

CITY HERITAGE SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2012

The City Heritage Society is forty years old, founded in 1973 by our President, Douglas Woodward and his late wife, Ann. In that same year, the east end and much of the north wall of the noble shell of Christ Church Newgate Street, burned out in the Blitz of 1940, was demolished to make room for a road scheme which was not implemented. In the same year, the Sun Insurance building at the corner of Bartholmew Lane and Threadneedle Street, the last work in the City of Charles Robert Cockerell, an architect of the lineage of Sir John Soane and George Dance the Younger, was demolished. While this was going on, a ruined tower which was the last of St Mildred Bread Street, was removed.

This is how things happened in 1973 but over the years, the climate of opinion on conservation has changed for the better and the Society can claim some share in bringing about that change, being one of the organisations helping to guard the City's heritage of buildings and its special ambiance. There is widespread acceptance that conservation and heritage should be taken into account; and that the distinctive character of the City, including that unique web of lanes and courts off the main streets, is amongst the factors which make it an attractive place to carry on business, so favouring a prosperous City, one of the three great financial centres of the world.

The City Heritage Award, intended to honour particularly commendable conservation of older buildings, has been a continuing success and has helped in forming that climate of opinion in favour of heritage. It was organised in collaboration with the Painter-Stainers Company just five years after the Society was founded, and the first award was given in 1978 for the restoration of 31 Newbury Street, Smithfield, which forms a corner with Bartholomew Close. Not far away in Middle Street is the elegant *Hand and Shears* pub (top right) of about 1830, adjoining several smaller Georgian houses.

Middle Street and Newbury Street, where older houses exist alongside one-time warehouses now converted to apartments, are now a pleasure to see and are highly valued. However, at the time of the first Award, the state of much of the area of Bartholomew Close was deplorable. A great deal of Newbury Street and of Middle Street might have been awaiting the end! But 31 Newbury street was one of the things pointing in the right direction and was, we like to think, an early step in the revival of this part of Smithfield which has proved such a conservation success story.



Now, we must look carefully at the rather drastic rebuilding scheme outlined in the *Barts Square* proposal. The recent Smithfield Conservation Area Character Summary rightly highlights the beneficial effects which have arisen in the area of Bartholomew Close from the process of “*incremental change*” having taken place “*within the framework of an historic street pattern*”. The present proposals appear far more drastic than the more gradual approach which has allowed this area to be “*reinvented*” while still preserving its character.

Recently there have been an apparent increase nearer the centre of the City in conversions of older business premises to residential use, indicating that the City is increasingly a desirable place to live. There are a number of factors to consider in assessing the appropriateness of this trend which will be explored in the City Heritage seminar to be held on 22 May.

The tower block known as “The Walkie Talkie” appears likely to have a wholly regrettable effect on the City skyline. Eastcheap is near to it and, in contrast to the wartime destruction of streets nearer the Tower of London, remains one of the most complete 19th and early 20th century thoroughfares in the City with a varied and interesting array of Victorian buildings especially on its north side. We hope that, once the towering neighbour has been completed, they will be improved for new uses.



'Walkie Talkie' building on far right

For a third year, we notice with regret the desolate, run-down appearance of Edwin Lutyens's splendid bank building, with faces to Poultry and Princes Street, in the heart of the City.

COMMENTS ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Society continues to monitor planning proposals. Some of the more important are as follows:

100 Minorities, EC3N 1JY

Hotel

This is an application for yet another hotel in this area which is in The Crescent Conservation Area and is adjacent to a World Heritage Site.

The new proposal directly fronts onto the Crescent and has an impact on this important Heritage Asset. Although the existing building is an average recent building, the new proposals are higher (nine storeys) and will adversely affect the Crescent due to its bulk and overshadowing.

There are already several notable objections on file and we would concur that the proposals are not of a suitable quality and refinement, considering the proximity and view from the Tower of London. The design is competent but no more. This is a significant site within the City and the proposals are disappointing considering what could be achieved. We also have concerns at yet another hotel in the area as this will affect the balance of uses. Perhaps some form of mixed use would be more appropriate and would allow the bulk and massing to be looked at more sensitively.

These proposals really do need to be reconsidered in the context of the historical significance of the site.

Little Britain/Bartholomew Close EC1

Mixed use redevelopment:

Office/Residential/Retail uses

The scheme is, in principle, to be welcomed and for the most part fits in with the historic context and townscape. However, the new block onto Little Britain, Montague Street and Albion Way does not fit in with the locality due to its bulk and sheer glass facades. In particular the Little Britain elevation is over dominant despite the recent amendment. There is not articulation to this block and quite simply lacks imagination and has none of the character of the Smithfield/ St. Bartholomew area or the King Edward Street/Little Britain area.

15 St Swithin's Lane EC4N 8AL **Demolition – Hotel/Restaurant**

Good design which is sympathetic to its context.

2 Wardrobe Place EC4V 5AH

Office to residential C3 Short stay

Looks promising but requires further consideration.
Approved

62 Upper Thames Street EC4V 3EH

Create new riverside walkway

To be encouraged

Approved

39 - 53 Cannon Street London EC4M 5SH

(i) Extension and alteration of the ground floor facade to include the installation of three new shop frontages; (ii) Change of use of the two existing retail units from shops (Class A1) to flexible retail use (Classes A1, A2, A3, A4); (iii) Change of use of 126 sq.m of basement and ground floor office space (Class B1) to flexible retail use (Classes A1, A2, A3, A4). (A total of three ground floor retail units are proposed).

Not controversial therefore no comment

Cliffords Inn 138 Fetter Lane London EC4A 1BX

(i) Demolition and replacement of existing facade to Fetter Lane (ii) Demolition of two external staircase structures, (iii) Infill of existing office space in the rear courtyard in two locations (272sq.m), (iv) Part change of use of lower ground, first and second floors from B1 (offices) to C3 (residential) to provide eight residential units (519sq.m), (v) Replacement windows on lower ground, ground, first and second floor levels, (vi) New spiral staircase and landscaping of southern courtyard.

Average design that fits in with townscape. It is an improvement on the existing pastiche façade. Not controversial.

River Plate House 7 - 11 Finsbury Circus London EC2M 7EA

Redevelopment of the site behind partially retained facade to South Place and erection of a new 9 storey office building (ground floor plus 8 storeys) (Class B1(a)) with alternative uses of part ground and part lower ground for retail (Class A1/A2/A3/A4) and/or gymnasium (Class D2) and/or offices (Class B1(a), roof top and basement M & E plant, together with servicing facilities, one disabled car parking space, cycle parking and associated ancillary works. (Total floorspace: 23,152sq.m (GIA)).

Still being assessed.

52-54 Lime Street & 21-26 Leadenhall (Prudential House), 27 & 27A Leadenhall Street (Allianz Cornhill House) & 34-35 Leadenhall Street & 4-5 Billiter Street (Winterthur House) London EC3

Demolition of the existing buildings and erection of 2 basement levels and ground plus 38 storey tower comprising office (Class B1) use [58,196sqm GEA] and retail (Class A1/A3) uses [1,072sqm GEA] with ancillary access, servicing and landscaping. [Total 59,268sqm GEA] This application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement which is available for inspection with the planning application. Copies of the Environmental Statement may be bought from DP9, 100 Pall Mall, London, SW1Y 5NQ, at a cost of £100 as long as stocks last.

Very concerned at height, bulk and density. The angular glass facades seemed contrived and, in context, it is overbearing. Still being assessed.

Sugar Quay, Lower Thames Street, London EC3R 6EA

Demolition of the existing building and construction of a new building of basement, ground and part 9, part 11 storeys plus plant comprising 165 residential units with associated residential facilities and 658sq.m. of retail / cafe and restaurant / office (A1-A4/B1) use at ground floor, creation of vehicular access point from Lower Thames Street, works of hard and soft landscaping and all necessary ancillary works (total area 26,030sq.m. GEA).

Foster and Partners

This is a reworking of a David Walker scheme given consent in 2011, for office and retail. This scheme is predominantly residential, which is an appropriate use for this riverside site. However it is adjacent to the Custom House and close to the Tower of London and is more of the same from Foster! Next to the historic context, it is disappointing visually and needs to be re-worked to realise the potential of this key site. We are also concerned at the use proposed. Still being assessed.

THE CITY HERITAGE PAINTER - STAINERS AWARD 2012



Entries for the 2012 Award included the well-landscaped churchyard of St Stephen Walbrook; the churchyard of St Botolph Bishopsgate made more accessible; the impressively restored late 19th century Bishopsgate Institute built in the

Arts and Crafts manner; and the buildings of the former Whitbread Brewery in Chiswell Street, now transformed into a first class hotel. After examining the details of the entries and visiting each in turn, the Assessors agreed by a majority, that this year's award should be made for the conversion to a hotel of the brewery premises by the Montcalm Group. This site comprises the frontage of Chiswell Street between Silk Street and Milton Street, which includes a variety of premises, dating from 1700 to the early 20th century.

On 9 July the Lord Mayor, Sir David Wootton, accompanied by the Sheriffs, (the lay Sheriff being our long-time member, Deputy Wendy Mead) and the Lady Mayoress, attended to unveil the plaque marking the Award. They were met by Deputy Richard Regan, representing the Chief Commoner, the Chairman of CHS and the Master of the Painter-Stainers Company. The Alderman and Deputies for the Ward of Cripplegate, the Chairman of Built Environment, other members of the Corporation, the City Planning Officer and representatives of the Hotel were amongst those who attended.

At the reception following the unveiling, at which the Lord Mayor presented a certificate to the architect of the scheme, the Chairman spoke of the importance of the site in the City's business history and the variety of the heritage buildings which it included. A tour of the hotel followed.

The Society, along with the Paint-Stainers Company, valued this opportunity of recognising and honouring the enterprise and foresight implicit in the commissioning of this scheme and the skill and imagination exercised in carrying it out. This group of buildings, which augmented the City's trade for two centuries, has now been given a new role.

The Assessors for 2012 were:

Desmond FitzPatrick BA FSA (Chairman)

Lady Freeman OBE PhD Dip Cons (AA) FSA

Andrew Hunter RIBA Painter-Stainers Company

Harry Evans FRICS Painter-Stainers Company

Peter Wynn Rees RIBA City Planning Officer, Corporation of the City of London

Douglas Woodward CBE President of the Society, attended for the discussion.

EVENTS

The first visit of 2012 was in February to the Bishopsgate Institute, in the Arts and Crafts/Art Nouveau manner, uncommon in the City. It re-opened in 2011 following a £6m refit, to continue its work begun 120 years ago.

In April we visited The Library of the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral and the Model Room where Wren's Great Model for the Cathedral is displayed: a great *might-have-been* of London. The Library houses an astonishing collection of books including such rarities as William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament, the first such rendering into English.

There was so much interest in this event that a further visit was arranged in the autumn for those unable to join the first!

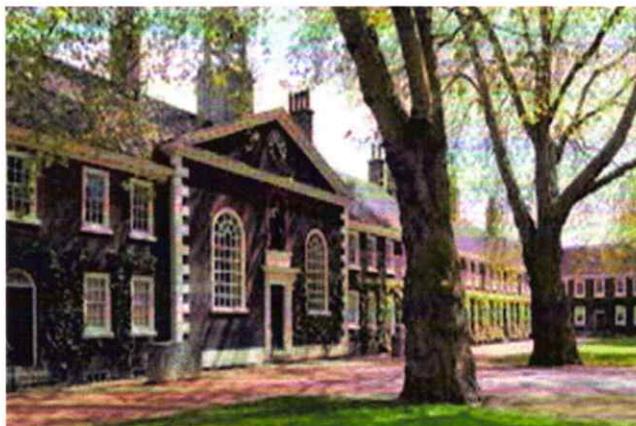


In July, there was a visit to the Montcalm Hotel in Chiswell Street (above) to see the remarkable transformation of the buildings of the former Whitbread Brewery into a first class hotel which received this year's City Heritage Award. The Chairman led a tour of the courtyards, which still preserve the impressive austerity of the old brewery buildings and the long, varied frontage to Chiswell Street. The tour of the interior showed how reminders of its industrial past, particularly brick vaulted and iron beamed ceilings, had been retained as features of character.

The Society's Annual Dinner was held at the hotel in October with the architect of the scheme, Andrea Cesati, as Guest of Honour.

The Clerkenwell Priory of the Knights of St John was dissolved in the 1530s along with many other religious houses in the City of London, but the Priory Gateway at Clerkenwell, much restored, survives as the headquarters of the revived English Order of St John. In August, members enjoyed a guided tour of the Museum, with its display of memorabilia

of the work of St John's Ambulance in the two World Wars, the crypt and the restored priory church.



As a Christmas event, members visited the Christmas Past Exhibition at the Geffrye Museum (above) to see eleven of the rooms transformed into Christmas scenes of the last four centuries. The museum is housed in the one-time almshouses of the Ironmongers' Company built in the 18th century.

Finally, for a second year, members joined in the Christmas Service of Carols and Lessons at the church of St Botolph Bishopsgate. This early 18th century church was crowded to the galleries for the well-loved service which the Society hopes to include in its annual programme. Mulled wine and mince pies followed!

Events for 2013 will include the AGM on 25 March, the Seminar on 22 May; a visit to Tallow Chandlers Hall (tba); and a walk in Spitalfields (tba). Details will be circulated.

Finally, may I thank all of our committee for their hard work and all of you for your continued support!

Desmond FitzPatrick, Chairman

The Society's Executive Committee 2012

C.Douglas Woodward CBE
Desmond FitzPatrick BA FSA
Peter Luscombe RIBA
Marina Nicholson
Patrick Burke
Les Breadmore
Anthony Hemy RIBA

President
Chairman
Deputy Chairman
Hon. Secretary
Membership Secretary
Hon. Treasurer
Planning Applications & Webmaster

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