

VAUXHALL GLASSHOUSES

THE EXCAVATION of the Vauxhall Pottery site (1977-81) has stimulated documentary research both in the Vauxhall area and in adjacent Water Lambeth. Some glasshouses were near neighbours of the pottery. One set, later amalgamated, on the east side of Vauxhall Street constituted the famous Duke of Buckingham's Glasshouse (c 1663-1786). To the west of Vauxhall Street in the grounds of the old Vauxhall Manor House proper another glasshouse was set up by John Bellingham. He held a post at Court in 1655, later secured some glass Patents (1679 & 1685, with application for another in 1692). He had managed the Duke of Buckingham's Glasshouse between 1671 and 1674, this being divulged in a Suit that he took against the Duke in 1676. In manorial records for Vauxhall the Bellingham glasshouse is clearly shown on the Thomas Hill map of the manor of 1681; and correspondence of the same year with the Dean & Chapter of Canterbury, owners of the manor, is most revealing. A neighbouring tenant threatened not to renew his lease because of the fire risk and indicated that one of two glasshouses had already been burnt down. The Dean & Chapter commissioned a Survey of the site and this reported distances between buildings of interest and also that the brick wall surrounding the site, clearly shown on Hill's map, was nine feet high. This reflects the secrecy with which glassmaking was carried on. The tenant's letter said that the glasshouse had recently been erected and it can be assumed that this was between 1675 and 1680. The glasshouse was advertised as producing plate glass. Its life was short though: the Lambeth rate book for 1700 gives Mr Bellingham's name, but with the word 'empty' inserted alongside. However Bellingham probably made a lot of money out of glass and it is significant that from the whole glass industry only he and John Bowles, who took over the Buckingham site, supported the glass tax imposed from 1695 to 1699. Excavation at the Vauxhall site included a trench cut through a lane running north of the factory, and from its lower layers came many small fragments of fused glass.

ROY EDWARDS

PROPOSED NEW MUSEUM OF CIVIL AVIATION AT CROYDON

AS THE RESULT of a very unusual — perhaps unique — piece of co-operation between an historical society and a financial group, a potentially major new London museum looks likely to come into being.

Airport House, Purley Way, Croydon, the former terminal building of Croydon Airport, London's chief airport between the two world wars, is the subject of a scheme proposed by its owners, Guardian Royal Exchange Assurance plc, to enlarge and update a dilapidated building for commercial purposes, at the same time conserving and restoring its historic core a Grade II listed building). It proposes then to turn this core over to the Croydon Airport Society to run as a museum of Civil Aviation.

The areas earmarked for museum purposes are the main concourse and booking hall, which is to be restored to its original appearance complete with its airline counters (Imperial Airways, Air France, KLM, SABENA, Deutsche Luft Hansa) international time clock tower, book stall, post office etc.; and the control tower complex. The control tower will have restored radio equipment; and its prominent radio mast will be rebuilt on the roof. The two areas will be linked by an enclosed roof-height walk

(similar to one which formerly existed) and will be self-contained. The scheme also includes the restoration of the airfield elevation of the terminal building to its original 1928 appearance.

The remainder of the building will be turned into modern warehousing, a use which GRE believes will be sufficiently profitable to justify the cost of the scheme; which, including the museum proposals, is estimated to be some £3 million (about half this would in any case be needed for repairs).

Croydon Airport became London's Customs Airport in March 1920, formed out of the amalgamation of two First World War flying fields. The Purley Way terminal was opened in 1928, replacing earlier 'temporary' buildings on a different site, demolished to enlarge the airfield area. It was then the most up to date airport in the world, the precursor of modern airport design and the terminal is therefore an important industrial archaeological monument.

The idea of the Croydon Airport Society arose among people brought into contact over the writing and publishing of the first volume in a (not yet completed) four-volume history of the Airport, which Sutton Libraries and Arts Services published in 1977. The Society was formed in 1978 after a successful campaign for the listing of the terminal at a time when its sale, likely to lead to demolition, was proposed.

The announcement of the new proposals for the building were made by Sir Peter Masefield (Chairman of the British Airport Authority from 1965-71, and now President of the Croydon Airport Society), together with Mr Peter Dugdale, Chief Executive of GRE, at a Press Conference held in Airport House on November 15th. Also present were top level representatives from the Science Museum and the RAF Museum, Hendon, both of whom have promised support for the new museum.

The scheme is subject to planning approval, which it is hoped to obtain in January 1983. If so, talks will commence on the setting up by GRE and the Croydon Airport Society of a Trust to manage the Museum; and it is hoped that, if all goes well, there will be an opening to the public within three years.

DOUG CLUETT

(Chairman, Croydon Airport Society)

RARE MEDIEVAL GLASS ON DISPLAY

A UNIQUE GROUP of early 14th century decorated glass beakers, recently discovered on a City building site, is on show at the Museum of London. The glass was found by archaeologists from the D.U.A. in a cess-pit on a site in Foster Lane. Many of the fragments have been pieced together by the Museum's conservation department.

Only three complete such vessels exist in the world and generally only isolated fragments are found, but represented here are pieces of at least six vessels painted with glowing enamel colours. The decorative motifs include both religious and secular subjects—the Virgin and Child, saints, a pelican in its piety, horsemen among stylised foliage, coats of arms and heraldic lions. Two of the beakers apparently carry the name of the man who made or possibly commissioned them. These seem to translate from Latin as 'Master Ba . . .' and 'Bartolameus made . . .'. It might be possible to connect the group with 'Bartholameus' known from Venetian documents to be a 'painter of glass' working in Venice between 1290 and the 1320s.