

## POST-WAR LONDON

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

Chairman of Council and Honorary Editor.

(a) Previous Planning. (b) Greater London. (c) A Variety of Schemes. (d) London's Defects. (e) Past Successes. (f) Crooked Streets. (g) Past Town-planning. (h) Smaller Units. (i) Local Authorities. (j) Air Transport for London. (k) A Plan for Westminster. (l) Bloomsbury. (m) Railways in London. (n) The River Front. (o) Roads. (p) Open Spaces. (q) A Nobler City. (r) Conclusion.

## (a) PREVIOUS PLANNING.

It is not easy to determine the limitations of the interests of an Archaeological Association; but at a recent conference a speaker stated, without contradiction, that "it covered everything from pre-history to railway stations." If this can be accepted as authoritative there can be no possible objection to a discussion in the *Transactions* of the various plans for the rebuilding and reconstruction of London, which have been suggested and partly made possible by the great blitz of 1940-41.

Sir Christopher Wren was probably not the first who wanted to re-design London, and he certainly was not the last; though in the two centuries and more since his death little enough has been done to make a reasonable design on which the gradual development of what William Cobbett rightly called the "Great Wen" might depend.

It is not always realised that a great chance for planning London occurred more than a century before the Great Fire, at the Dissolution of the Monasteries. London soon spread unplanned over the circumambient area thus set free, and, before the Armada, problems of overcrowding were beginning to arise.

The various rules and regulations did not solve the problems that were causing so much anxiety, mainly because they were never rigidly enforced. When a century later the city suffered nearly total destruction in the Great Fire it was perhaps natural that those who wished to present their plans for reconstruction to King Charles II should have concerned themselves chiefly with the "Square Mile." It is perhaps fatally easy to be wise after the event, but it seems clear to-day that far more important was the government and planning of the ever-growing suburbs. The incorporation of the suburbs achieved by Charles I in 1636 might well have solved the first

problem, while the second was partially tackled by Cromwell in his rigid rules as to suburban buildings.

The four main plans for rebuilding London in 1666 had one very serious fault in common. They almost completely ignored the London of the immediate past, and proposed to construct an entirely new city, admirable no doubt, but almost entirely destructive of existing streets. That is why many people to-day do not regret the decision not to accept any of the plans put forward, but realise what a thousand pities it was that Wren did not devote his genius to a far-reaching scheme for developing the suburbs, and that the schemes put forward by John Evelyn and Sir William Petty for what was really a 17th century Green Belt fell on deaf ears.

All those who to-day and to-morrow are putting forward schemes for a new London have as their object not to wipe the London that we know off the map, and to construct something which might look well on paper, but would not be London, but to "endeavour to retain the old structure, where discernible, and make it workable under modern conditions." They believe that, as time goes on, modifications will certainly have to be introduced in the details of their scheme, but that if the outline is drawn rightly there will be nothing fundamental to undo.

#### (b) GREATER LONDON.

Petty's green belt would have been no more than two miles from the centre of London; the proposal made by Dame H. O. Barnett in 1910 envisaged a green girdle five miles out; but the incomplete series of open spaces that almost surround Greater London to-day are nowhere less than ten or eleven miles from Charing Cross. The area inside this girdle comprises 850 miles, whereas the Lord Mayor's London is one square mile only, and this amorphous semi-regulated expanse contains a population of eight and a half millions.

Whatever plans are put forward for one part or another, for the City, the County, the Metropolitan Police Area, the London *Regional Transport District*, there must be a close co-operation between the various authorities, so as to secure a master plan for the Greatest London, so as to profit by the many mistakes and few successes of the past, to take advantage of the wonderful chances given us in the present, and to make such comprehensive and far-reaching schemes as to anticipate some at least of to-morrow's problems.

A recent letter in *The Times* emphasises the need for dealing "with the whole area of Greater London, an area some five times as large as the County of London, in a most comprehensive manner. . . . Proper planning cannot take notice of arbitrary boundaries. . . . Great London is the unit, not the L.C.C. area or that of the City, detailed plans of which should be governed by a master plan prepared on a regional basis."

(c) A VARIETY OF SCHEMES.

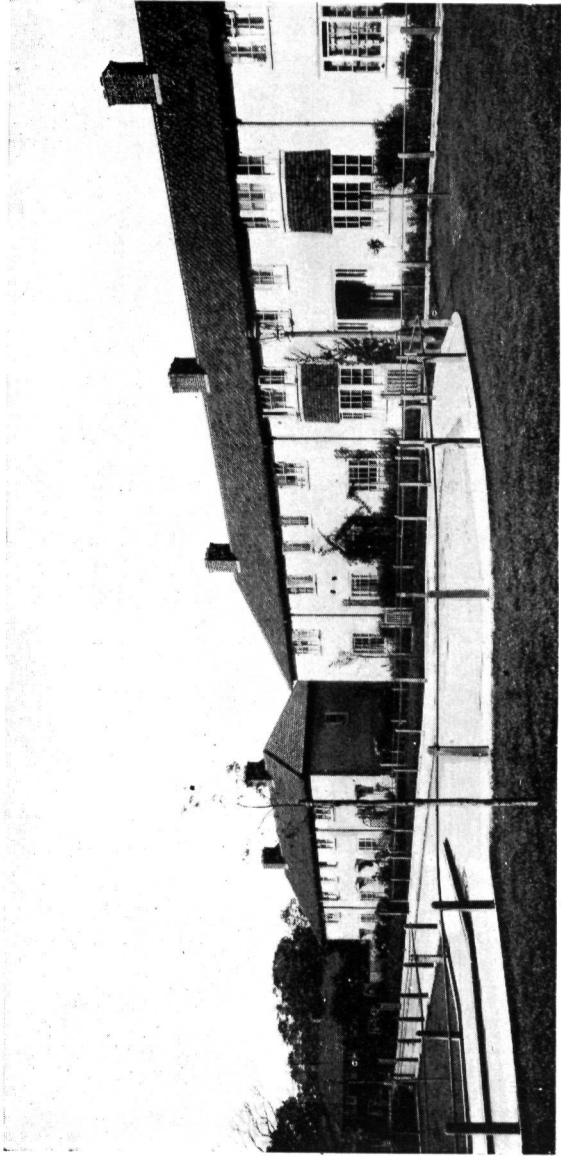
Our Prime Minister has given us a slogan for the task of making a better London for our children, as he has in so many other exacting duties, when he says "we have one large immediate task in the replanning and rebuilding of our cities and towns."

Of all the schemes and suggestions and visions for London's future, three stand out most prominently:—*London Replanned*, The Royal Academy Planning Committee's Interim Report, issued by *County Life* in October, 1942 (2s. 6d.); *Greater London*, towards a master plan. Second Report of the London Regional Reconstruction Committee of the R.I.B.A. issued in May, 1943; and *The County of London Plan*, prepared for the L.C.C. and published in July, 1943, by Macmillan & Co. (12s. 6d.) Other items which may be studied with considerable profit are current issues of *Town and County Planning*, issued quarterly (2s. 6d.); *Sixty Years of Planning*, The Bournville Experiment (1s.); *Living in Cities*, by Ralph Tubbs, Penguin Books (1s.); *Your Inheritance*, an uncomic strip, Architectural Press (1s.); *Town Planning*, by Thomas Sharp, Penguin Books (9d.); and, of course, The Barlow, Scott, Uthwatt and Beveridge Report, where they apply.

Several striking pronouncements and warnings have been given with a view to helping progress and hindering attempts to "sabotage" the reformers' effort. We need "a faith which rises above the petty criticism by those who persist in finding difficulties, and thereby nullifying progress." We must "endeavour to assist in seeing that apathy and selfishness may not be allowed to strangle achievement." Cities "cannot afford to be further strangled or disfigured for lack of freedom of action"; citizens must refuse to "listen to the pessimists who scoff at our dreams as Utopian, in order to conceal their unwillingness to help," but must make "certain that they get the most efficient and most imaginative planners." We must and can



ROEHAMPTON COTTAGE ESTATE, WANDSWORTH, SURREY. STARTED 1921.



WATLING COTTAGE ESTATE, HENDON, MIDDLESEX. STARTED 1925.

have "the London that we want; the London that people will come from the far corners of the world to see; if only we determine that we will have it; and that no weakness or indifference shall prevent it."

And finally a word of warning: "The fate of London in the post-war years will be one of the signs by which posterity will judge us, and by which it is right that they should judge us . . . if we do not set our feet on the right road, we shall have missed one of the great moments of history, and we shall have shown ourselves unworthy of our victory. Therefore let us begin now."

#### (d) LONDON'S DEFECTS.

The chief defects of modern London, apart from its monstrous unplanned hugeness, are (a) depressed housing, or more succinctly, slums; (b) traffic congestion, partly caused by the lack of circular and orbital roads; (c) inadequacy and maldistribution of open spaces, by which those with large gardens of their own frequently have magnificent parks and commons at their doors, while the slum-dwellers, with altogether inadequate back-yards, have none; (d) indeterminate zoning, or a careless jumbling of residential quarters and industrial areas. To these may be added a fifth, which is partly the cause and partly the effect of London's haphazard growth; and that is (e) the all too frequent swamping of local identity and patriotism, when a once self-contained town, village or hamlet is absorbed in the ever growing outward sprawl.

In various ways the main schemes for replanning seek to remedy these five very obvious defects, coupled with a very definite determination to utilise far more fully London's greatest open space, the river Thames. Not only are its banks largely spoiled by ugly factories and sordid slums, but few Londoners ever have the chance that their parents and grandparents had of travelling up and down its waters in steam boats. It is often forgotten that in Stuart and Hanoverian times the quickest and most convenient method of getting from one end of London to another was by wherry.

#### (e) PAST SUCCESSES.

In spite of the lack of large-scale planning in the past, London and the big or biggish towns have splendid examples of good artistic commonsense schemes. Princes Street, Edinburgh, and Wood's crescents in Bath come to mind in towns outside

London; while, in the Metropolis, the planning of Bloomsbury with its squares; Inigo Jones's schemes for Covent Garden where "open spaces and ordered terraces replaced crooked streets and alleys"; even the original Seven Dials; St. James' Square and the adjacent streets; the Holborn property of Bedford School; the North side of Clapham Common attributed to Wren; Piccadilly; Mayfair; Nash's Regent's Park and Regent Street; the development of the Harley estates to the north of Tyburn Road; Cubitt's building in the south westerly farm which Mary Davies brought to the first of the Grosvenors; the Clissold Park area of Stoke Newington; all these are pleasing oasis in wastes of sordid unplanned slums. The unrestricted building of recent centuries has resulted in a degradation of our cities, which are no longer "the concentrated expression of men's culture." As a result of the deterioration of city life "the disillusioned citizens try to escape to suburbia. But it is no escape. Here they hope to get the advantage of both town and country, but in vain. The community life of the town, the friendliness of the market, and the comfort of surrounding buildings are all missing; time, money and energy are wasted in wearisome travelling; and each new suburban house pushes the country further away. Let us put a stop to the suffocating expansion, and reconstruct the centre of our cities, so that we can again live in them and play in them. Let us give the countryside new vitality by putting it to work again. Let us regain the thrill of passing from town to country. Town or Country, not universal suburbia." This is a very good summary by Ralph Tubbs of some at least of the aims of our schemes of reconstruction.

#### (f) CROOKED STREETS.

In the replanning of London it will be worth while to re-read what Hilaire Belloc has to say about Crooked Streets. He would be content with broad straight arteries for your main streets, and allow the small crooked alleys, so "packed with human experience and reflecting in a lively manner all the chances and misfortunes and expectations and domesticity and wonderment of men" to remain untouched. Most of us would be sorry if the authorities were to straighten out Marylebone Lane, which winds so picturesquely down towards Oxford Street, or Walbrook, which follows the winding course of the old stream, so graphically described by John Stow, as Crooked Lane, whose name indicates its character. Belloc

claims that any town that has not been mummified is bound to have crooked streets, individual, and with a soul and character all their own. He feels that "there is no power on earth that can make men build straight streets for long. . . . The crooked streets will certainly return."

And specifically about the City of London he says that as if "by a special Providence the curse of the straight street has never fallen, so that it is to this day a labyrinth of little lanes." It was intended after the Great Fire to set it all out in order, with "piazzas" and boulevards and the rest—but the English temper was too strong for any such nonsense, and the streets and courts took to the natural lines which suit us best." And he gives as his final word "There is no ancient city but glories, or has gloried, in a whole foison and multitude of crooked streets. There is none, however wasted and swept by power, which, if you leave it alone to natural things, will not breed crooked streets in less than a hundred years and keep them for a thousand more." So let us reflect awhile before we straighten out all the winding lanes of the City, or destroy quite all the alleys and courtyards impinging on Fleet Street and the Strand.

#### (g) PAST TOWN PLANNING.

English towns were not always the drab unplanned semi-slum areas which pass for towns to-day or did so yesterday. When Alpha of the Plough found himself in Tewkesbury he thought it almost too good and beautiful to be true; and no one can visit Ludlow, Ledbury, Leominster or Weobley, to mention only four beauty spots of the Welsh Marches, without realising that our mediaeval ancestors had grasped some of the essential principles of town-planning. But ever since the Industrial Revolution, our towns have been mainly repulsive and inefficient. D. H. Lawrence, writing a dozen years ago about *Nottingham and the Mining Countryside*, characterised English towns as "A great scrabble of ugly pettiness over the face of the land," and he went on to complain that, although we are essentially town-folk these days, we do not "know how to build a city, how to think of one, or how to live in one."

When one begins to discuss an appropriate size, one instinctively compares London's size to-day with the area that alarmed the Tudors and the Stuarts, perhaps an eighth and a quarter of a million respectively; and then recalls the gloomy fact that a spectator on the edge of the Green Belt



to-day is gazing at a hotch-potch of eight and a half million inhabitants.

When someone tells us that New York threatens to outrival London in population, we feel inclined to say "Let it." I believe it is only the spread of New York outside its own State that prevents it from having officially the largest town population in the world. To the sane observer there is nothing for pride in these huge monstrosities. London in the main grows outwards, New York chiefly upwards; and the recent experience of the 27,000 tenants of the Rockefeller Building, when for the second time in a few months the lift operators struck work, makes one wonder whether expansion is not better than upward growth. Almost anything that can be done to diminish the population of London will be welcome, and the proposal to extricate 600,000 from the central area is sound. But we must beware of making more and more suburban areas. Satellites not suburbs must be our watchword.

#### (h) SMALLER UNITS.

Another very real improvement is the recognition that it is possible to separate a number of communities in the area immediately round central London, and perhaps to restore to them their local patriotism and civic consciousness. In an excellent map in the *County of London Plan*, entitled *Social and Functional Analysis*, an attempt is made to leave the city as a main commercial and financial centre, the West End for Law, Government, Shopping, Clubland, Museums, University, Art Galleries, and the like; while, immediately outside, there are to be integrated areas with souls of their own, such as St. John's Wood, Paddington, South Kensington, Belgravia, Chelsea, Pimlico, Lambeth, Walworth, Bermondsey, Stepney, Shore-ditch, Finsbury, W. Islington and Camden Town. Some of these communities are well defined, others have become merged in the continuous built-up area, but still have their independent spirit.

Railways, canals and industrial concentrations have sometimes cut across the very centres of these one-time separate villages, but most of them have community centres with churches, schools, houses of refreshment and entertainment, shops; though the High Street with its main shopping centre is often a through traffic road of considerable importance, producing acute congestion and the risk of frequent accidents.

It should be possible to limit the amount of through traffic by constructing by-pass roads, and in no case should the needs of a suburban area be sacrificed to the claims of people who have no other interest in a district than to get through it as quickly as possible. It should never have been possible for the Croydon authorities to consider seriously the question of destroying the Whitgift Hospital, built in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in order to allow motor cars to dash through Croydon at an increased speed.

The problem of restoring identity to the near-in suburbs will not be easy, especially on the south side of the river. To separate Lambeth from Southwark and Brixton, Peckham from Camberwell and Bermondsey, New Cross from Lewisham and Deptford, all this may need drastic treatment at once, and infinite patience over half a century. But the existence of Blackheath and Greenwich Park makes the integration of Greenwich, Lewisham, Blackheath and Charlton far easier.

Development on the west of Watling Street or Edgware Road has been far quicker and less planned than on the East. Compare, for instance, the different problems suggested by recent developments in Kilburn, North Paddington, Kensal Green, Harlesden, Willesden and Brondesbury, where building is almost continuous, and open spaces comparatively rare, with the corresponding areas on the other side of the Edgware Road and the L.M.S. main line from St. Pancras to Elstree. There you have St. John's Wood, Swiss Cottage, Hampstead, Golder's Green, Hendon and Finchley; and it is not difficult to know when you have passed from one to the other.

Take Hendon, one of the most recently developed areas near London, the largest non-county borough in the Kingdom. There is little difficulty in tracing its boundaries, and it has taken good care to emphasise them. In the main, its western boundary is Watling Street, its eastern is the Dollis Brook, its southern edge is marked by Hampstead Heath, and its northern limit is fixed by the Green Belt emphasised by Grim's Dyke and Scratch Wood. It has model forms of development in the so-called Hampstead Garden suburb, mostly in Hendon, but partly in Finchley, and in the L.C.C. Watling estate, both of which show within limits how an area should be developed. Hendon still consists of half-a-dozen old manorial villages, Elstree, Edgware, Mill Hill, Hendon, Child's Hill, and Golder's Green, and very marked local patriotism is still maintained in

these more or less self-contained communities. We must try to preserve or restore some such pride all over the London area.

In an important contribution to *The Times*, Lewis Silkin, M.P., L.C.C., agrees that London must not be considered in future as "one immense urban agglomeration," but must be split up into separate communities, each about the size of one of the smaller London boroughs, self-contained but not parochial. The authors of this L.C.C. scheme warn us that "the segregation of the community should not be taken far enough to endanger the sense of interdependence on the adjoining communities on our London as a whole." As always, reformers have to try and hit on the happy medium between *laissez-faire* and rigid planning, and to combine local patriotism with civic pride in London as a whole. It will not be easy to make the best of both worlds. The words of the authors of the L.C.C. plan may well be quoted to show the aim they have in view with regard to their communities so obviously descended from ancient villages.

"It should be one of the first objectives of the planners to disengage these communities, to mark more clearly their identities, to preserve them from disturbing intrusions such as streams of through traffic, and generally to reconstruct them where reconstruction is necessary owing to war damage or decay. . . . To ignore or scrap these communities in favour of a new and theoretical sub-division of areas would be both academic and too drastic; the plan might look well on paper, but it would not be London."

A very obvious way in which our Society and the dozen others with whom we have combined in the *English Town Exhibition* can help is to foster a keen interest in the history of the various communities already referred to, and to try and provide, where nothing of the kind exist, an adequate history of the ancient village and modern township.

In several of the units which still retain their local patriotism there are adequate collections of village antiquities, of books, maps, pictures and prints relating to the locality, and in some cases a satisfactory local history. One might mention, as example, the collections in Westminster, St. Pancras and Camberwell, to take three districts well inside the L.C.C. area; while Hendon and Hampstead have made or received fine collections and have good histories available, Hendon on a small scale, Hampstead in three magnificent volumes.

#### (i) LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

Special regard must be paid to the work of the London

Regional Reconstruction Committee of the R.I.B.A. in their efforts to produce a scheme towards a master plan for Greater London.

One of the snags that lie in the path of all reconstruction of the metropolis is the number of local authorities that are concerned. Besides the County of London, there are parts of Essex, Herts, Surrey and Kent, and the whole of Middlesex included in Greater London; while there are ninety-five smaller areas—two cities, 26 metropolitan boroughs, 1 royal borough, 3 county boroughs, 36 boroughs, 26 urban districts and one rural district, that of Elstree.

But, as has already been suggested, this difficulty has also its advantages, and most if not all of those who are trying to plan a new London insist that "reconstruction of domestic communities and industrial areas, and re-identification of locality is of the utmost importance." G. D. H. Cole, in one of his recent books, reminds us that the shrinking of the world through speed of communication and transport makes us members of what must soon be a world state. Global war must give place to global peace, and global reconstructions. But the average men and women need a unit of government and a place to live in far smaller and more within their comprehension, and this they can find in London in the re-identification of locality, which has been lost by the errors and apathy of the past. "The identity of the community is as essential as that of the family in our way of life. The wearing of ermine and chains of office by a hundred and one figure-heads of our administrative bodies within the region cannot alone stimulate a proper interest in a man who does not know where his borough begins and where it ends." The proposals of the London Regional Reconstruction Committee here coincide with those of the London County Council, and promise, if and when achieved, to give vital life to good citizenship and to promote intimate and sympathetic administration.

Here is one of the main principles of the L.R.R.C. clearly set out.

"Re-cultivated urban areas must be self-contained communities, each with its own local civic sense and pride, each provided with its own amenities, including schools, clinics, hospitals, recreations, shopping and administrative areas, and with provision for local light and domestic trades and industries and local distribution facilities.

"Definite limitation of size, area and population of these entities must be regarded as a planning factor; it is of the greatest importance for our future life, thus to provide and to protect amenity and re-create social consciousness."

If all this argument is true, and there seems a wealth of agreement on the subject, it is all the more odd that the White Paper on Education should plan to take education of all kinds out of the hands of the Borough Education Committees and pass it over to the County. This is an especially retrograde step in a county like Middlesex where the population is so enormous. It is most certainly not in the best interests of the community that local patriotism should be thus stifled, and the *almost unanimous voice with which the various local authorities* have condemned the scheme should secure its prompt and permanent rejection.

(j) AIR TRANSPORT FOR LONDON.

A very obvious result of the war will be the growth of civil aviation, and some schemes must be devised for dealing with this problem as it concerns London. After the last war, Hendon and Croydon loomed large on the horizon as airports, but each had certain disadvantages. One of the chief difficulties was the problem of getting reasonably quickly from these aerodromes to the centre of London and the main railway stations.

The authors of the L.C.C. plan suggest that, "if . . . Croydon continues after the war to be a major aerodrome serving London, a greatly improved connection with the Central and Victoria districts would be ensured by carrying out the prepared main radial road via Purley Way, King's Avenue, Tooting Bec and Clapham Road." Many of these problems will be solved if the principal roads and rail proposals in the Plan materialise. There is, of course, an alternative solution, that is the use of planes of the gyroscope type, which could land on interior open spaces or even on roofs of buildings in the central area.

Their suggestions are not yet definite, but Regent's Park, Hyde Park, Camberwell, Kidbrooke, Wimbledon Common and Crystal Palace have all been considered, and in addition "the main-line railway companies have been approached as to the possibility of utilising the roofs of railway stations and the considerable areas of sidings adjoining." They do not like the idea of an aerodrome of 200 acres in the heart of London, but consider that seaplane bases might well be constructed on certain lengths of the Thames, utilising if feasible the river loop at the Isle of Dogs or the longer stretches adjoining Plumstead Marshes.

This is where another scheme comes into play, forming part of the Master Plan prepared by the London Regional Reconstruction Committee of the R.I.B.A. The plan for air transport was prepared by R. F. Lloyd Jones and Graham Dawbarn, both experts in architectural requirements and the demands of aviation, and envisages "an inner airport in the Poplar district of the East End immediately to the north of the Isle of Dogs, which is planned as a new dock basin for the Port of London. The airport would be connected by main traffic roads to the central area of London and by both the tube and long-distance railways. It is about two miles from the Bank of England, and the surrounding area would be kept free from obstruction."

The aerodrome, which is for passenger and freight traffic operating over non-stop stages of not more than 800 to 1,000 miles, would have two double runways, giving fair directional landing, varying in length from 5,500 to 6,000 feet, with subsidiary single runways 5,700 feet long. An important feature of the scheme is the fact that much of the area concerned has been heavily blitzed, and is therefore in the nature of a temporary open space.

One airport would, of course, not be sufficient for the growing demands of Londoners. Not more than 3,000 passengers a day could arrive and leave, and so it would be necessary to have such additional aerodromes as Fairlop to the east and Heston to the west, as well, perhaps as the northern and southern locations of Hendon and Croydon. "The great airport would be not merely a pattern of runways with a terminal building; an airport was both a hive of industry and a lung, and it might be more, an attached lung. The town planner, the architect and the engineer must make airports not only an essential but an attractive part of reconstructed England."

Another scheme for a Thames Airport is put forward by F. G. Miles, Chairman of Phillips & Powis, Ltd., the builders of such admirable training aircraft as the Magister and Master, and Guy Morgan, the well-known architect and engineer. They have based their plans on the theory that what seemed lavish yesterday becomes inadequate to-morrow. Other considerations led them to conclude that runways nearly 3 miles long will be required, and that it will be necessary to provide not only an aerodrome for land-planes but also a large artificial lagoon for flying boats.

This scheme goes much farther down the Thames than the

Isle of Dogs, and to make their plans more definite they suggest that part of the Kentish Coast between Cliffe and All-hallows, and opposite Canvey Island. No official notice has as yet been taken of the scheme and no authorities have been consulted nor estimates made as to the cost of the land. Road and rail services to London are quite easy; cement works near at hand would ease construction; the development could be done, if necessary, in stages, and the lagoon could be modified or postponed. The transport services are provided in the main buildings, which are between the airfield and the lagoon, and are on three levels one above the other. Hangers for sea and land-planes are conveniently near, and the lateral movement of passengers and freight is thus reduced to one hundred yards. The site is conveniently flat and the main runway lies in the direction of the prevailing winds, moving from south-west to north-west.

An estimate has been made for the whole scheme and works out at about £30 million, not a very big sum compared with the war costs which we incur to-day. The airport could handle eight million passengers each year and a very substantial amount of freight. This plan for a big down-stream aerodrome adapted for the needs of the next 20 or 30 years demands our very close study.

#### (k) A PLAN FOR WESTMINSTER.

A notion on which all the planners seem to be agreed is to give special consideration to focal points, where there may be heavy concentration of traffic which may need competent layout or possible reorganisation. It should not be impossible to combine successful handling of traffic with good architecture. The L.C.C. Plan and that put forward by the Royal Academy both tackle these problems with great skill.

Consider first what may be called the Westminster Precinct Area. Five important roads with heavy volumes of traffic converge on Parliament Square, while at the same time it is a centre for countless visitors to the noble group of historical buildings around the nation's ancient shrine, which "calls for a more tranquil setting without the distractions associated with great volumes of quick-moving and heavy traffic," but with a dignified and reasonably spacious environment for ceremonial occasions. The Royal Academy Plan proposed a new processional way from Victoria Station to Buckingham

Palace, so as to give visitors from the Continent a magnificent first impression.

From the new *Place* formed by this Avenue, opposite the south side of the Palace in Buckingham Gate a diagonal road is aligned on Westminster Cathedral, thus revealing an impressive view of Bentley's masterpiece. The road, incidentally, is continued along the north side of the Cathedral as part of the route planned by Sir Charles Bressey connecting South Kensington with Lambeth Bridge.

The L.C.C. plan is more directly concerned with the immediate Abbey precincts, and suggests that Victoria Street, instead of passing right down to the Abbey, is to divide into two at Christ Church. One branch is planned to go by Broadway, Birdgate Walk and Great George Street to Westminster Bridge and the Embankment. The other would lead by Strutton Street and Horseferry Road to Lambeth Bridge. Only local traffic would be allowed in the area, and the precinct, which is a pivot of our national life, both religious and secular, would be left as a region with a really permanent atmosphere of dignity and calm. From Lambeth Bridge there would be a link with the main road running westwards to Cromwell Road; or one passing by Regency Street to Vauxhall Bridge Road, and the Embankment. Another important addition would be the proposed terminal from Charing Cross to a point west of Victoria Station.

#### (l) BLOOMSBURY.

Another example of the suggested precincts is a proposed University area to include the British Museum, University College, and the University of London. This area is already one of the best laid out in the whole of London, as it contains much of Bloomsbury, a real masterpiece of design by successive Dukes of Bedford. It is not proposed to interfere with the South Kensington region, which houses certain branches of University life, and contains such a wealth of museums of various kinds. There will have to be at least two educational centres in London, but the central one will perhaps always be the more important. The Bloomsbury area is rapidly becoming a parent centre for professional bodies and seats of learning, and students' hostels should be organised as occasion permits until the whole area and other areas immediately adjacent share the same characteristics. Gordon, Tavistock, Russell, Woburn, Bedford and Bloomsbury Squares are naturally



left intact; and the actual precinct extends from Great Russell Street on the south roughly to Euston Road on the north, with Southampton Row, Woburn Place and Tottenham Court Road as its lateral limits. There should be no through traffic in this area, but the enclosing roads will be widened and developed with sub-arterial tracks. There are also north-south and east-west tunnels which will take off any traffic which needs to get from one side of the precinct to the other without causing noise or accident.

Here again the Royal Academy Plan has a detailed scheme for Bloomsbury. The old mean streets in front of the Museum are cleared away, and a broad vista, or forecourt, to the facade is opened from Holborn, where there is a traffic circus. The forecourt is flanked with hostels for university students and includes St. George's Church without any obscuring building round it. It forms a fine contrast to the Museum beyond. In the Royal Academy plan a new road from the Holborn traffic circus connects Bloomsbury with Covent Garden.

#### (m) RAILWAYS IN LONDON

London's first railway came in 1836, and the century of subsequent growth has not been marked by any very clear plan of action. Even the recent amalgamations have not done much to bring order into the somewhat chaotic duplicated system. The existing arrangements give to the metropolis "a highly complex, and in many respects unco-ordinated, railway system, with a multiplicity of sidings, goods yards and station buildings to meet the various demands." It perhaps needs specific statement to remind Londoners that there are four distinct types of railway level in the metropolis. (a) Some railway routes, especially on the south side, are at viaduct level; and this implies elevated stations with cross-over railway bridges giving access to ground level stations on the north side of the Thames. These viaducts are usually ugly in appearance, and they split up the housing areas on the south side without any relation to the historic communities into which they cut. (b) Most of the northern and north-western termini and approaches are on ground level, which take up a great deal of room, but do not obstruct road and water transport and surface development to the same extent as viaducts. (c) Next came sub-way level lines which call for little comment save to say that these include most of the original underground

railways, such as the Metropolitan and District railways. (d) The fourth and most recent kind is definitely some way below the surface, not coming up to ground level until the lines reach the outer suburbs. A good example is the Northern Line which comes out from under Hampstead Heath at Golder's Green, and emerges from under Highgate Hill near East Finchley.

The L.R.R.C. plan for reorganisation of London Railways is drastic, and recommends that most of the terminal stations be given up and the number reduced to four. These would comprise the following:—

- (a) A western terminus (Paddington) serving western and south-western England, part of the Midlands, Wales and some services to Ireland.
- (b) A northern terminus, a combination of Euston, St. Pancras, and King's Cross, with a double-level station, serving the Midlands, N.W. and N.E. England, Scotland and the Irish services.
- (c) An eastern terminus (Liverpool Street) serving eastern England, and the east coast ports.
- (d) A southern terminus (a combination of Victoria, Charing Cross, Cannon Street, London Bridge and Waterloo), serving S.E. southern and S.W. England and the Channel Ports.

This scheme deals of course mainly with main-line and outer suburban traffic, though there will be considerable use for people living close to the centre. Whatever replanning is adopted, it is essential that problems of marketing, of cross-London traffic, peak-loadings due to the flow of workers, subsidiary peak-loadings caused by shopping and recreational activities should be carefully considered.

Electrification, quick service, non-stop sections on the lines will help to solve some of the problems; but it is imperative that the average worker in future wastes less time than in the past in getting to and from his job. These four main terminal stations will be connected as now with an inner ring of railway, and there will be also an outer circle, connecting, among other places, Willesden Junction, Clapham Junction and Bow Road.

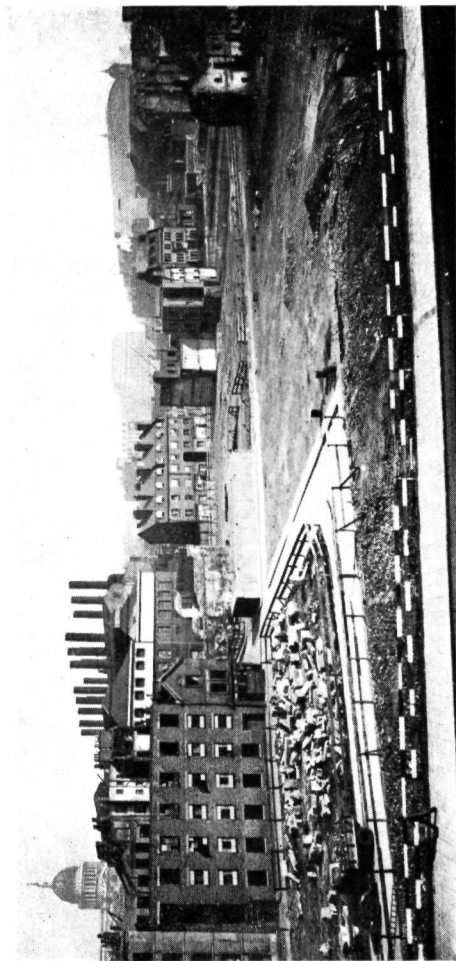
A very important suggestion made by the L.R.R.C. discusses the detrimental effect of main communication on living, and this is to be avoided by eliminating gradually all dwelling houses from close proximity to our main railways, trunk road and canals. The space thus obtained on both sides of these

through ways will be regarded as parkland, and their purpose will be extensive. They will protect living areas from the baneful influence of through traffic, will "bring greater efficiency to the roads, given open and continuous lines of ventilation from the perimeter of the region to the centre, and enable land not fit for living to be used for better purposes. These open areas could be used for recreation, including walking, from the centre to the perimeter, sites for special buildings, such as hospitals, market gardens and allotments. Most important of all, they define the boundaries of properly identifiable areas of living space."

A very important booklet was compiled some years ago by Clough Ellis-Williams, and it emphasised the beauty of Oxford's centre and the sordid slum-like approaches to it from too many points of the compass. The same applies to London, and there is only one really worthy approach to the centre and that is from the north-west. To approach the greatest city in the world by the Barnet by-pass, to run downhill between Scratch Wood and Moat Mount with their adjacent fields and golf course, to drive through reasonably well laid out areas in Mill Hill, Hendon and Finchley Road, to proceed along Avenue Road through Regent's Park, and to enter London either by Baker Street or better still down Portland Place and Regent's Street is to be given rather a magnificent idea of what London at its best can be. It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that there is no other approach to London with a title of the beauty or grandeur that this well-designed entrance gives. All distinguished visitors to our great capital should be landed by plane at Hatfield, whatever part of the world they come from, and proceed to the West End by the route just indicated.

#### (n) THE RIVER FRONT.

In considering problems of the Thames and its banks, one is instinctively thrown back to the plans proposed after the Great Fire of 1666. As Sydney Perks, F.R.I.B.A., F.S.A., the City Surveyor, remarked in 1924, the idea of a quay along the north side of the Thames was not a monopoly of Wren's. Hooke and Evelyn both incorporated this idea in their plans, and there seems to have been a general consensus of opinion on the subject. But the researches of the City Surveyor make it quite clear that the quay or embankment defined in the letters patent issued in the years after the Fire was never built, and



A VIEW FROM SOUTHWARK STREET, LOOKING TOWARDS THE GLOBE THEATRE, TAKEN IN 1943, AFTER BOMB DAMAGE CLEARANCE.

The dome of St. Paul's on the north bank can be seen beyond the power station.

that the clear space of 40 feet from the water line was never kept. So that Victoria and Albert Embankments from Blackfriars to Westminster are an important contribution made only in recent years towards the improvement of the centre of London.

Someone has well called the Thames London's largest open space, and it is certainly surprising that more use is not made of it. The L.C.C. Plan has very clear intentions with regard to the River Front.

"In order to improve the bank of the river for the benefit of the community as a whole, and to bring this magnificent feature more into the life of the metropolis, the Plan proposes an increase in the length and number of stretches available to the public. At present only 9 per cent. of the total river front within the county is used for public open spaces. It is proposed to increase this to 30 per cent., at the same time utilising other stretches of it as a setting for residential and important public buildings with new embankment roads. The aim would be to provide every riverside community with a riverside open space, equipped with facilities for rest and recreation in the form of cafés, bathing pools, garden and riverside walks."—

It is interesting to note that fifteen local authorities in the L.C.C. area have frontages on to the Thames; the Cities of London and Westminster, and the Boroughs of Hammersmith, Fulham, Chelsea, Stepney, Poplar, Woolwich, Greenwich, Deptford, Bermondsey, Southwark, Lambeth, Battersea and Wandsworth. Of these, six have no riverside amenity or open space, while, of the total length of river frontage, just short of 40 miles, practically three quarters is given up to Industry, Wharves and Warehouses and Railways. To effect drastic improvements along the Thames, it is proposed to remove most of the industry and wharves along the Woolwich river front and construct an open space there; and radical changes are also planned for the river front at Greenwich. This is only a beginning, and there is a long-term plan for remodelling the river front of Stepney from the Tower to King Edward VII Park, providing recreational facilities for the community and an appropriate setting for the Tower of London. Such a scheme is made possible because it has been discovered that neglect and decay have brought some industrial properties along the Thames into a dilapidated condition. Enemy action has destroyed and seriously damaged others, and a number of industries do not make adequate use of the river front, and some have no direct connection with the river at all. On the opposite side of the river, the Surrey side, it is proposed to

extend Southwark Park to the river, and this open space will stretch as far as the Surrey Docks on one side and to Cherry Garden Stairs on the other.

A very fine air view of Thames side in the Central Area shows the two river banks in striking contrast. From Westminster eastwards, or even along the whole north side from Vauxhall Bridge to Blackfriars, there are magnificent buildings, fine parks, animated streets and a spacious and attractive embankment. On the Surrey side again, with the exception of St. Thomas's Hospital and the County Hall, there is hardly anything to attract. There is no dignity or design, only a dull monotony presenting a depressing semi-derelict appearance, now much intensified by war damage. A diagrammatic comparison with Paris and Moscow shows how essential and how comparatively simple real improvements would be. Possibly one reason why the Surrey side is so depressing is that public access to it is so difficult, and there is not therefore the same demand for its alteration. A very cogent point of view is put forward when it is suggested that the best way of reducing the barrier effect of a river is to provide enough bridges to echo the same frequency of access as is found in the normal street pattern. To give interval of access across the Thames comparable with that enjoyed in Paris, it is proposed to build two new bridges at Charing Cross and the Temple. It is difficult to see why Londoners ever allowed Hungerford Bridge to be removed from Charing Cross and taken away to help form the Clifton Suspension Bridge. Few things are so exasperating as to drive down Northumberland Avenue for the first time and to find that you cannot drive across the Thames, but must turn to right or left and make use of Westminster or Waterloo Bridge. It is not easy to be patient with the authorities who allowed the deplorable railway viaducts on the south side of the Thames in Southwark. A photograph from the air shows the ancient bridge-head and gate of London disgraced by a sprawling network of lines linking up Cannon Street station, London Bridge and Waterloo Junction. If proof were needed of the incapacity of the Victorians to town plan in London, the L.C.C. book provides it by printing opposite to this deplorable monster of railway abortion Wenceslaus Hollar's delightful picture of Bankside, with the Globe Theatre and Paris Garden—a veritable pleasure and leisure city. Underneath are two recent photographs of portions of Bankside in 1943, showing the splendid site laid

bare by bomb damage and judicious clearance, and suggesting that the first step has been taken towards a comprehensive scheme and sane re-development.

Here is a good example of the method of treatment proposed by the L.C.C. Four maps are published in such a way as to be seen all together, and show the existing situation and three successive reconstruction stages. When the scheme is complete there will be a riverside promenade on the Surrey side from Westminster Bridge to London Bridge, giving more than one mile and a half of riverside amenity. At the London Bridge end there is planned an open space around Southwark Cathedral, with a new roundabout at the junction of Southwark Street and Borough High Street. When the scheme is complete, all the cross-river railways will have been eliminated, and the worst features of Victorian mismanagement will have gone.

#### (o) ROADS.

Another very vital problem which the various authorities have had to face is that of road transport. The tremendous growth of pre-war traffic led to frequent blockages, much delay, and needless risks. It is only necessary to point to the number of accidents on the roads to show that drastic changes are needed to make that aspect of London life a little safer for democracy.

The L.R.R.C. devised some axioms with regard to these problems which may here be emphasised (a) Arterial roads must be regarded as a part of the national system, and linked up with it, for long distance use by efficient modern vehicles at reasonable not restricted speeds. (b) They should be regarded as limiting factors for areas of local planning, but they also tend to be destructive of amenities and a danger to life and limb. (c) Access to arterial roads must be restricted to a minimum number of planned convenient points by means of fly-over roundabouts and other types of junctions eliminating interruptions of fast traffic. (d) The modern motor vehicle is more advanced in efficiency than the roads it has to use; especially in regard to its speed which is so hampered by blind-corners, cross-roads, speed-limits, unbanked curves and inadequate provision for the pedal-cyclist and the pedestrian.

The L.R.R.C. envisage four circular roads round London, the two inner ones being for "Internal Distribution." When the North and South orbital roads are complete they should

serve as a first "Coarse sieve" for sorting traffic, while the north and south circular roads provide a second "Fine sieve" for the same purpose. Wherever possible, trunk roads should be planned to pass through continuous open spaces and along parkways. This planning would reduce accidents, protect amenities, and emphasise the essential barrier nature of trunk roads, especially if they are associated with existing canals and trunk railways.

The aim of the L.C.C. planners is in many ways the same, though the exact details may be different. Everyone seems to agree with the aim of segregating fast long-distance traffic from traffic of a purely local nature. As Sir Charles Bressey points out in a review of the L.C.C. Plan in *The Spectator*, the object of the Survey of 1937, over which he presided, was to secure fluidity of traffic; the aim to-day is canalisation of traffic.

The L.C.C. have planned three circular roads, the first running round from just east of the Tower to Kensington Gardens, across the river by a bridge at the S.W. and by a tunnel at the N.E. "B," called an arterial ring road, is roughly the same as the second ring road suggested by the L.R.R.C. Its aim is to "facilitate the circulation of dock traffic round central London and between the docks, marshalling yards and industrial centres, notably those on the western approaches of London." It starts from the N.W. corner of Regent's Park, along the north side to St. John's Wood, between Maida Vale and Paddington, north-west of Bayswater, between Kensington and Shepherd's Bush, then following the line of the railway between Fulham and Chelsea; across the river by a new Battersea Bridge to Clapham Common, Loughborough Junction, New Cross and Deptford, passing by a tunnel under the river to the Isle of Dogs and then northwards on the west side of Poplar between the communities of Poplar and Stepney.

This circular road would be joined at intervals by ten radial arterial roads, connected with the great trunk roads of the country, and crossing some miles further at the "C" ring road. These then are, roughly speaking, Radial Road No. 1, the Great West Road, to Bath and Salisbury; No. 2, Western Avenue, to Oxford and Gloucester; No. 5, Hendon Way, to the Watford and Barnet by-pass and the North, Holyhead, Birmingham and Edinburgh; No. 8, Green Lanes to Cambridge; No. 11, N.E. outlet, to Norwich and Ipswich; No. 13, Barking



## THE PROPOSED ROAD SYSTEM

The system of arterial roads consists of one main ring-road ("B") by-passing the whole of the central area, and two cross routes, incorporating tunnels, to relieve the traffic congestion at the centre. The main ring-road for fast traffic provides access to the radial roads which link up with the national trunk roads.

The sub-arterial road system consists of an inner ring-road ("A") encircling the central area; an outer ("C") ring-road providing "cross country" communication between the outer suburbs; and a series of radial roads.

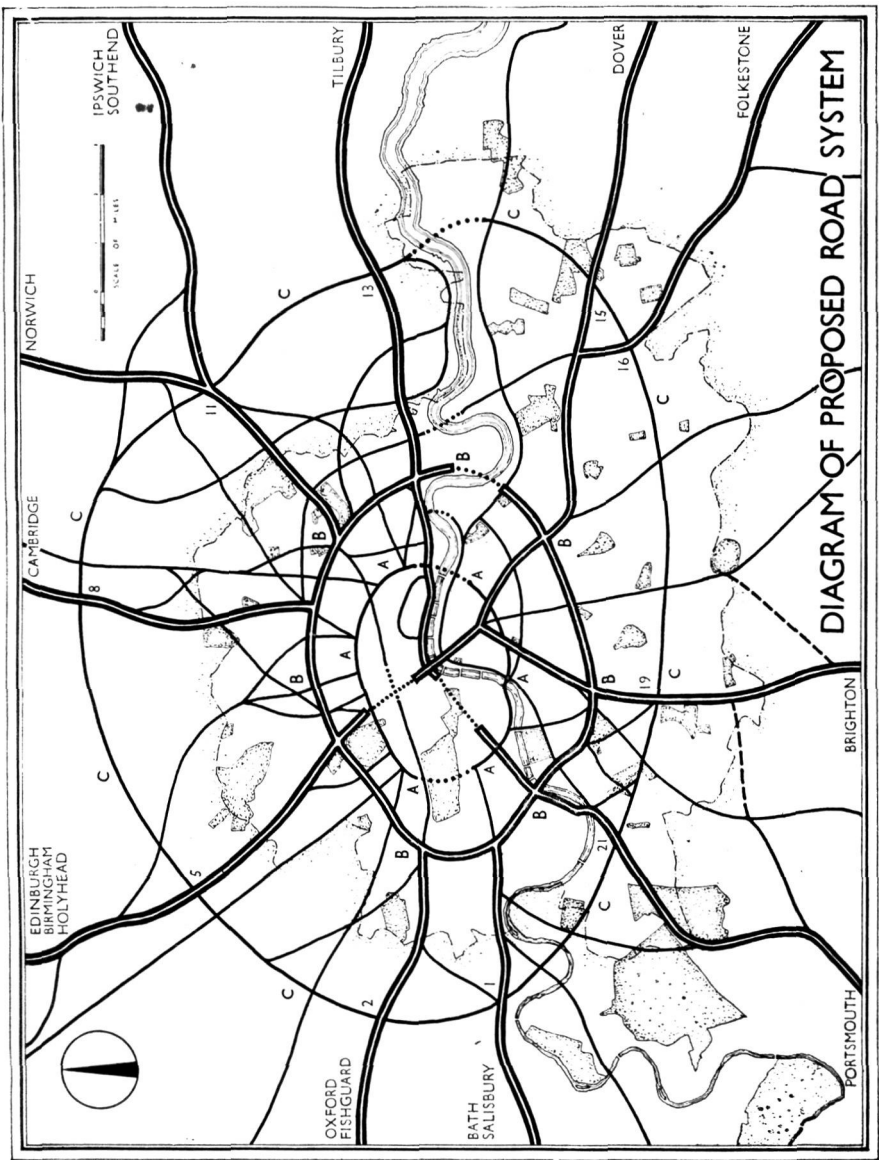


DIAGRAM OF PROPOSED ROAD SYSTEM



By-pass to the Docks and Tilbury; No. 15, Rochester Way to Canterbury and Dover; No. 16, Sidcup By-pass to Folkestone; No. 19, Streatham By-pass to Brighton; and No. 21, the Portsmouth Road.

There is no doubt that much good will have come from the various exhibitions that have been held in connection with the replanning of London. Many people have studied maps of London for almost the first time, and have realised the obvious, but often unnoticed, fact that the Thames at Westminster and the road at Whitehall run south-north and not east-west. Amateur planners have often talked of more bridges over the river without considering the implications involved. Merely to throw two more bridges over the Thames between Westminster and the Tower may serve only to increase the traffic-jams at the Elephant and Castle and St. George's Circus. Now that all possible problems at present visible have been tackled, and room for essential changes on the way provided, we must press on with vigour and foresight.

What is wanted is a united front together with combined operations and an absence of parochial jealousies. In the Scott and Uthwatt reports, together with the various schemes of planning, we can find room for common action on fundamental principles. "The public is entitled to an assurance that indispensable and long-deferred improvements shall not be thwarted by needless obstacles, extravagant claims, and vexatiously protracted procedure."

#### (p) OPEN SPACES.

"Adequate open space for both recreation and rest is a vital factor in maintaining and improving the health of the people." This is the opinion of the L.C.C., and their plan insists that in high developed areas there should be 4 acres of open space per 1,000 people. In Woolwich the standard is 6, in Shoreditch 0.1 acres. Many competent authorities demand 7, but it is hoped that the extra 3 acres per 1,000 will be provided either in the Green Belt or in the wedges of open spaces leading from the Girdle to the county boundary. Very strict control of building will be needed to avoid complete filling up of the remaining open spaces within 10 miles of the centre. It is estimated that 25,000 acres of new open spaces are required for recreational needs, and less than 4,000 acres of undeveloped land within the ten-mile radius are suitable for games.

In planning the wedges from the centre to the circumference there are thirteen large areas that call for co-ordination, running out in all directions and so serving a wide variety of population. Here are some of them :

- (a) The Western Parks from Trafalgar Square to Greenford.
- (b) Northwards from Regent's Park, Hampstead Heath to Mill Hill, where there are large public open spaces, and very choice private parks belonging to Mill Hill School and to Roman Catholic institutions.
- (c) Clissold Park northwards.
- (d) Victoria Park, the Hackney open spaces and the Lea valley north-eastwards.
- (e) Wanstead and Epping.
- (f) The marsh land between Becontree and the Thames.

Here are six possible park wedges on the north side of the river, and they are closely related to the road plan and the community structure, sometimes making a barrier between the old villages which have become so absorbed by continuous urban development.

On the south side there are two park wedges which start from Greenwich, of which (g) extends to Plumstead Marshes, and (h) to Chislehurst and Foots Cray. The others are (i) Peckham-Beckenham-Hayes; (j) Dulwich-Crystal Palace-West Wickham; (k) Clapham-Wandsworth-Croydon; (l) Morden-Nonsuch-Chessington; (m) the Thames-side recreational area, including Barnes, Wimbledon, Richmond, Hampton and Bushey. It is obvious that a start must be made with the crowded areas, for instance—the East End, Islington, Finsbury and the South Bank Boroughs. Here again the damage done by bombing will give a chance for securing immediate open spaces which should not be lost. But in considering the larger schemes it will be necessary "in order to safeguard the realisation of the Plan as a whole, to take such measures meanwhile as will prevent major re-development on sites intended for eventual new open spaces."

A very useful series of tables in an appendix show the existing open spaces compared with the amount required at 4 acres per 1,000. Battersea, Greenwich, Hackney, Hampstead, Lewisham, St. Marylebone, St. Pancras, Wandsworth, Woolwich, and Westminster, are among the local authorities that pass muster. Bermondsey has 76 acres where there should be 244, Camberwell 237 for 724, Deptford 63 for 276, Finsbury 19 for



PLAN OF EXISTING OPEN SPACES.





PLAN OF PROPOSED PARK SYSTEM.

144; Fulham (once a network of market-gardens) 80 where there should be 496 acres. Islington is in a bad way, 60 instead of 908, Lambeth 282 for 880, Paddington 125 for 520, Poplar 107 for 328, Shoreditch 9 for 136, Stepney 9 for 136. The population of all the areas concerned comes to 4 million, so that there is considerable urgency in this open space problem.

The only areas which at present possess the right amount of open space or fall short by only a very small margin are Battersea, Greenwich (able to spare more than half), Hackney, Hampstead, St Marylebone, St Pancras, Wandsworth, Woolwich and Westminster. If eligible private spaces can be made available, the total area suitable for public use is 9,159 acres in the L.C.C. area, whereas the amount required is 13,316, leaving a total of 4,137 acres to be provided.

In Elizabethan and early Stuart times it was possible for any Londoner to get into open country within ten minutes' walk. Those who are privileged to live within sight of green fields know what an enormous boon their juxtaposition can mean. All the planners for post-war London are agreed on the need for open spaces near at hand for every one. The Royal Academy Planners write "One of London's great attractions is its large number of squares and open spaces." This remark, unfortunately, applies principally to the west side, and the Committees most strongly urge that not only squares of ordinary size, but large open spaces with playgrounds for children and adults, be laid out and suitably planned to serve all districts. In general, public parks and gardens should be so arranged that all sections of the people of London should be within ten minutes' walk or half-a-mile of such places of rest and recreation. . . . In the new London, with a better provision of open spaces and well-sited and designed buildings, there should be many opportunities for sculptors to show their skill in collaboration with architects."

#### (g) A NOBLE CITY.

The war has brought an awakening of social consciousness and a new interest in the "efficiency and worthiness of the centres in which people work." It is clear that a great many people who are interested in town planning are no longer content for our cities to be "oppressive congestions of business"; and are determined to banish for ever "disgrace of deformity and squalor."

There is much in London to praise ; perhaps a great deal more of which we must feel ashamed. It is not often that the Sibyl gives us a completely second chance, but the Luftwaffe's bombs have done something which we could never have anticipated. We must retain the many outward signs of past Londoners' "love of order, proportion and seemliness"; and by good planning, purity and propriety in our architectural design, by segregation of industry and dwelling houses, by the controlling of traffic of all kinds—road, rail and air—by a wide increase of open spaces, and by restoring to the people articulate regions of which they can be personally proud, give to the future generations of Londoners the greatest, most efficient and most beautiful metropolis in the world.

(r) CONCLUSION.

The volume produced by Messrs. Macmillan for the London County Council is a remarkable piece of work. Text, maps and illustrations combine to give an authoritative book on this all-important problem of the re-planning and re-building of London. There may be details or even principles on which controversy will be aroused, but no one should venture to offer any criticism until he has read with the utmost care this outstanding volume. It reflects the greatest possible credit on all those who have put their utmost efforts into the publication of an epoch-making contribution towards the solution of a highly complicated network of problems.

## THE BOMBED BUILDINGS OF LONDON

A SPIRITED American account of the Battle of Britain and the bombing of London was entitled *They'll Never Quit*, by Harvey Klemmer, who was over here in 1940-41; and in it he pays a very fine tribute to the average man and woman who faced up to the challenge of those thrilling months. He writes: "No saga of old can eclipse in majesty or importance the saga which is being unfolded in Britain to-day. The people of Britain are heroes to everyone except themselves." And he goes on to discuss this total war, about which the Germans have been talking for years. Göring's mouthpiece, *The National Zeitung*, declared in July, 1940, that the awakening of England would be even more frightful than "the fates which England has already