

LAING'S CUSTOM HOUSE, 1813-27

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The present Custom House (p11. 5 and 6) in Lower Thames Street was built in 1813-17 by David Laing, the Customs Surveyor for Buildings, on a new site somewhat to the west of the old Custom House. It was partially rebuilt in 1825-26 for the Surveyor-General of Works by (Sir) Robert Smirke, better known perhaps for his work on the British Museum and the General Post Office.

It has now become customary, perhaps on account of a remark in Stow's *Survey*,¹ to refer to Laing's building as the fifth Custom House on about this site. It must, however, now be accepted that there is quite definite evidence of at least six Custom Houses here or hereabouts. Although something at least is known about the earlier customs system²—including something in detail, for example, about the *quindecima* of the Winchester assize of 1203³—the earliest Custom House at present known is a late-thirteenth century building⁴ which may very well have been the headquarters from which the *nova custuma* of 1275 was administered (known after 1303 as the *antiqua custuma*). This building—in which Geoffrey Chaucer may have worked⁵—appears to have been superseded in about 1382 by a "second" Custom House, that built by John Churchman and commonly referred to as "the first"⁶—and in which also Chaucer may have worked. This may not have been the house illustrated by Anthony van den Wyngaerde (1540). In any case, Lord Treasurer Winchester was responsible in 1559 for some radical reforms in the customs service⁷, and consequentially for a new ("third") Custom House⁸. The drawings of the period—those of Agas (1592?), Visscher (1616), Gottfried of Frankfort (1638—per Matthew Meriana), Hollar (1647) and Bartholomow Howlett (1663)—are, however, difficult to reconcile. In any case, this early Elizabethan building was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666, and Wren was commissioned to build a "fourth", which he commenced in 1669 and completed in 1671⁹.

In January 1715, however, a fire in Thames Street severely damaged Wren's building¹⁰, particularly its west wing, and because other defects had now become apparent, the building of a "fifth" Custom House was undertaken upon a somewhat enlarged site. Thomas Ripley, Master-Carpenter to the Customs (and later Controller of the Works), commenced this work in 1722¹¹ and completed it in 1725 at a cost of just

over £11,000 (or £2,000 above the estimate)¹². The immense growth of oversea trade in the middle- and late-eighteenth century, however, made Ripley's building altogether inadequate for its purpose, so that statutory power had to be taken to replace the old Custom House¹³ which by 1810 had "been for some time found inadequate to the accommodation of the trade [of the port]", and furthermore was by now "in a state so ruinous and dilapidated" as to be beyond practical repair. Notwithstanding the war it was decided to rebuild, but the problem was how to provide a "sixth" Custom House "without creating a chasm in the despatch of commercial business which would not be destructive to the merchants of Great Britain, nor yet without incurring an expense which could not be justified"¹⁴. Laing's Custom House of 1813-17 was intended to be the solution of that problem.

By this time the current "despatch of commercial business" had become the real priority—Adam Smith had observed the fact before Napoleon. Notwithstanding the interruption of wars, oversea trade was rapidly increasing—the results of the industrial revolution were now coming into full effect. From about 1700 English imports had shown only modest fluctuations until about 1750; in the thirty years between 1760 and 1790, however, imports had about doubled, and they took only twenty more years to double again between 1790 and 1810. Exports too showed the same rapid advance¹⁵. The increasing volume of trade, which could not be met at the legal quays and sufferance wharves within the limits of the City, was now being accommodated in the newly engineered enclosed dock systems down the tideway—the West India Docks (1802), the London Docks (1805), and the East India Docks (1806). Apart altogether from this, the London Custom House served not only as the custom house for the port of London: it was the headquarters of the Board of Commissioners of Customs which administered the customs affairs not only of the whole of the United Kingdom, but also of the "Plantations" (as they were called), the oversea territories in North America, the West and East Indies, Africa, and (later) Australia¹⁶.

Obviously Ripley's Custom House—although in the middle of the century it had had another story added—had become hopelessly inadequate. Most of the public business in the Custom House was transacted in the famous great Long Room, the main features of which Ripley had copied from Wren. Some time after 1810 it was intended to enlarge

this room and in addition to construct an extended wing at the east end. On closer consideration, however, it was realised that this could not be done without that interruption to public business which it was so desirable to avoid. In any case, the already dilapidated state of the building did not warrant such expenditure upon it. The Commissioners of Customs, therefore, pressed the Treasury to provide the funds to construct an entirely new custom house on some nearby site—necessarily in the City, and adjacent to the Upper Pool—so that, upon its completion, public business could be transferred from the old building to the new without any interruption whatsoever. The Lords of the Treasury assented to this course in principle in the May of 1812, and the site fixed upon was that immediately west of the then present site. This site extended from the west of Ripley's Custom House to the east end of Billingsgate Dock, a distance of over 550 feet, embracing thirteen islands of property, eleven side streets and two public stairs to the river. A fire in the May of 1808 had already laid a great portion of this site waste, and a statute was obtained for acquiring by purchase surviving property rights as necessary.

At this time Laing had some ambitious ideas about town-planning the whole area south of Great Tower Street. He suggested extinguishing all property lines between Bear Lane, Water Lane, Harp Lane, St. Dunstan's Hill and Idol Lane, clearing the area, providing a whole precinct round St. Dunstan's Church, constructing a new custom house *north* of Lower Thames Street—rather than south of it—and leaving everything to the south to be an open quay to the river, with a new embankment line. But, said Laing in retrospect,

the execution of this extensive conception would have occasioned a vast additional expense, with a tedious and inconvenient delay; it was therefore laid aside, without proceeding to make regular designs, or more than general calculations¹⁷.

A cession of the rights and interests, therefore, of the proprietors and occupiers of the land and premises immediately to the west of Ripley's Custom House already referred to—as far along as Billingsgate Dock, from the south side of Lower Thames Street to the line of the river, in the length of 551 feet 3 inches—was acquired by the Crown by statutory purchase, at a figure taken on the verdicts of juries at £41,700. The remaining buildings were then demolished, the resultant materials sold on the site in a number of public auctions, and the site

cleared—in due course—for the new works. The provisional estimate for the building of the new custom house was £221,000, against which might be set about £9,500 to be realised by the sales¹⁸. Besides this,

from the Great Increase of Rent which has been derived by the Crown on the recent refitting of the wharves and warehouses, it is presumed that the Old Custom House whether appointed as warehouses or otherwise may be let or sold with the Quays to a considerable advantage to the Crown.

Because of the quite massive character of the proposed new building and the alluvial (and suspected somewhat unsatisfactory) nature of the site adjacent to the river, the Customs and the Treasury thought it best to take an engineer's opinion. By their letter of the 24 January, 1812, therefore, the Treasury requested John Rennie, who had already been concerned in the engineering of the East India Dock, to examine (in association with Laing) "the nature of the Intended New Custom House" and to give an opinion "on the necessity and expediency of securing the foundation with Piles". Rennie examined the plans and the site, and he and Laing made borings on 7 February. It was clear from the samples of earth brought up that the soil to a depth of 18 to 20 feet was "compounded of Brick Rubbish, Black River Mud and thin Earth of a very unequal Quality, and some of it extremely soft". It would therefore "be very hazardous, and occasion a risk" to build a custom house there, unless it were constructed on piles that were "drove at least 2 feet into the hard Ground" which lay more than 18-20 feet below the present surface. (This was important in its sequel.) Rennie estimated that the additional cost of piling and driving would be about £7,000. On the 8 May, the Treasury, "considering the said Custom House as a Building in which durability is the Quality most to be regarded", approved the plans earlier proposed by the Board of Customs, and made the additional funds available for engineering the piles. More detailed specifications were now drawn up by Laing, the job put out to tender, and the contract ultimately let to Miles and Peto for the sum of £165,000. Henry Peto was a master-builder of Little Britain, and John Miles was a City merchant of College Hill. The two contractors and four other sureties were then placed under bond to complete the building (subject to certain conditions) in a good and workmanlike manner on or before 25 March 1815.

There were, however, to be some considerable delays. Firstly, it proved difficult to prepare abstracts of title and the drafts of the relative

deeds and conveyances which should correctly express the purchase by the Crown (by verdicts of the jury under the recent act) of those parcels of property which "were intermingled amidst those which formed the *property of the Crown*". Secondly, the *physical clearance of the ground* after title had been clearly secured proved difficult, as it did to demolish the existing buildings, sell the materials and get them carted away. At the end of November 1812, Laing reported that he expected the site would "be sufficiently cleared to enable the contractors to commence the excavating and Pile-driving of the West Wing" within the "course of a few weeks". In the following March, however, the site was still only "partially cleared", but "not sufficiently so to enable the contractors to commence the Working". In fact the ground could not be cleared and enclosed until 12 July 1813, when some materials were laid by the contractors, and the architects took the levels and marked and staked out the lines for the excavators. The ground was opened and work commenced on 1 August.

By the 25 October—"being the fifty-third anniversary of His Majesty's Accession"—the work was sufficiently advanced for the foundation stone to be formally laid with great ceremony by the Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool, himself a sinecure Collector of Customs by patent appointment. Serious delays and perplexing difficulties, however, set in from the very start. The site was found to be unexpectedly and confusedly intersected by numerous old foundation walls and embankments, "strongly bound and compacted together". These had necessarily to be removed or broken through during the pile-driving process if a sound and trustworthy foundation was to be found. The want of any uniform consistency in the soil, however, the discovery during excavation of "coins and other articles of workmanship", and various receding stone and wooden embankments of earlier river frontages, and other structures, all raised doubts whether the samples of gravel brought up in the engineer's borings had been brought up from a lower virgin stratum or from merely made levels. To meet this difficulty—important in its sequel—"additional piles were required of extraordinary size and length", and greater power to drive them. Additional to these delays was the exceptionally long and severe winter of 1813-14—the frost fair of this winter is familiar—which stopped the progress of pile-driving owing to the hardness of the ground.

Furthermore, the removal of the ancient embankment paving and campshot which, as Laing later said "had been waterbound and com-

pressed for many centuries", left cavities in the site which were rapidly filled by the tides. This delayed the work for hours when the contents were water, and for weeks when it was ice. When at last work could be resumed a great quantity of selected beech piles and other timber had to be rejected owing to damage in the meantime by damp and frost, and "some weeks were lost during the falling and bringing other Beech Trees to supply the Deficiency". By the January of 1814, therefore, the contractors who were under contract (and also under bond penalty) to complete the building within $2\frac{1}{2}$ years of possession of the site, were already well behind schedule. The essential feature of the whole plan was, of course, to build this new custom house alongside the old so that when it was complete the staff could be transferred overnight in such a way as not to create that "chasm in the despatch of commercial business", which it was feared might be "destructive to the merchants of Great Britain".

In the February of 1814 all hopes of this were entirely defeated. On Saturday the 12th

about six in the morning a most dreadful fire burst out from the West Wing of the Custom House. A little after seven about ten barrels of gunpowder exploded which blew up and entirely shattered the East Wing. About eight a report was circulated that many barrels of gunpowder were deposited in the vaults. About half past nine the report was confirmed. The explosion was tremendous¹⁹.

The explosion of the powder carried the burnt papers, ships registers, and a variety of matter as far as Dalston, Shacklewell,

Homerton, Hackney, Highbury and all the adjoining villages²⁰.

Already the next day *National Register* reported, "The whole Custom House is now down except the front wall".

Lest it be assumed that life was altogether leisurely in those days, it should be recorded that the Commissioners of Customs held a Board meeting on the very day of the fire²¹ and appointed a committee of heads of departments to meet next day—Sunday—at the Commercial Sale Rooms, Mincing Lane, to regulate the continuance of the service. It is noteworthy also that on the day of the fire "the Deeds and other Public Documents in the Strong Room" and other surviving books and papers were removed to the nearby Corn Market and to "sheds on the scite of the new Custom House"; that "two Inspectors of the River with

a sufficient number of Trusty Tidewaiters" were appointed to "assist in saving such Books Papers Documents and other property as may be dug out of the Ruins"; and that a committee was appointed to inspect the records saved. After thus dealing with the Customs records, they considered what should be done about a quantity of gold understood to be "scattered about the ruins" and clearly inviting loot.

On the Wednesday

It being stated by Mr. Garland of Sun Street, Hoxton, that the Fields and Houses in the Neighbourhood have been covered with papers blown from the Custom House during the late Fire, which might be collected if means were taken for that purpose, three men "with their Clerks" and four porters were ordered immediately "to repair to Hoxton and use best endeavours to collect as many of the papers in question as possible". The public were therefore informed by printed hand-bills which were "distributed and posted up in the Villages nearby", that officers would attend daily "at the Sign of the Robin Hood and Little John, Hoxton Fields, at the Shoulder of Mutton and Cat, London Fields, Hackney, at the Lamb, Kingsland, and at the Bird Cage, Stamford Hill". The officers were to bring the recovered documents back "to the Custom House, Mincing Lane". The main business transacted in the old Custom House had in fact now been transferred to the Commercial Sale Rooms—leased for this purpose at a rent of £12,000 per annum—until such time as Laing's new Custom House should be ready for occupation.

The unexpected loss of the old Custom House, and the consequent need to lease expensive alternative accommodation, made the completion of the new building, therefore, even more urgent. At precisely this time, however, Henry Peto, the master-builder, was further embarrassed in the pressing forward of the building by the death of John Mills, his partner, whose principal intended function appears to have been to finance the venture. It seems likely that Peto alone, without his financial backer, could not command the resources necessary to overcome the various delays which later ensued. Already in the spring of 1814 it was being officially questioned whether advance payments should continue to be made to the contractor save on conditions that should ensure greater progress in the work.

As time went on it became clear that not only would the new Custom House not be completed by the contracted date—1 February, 1816—but furthermore it would not be ready by 25 March, the expiry

date of the Customs lease on the Commercial Sale Rooms. The irate Board of Customs directed their Solicitor to report whether there had been any actionable breach of contract on the part of the contractor; the Solicitor—being a solicitor—reported that he could not find any actionable breach of contract, because the contract date had not yet been reached. The utmost the Board of Customs could do, therefore, was to urge everyone to press on with the job. Michaelmas, 1816, became the new target date, but already by the August of 1815, notwithstanding that “the Contractor is now making every possible exertion towards the completion of the New Custom House”, possession did not seem likely before January, 1817. The Board in reluctantly accepting this report directed their Surveyor for Buildings to press the contractor “to complete the Building with all practicable celerity so far as is consistent with the safety and stability of the same”.

There were delays both in labour and in materials. In the matter of labour, it seems that in the spring of 1815 the master-carpenters of the City had “made a General Resolution to lower the Men’s Wages”, and Laing (as he afterwards said) had “refrained from urging Mr. Peto to a Breach of so reasonable determination”, this notwithstanding the regret he might feel “at any present impediment to the works that may ensue from it”. In consequence, therefore, of the men “resisting the intentions of the contractors to reduce their wages”, Laing had to admit to the Board in one of his monthly progress reports, that “it has unfortunately happened that for nearly a fortnight past there have been no Carpenters at work on the Building”. They were (not surprisingly) out on strike. Asked later whether the carpenters had “resumed their labour”, Laing reported that “ten carpenters had resumed”, and the “deficiency of hands will be made up in a few days”. Later the men had “at length complied with the reduction of wages proposed by the Contractor”.

In the matter of materials, as late as the January of 1817 work was seriously retarded “in consequence of the repeated delays in the supply of the Craigleith stone”. The architect blamed the contractor, the contractor blamed the stone-merchant, and the stone-merchant blamed the quarry. The quarry in Craigleith pleaded that “the immense sizes of the Landings and great thickness of the Cubical Courses required rendered it impossible to procure them . . . as the Rock in the Quarry is mostly divided into beds of less thickness and breadth”. There was, in any case, great difficulty and expense in “raising such unwieldy Stones

out of the Quarry and conveying them to Leith" for shipment, and even a month later the stone was "not yet delivered on Shipboard". Laing called the delay "beyond any precedent within my Knowledge", and had no doubt that prompt delivery "might have been expedited by an earlier and prompt negotiation with the Stone Merchants". Laing had earlier complained of the contractors' neglect "in providing and preparing sufficient Materials for regular and rapid progress", and Laing had no doubt that, notwithstanding these and other delays, "had the contractor duly exerted himself since that time the new Custom House might have been completed by Christmas, 1816". The difficulty was probably that Peto—after the death of Miles—was unable to finance ahead. The Board of Customs, "with a view to accelerate the progress of the works", had "in several Instances advanced the contractor payments in anticipation of the instalments falling due". In the January of 1817 the contractor undertook to take on more hands and speed up the work generally, in order to assure possession by Lady Day. By the middle of February, however, the Board expressed themselves "by no means satisfied", and on the 21st, fearing "the great additional expense that would be incurred by any impediment arising in the removal of the several Offices to the New Custom House by Lady Day", and learning that the new Custom House could not now possibly be ready by that time, took legal advice as to whether they should sue for the penalty of the bond, and in any case they stopped, at least for the time being, any payments to the contractor, "expressing their extreme dissatisfaction at the delay".

Lady Day came and went, and the contract was not fulfilled: the new Custom House was not yet completed. Although the Board of Commissioners themselves were able to take up their quarters in the only partially completed building on 12 May, 1817, it was not until nearly Michaelmas that Peto the contractor could petition the Board for £19,000 (out of the last £20,000 instalment), the building now being "complete according to the Terms of the Contract (with the Exception of the King's Arms and two Basso Relievos which are to be put on the South Front)".

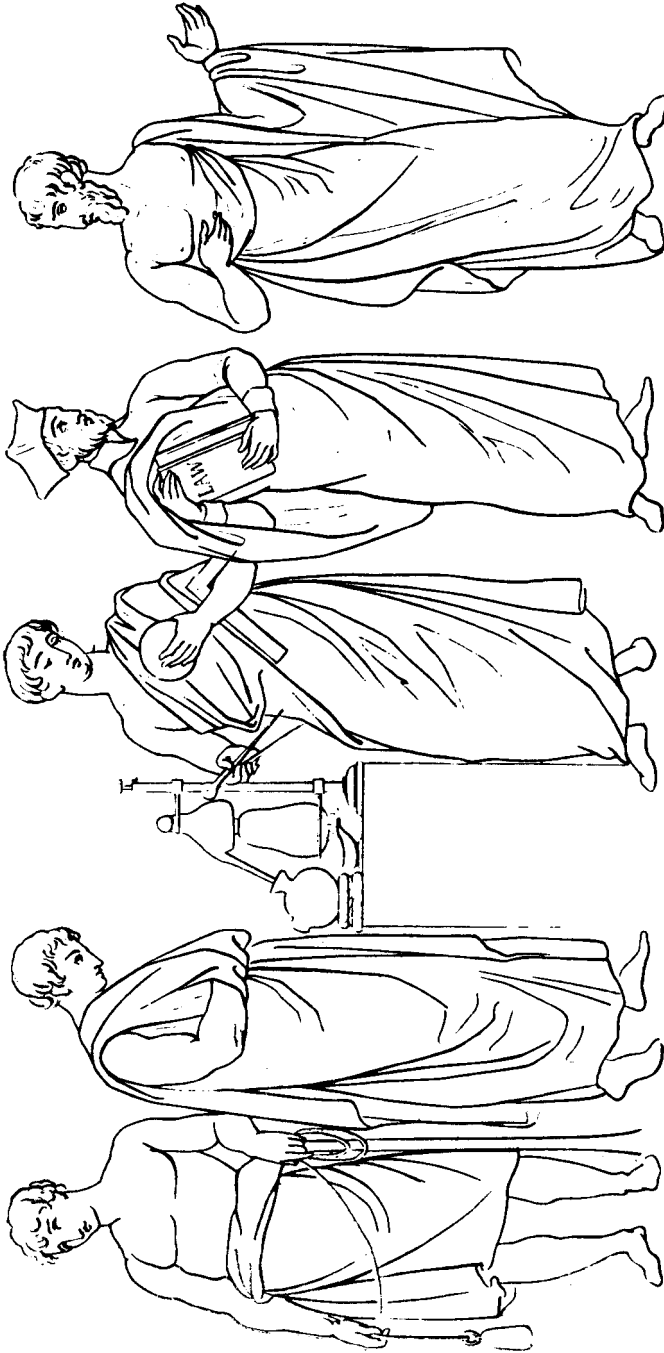
The building was professionally inspected under the terms of the contract on 22 November by Robert Browne and Robert Smirke for the Office of Works who declared, so far as the Works were concerned—significant in the sequel, "We are of opinion that Mr. Peto may be

justly considered to have discharged the obligation of his contract," and the last instalment was duly paid.

The reference to the "basso relievos" was to an ambitious display of allegorical statuary which was to run along the whole length of the central range on the south (river) front.²² In the entablature a central inscription was flanked by two bas-reliefs: to the east, the figure of Prosperity, identified with Britannia, was attended on her right hand by the figures of Strength and Naval Power, flanked by Philosophy (fig. 1) introducing the Sciences (Jurisprudence, Mathematics, etc.), followed by Charity, Hope, Faith, and the other Virtues; and on her left hand, the figures of Victory and Justice, flanked by Wisdom and Genius (fig. 2) introducing the Arts (Painting, Sculpture, etc.), followed by History, Lyric Poetry, Comedy and the other Muses. To the west was Commerce, the source of Prosperity, depicted by figures representing the Four Quarters of the Earth laying their commodities at the feet of Britain. The whole was surmounted by a great clock—Time "encircled by a wreath of British oak-leaves"—flanked by a recumbent male figure—Industry—and a recumbent female figure—Plenty. The whole allegory was completed by a massive royal arms "marking the authority which gives efficacy to business", flanked by Neptune "armed with his Trident, recumbent on a sea-horse", and Britannia who, while grasping "in her right hand the spear of defence", in her left hand holds the olive branch across the globe. It is pleasing to see from the accounts that the British oak leaves to encircle Time cost only £176, and that the "basso Relievo of Prosperity, the result of Commerce, representing Britain accompanied by Strength and Justice . . ." cost only £1,725, plus the cost of erection ("2 Sculptors, 98½ days at 6s., £58 19s. 0d.").

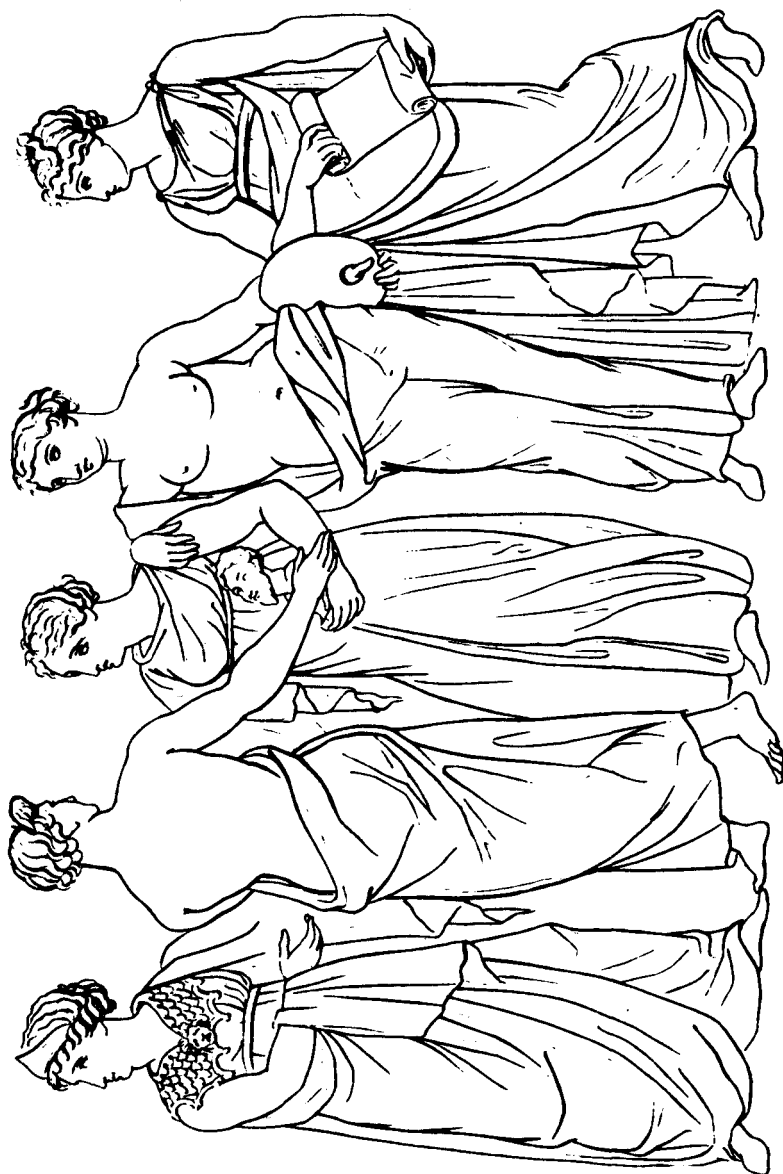
All this seemed—at least at this stage—very satisfactory, and Laing's "large perspective Drawing of the New Custom House" was exhibited in the Annual Exhibition of the Royal Academy and later presented to the Board of Customs, and Laing issued his great folio volume of *Plans, Elevations and Sections of . . . the New Custom House* in 1818 to claim his new Custom House as the very exemplification of "accommodation and elegance", that is to say, as the absolute attainment of the main "object of Architecture as an Art"—"to establish the dignity of a people, not among contemporaries only, but to posterity".

There was, however, a less glittering side to this brilliant medal. When the various accounts were finally made up—and Laing was at



Philosophy introducing Jurisprudence, Mathematics, Chemistry and Navigation (See p. 209)

Fig. 1. LAING'S CUSTOM HOUSE: WESTERN ENTABLATURE



The Polite Arts: Wisdom and Genius introducing Sculpture, Painting and Architecture (See p. 209)
LAING'S CUSTOM HOUSE: EASTERN ENTABLATURE
Fig. 2.

least partly responsible for their complication and confusion—the new Custom House was found to have cost £482,956 12s. 10½d., against an estimated net cost of £211,500 and a contract figure of £165,000. It is clear from the surviving records that the Board of Customs had, even before the completion of the building, become dissatisfied with Laing's general and professional conduct, particularly on account of

his management and inattention, Whereby the Terms and Conditions of the Contract have not been properly carried into effect and the claims of the Contractor for Works under the Contract and for works charged as Extras have been so blended and rendered so complicated and difficult of adjustment as to leave it a matter of doubt whether the Contractor has not already been considerably overpaid.

This, however, is not the place to relate in detail the ensuing dispute, of the declined arbitration and the consequent proceedings at law.

But even that was not the end of the matter. To revert to the period of building, it seems that even from an early stage, but particularly after the removal of certain campshot and other stone work had flooded the site, Laing had had doubts about the stability of the building. He therefore found it necessary

to have recourse to additional Strength and Security, and a tier of Oak Chain Bond, 9 in. by 12, was laid in the Center of all foundation Walls,

and later, with special reference to the central range, to introduce iron ties into

the ground arches over the King's Warehouse which receive the floor of the Long Room . . . to counteract the lateral pressure.

It was precisely here, in the ground arches over the King's Warehouse, under the great Long Room—199 feet in length, that Laing saw the main problem. When the time came (December, 1815) to remove the centring on which these vaults over the King's Warehouse were turned, he reported—somewhat more confidently—that it presented “a very interesting and satisfactory appearance, both as to the correcting of the work and the General Soundness of the cylindrical Vaulting”. When “the framing to vaults of the King's Warehouse” were removed, “as well as to the cellar underneath”, he reported—important in its sequel—that “this extensive and important part of the work proves itself to be executed in a most perfect and substantial manner”.

Early in 1820, however, some cracks began to appear in the arches under this important central range. At first they were merely caulked with tow and oakum, but within a year they opened again. At about the same time the south front shed some of the lettering from the ambitious entablature, and on examination was found to be out of perpendicular. Then the domed ceiling of the Long Room shed some of its plaster—to the great concern at least of its occupants.

In the September of 1823 the roof of the Long Room was found to have sunk so much that the water-gutters had to be adjusted to carry away the rain water. In the December of 1824 a "pillar which supports one of the Arches of the Building" was found to have "Given way at the Base in such a way as [appeared] to endanger the safety of the Building". Raking and dead-shores were at once erected to discharge the lateral and positive pressures, the levels of the various piers were professionally taken, and Robert Smirke from the Board of Works was called in to make an independent inspection. After Christmas, because "the indications of failure were increasing", the Long Room was cleared to staff and public, and on the following morning the foundations of two of the piers supporting the arches gave way and part of the floor of the great Long Room collapsed.²³ Major reconstruction had now to be undertaken.

In 1812 Rennie had specified piles to be driven at least 2 feet into a firm level at least 18 feet to 20 feet below the surface, and Laing in his *Plans and Elevations* had said that piles had been prepared up to 28 feet to 30 feet. *The building had now to be shored in the central range, and part of it re-excavated to the foundations, a task undertaken by Smirke.* The 2,378 piles he excavated, however, were found to average no more than 10 feet 1 in. in length and to be only a little over half the specified thickness. One pier, for example, supporting four groined arches under a large office, was found "resting upon only four piles, the longest of which was less than six feet in length". Also, Laing's plans referred to "piles shod and hooped with iron", but none such was later found. In addition to all this, faulty second-hand timber was found in the construction of the roof—where only a subsequent accident could have disclosed it—and worse still, the spandrels of the critical arches under the King's Warehouse were found to be filled with stone rubbish, where solid brick-work had not only been specified in the plans but also had been charged for in the accounts.

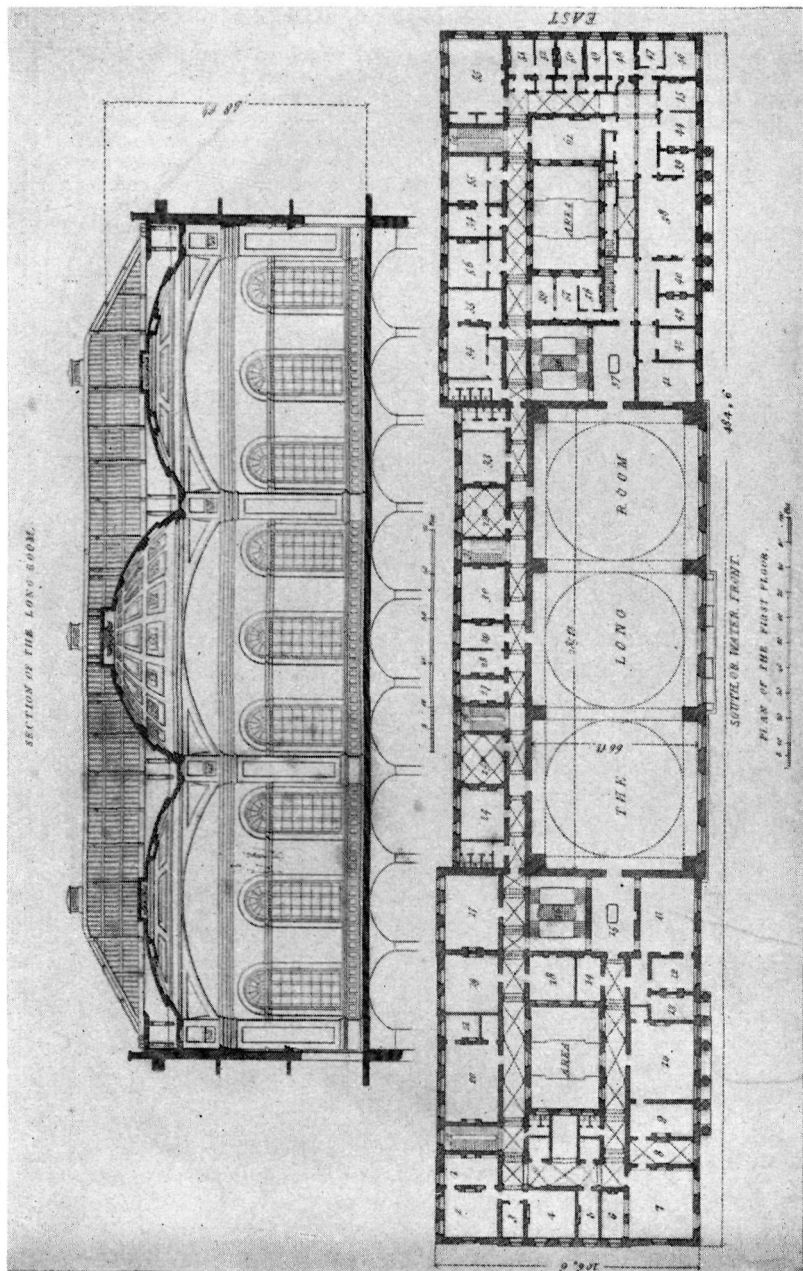
Laing was at once suspended and later dismissed from office, for failing to discover this during the course of building,²⁴ and action in law was taken against the builder for fraud, negligence and breach of contract, and in addition the bond was escheated in the penal sum of "£33,000 of good and lawful money".²⁵

So far as the Custom House itself was concerned, the central range had to be rebuilt by Smirke. He provided a new arched Long Room of 13 bays, with Tuscan pilasters. On the south front, Laing's rather pompous statuary was dismantled and replaced by a raised and projected Ionic hexastyle answering to Laing's east and west wings, a Greek portico integrated with the main building, yet free of any then current continental influence.

This is the Custom House which, but for the war damage to the (now demolished) east wing, is substantially the Custom House we see today.

NOTES

- 1 ed. C. L. Kingsford (1908) I, 135-6 & II, 169.
- 2 N.S.B. Gras: *Early English Customs System* (Harvard, 1918), 217-22.
- 3 *Rotuli Litterarum Patentium*, I, 423.
- 4 M. H. Mills, "The London Customs (*sic*) House during the Middle Ages", in *Archaeologia*, lxxxiii (1933), 307-25.
- 5 *Cal. Patent Rolls: Edw. III, XV (1370-74)*, 449.
- 6 *Survey of London*, XII (Parish of All Hallows Barking) ii (1934) 33.
- 7 The "Rules Orders and Directions" to the ports (1564) are reprinted in "*The Modern Practice of the Court of the Exchequer*", "By [B.Y.] an Officer of the Customs", London, 1730. See also PRO: Queen's Rem. Mem. Roll, 7 Eliz, I, Hil, 319.
- 8 *Cal. State Papers, Dom.* 1547-80, 105.
- 9 *Cal. Treasury Books, III, ii (1669-72)*, 797. See also *London Topographical Record*, XXI (1958), pp. 1-25.
- 10 *Daily Courant*, 15 January, 1715.
- 11 P.R.O.: T1/241 (13), p. 193.
- 12 *Ibid*, 254 No. 3 (9).
- 13 Statutes: 8 Geo. I, cap. 31; 39-40 Geo. III, cap. xlvii; and 52 Geo. III, cap. 49.
- 14 52 Geo. III, cap. 49, sec. 2.
- 15 The unreliability of "notional" values in this type of calculation from the statistics of the Register-General of Imports & Exports (P.R.O.: Customs 2-3) is, presumably, well known.
- 16 R. C. Jarvis, "Archival History of the Customs Records", in *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, I (1959-60).
- 17 *Plans, Elevations, and Sections of . . . The New Custom House* (as to which, see below) 1818, pp. 2-3, 415, and plates 1-4.



From their Library Collection

By courtesy of the Commissioners of H. M. Customs Excise

LAING'S CUSTOM HOUSE LONDON
 Section of the Long Room, and first floor plan.

- 18 The greater part of what follows is taken from a collection of papers: "Burning of the Custom House—1814", "Proceedings after the Fire", "Rebuilding of Custom House" 1811-37 (4 vols.), and "Expense of Fitting up Custom House—1815-20", all now preserved in the Customs Library.
- 19 *London Chronicle*, 14 February, 1814.
- 20 *Evening Star*, 15 February, 1814.
- 21 Customs Library: Customs 29/7, ff. 75 and 152.
- 22 For details of the allegorical figures, see Laing, *op. cit.*, 28-30.
- 23 Customs Library: Customs 26/60, ff. 318, 418, 444 & 456.
- 24 *Ibid*: Customs 28/60, ff. 448 & 456; and 62, f. 301.
- 25 *Times*, 18 May, 1826.