



# CITY HERITAGE SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1991

Last year's annual report had as its headline "a famous victory" referring to the Court of Appeal's decision in March 1990 which promised to save for posterity the buildings on the Poultry site for which we have fought so long. Alas, twelve months later, the House of Lords allowed an appeal by Lord Palumbo against the Court of Appeal decision thus bringing to an end a 20-year campaign to conserve Mappin and Webb and seven other listed buildings on this key site at the heart of the City's central conservation area. The Times in a notable editorial said of the proposed development that it was "sheer destruction, a monumental act of egotism".

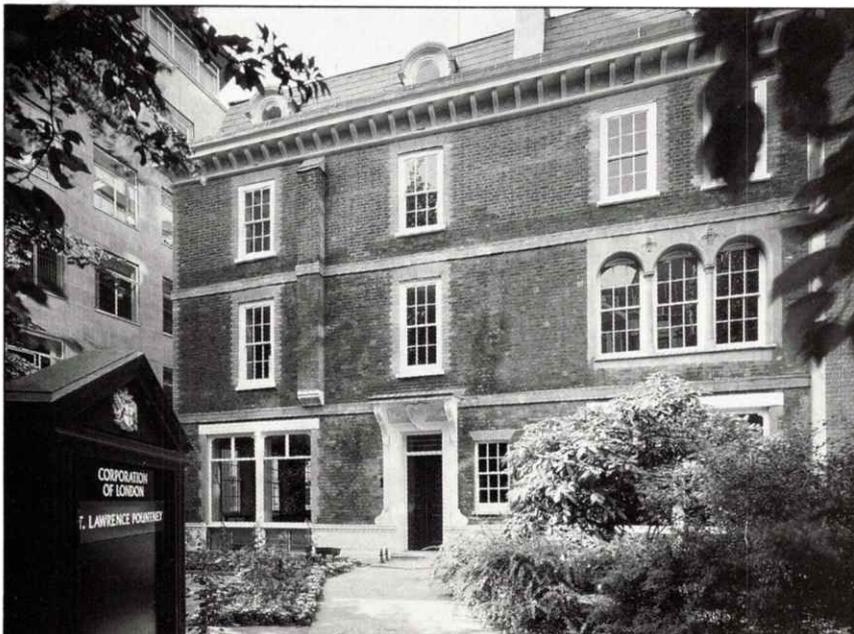
Even now the battle is not over. Save Britain's Heritage with the support of our Society and others is campaigning against the "blocking up" of ancient Bucklersbury and Pancras Lane, the medieval streets that go through the site and would be obliterated in the Palumbo development.

## PATERNOSTER SQUARE

Turning from the past to the future there can be no question that the most important planning matter of 1991 has centred on the proposals for redevelopment of Paternoster Square by St. Paul's.

City Heritage has expressed broad support for the neo-classical scheme submitted by Paternoster Associates which includes buildings by Terry Farrell, John Simpson

*Rectory House - City Heritage Award 1991*



and Thomas Beeby. We took into account the strong support of a large majority of the public whose views were sought in the consultation process.

In our comments we said that we approved the classical style of architecture which is proposed and the use of brick and stone. We also commended the choice of the individual architects for the various buildings. "The total concept respects the cathedral, is not overpowering and is relieved by the piazza and the profusion of arcades. We like the reinstatement of the original street pattern and the use of space".

There are numerous improvements, however, that we have suggested should be made before the scheme is approved. Our most serious criticism is that the proposals would represent over-development with almost twice as much on the site as we think there should be. We have also urged a more imaginative mix of uses with housing in particular being desirable on this site.

## OTHER PLANNING APPLICATIONS ON WHICH WE HAVE COMMENTED

*52-60 Cannon Street.* The proposed replacement for this 1960's building which itself is of no merit represents little if any improvement and has the added disadvantage of being decidedly more noticeable.

*Carter Lane/Addle Hill/Wardrobe Place.* CHS has long urged refurbishment of these Victorian workshop/warehouses. The decision to refurbish in this exceptionally interesting area is commendable and the plans and elevations suggest that excellent smaller office premises will come out of the project.

*21 and 21a Lime Street* We would greatly regret to see the total loss of these buildings in the new Leadenhall Market conservation area. In particular we urge the retention of the Lime Street facade because of its complementary relationship with the adjacent market buildings.

*10-15 Lombard Street* The existing building is heavy, tired, early post-war classical: its removal is unlikely to harm the conservation area. The classical treatment of the replacement building is correct but would be improved by the loss of what seems to be afterthought detail: triglyphs,



Award line-up: The Master Painter-Stainer, The Lord Mayor, Chairman City Heritage Society, and building owner, The Hon Charles Cecil

obelisks and dentil mouldings occur almost accidentally. Although not exciting it might be of more consequence than the present building on this important site.

*Hayne Street/Long Lane/Lindsey Street* While the bulk and massing of this scheme are more appropriate than the earlier one, the design of the elevations is still poor and needs to be vastly improved before accepted as suitable for this location.

*1 London Wall* The design is by Sir Norman Foster and therefore one has high hopes for the quality of the detail design and elegance of the final product. It would be far better than the present undistinguished building. However, this scheme is not the answer. Its form and massing give cause for alarm. It seems alien to its context. Parts of the building are too high. It represents over-development, the gross floor area increasing from 95,000sq.ft to 200,000sq.ft.

*Sudbury House, 15 Newgate Street* With a plot ratio of 5.04:1 this is a high-density building and the concept of a square building on eight floors does little to reduce the bulk. The "top hamper" is excessively bulky. We strongly recommend some slight reduction in bulk and height. The elevations are richly modelled and well designed. We support this application subject to the reservations expressed.

*70-78 Lombard Street* On the ground floor it is proposed to realign the line of Pope's Head Alley. This is regrettable and the developers should be asked to reconsider. The seven retail units proposed are welcomed. On the floors above the ground floor the existing cellular arrangement would be swept away and replaced by open plan. This is not desirable because it makes for discord between plan and elevation and at night would give an unsatisfactory appearance. The extra floor is alien in form and style and makes the whole building too bulky.

*84-89 Wood Street* The enormous presence of the Lee House replacement adjacent to this site is a dominating factor here. Surely it must be a planning mistake to allow another monster-size building cheek-by-jowl with the Lee House monster! We are increasingly concerned at the creation of an extremely high wall of buildings separating Barbican from the rest of the City.

*57-59 West Smithfield* Decent design involving reinstatement of a building whose excellent facade is a feature of West Smithfield. We regret the proposed destruction of the interior of the building.

*Empire House, St. Martins-le-Grand* This would be a terribly unworthy building wherever it was built and doubly and trebly so because of its location and the buildings it would replace. Its elevations are insensitive. It is incompatible with its surroundings. It does not fit in with its neighbours.

*147-148 Leadenhall Street* This building was properly listed and therefore it warrants every effort being made to preserve it.

## PROPOSALS FOR SMITHFIELD

The City Corporation has proposed a major refurbishment for Smithfield market so that it will conform with European Commission hygiene requirements. For many years the City Heritage Society has supported the retention of the meat market as being an important part of the heritage. However, in view of the less than enthusiastic support from the market tenants and the traffic problems which will be further exacerbated as a result of the refurbished proposals, it is increasingly our view that the main market buildings should be refurbished for a different type of use. One such use would be to provide a new home for the Museum of London.

## THE UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The City Corporation — like other planning authorities — is in the process, almost completed, of establishing a unitary development plan which will guide and control planning and related matters over the coming years.

In our comments we have commended much of its content which in numerous ways reflects observations which we have made at earlier stages of the plan's formulation. In particular we are pleased to see the considerable emphasis laid on the fact that it is the character of the City's old buildings and streets which is such a powerful factor in recommending the City as a location for financial and commercial business firms.

Much pressure has been exerted by the development lobby to ensure that the plan when finally published will be favourable to ambitious development policies and it is in this area that we have at the final stage of consultation, felt it necessary to voice our concern. We have pointed out that the plan in no way recognizes the changed economic circumstances which in our view make a nonsense of a special thrust of the plan — that is the positive encouragement it gives to developers to provide an over-supply of office space. Everyone is agreed that the future for the City depends on its continued attractiveness as an international financial centre. But we dispute that success in maintaining its leading position will come from the creation of yet more vast office buildings which the evidence suggests will remain very much under-occupied.

It must surely now be right for the City's plan to chart new ways forward which reflect economic realities not to hark back to the days immediately preceding and following "Big Bang". To this end we have suggested that to have a 5:1 plot ratio as the norm (all too often exceeded) is wrong and that 4:1 would be a better yardstick in creating the kind of buildings and environmental quality which are likely to ensure the City's continued attractiveness to business firms in the future.

Evidence to support our view comes regularly from those closest to the problem — the firms of surveyors and

estate agents who try to sell the space as it becomes available, and from other commentators:

Evening Standard, 13th May 1991: "London's office landlords are experiencing the greatest slump in demand for space in living memory. Nearly 12 million sq.ft of space, roughly 17 per cent of the total supply, is now available in EC1, EC2, EC3 and EC4 areas of the City. Around 17000 sq.ft are falling vacant every day. These estimates are based on statistics supplied by agents Debenham Tewson & Chinnocks".

The Times, 1st November 1991 Sir Brian Goswell of agents Healey & Baker: "Within a 10-minute stroll of the Bank of England about 1.6 million sq.ft of office space is available or expected by the end of 1992. In the whole City the figure is likely to be about 9.5 million sq.ft."

The Times, 11 September 1991 "A sharp fall in office take-up in the West End and an office glut in the City are the twin themes of the latest report by St. Quintin. The City has a vacancy rate of nearly 20 per cent.

### NEW PLANNING GUIDELINES

The Department of the Environment is in the process of amending its design guidelines. A change is to be welcomed because since the unfortunate days of Mr. Nicholas Ridley's tenure of office as Secretary of State the planning guidelines have tended to favour development at the cost of conservation, the Poultry buildings being a notable casualty of this policy. In our comments on the draft proposals we have said we would welcome the inclusion of the principle that where the setting or immediate neighbourhood so justifies there should be a presumption in favour of conservation or refurbishment notwithstanding submission of a rebuilding proposal of acceptable design quality. The Times newspaper's comment was that Mr. Heseltine should show his disregard to civil service gobbledegook when he issues the new guidelines: "The words "conserve" and "enhance" must not be interchangeable with "demolish".

### NEW CONSERVATION AREAS AGREED

At the beginning of the year proposals were made by the City Corporation for some modest and overdue increases in the number and size of City conservation areas. Such areas were first designated in 1971 and there were additions in 1974. At the beginning of 1991 some 25 per cent of the City was covered by conservation area designation. The Corporation's proposals were welcomed by the Society and met with predictable opposition from developers and estate agents.

In the outcome the proposals, somewhat watered-down, were agreed giving us three new areas: the Temples, Leadenhall Market, and buildings and land north and west of the Tower of London; extensions to the existing Eastcheap and Whitefriars areas; plus some minor revisions.

At the same time the City Heritage Forum, of which the Society is a member, had identified the desirability for a new conservation area centred on the church of St. Botolph, Bishopsgate. The proposal was developed by architects Rothermel Thomas and submitted to the Corporation. Bearing in mind the strong opposition to the Corporation's own proposals it was not surprising that our suggestion for St. Botolph's was not accepted but it is a matter we shall keep on our programme for future

action. We also agreed to press for enlargement of the existing Dyers Buildings conservation area.

It is our view that the Corporation should produce guidelines covering all the existing conservation areas similar to those produced at the time of the first designations in 1971. We feel that a publication of this kind would be of help in guiding owners, developers and architects to arrive at more appropriate building design proposals than is often currently the case.

### CITY HERITAGE AWARD

The City Heritage Award, which we run in conjunction with the Worshipful Company of Painter-Stainers, was given in June 1991 for the refurbishment of Rectory House, a building dating from 1670 situated in the garden of Laurence Pountney Churchyard off Cannon Street.

Against strong opposition, notably from two distinguished livery halls, the treatment of this domestic-scale office refurbishment won unanimous praise from the seven assessors. It is irregular in shape and characterized by sloping floors. There was praise for the imagination and interesting choice of colour schemes in keeping with the period of the various rooms. An original frontage to a former shop was fully restored.

The 1991 Award named the following:

OWNER: Principal Hotels Limited

ARCHITECT: Seifert Limited

CONTRACTOR: Fairclough Building Limited

The assessors praised a number of other entries, in particular the major restoration and improvements at Goldsmith's Hall carried out by Donald W. Insall Associates; the extensive alterations and improvements to Innholders Hall by Green Lloyd Architects; another Insall project — the restoration by Holloway White Allom of the Bartholomew Lane elevation of the Bank of England; and the refurbishment by Greycoat of another building of the 1670's — a former mansion in White Lion Court off Cornhill.

The Assessors for the 1991 Award were:

Mrs. Jennifer Freeman *English Heritage*

Ashley Barker

R.C. Houghton *Worshipful Company of Painter-Stainers*

A.F. Shannon *Worshipful Company of Painter-Stainers*

Matthew Saunders *Ancient Monuments Society*

Peter Wynne Rees *City Planning Officer*

C. Douglas Woodward *City Heritage Society*

### NEW ARCHITECTURE AWARD

The year 1991 saw the introduction of another award scheme — the City Heritage New Architecture Award — presented jointly by our Society and the Worshipful Company of Chartered Architects. The intention is that this new award for buildings, which hopefully will form part of the City's future heritage, will be complementary to the conservation awards we have been making since 1978.

The first recipient was Kumagai Gumi's "Whitefriars" building off Fleet Street which the assessors considered fitted well into the existing townscape and maintained the scale so often lost in modern developments. The architects were YRM Partnership.

Speaking at the award ceremony in April our Chairman said: "Those of us who work and live in the City have been depressed by the mediocrity if not the downright ugliness of so many of our newer buildings. This award is a positive step towards encouraging the kind of high standards of design that befit the heart of a great capital city".

### LACK OF A LOCAL NEWSPAPER

Concern has been expressed by your Executive Committee at the demise of the old "City Recorder" newspaper which over all the years of the Society's existence had afforded generous coverage to our affairs. We are urgently in need of a replacement which will deal with local planning and conservation issues on a regular basis. We would like to record our thanks to "City Planning" for including in its pages details of our major events.

### DERELICTION IN QUEEN STREET

We have voiced our concern as to the state of the building situated next to the Sugar Loaf public house in Queen Street which has been empty and unused for many years and is now dirty and derelict. The City Planning Officer reports that discussions have since taken place with the owners' architects and options for redevelopment are being investigated.

### CROSSRAIL

The proposed Crossrail link between Liverpool Street and Paddington has to be accepted as a helpful contribution to London's transport but there is certainly one feature which is wholly undesirable and that is the way in which Finsbury Circus — the City's largest open space — will be lost as an amenity during the years of construction, since it is proposed to use it as an area from which to remove the spoil for the tunnel workings.

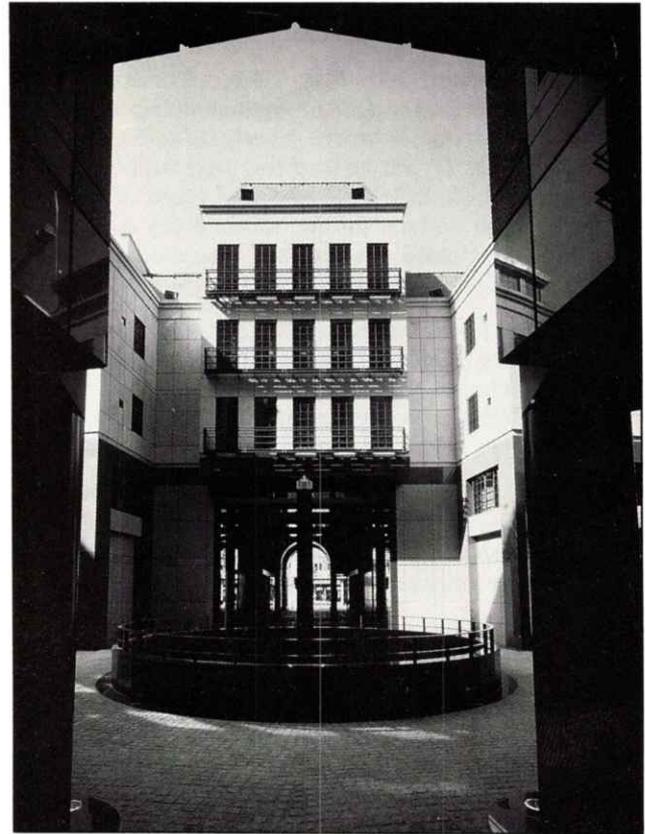
### EVENTS

Members and their guests enjoyed a number of outside events during the year.

The first, in April, was a private reception and tour of the splendidly restored Britannic House, Finsbury Circus which had won the City Heritage Award 1990. British Petroleum, whose headquarters it now is, were our generous hosts.

May 22 was the occasion of the annual City Heritage Lecture given this year by Simon Jenkins, Editor of The Times who, the Chairman reminded us in his introductory remarks, had given the first talk to the Society when it had been founded in 1973. Mr. Jenkins commented of the Poultry case that the only hope now was that Lord Palumbo would realize that destruction of the buildings would make him so universally unpopular that he might even at this late stage change his mind!

On a July evening Society members attended a specially arranged visit to the magnificently restored Queen's House at Greenwich, designed by Inigo Jones in 1616



*Whitefriars — recipient of the New Architecture Award*

and refurbished as it might have looked when occupied by Queen Henrietta Maria in the 1660's.

In November a coach took members to view Sutton House in Hackney, thought to be the oldest surviving house in east London. The 1530 building, an extremely rare example of a merchant's brick house dating from Tudor times, is being restored by English Heritage.

We returned in December to the National Liberal Club for our annual Dinner, the usual happy occasion, with Donald Insall as our chief guest. A noted conservation architect he has been specially concerned with building conservation projects in Chester and other historic city centres. He is currently involved in the major refurbishment of the Mansion House.

### MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 1991

C. Douglas Woodward OBE	<i>Chairman</i>
N. Searle	<i>Vice Chairman</i>
G. Rees	<i>Hon. Treasurer</i>
Mrs. Ann Woodward	<i>Membership Secretary and Social Events</i>
D.M. Tettmar	<i>Hon Secretary</i>
A.H. Hemy	
R.T.D. Wilmot	
J. Thomas	<i>Planning applications and Conservation area Advisory Committee</i>
D. Fitzpatrick	<i>Planning applications and Conservation Area Advisory Committee</i>
Peter Duggan	<i>Publicity</i>

The Committee met on six occasions during the year, in February, April, June, August, September and November.