Heritage Bills

During the year both the new Planning Bill and the Heritage Bill have been under scrutiny. We have looked at some of the implications for us as an Amenity Society, and I have tabled articles about the two important Bills at our Executive Committee Meetings. The aim of the authors of these Bills is to 'simplify' planning law. However, we must be wary about some aspects of these new proposed laws. When the Bills have been passed we will look at the implications more closely, and pass on our comments to members of the Society, and to the wider public.

### Threat To The City Skyline Lessened By Boris

In January, in an article in the Evening Standard, Simon Jenkins reported that Ken Livingstone's 'towering ambition' for skyscrapers would 'forever scar our City'. Thankfully, in the ensuing elections, Boris Johnson took over from Ken Livingstone as Mayor of London and we welcomed his promise that views of St. Paul's would be protected after all, and that the threat to the City skyline from tall buildings would be lessened. We still hope that these promises will hold good, though we understand that Boris has now allowed local authorities to make decisions on proposals for skyscrapers, rather than taking the decisions himself.

We must be wary also of developments to the East of the City, and across the River in Southwark and Lambeth, all of which might harm the character and appearance of our City.

### The Smithfield Inquiry

In January, at the request of SAVE, we sent a letter to the Inspector re-affirming our opposition to the development. Our good friend and member of City Heritage, Dr. Jenny Freeman, gave evidence for SAVE, and later in the year we were delighted to hear that the Secretary of State upheld the Inspector's recommendations that planning permission should not be granted. The existing character of Smithfield including a number of Victorian Buildings (by Sir Horace Jones) between the main market buildings and Farringdon Road is now recognised as making a major contribution to the Smithfield Conservation Area and should be included in any new Conservation-led development scheme. Our long campaign has therefore succeeded, and we congratulate English Heritage, and particularly Dr. Jenny Freeman for her part in this victory for heritage.

### Comments On Other Planning Applications

With the downturn in the property market there have been fewer planning applications of significance, though there have still been some of major importance, and we have commented on some thirty of these.

There has also been a flurry of applications for 'condenser units', replacement of windows, doors, etc., and we are glad to observe that because of our campaign for screening unsightly air conditioning units and plant, they are now generally screened and out-of-view from the pedestrian in the street, especially in conservation areas.

There follows a summary of our comments on some of the applications:-

*3, Wardrobe Place:* We supported the change of use from unwanted offices to an 'apartment-hotel'.

*John Carpenter House:* We commended refurbishment of this late 1970's building, particularly the improvement of the roof line.

*Seal House:* We commented: 'Seldom can there have been a less convincing argument to justify the towering height of a building next to a rather grand listed one - Fishmongers' Hall . . .' We were therefore pleased when Peter Rees, the City Planning Officer, recommended refusal - and, by a narrow margin, the Committee then turned down the application. This application has now been re-submitted, in their own words 'angled and sliced' on a rhomboid plan in order to comply with planning law, and appearing from the River and the south as a matchbox-shaped building with a slanting top. We still do not think that this is an appropriate building for this important riverside site, next to the Grade I listed Fishmongers' Hall.

*27-35 Poultry:* We welcomed the change to hotel use of the former Midland Bank. The first scheme was good. The second was reasonable, but failed in one particular respect in that the taxi drop appears to be in Poultry which is not a sensible solution in view of the already congested street - an alternative drop should be located in a side street. After negotiations, a third scheme was submitted with a 'Portland Stone' elevation instead of a 'green wall' at the rear of the building. We approved the alteration, but have asked for the officers to ensure that both the interior renovation of this Lutyens building is of the highest quality, and that the external Portland Stone is 'real' Portland Stone and not a substitute.

*5-7 New Street:* We commended a change of use to three town houses.

*8-10 Moorgate:* Our response to the first planning application was that we would have preferred a totally conservation approach to this development. We were glad that the best of the façades were to be retained. It would, however, be a great pity to lose the colourful brick and masonry small buildings. The developers resubmitted the scheme with a revised statement and estimates of costs for some of the buildings as well as a Townscape and Visual Assessment and Heritage Building Assessment. Our response was that the report was partial

as it excluded 8-10 Moorgate itself. We believed that the proposal would harm the Bank Conservation Area, especially the demolition of Victorian brick and masonry façades in Telegraph Street and Tokenhouse Yard, harming the character and appearance of these colourful enclaves. The scheme is being reconsidered.

76-78 Fenchurch Street: We commented that this proposed 'monolith' by Norman Foster would dominate the surrounding streets and create a canyon. Moreover it would be in polished granite which was unsympathetic to the neighbouring listed buildings and would adversely affect the Lloyds Conservation Area. Turned down by the Planning Committee, contrary to the recommendation for approval by Peter Rees. Re-submitted at a later date, taking more account of the listed buildings and conservation area in terms of height and bulk, and in the use of Portland stone instead of polished granite, which would be much more in keeping with the surrounding historic heart of the City.

120 Fenchurch Street: Another tall building, yet not as tall as originally envisaged. The top four storeys leaned outwards, which seemed to be perverse. Only three doors in the long Fenchurch Street elevation, which did not allow for much activity at street level.

5, Cheapside: A rather 'glitzy', aggressive proposal, which would replace the octagonal building at the end of Cheapside, affecting the setting of St. Paul's Cathedral and the St. Paul's Conservation Area. The proposal was withdrawn.

Roman House: A welcome refurbishment scheme, with an additional ninth floor.

20 Cannon Street: A re-skin of a 1960's building with an added floor. We recommended that the private small garden and sculpture should be retained. The sculpture is now going to be looked after adequately, and landscaping will be incorporated into the scheme.

1-2 Serjeant's Inn: On this sensitive site, neighbouring the Temple, the new elevations of this proposed hotel building would not be as good as the existing neo-classical frontage of 1-2 Serjeant's Inn, and would be detrimental to the neighbouring Temple Conservation Area.

Unilever House: A sensitive and practical solution to proposals to alter the rear entrance to the Watergate (rear) façade of Unilever House.

Fur Trade House: Another large complex hotel development on a difficult site stretching from Queenhithe Dock, a scheduled ancient monument (the oldest existing Saxon Dock in Britain) to the Cleary Gardens and Victoria Street. Disappointing Dockside elevation, and 'overbearing' bridge in Cleary Gardens.

60-70 St Mary Axe: Another alien building in the City landscape. This vast elliptical structure would dwarf the older buildings in St. Mary Axe. At twenty-four storeys high, cone-shaped with vertical sides, this would create curious angles on the City skyline.

Garlick Hill & Skinners Lane: Proposed extension and refurbishment and remodelling of these buildings. A sensitive scheme, replacing present cluttered accretions at roof level. No further increase in height beyond what is proposed now should be allowed.

5, 6 And 7 Giltspur Street: We particularly regret the loss of the White Hart Public House, at ground level in No. 7 Giltspur Street. Disappointing replacement building proposed.

15, Bishopsgate: In this resubmitted scheme, there would be a further encroachment into the integrity of the space above Gibson Hall. The 'green roof' however, is a welcome addition to the proposals.

Drapers Gardens, 12 Throgmorton Avenue: The proposed changes in access at the entrance to the proposed 'pocket park', involving the demolition of 10-12 Cophthall Avenue, would further harm the character and appearance of this attractive Victorian and twentieth century street frontage.

34 Lime Street: The proposed re-cladding of this building in Jura stone would be an improvement. We asked that the additional plant room should be placed so that it cannot be seen from street level.

#### Response To The Cheapside Enhancement Strategy

In the past we have welcomed enhancement strategies by the City Planning Department for Bow Lane, Carter Lane and the Fleet Street Courts and Lanes, but are apprehensive about the proposed major width reduction of the historic route from Holborn to the City from 14 metres to 8 metres. We also responded by saying that we would like more indication that the proposed scheme catered for small-scale retail outlets as well as large ones, and sought an analysis of the proposals making sure that traffic jams did not ensue, and that the public and shop-owners would be properly catered for. Making the route tree-lined was also questionable in several respects. We understand this Strategy has now gone back to the drawing board.

## City Heritage Award, 2008

City Heritage, in conjunction with the Painter-Stainers' Company, gave our Annual Award this year to Unilever, whose architect, John Bushell of Kohn Pedersen Fox (International) PLA, skilfully reinstated their fine, bronze gates on the Victoria Embankment (retrieved from

storage), and kept the 1930's front 'cell' of the building, and then, through revolving doors created a 20th century atrium with upper floors overlooking the City and a 'green' sheltered roof terrace, winning a BREEAM award for excellence, and enabling the retention of the building as Unilever's World Headquarters. Sheriff, Alderman, Michael Bear kindly presented the Awards.



Sheriff, Alderman  
Michael Bear

### Unilever House '100 VE'

Owner: Unilever plc  
Architect: Kohn Pedersen Fox  
(International) PLA  
Contractor: Bovis Lend Lease

Chairman, Anne Thomas by  
the newly reinstated bronze  
front doors of Award-winning  
Unilever House.



The Highly Commended Award went to St. Mary Aldermary, which we visited with members last year. The architect, Colin Kerr, of Molyneux Kerr, discreetly created hospitality features under the Tower, and a kitchen which folds back into the panelling, and beautifully restored and redecorated the gilded Chancel ceiling and the very fine Wren fan-vaulting - an unusual feature in 1660's London.

### St. Mary Aldermary

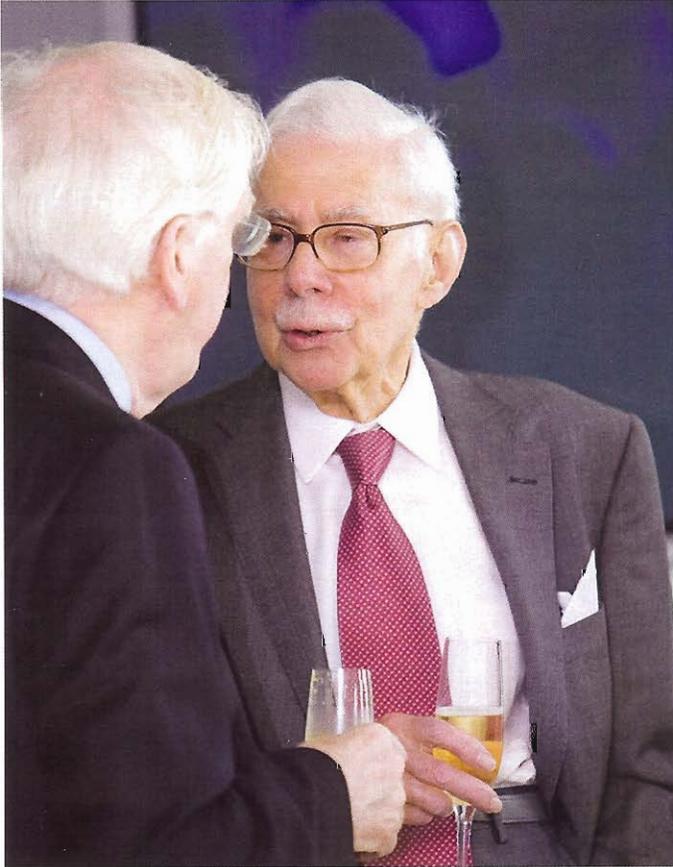
Owner: Guild Church  
Priest-in-Charge: Rev. John Mothersole  
Architect: Molyneux Kerr  
Contractor: Bakers of Danbury

Both these awards were given for ensuring the continuing development of the original use in that building - rather than a 'change of use'. We feel this is also good for heritage in the City.

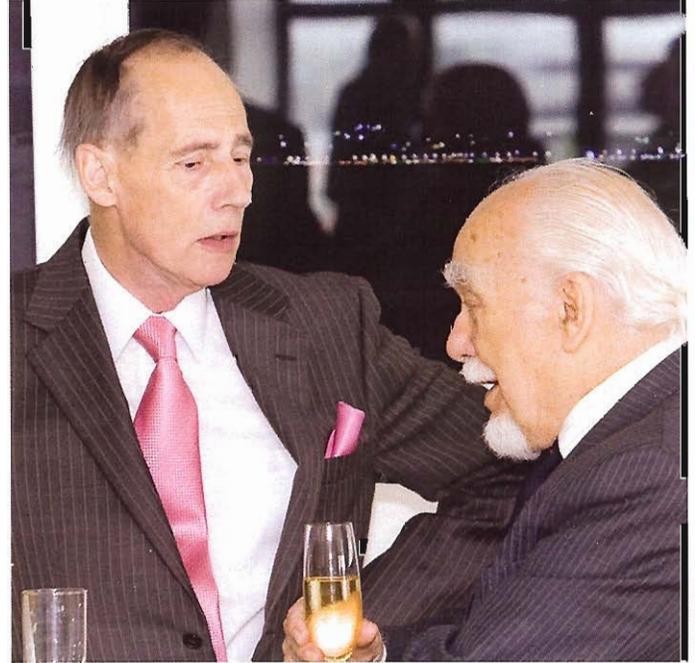
## The Assessors For The City Heritage Annual Award

Desmond Fitzpatrick  
Lady Freeman, BA Dip Cons (AA) PhD  
Annie Hampson, BA Dip TP MRTPI  
Reg Houghton, Dip Arch  
Peter Luscombe, RIBA  
Matthew Saunders, MBE BA Cantab  
Arthur Shannon, ARIBA AADipl  
David Gandy  
Anne Thomas, BA MA FRSA  
C. Douglas Woodward, CBE

City Heritage Society  
Director of the Historic Chapels Trust  
Corporation of London  
Worshipful Company of Painter-Stainers  
Worshipful Company of Chartered Architects  
Ancient Monument Society  
Worshipful Company of Painter-Stainers  
Master, Worshipful Company of Painter-Stainers  
City Heritage Society  
City Heritage Society



President, Douglas Woodward, CBE with Mr. Archie Galloway, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Committee.



Patrick Burke, Membership Secretary, and Les Breadmore, Treasurer.



James Thomas, member of the Committee, with David Gandy, Master of the Worshipful Company of Painter-Stainers.



Some of the members of City Heritage Society, visiting Unilever House, on green roof terrace, overlooking the City.

## Events

The Members' visits to St. James Garlickhythe to see their newly restored organ and hear it played by Alderman Dr. Andrew Parmley, Child's Bank in Fleet Street, The Gresham Lecture on 'Beauty in Architecture', Apothecaries' Hall, and to St. Bartholomew-the -Great, were all superb, and then in December we were invited to a joyous Carol Service and Christmas celebration at St. Mary Aldermary which we greatly enjoyed. At Unilever a record number of members drank sparkling wine and enjoyed not only inspecting the reinstated panelled Board Room and the 1930's Eric Gill panels, but also the spectacular views from the eighth floor and upper green roof terrace. In January we visit The Old Bailey for a guided tour; this event has already been over-subscribed, so some of us will be going on the second visit in May.

We held our Annual Dinner this year again at the Guildhall Club with Mark Field, Member of Parliament for the City and Westminster as our main Speaker for the evening. Desmond Fitzpatrick, Deputy Chairman, gave a warm welcoming speech proposing the health of our guests. Mark Field responded, giving us his comprehensive analysis of the global economy, the World financial crisis and its effect on the City, and also gave us resounding support for the continuing and important role of City Heritage Society. I quote from his speech:

'Long aligned to the principles of refurbishment and renewal, I believe the City Heritage Society has an important role to play in the Square Mile's recovery. The City's

independence as an administrative unit will remain crucial to its future success and this Society is in the position to indirectly make the case for the continuation of that independence by keeping alive the City's unique history and maintaining the buildings and architectural legacy which distinguish the Square Mile from its neighbours. The Society will also no doubt continue to play a part in the physical shaping of the City in the years ahead and can offer an historical perspective and a guiding hand as we weather the economic storms ahead.'

The Chief Commoner, John Barker, Chairman of the Planning Committee, Mrs. Christine Cohen - also a staunch member of City Heritage, and Mr. David Stothard, Director of Development East in the City Planning Department, were our other main guests. Our good friend, Lady - Dr. Jenny - Freeman, was also with us as a long-term member of City Heritage, and we used the evening also to congratulate her on her considerable contribution in winning the Smithfield Inquiry.

## Committee

In March, 2008 Anne Thomas, the then Vice-Chairman, took over as Chairman, and Douglas Woodward, founder of the Society, retired after thirty-five years, and became President. Desmond Fitzpatrick remains as Deputy Chairman. Norman Searle, who sends his best wishes to all members, has now retired 'honourably' after long and devoted service to the Society. Patrick Burke took over as

Membership Secretary. Les Breadmore, Treasurer, has done sterling work during the Year, helping to co-ordinate any changes and the growth in membership. Mary Hemy has continued her duties as Hon. Secretary. Anthony Hemy oversaw the launch of our City Heritage Website, ([www.cityheritage.org.uk](http://www.cityheritage.org.uk)). Desmond Fitzpatrick and James Thomas have, with your Chairman, made regular comments to the Planning Officers, which have been well-received.

I spoke recently to a senior member of English Heritage who had worked in the City Planning Department, and was told: "The City Heritage Society is an amenity society well-respected by the City Corporation - unlike many amenity societies in the Country." In fact, during 2008, in spite of the many changes, there has been a growth in membership and in the Corporate membership of the Society. We hope that in the year to come more new, young members will join.

Your Chairman was asked to write an article for the 'Barbican Life' about City Heritage; the Editor made it the 'lead article', well-illustrated with photographs of some members at Unilever House and the cover showing the 'Highly Commended' refurbished St. Mary Aldermary. We have had several good reports about it and more new members have sent their application forms to Patrick Burke.

Christine Cohen, Chairman of the Planning Committee recently invited me to the annual Planning Dinner in the nearly-finished Broadgate Tower, on the edge of Spitalfields, situated far from St. Paul's and east of 'the Cluster'. It was hard to see the quality of the architecture in candlelight! But it seemed a welcome use of a small site in a run-down area.

Closer to home, Barbican residents have been concerned with both 'street enhancement' plans, and proposed high rise development. Residents have their own 'hot line' to

the City planners, however, and made their own comments, so that the vast scheme for St. Alphage was never even submitted as a planning application and therefore we were unable to comment.

Douglas Woodward, our President, wrote an article on 'The Downturn in the Property Market and the Effect on the City', well-received by many as have been his 'predictions' for some time on the over-supply of office space. He has also been busy, together with your Chairman, in preparing new pages shortly to be published on the new City Heritage Society Web-site on the history of the Society, the Annual Awards, and future Events .

In February we are holding a Seminar for the first time for several years. The title will be 'We need more Front Doors!' (rather than anonymous high-rise glass-fronted elevations) at The Gallery, Cowcross Street. Sir Terry Farrell, Sir Richard MacCormac, Richard Saxon, and Steven Bee of English Heritage, will be the main Speakers, together with Alan Baxter who will be chairing the event. We have also invited members from City Architecture Forum to join us, and will be sending out invitations to people in the City, and to the Press, as well as to all City Heritage members.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on 3rd March, and we look forward to seeing you at Pewterers' Hall, as last year, for this annual event in our calendar.

May I take this opportunity of thanking you for your support, and sending you our very best wishes for the New Year.

Anne Thomas,  
Chairman

\*'The Goings on at Guildhall' by C.D. Woodward, was published in 2008.

**The Society's Executive Committee, 2008**

<b>C. Douglas Woodward, CBE</b>	<b>President</b>
<b>Anne Thomas, BA MA (Urban Design) FRSA</b>	<b>Chairman</b>
<b>Desmond Fitzpatrick</b>	<b>Deputy Chairman</b>
<b>Patrick Burke</b>	<b>Membership Secretary</b>
<b>Mary Hemy, BA</b>	<b>Hon. Secretary</b>
<b>Les Breadmore</b>	<b>Hon. Treasurer</b>
<b>Anthony Hemy, RIBA</b>	
<b>James Thomas, BA Arch Dip TP FRIBA FRTPI</b>	