



# CITY HERITAGE SOCIETY

## ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020

What a strange, unique and challenging year it has been for one and all. As your fledgling Chairman I was so looking forward to meeting you all at various events and the Annual Dinner but, sadly, all social life has been snatched away from us this last year.

I was also looking forward to Peter Luscombe's guidance as I took over the Chairmanship of the Society, sadly that experience has been snatched away too when Peter Luscombe, who was chairman of the Society from 2015-2019, died unexpectedly in June aged 85. Shortly after his death, David Cole-Adams penned an appreciation of the life of Peter. By way of background, David is a Past Master of the Worshipful Company of Chartered Architects and is currently Clerk Emeritus to that Company. The full text is appended to this report and is reproduced with David's kind permission.

Two long-standing members sadly died within a short time of one another – June and Vic Giles. They supported numerous events over the years and will be missed.

Although the Society has remained somewhat dormant following the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, things have been kept ticking over with the committee continuing to hold meetings.

Pictured opposite are members of the Committee at the National Liberal Club where the AGM was held followed by a committee meeting.



However as a new age brakes for us all from the summer, hopefully, I am looking forward to organising events and visits once again and meeting you at an event as, and when, we are allowed to.

Finally, two announcements that I am delighted to make. Firstly, Desmond FitzPatrick was asked to become the Society's President at the last AGM and I am pleased to say he graciously accepted. Secondly, congratulations to our former Treasurer, Les Breadmore who celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday last June.

Onwards and upwards to one and all!

*Dorian Crone*

### Visits

We will resume events as soon as it is safe to do so but at the moment it looks like that will be sometime in the second half of the year.

## Planning Application Comments

We continue to try to monitor all planning application to the City and, where appropriate, to comment on them. The schemes we commented on are listed below with a brief summary:

### *1 Abchurch Yard*

The Society had no objection against the increased height of the building but considered that the new dormer on the front elevation should be traditionally detailed to blend with the existing retained elevation and not in the form of a lead box.

### *1-5 London Wall Buildings*

We welcomed the restoration of lost features and the new roof scape which tidies up the skyline on Finsbury Circus. But we expressed some concerns about the option for use of the ground floor units. Uses requiring extensive external signage would not be welcome.

We expressed doubt that a new pedestrian route into Finsbury Circus was necessary as Circus Place and the access of Blomfield Street are close by. We did not object to the additional storeys, but we did not like the proposed detail of these facades. In our opinion to be acceptable, these elevations should reflect the classical detailing of the existing facades over which they sit and the window proportions and glazing bars should be similar to the existing façade so that the new elevations blend with, rather than contrast, with the existing elevations. The central raised portion on the London Wall façade could, for instance, be completed with a pediment.

### *Site bounded by Fenchurch Street, Mark Lane, Dunster Court and Mincing Lane*

No objection to the demolition of the buildings as they are not considered to be of architectural or historic value. However, it

is hoped that some elements of the present Clothworkers' Hall can be incorporated into either the new Hall or located in the revamped public space.

The Society commended the opening of views from Fenchurch Street of the medieval tower and its improved setting and public access. We also commended the clarity of the design of the new building in making the Clothworkers' Hall element so distinctive and the lower floors being treated as a podium to the tower which we feel reduced the impact of the proposed tall building on Fenchurch Street.

### *Ashley Building, Middle Temple Lane*

Some reservations regarding the proposed replacement of the slots in what, in classical terms, is the basement storey of the West Elevation. We suggested that the new windows proposed to be inserted should be square based on the width of the narrow windows in the upper floor of the wings. This would allow a stone lintel above the windows and below the string course and go some way to retaining the strong base to the elevation and respect the hierarchy of the windows. We suggested that the same opening size be retained throughout the basement level, including the windows below the wider windows of the upper floors of the central bay.

We were also doubtful about the proposal for the louvered openings to the plant room. We considered that a more honest expression of these louvres would be more satisfactory screened, not by open reproductions of the window glazing bars, but by decorative iron grilles. These would also reinforce the 'basement' character of this storey. The louvres could then be made of obscure glass as they would be protected by the iron screens.

*Poultry Market & General Market & Annexe Buildings, West Smithfield*

The Society commented that it was pleased with the care taken over the shop fronts and the retention of the "Phoenix" columns and roof structure of the General Market. We also welcomed the transparency proposed for the elevated walkway and canopy connecting the annexe buildings and did not object to the treatment of the annexe buildings.

However, the creation of a romantic skyline by the introduction of domes and domed turrets is a characteristic of Sir Horace Jones' designs for the Smithfield complex. While it would be unreasonable to expect the recreation on this building of the central dome and the ornate entrance from Harts Corner we, nonetheless, regret that it is not proposed to reinstate the dome over the turret at the West end Smithfield elevation where the lower floors survive.

On Harts Corner we considered that the bland post-war replacement with its utilitarian canopy could be enhanced possibly by a visible slate roof and ornate dormers to echo the rest of the street

elevations. The lettering on Harts Corner would, we felt, be better placed on the canopy which would also benefit from being more decorative.

The Society particularly objected to the proposed illuminated signage on gantries proposed to be added to the turret on the West end of Smithfield elevation and to the top of the post-war building on Harts Corner. These do not enhance the skyline and it has been a principle in the City to resist large illuminated signs.

*150 Aldersgate Street and 3-4 Bartholomew Place*

The Society did not consider that the proposals, in broad terms, were unacceptable though the proposed refacing on Aldersgate Street hardly seems to be an improvement on the existing façade, being just another example of floor to ceiling windows in stone surrounds. The greening of the upper storeys was an issue the Society was unhappy with. Unless it is possible to enforce the maintenance of such features in the future, they are just a potential for neglect and could become unsightly without the possibility of enforcing rectification.

## OBITUARY

### PETER LUSCOMBE 1935- 2020 - AN APPRECIATION



It is with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Peter in the past week. Peter was one of the founder members of the Company of Chartered Architects and, by virtue of the fact that he was also a member of the Painter-Stainers' Company and had considerable experience of working on buildings in the Square Mile, quickly found himself elected to the Court of the fledgling company in 1986. He was elected as Master for the year 1991-92 and remained on the court until 1999.

His year as Master was marked particularly by the Company's first participation in the Lord Mayor's Show as part of a joint entry with the Constructors' Company whose master had become a good friend through their mutual involvement as architect and contractor in a couple of City projects. Peter brought his artistic talents to bear in designing the float under the strap line – *"Two Sides of the One Coin"* and producing the necessary art work.

His year also saw the erection of the WCCA shield in Guildhall and the first Company carol service at St Mary-le-Bow (where Peter served as a Church Warden). It is likely that Peter fired the first shot in the search for a permanent home for the Company in the City. This had been a

requirement of the Company Ordinances and a Hall Committee was established in his year.

Peter was born in Plymouth and undertook his architectural education in that city. As far as is known this took the form of an 'articled pupilage' with a small local practice operating out of a 'dingy upstairs office' in the city.

Little can be established about his early working experience though old friends advise that he headed for London as soon as was practical and was soon to be found working with the well-established practice Ley Colbeck and Partners alongside Alan Luke who was among the founding fathers of the WCCA. His workload involved him in a good amount of conservation work. He remained with the practice until it was merged into the Halpern Partnership Ltd serving them as a consultant for a few years.

His professional life led him to his involvement with the City. He joined the Painter-Stainers' Company in 1983 and served as Chairman of their Fine Art Society for several years and latterly Deputy Chairman. He was very involved with his painting (watercolours were his preferred medium) and a number of Past Masters will

recall being invited to Painters' Hall for a reception at their annual art exhibition which always featured a number of his works and frequently, in my experience, featured Peter sitting on a stool in the middle of the exhibition working away as the 'artist in residence'.

He joined the WCCA shortly after and it is of interest to note that it is his signature that adorns the Livery Certificates of those members of the Company who were admitted to the Livery en masse shortly after the grant of Livery was bestowed by the Court of Aldermen.

Also, on the art front, Peter was a member of the Society of Marine Artists and other art societies and frequently displayed his works in their exhibitions – most notably at the Mall Galleries each year. His work was well regarded.

It was probably as a direct result of his involvement with conservation projects that Peter developed his interest in the historic buildings of the City, serving on the Conservation Area Advisory Committee whose officers advise that they '*will miss him as his contributions were always perceptive and lucid*'.

He became involved in the refurbishment of the Bishopsgate Institute before being introduced to the City Heritage Society. He took over the chairmanship of the Society founded by Douglas Woodward CBE in succession to Anne Thomas and Desmond FitzPatrick – he held the post until the current year when he was looking forward to passing on the role to Dorian Crone. He took a very active part in formulating opinions of the proposed new City buildings which came before the Society for comment and was forthright and fair in his commentary on the proposals.

His other interests revolved around the various churches with which he was

involved. He was, for many years, a Church Warden at St Mary-le-Bow and was a Parish Clerk of one of the former churches which came under the umbrella of St Mary-le-Bow.

His particular parish was that of St Faith Under St Paul's. A curious parish, the early building dating from pre-11<sup>th</sup> century was 'physically removed' in 1256 to allow for the eastern extension of St Paul's. The congregation (comprising mainly the printers gathered around the Paternoster area) continued to meet in the crypt of the gothic cathedral until the Great Fire. The parish, in the form of Peter, continued to be recognized when a toast might be proposed to St Faith Under St Paul's at formal gatherings of the Parish Clerk's Company.

Peter was a thoroughly nice man to know and to travel with – he was good company. He joined one of the study trips which I organized to the eastern seaboard of the United States – it was, I think I recall him telling me, the first time he had been abroad. He was a keen and not uncritical observer of style and detail. Like some others on the trip he was surprised to find himself less than impressed by some of the Frank Lloyd Wright buildings we visited.

He was generous with his help and advice; literally a week before his untimely death I had a couple of long conversations with him aimed at trying to identify some of the early winners of the Company's New City Architecture Awards which were initially run in conjunction with the City Heritage Society. He patiently carried out the necessary research and came up with the answers I was seeking from what had been hard to locate records. He then proceeded to give me his individual critique of some of the more prominent of those winning buildings and their more recent successors. All very entertaining and, in many cases, spot-on!

**The Society's Executive Committee 2020**

*Desmond FitzPatrick FSA	President
*Dorian Crone RIBA, MRTPI, IHBC	Chairman
Antony Croot	Hon. Treasurer
Patrick Burke	Membership Secretary
Anthony Hemy RIBA	Planning applications
D Sanya Juliuson	
*since August 2020	

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