

# CITY HERITAGE SOCIETY

## ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2010

Ten years ago, the City could not have forecast that the economy would be as it is, poised between emergence from a recession and a possible plunge into something even worse. This is an uncomfortable situation for those who, like so many of our members, feel passionately about the City's prosperity, and its future as the world's leading financial market place, directly or indirectly creating, through its services, about a fifth of all the value produced by this country. The City Heritage Society recognises that the prosperity of the City of London with its long history and international high repute as a world trading centre, is served by the special circumstances, both of its geographical situation between Tokyo and New York, allowing it to trade twenty four hours a day; and by the hundred and one circumstances which create and maintain its peculiarly good ambiance as a place where people the world over are happy to work. It is with such character and ambiance that this Society is always concerned. We believe that, while the Corporation as a planning authority must make provision for the working spaces needed by global businesses, it should do so in a way that does not impair the City's distinctive character. For this reason, the Society pays close attention to the planning process, opposing the overdevelopment of sites and the destruction of good buildings. We recognise the importance to the City's character of its lanes, alleyways and courtyards - that subtext to the great highways - of which Bow Lane and its tributaries are fine examples, being much-frequented pedestrian spaces, buzzing with activity; or Carter Lane, shaped by its history. No one could plan or invent places of such character!

Some of the great highways, too, are changing. Cheapside's name implies that it is a market place but for too long, much of it, west of the King Street-Queen Street crossing, has looked run down and provisional! The Corporation's efforts at improvements are aimed at increasing the City's attractiveness as a shopping destination. We are watching with cautious optimism. *One New Change* opened in the autumn and it is hoped it may create so high a level of retail attraction in Cheapside as may benefit other outlets. We are less happy about the effects of its bulk on St Paul's, its immediate neighbour.

However, to the south east of St Paul's great improvements are arising from the Corporation's Street

Scene initiative. Existing gardens are being improved and new gardens will replace the asphalt desert of the coach park. To the south of the cathedral, at Old Change Court, a Victorian fountain has been re-erected after expert restoration. Originally situated, from 1873, in Guildhall Yard, it was taken down in the course of refurbishments in the early 1990s. It commemorated the benefactors of the united parishes of St Lawrence Jewry and St Mary Magdalene, Milk Street and features statues of both patron saints.

By contrast, in the heart of the City, the former Midland Bank building, with main frontages on Poultry and Princes Street, remains empty and neglected: the proposal to convert it into a hotel continues on hold. This outstanding work of Sir Edwin Lutyens is becoming progressively more shabby. It provides a lamentable introduction to the City's financial centre. The delay appears to arise from the present economic climate.

### COMMENTS ON OTHER PLANNING PERMISSIONS

The Society pays close attention to planning proposals, some of the most important are as follows:

STONE HOUSE (128-140 BISHOPSGATE - 77-84 HOUNDSDITCH), STAPLE HALL (87-90 HOUNDSDITCH) 142 -150 BISHOPSGATE, 1-3 +5 STONE HOUSE COURT 1-17 DEVONSHIRE ROW

We objected to this large scheme in that it was a smaller tower block adjacent to Heron Tower and formed a new piazza overshadowed by both buildings. It is out of scale and inappropriate to the townscape of Bishopsgate and will overpower the Conservation Area.

This is a substantial scheme and affects not only a listed building frontage but also Bishopsgate Conservation Area. We note that the proposals retain the listed historic shop frontage to Stone House, although in a new location. The retained elements of 1 Stone House Court appear to be stuck onto the east end of the new building, which does not sit easily with the new building. It is commendable to retain historic fabric but does little to ameliorate the impact of the complete scheme.

## 5 BREAM'S BUILDINGS

This is a welcome change of use from office to residential and helps to maintain the character of the existing building, in particular the notable frontage.

## FINSBURY CIRCUS HOUSE, 12 - 15 FINSBURY CIRCUS (NORTH).

This is an important scheme within Finsbury Circus, on the north side of the Circus. The building is centred on the important north/south axis of the Circus and can be seen from London Wall through Circus Place.

The proposals retain the stone elements of the existing Finsbury Circus elevation with new windows and entrance screening. Also the roof is remodelled to follow the existing cornice and roof lines of the Circus and reduces its apparent bulk and height from street level.

We supported the scheme as it retains important elements regarding the setting of Finsbury Circus and in fact improves the roof and upper floor levels. However with such a scheme the detailed aspects of the facades will determine the quality of the finished building and we hope this will be carefully conditioned so that this can be monitored and the quality of the scheme assured.

## 39-40 CLOTH FAIR

This is an excellent scheme that returns the building to its original use as a house. This is to be encouraged.

## 191 - 121 BISHOPSGATE

This is a key site at the intersection of Liverpool Street and Bishopsgate with St. Botolph's Church to the south. It is a bold statement and the architects have attempted to address the significance of its location and context. However the fenestration of the new building is too simplistic with a strong horizontal banding which does not help. The fenestration needs to be reconsidered with a view to the grain and texture of the surfaces to bring life and vitality into the scheme.

The scheme is satisfactory as far as it goes, however we feel the potential has not been fully realised and hope that it can be developed into something special and in keeping with the quality of the area.

## ST DUNSTAN'S HOUSE, 133 - 137 FETTER LANE

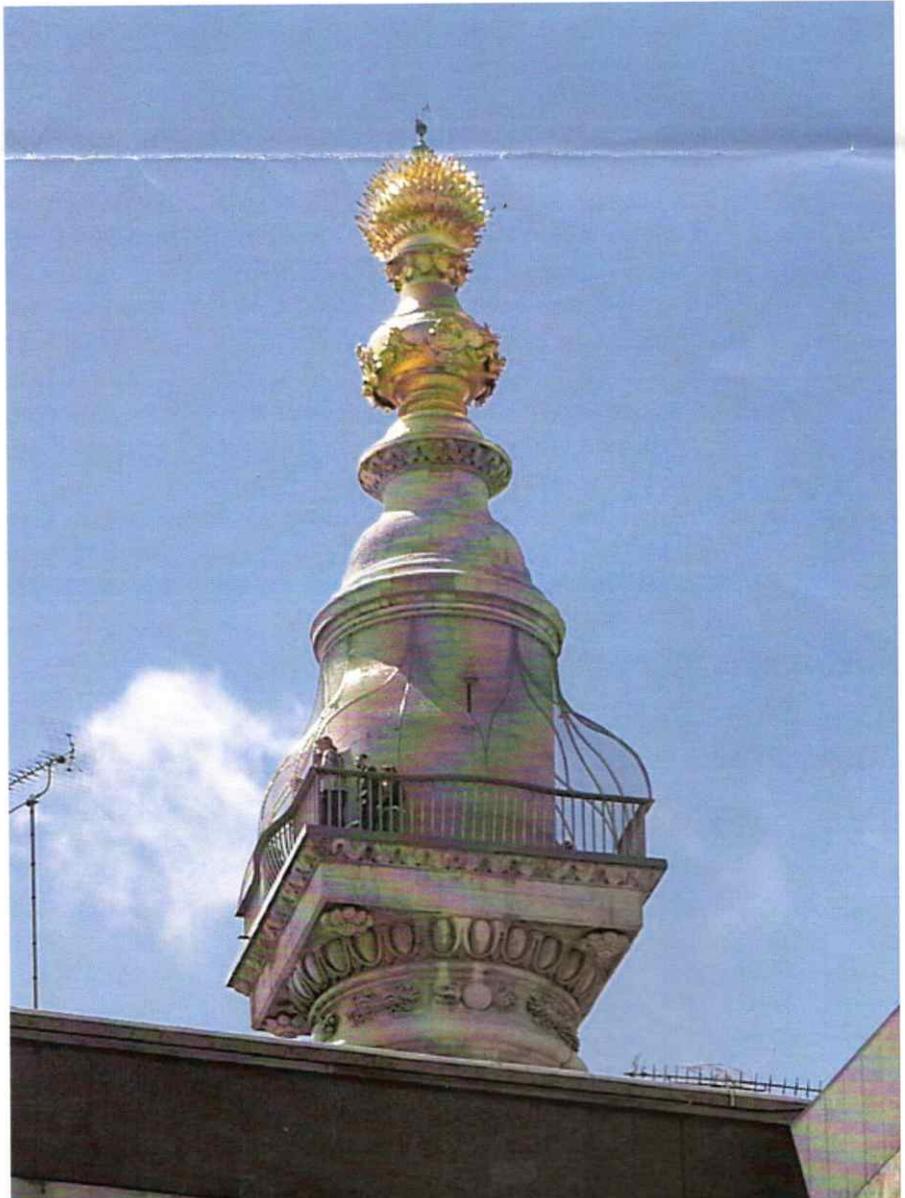
This is the redevelopment of a site on the west side of Fetter Lane and sees the demolition of the late 1970's existing building, which contributes little to the historic setting of the Public Records Office building to the north and Clifford's Inn to the south.

The proposals show a better replacement, more in keeping with the context and the Conservation Area. The elevation design is much improved over the bulky, monolithic feel of the existing building and has a more articulated façade. It is modern yet respectful.

It is also good to note that more residential is being created within the City.

## THE GUILD CHURCH OF ST MARTIN WITHIN LUDGATE, LUDGATE HILL, LONDON, EC4M 7DE

This is a good example of integrating disabled access into an historic building and has been well presented and detailed.



## THE CITY HERITAGE PAINTER-STAINERS AWARD 2010

Last year, the Award honoured the Corporation of the City of London's outstanding restoration of The Monument, erected about three hundred and forty years ago to commemorate the Great Fire which led to the rebuilding of so much of the City and to a great new phase in its history. The project, designed and supervised by Julian Harrap Architects, with Cathedral Works of Chichester as the main contractor, involved work on a structure whose height of over two hundred feet created special stone cleaning and restoration problems. This iconic structure, for some years in a bad state, now looks as it should look, seeming, with St Pauls, to be a symbol of the City's greatness and survival. On 17 July, the Lord Mayor, with the Lady Mayoress and Alderman and Sheriff Wootton in attendance, unveiled the Award plaque at the Monument.

Afterwards, a reception was held at St Mary at Hill, with the Alderman and the Deputy for Billingsgate Ward and Mr Sheriff Sermon in attendance. The Lord Mayor presented the Award Certificate to Julian Harrap the supervising architect.

The Society greatly values its association in the annual award, now over thirty years old, with the Worshipful Company of Painter-Stainers and records with deep regret the death in August of Past Master Arthur Shannon who was an Assessor for the award from its foundation and, despite serious illness, attended the Assessment Panel in April, for the last time.

### The Assessors in 2010 were:

Desmond FitzPatrick BA FSA (Chairman)  
Lady Freeman BA FSA Dip Cons (AA) PhD  
A. F. Shannon ARIBA AADipl  
R. C. Houghton RIBA FCI Arb Dip Arch  
Matthew Saunders MBE BA  
Peter Hammerson Master Painter-Stainer  
Douglas Woodward CBE, President, attended for the discussions of the Assessors

### EVENTS

Towards the end of January, a visit to the Museum of the Bank of England was preceded by a view of some of Sir John Soane's remaining work and a short talk on the overend Gurney bank crash of one hundred and fifty years ago, in the days before quantitative easing!

In February came a visit to The Building Centre in Store Street where there was a new exhibition of buildings and planning in the City of London with a stunning model. Peter Murray, the Curator, gave a talk about new buildings in the City and their impact on heritage within 'the Square Mile'.

The AGM was held in March at the Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street, Smithfield and included a talk on the work of the Historic Chapels Trust by its Director, Lady Freeman, well known to the Society as an Assessor for the annual City Heritage Award.



*The Lord Mayor, Nick Anstee (left) with Desmond FitzPatrick, Chairman, CHS*

Late in April, the Chairman led a tour of 17th and 18th century Buckingham Street, and of the Adelphi, where features of the work of the Adam brothers have survived, particularly the buildings of The Royal Society of Arts where we enjoyed a tour of its rooms and the astonishing vaults beneath.

In June the Beadle of the Worshipful Company of Skinners welcomed members to a most interesting tour of the Company's 17th century Hall in Dowgate Hill. This was followed by a visit next door to the treasures of the Fan Makers Livery Company.

Late in September, members visited the Monument to view the outcome of the restoration. This was followed by a visit to St Mary at Hill, nearby.

The Society's Annual Dinner, late in November was generally enjoyed. The toast to *Our Guests* was proposed by Peter Luscombe and the Guest of Honour, the architect Julian Harrap (below), held us enthralled with his well-illustrated account of the restoration of the Monument.



Once again, a number of members joined a full congregation at the Carol Service at St Mary Aldermary, held on 13 December. The singing was led by the Constanza Choir with Alderman Dr Andrew Palmley at the organ. The Bishop of London gave an address. Refreshments followed. It was a truly grand City event!

Our first main event in 2011 will be a seminar focussed on **The City of London – a great visitor attraction** and will

take place at 6.30pm on Thursday 10 March at The Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street EC1 and the Annual General Meeting will be held on a date to be advised.

Other events will include a visit to No 2 Temple Place, off the Embankment, a splendid Arts and Crafts house designed in 1895 by John Loughborough Pearson for William Waldorf Astor. We hope to arrange a visit to the Sir John Soane Museum at Lincolns Inn Fields, and the William Morris Gallery at Waltham Forest. Later in the year, we will explore the remains of the northern sections of the walls of London, much of which, at Noble Street and near Barber Surgeons Hall, seem like a memorial not only to Roman and medieval London but to the Blitz of seventy years ago, which uncovered so much. Details of these events will be circulated.

Finally, on a personal note: Anne Thomas, who since 2008 had proved such an excellent Chairman, necessarily resigned in April 2010 due to ill-health and consequent treatment regimes. As Deputy Chairman, I took over the Chairmanship with much uncertainty but have been learning as I go along, supported by a really strong Committee, to whom I offer most hearty thanks.

Desmond FitzPatrick, Chairman

#### **The Society's Executive Committee 2010**

**C. Douglas Woodward CBE**

**Desmond FitzPatrick BA FSA**

**Patrick Burke**

**Marina Nicholson**

**Anthony Hemy RIBA**

**Peter Luscombe RIBA**

**President**

**Chairman (from April, in succession to Anne Thomas)**

**Membership Secretary**

**Hon. Secretary**

**(co-opted June 2010)**

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**James Thomas resigned in April from the Committee through ill-health.**

We record, with great regret, the death during 2010 of Norman Searle, for long a most active member of the Society and its Deputy Chairman for a number of years.