

NOTES AND QUERIES—LONDON DAY BY DAY

By N. G. BRETT-JAMES, M.A., B.LITT., F.S.A.

1. EAST AND WEST.—The interest taken by a large class of people in the history of London is proved by the fact that hardly a week-day has passed during the past 12 months without some paragraph on its many-sided story in *The Times*. As contrasting items we may note the changes in Trafalgar Square in the West End, the memorials to Jellicoe and to Beatty, the cleaning-up of the Nelson statue, and the temporary alarm of the pigeons at the crowds of spectators who hardly left them room to perch; and, at the other end of the City, Tredegar Square in Stepney, with its handsome Georgian houses, and the wrought iron gates on Stepney Green.

The crowds in Trafalgar Square were so huge that *Time and Tide* had a competition for verses about the mass of folk

“edging round Trafalgar Square
Half suburban London there,”

with characteristic references to the “variegated half-submerged electric light, and their fishtails bifurcated, tastefully illuminated.” The ceremony of unveiling the portrait busts of Jellicoe and Beatty was performed by H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester, with a big representative parade of 2,500 Servicemen, including 80 shipmates of the two admirals.

2. SOUTHWARK.—The “South Bank” or the “Surreyside,” London’s 26th ward, was an important district when there was only one bridge over the river in the London area.

The bear and bull-baiting pits, the Globe and Swan Theatres, other places of less repute, and a collection of coaching inns gave it an active interest in London’s doings. When Mr. Pickwick arrived in Southwark more than a century ago, it was still a place of importance; but the earlier building of other bridges further west, and the rebuilding of London Bridge on a wider scale, made possible by the casting vote of Samuel Favell, one of the founders of Mill Hill School, directed travellers across the river, either to the West End or to the City, and Southwark continued to decline. Even within living memory substantial citizens had comfortable living quarters in Southwark; but the South Bank “gradually took on the seedy, semi-industrial aspect” we know to-day.

The Abercrombie-Forshaw plan aimed at restoring prestige and prosperity to Southwark; and the great exhibition of 1951, with its huge concert hall and a national theatre on the South Bank, should do something to help the good work. It may attract across the river a public which "not only hardly knows where Shakespeare's Globe stood, but is even beginning to forget the original whereabouts of the Old Vic."

Another part of the South Bank scheme is to build new Government offices on the waterfront leased to the Ministry of Works by the L.C.C., and a great chance here occurs of giving Lambeth not only something of the solemnity of Whitehall, but also a little of the gaiety of Piccadilly and the Strand.

The Times made a stimulating suggestion that on the ground floor and even on the first floor of the Government offices there should be shops and restaurants, which with the theatre and concert hall might restore to Lambeth some of its mediæval fun and prosperity. There must be gaiety instead of gloom after office hours in this magnificent site with its splendid possibilities, and the Ministry of Works must at all costs avoid "the conventional conception of a Government building as a grandiloquent symbol of aloofness and authority."

3. RECORDS.—It was an interesting gathering that met in the Vintners' Hall in the summer of 1948 to welcome Lord Greene, the Master of the Rolls, and to thank him for the splendid service which he had rendered to the preservation of archives. Few of us who then had the pleasure of renewing our friendship with him realised that it was to be one of the last of his public appearances in his very important office.

Equally valuable has been the work put in by his deputy, Sir Hilary Jenkinson, under whom some of us have had the great good fortune to study the reading and interpreting of archives. Nothing has been too much trouble for these two stalwarts, and our society has reason to be grateful to them for making the Hendon Public Library a receptacle for manorial and other documents, and thereby making it possible to place there the results of our excavations at Sulloniacæ.

Besides the very important work that goes on in this storing of archives and the training of archivists, there are also from time to time special exhibitions of interesting documents, as well as the permanent collections of important historic treasures

always open for the public. In 1948 there was a fascinating exhibition of famous treaties, so important in the history of the British Commonwealth.

One exceptionally interesting treaty, which was recently discovered at Ham House, is the abortive effort of James I in 1604 to unite England and Scotland, an attempt which was not actually achieved until 1707. Sir Hilary Jenkinson gave in *The Times* an important and detailed account of this extremely rare document, with so many signatures of distinction, including autographs of Bacon, Southampton, Nottingham, Pembroke, Cecil, Monteaule; most of them employing the "sweet Roman hand." There are 63 fine seals pendent on 20 plaited laces of green silk and bullion about a foot long. This proposed treaty, which "should make perfecte that mutuall love and uniformitie of manners and customes" for which King James was so anxious, was not very popular in England.

The Scottish Parliament was not over keen but was ready "to bury its particular greif in a lake of perpetuall oblivion." Then came the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, and by the time the terrific excitement thus caused had died down it was clear that the Union of England and Scotland would not be forthcoming.

4. THE ABBEY.—Westminster Abbey naturally figures large in any record of "London day by day," and an event of unusual interest and importance occurred when for the first time in history the head of a foreign state was there commemorated. A tablet was unveiled by the Prime Minister and Mr. Churchill "To the honoured memory of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1882-1945. A faithful friend of freedom and of Britain, four times President of the United States. Erected by the Government of the United Kingdom." Both sponsors and the Dean spoke in honour of Mr. Roosevelt, and Mrs. Roosevelt signed the Abbey visitors' book after the ceremony.

Another historic event celebrated in the Abbey was the ringing of 5,000 changes on the bells to celebrate the birth of Princess Elizabeth's son, Prince Charles.

Two royal chairs and footstools for the use of the King and Queen have recently been presented to the Abbey by the Canada Club. Their Majesties attended the Dominion Day service at the Abbey, which was conducted by the Dean.

In the adjoining church of St. Margaret's, Westminster, the

official church of Parliament, a service was held to commemorate the restoration by Miss Jean Howison of the Milton Memorial Window, originally given in 1888 by George W. Childs, of Philadelphia, and damaged during the war. The choir sang Milton's hymn, "The Lord will come and not be slow"; T. S. Eliot, O.M., read the sonnet, "Methought I saw my late espoused Saint," and Dr. E. M. W. Tillyard, Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, gave an address on Milton.

5. THE RIVER.—When one of the Stuart monarchs threatened to move the capital from London and Westminster, it was a very intelligent citizen who remarked that he did not mind the capital going as long as they left the Thames where it was. Although there must be countless Londoners who never see the river it still remains one of the capital's leading assets.

In order to extend the river wall on the South Bank from County Hall to Waterloo Bridge granite has been quarried from the Pelastine quarry, near Penryn, Cornwall. Granite from the same spot was used for the new Chelsea and Lambeth Bridges and for other parts of the Embankment.

We are getting used to the new Waterloo Bridge, and a particularly fine water colour of the river with the bridge in the foreground, looking eastwards to St. Pauls and the Tower, has been painted by Norman Wilkinson, R.I., for the Tunnel Cement Company and reproduced as a calendar.

There is a considerable difference between the average high and low tidemarks of the Thames, apart from any exceptional shortage of water. For the past seven years an enthusiastic collector, *Robin Green*, has been collecting many thousands of objects of all kinds and all periods from Roman times onwards on the shore of the River Thames. The collection has been bought by the City Corporation with the help of a substantial donation from the Clothworkers' Company, and is now on exhibition in the Guildhall Museum.

It includes coins of nearly all periods, dice, tobacco pipes, glass beads, gem stones, spoons, bullets; and 8,000 cloth seals, varying in date from 1450 to 1750. Some of these were private marks of London merchants; but more are seals affixed to bales of cloth by the King's Alnager to indicate its satisfactory quality. The state of the London woollen industry should be clarified by these leaden seals.

Another interesting collection of buttons, most of pewter and some of glass, from the fifteenth century onwards, is probably among the finest extant.

6. DR. ISAAC WATTS.—Dr. Johnson has been severely criticised for including an account of Dr. Isaac Watts in his *Lives of the Poets*. But time has justified him, and an interesting exhibition was held at the Central Library, Stoke Newington, the village where Watts lived for 36 years as the guest of Sir Thomas Abney. It marked the bicentenary of his death at Abney House in 1748. During his stay he had his own special armchair which Sir Thomas allotted to him, and this has been in the Reed family now for more than a century. It now occupies a place in an Elstree home near to chairs belonging to John Knox and to Cardinal Manning. New College, Hampstead, lent Watts' watch; the British and Foreign Bible Society lent his pocket Bible, and there were many editions of his books, including *Divine and Moral Songs for Children*, two copies of which were very appropriately open to show "How doth the little Busy Bee" (satirized by Lewis Carroll), and "Let dogs delight to bark and bite."

Watts' most famous hymns are: "When I survey the wondrous cross," "There is a land of pure delight," and "O God, our help in ages past."

7. REPLANNING AND REBUILDING.—In the City, though an immense amount of restoration is still needed, much has been done. The Royal Exchange has been repaired and wall paintings of historical subjects have been restored. The Bank of England was given the unusual compliment of being a "Profile" in the *Observer*. In the *Listener* there was a thorough revaluation "of what many regard as Wren's masterpiece," St. Stephens, Walbrook; in any case an experiment before launching on the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. It is tragic to remember that, whereas before the second world war 32 of Wren's 51 City churches survived, that number is now reduced to 15.

The complete rebuilding of those parts of the City which were destroyed in the Blitz involves an area of 232 acres, rather more than one-third of the historic "square mile." An immediate effort is being made to develop 7 areas totalling 43 acres, only one-sixth of the total, during the next five years;

which gives the grim suggestion that the rest may have to wait derelict for anything up to even 30 years. The first area to be tackled is that to the east of St. Paul's, bounded by the Churchyard, Cheapside, Bread Street and Cannon Street; and a compulsory purchase order is to be made.

The cost of this area of 8 acres will be a million and a half pounds; and it is suggested that the rest of the total area should be acquired over a period of years and be developed either by the Corporation or by granting building leases. There is a widespread feeling that the development is too slow. "Every month that the priceless acres of the City remain derelict there is a loss of hundreds of thousands of pounds in trade and commerce."

REPORTS OF THE SOCIETY'S MEETINGS

MEETINGS AT THE BISHOPSGATE INSTITUTE

1949.

21st January. English Mediæval Architects. John H. Harvey.

25th February. Annual General Meeting and Exhibition. Address by Major T. F. Reddaway, M.A., F.S.A.

The Exhibition was also open on Saturday, 26th February.

18th March. Excavation of Roman remains at Brockley Hill. Miss K. M. Richardson, F.S.A.

8th April. London merchants in quest of the eastern trade. Mrs. L. B. Ellis, M.A.

VISITS

1949.

8th January. BRUCE CASTLE, Tottenham. Conducted by C. W. Rock, B.Sc., A.L.A.

This building is chiefly of seventeenth century date and at one time was occupied by Sir Rowland Hill, originator of Penny Post. It contains a remarkable collection of exhibits dealing with the development of the postal service and also many local antiquities. The arrangement and use of the Museum as an educational instrument is worthy of the highest praise.

12th February. THE MANSION HOUSE. Conducted by one of the Staff.

Erected by George Dance, Senior, in 1739-53, on the site of the old Stocks Market, it is the official residence of the Lord Mayor and serves also as a Court of Justice and prison.

Visitors are shown the Egyptian Hall, State Drawing Rooms, Long Parlour, the Lord Mayor's Police Court, and also the strong room, where are displayed the state swords, mace and valuable plate used on civic occasions.

26th March. CHELSEA. Carlyle's house, Crosby Hall, etc.

The custodian, Mrs. Strong, conducted members over Carlyle's house