

## OUTDOOR MONUMENTS IN THE CITY OF LONDON

AT a recent meeting of the Court of Common Council a question was directed at the Chairman of the Special Committee by A. J. Osborn of Broad Street Ward, concerning the ultimate fate of the "Wilkes Memorial", alleged to be sinking perceptibly into the gentlemen's lavatory in Ludgate Circus.

In reply, the Chairman undertook to look into the matter and obtained from the Court permission for the Committee to draw up a Report on *all* the outdoor monuments in the City.

At the same time the Special Committee was asked by the Streets Committee to express an opinion regarding the suggested removal in the interests of traffic requirements, of two stone obelisks in Ludgate Circus, one of these being the so-called "Wilkes Memorial" mentioned in A. J. Osborn's question.

Under the direction of the Special Committee the whole question of the various outdoor monuments, statues and other memorials in the City of London, and the responsibility for their maintenance, was examined by a Sub-Committee, and an historical record of such monuments and statues was ordered to be drawn up.

This was a somewhat painful process. In accordance with custom, it was moved that it be left to the Chairman and the Town Clerk to draw up a Report, and if all that had been required was a summary of what had taken place in Committee no doubt an adequate report would have been forthcoming, the Town Clerk's staff having first submitted a draft for approval to their chief, who might, or might not, have consulted the Chairman before presenting it to the Committee.

In the present instance, however, a great deal more was required, necessitating not merely a *précis* of the minute books but exhaustive research in the Corporation's records.

There is, probably, no machinery less suitable for such a purpose than Government or Municipal Offices, working as they do in watertight departments, and the first draft of the Report was dreary, meagre and in every way unsatisfactory, the watertight department concerned having failed to consult either the Records Office or the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the information supplied being mainly copied from a booklet published by the London County Council.

There is a legend that someone once said to Philip Guedalla "History repeats itself". He replied "So I have often heard, but in reality, historians repeat one another".

Fortunately, this legend is known to all Keepers of Records, who profit by the aphorism and verify a reference before committing anything to paper, and the Chairman of the Special Committee, having maintained silence in several languages on receipt of the

draft report, gravitated instinctively to the Records Department, for nothing can be placed on, or removed from, the public highway without permission of the local authority, and in the City of London such permission is accorded by resolution of the Court of Common Council, whose printed proceedings are preserved in the Records Department, an Index compiled there facilitating reference to their contents.

The life history of every outdoor monument and statue on public thoroughfares in the City is therefore obtainable by research in the Records Department, and the Deputy Keeper of the Records, an honorary member of this Association, transformed the bare bones of the draft into a notable Report, which was received with acclamation by Aldermen and Common Councilmen alike.

Sir F. Tidbury-Beer, a senior member of this Association, whose erudite paper on "Boundary Marks in the City of London" will have pride of place in Part II\* of our "Transactions", made many helpful suggestions, while the Chairman of the Special Committee searched through all the London Guide Books he could find in order to provide matter for the Deputy Keeper's researches.

Together, we found many omissions from the draft report, the most glaring being that of the Monument itself, an omission which can be explained only on the assumption that under the watertight departmental system the author of the draft, who was minuting clerk of the Special Committee and of the four Market Committees, had no right of access to the Minutes of the City Lands Committee, who are the custodians of the Monument.

The Deputy Keeper supplied a full description of the Monument and chapter and verse for authority to erect the pillar which incurred the wrath of Alexander Pope in his "Moral Essays":—

"Where London's column, pointing at the skies,  
Like a tall bully, lifts the head and lies."

The cause of the diatribe was an inscription which attributed the Fire of London to Papist incendiarism, and Alexander Pope was a Roman Catholic. The inscription was set up in 1681 on the Monument itself, with a duplicate on the house in Pudding Lane, where the Fire originated. Both inscriptions were removed during the reign of James II, to be restored in that of William and Mary, remaining in place until ordered by the Common Council to be removed once more in 1830. The inscription from the house in Pudding Lane is in the Guildhall Museum.

The Monument designed by Sir Christopher Wren was not *built* by him or under his direction, the work being carried out by the City Surveyor. No disappointment need be felt on this account for Wren did not actually *build* St. Paul's Cathedral, as Edward Clerihew Bentley pointed out in "Biography for Beginners":—

Sir Christopher Wren  
Said: "I am dining with some men."

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\*Printed separately in Volume I Part II. (Privately printed 1948).

If anybody calls  
Say I am designing St. Paul's."

But this makes one enquire whether St. Paul's Cathedral ought not to have been included in the Report of the Special Committee. Above Wren's tomb in the Crypt is the famous epitaph, which was repeated in the North Transept, the dome and porch of which, with the copy of the epitaph, were destroyed by a heavy bomb in April, 1941. But the epitaph above the tomb in the Crypt is still intact.

"Si monumentum requiris, circumspice."

Since the Report of the Special Committee was printed certain other omissions have come to light. They are noted in this paper in alphabetical order and may be regarded as supplementary to the printed Report, a copy of which was sent to every Member. Extra copies are available on application to the Hallkeeper.

#### ADDITIONS TO THE PRINTED REPORT.

*Aldgate Pump.*—There was an Aldgate Well in the reign of King John and a pump was erected, in place of the winch and bucket, about 1600. In 1871, owing to street widenings, it was proposed to leave the pump as an island site in the roadway, but subsequently it was decided to move it about ten feet to a point at the junction Leadenhall Street and Fenchurch Street. The Medical Officer of the City of London had often reported on the bad state of the water supplied and in May, 1876, the Commissioners of Sewers (the predecessors of the Public Health Department of the Corporation) ordered that the handle of the pump be chained up to prevent further use and that a standpipe be set up there to supply New River water. Aldgate Well was alleged to be responsible for many deaths from cholera, severe outbreaks of which occurred in London during the Dog Days, called after the Greater and Lesser Dog Stars, which are in their ascendancy in the constellations Canis Major and Minor about July 3rd to August 15th, and have been noted from earliest times as the hottest, driest, and most unwholesome period of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. During that period drinking water is in constant demand and it is recorded that there were over 13,000 deaths from cholera in London in 1849, mainly as a result from drinking impure water. After the chaining of the pump handle in the early summer of 1876 no water was obtainable from the pump and this gave rise to a cant expression "a draft on Aldgate Pump" to signify a worthless note of hand, the modern equivalent being a "stumer" or a "dud cheque".

*Aldersgate Boundary Marks.*—Stones or obelisks in conjunction with drinking fountains were set up in Aldersgate under the Will of Alderman Robert Besley in 1877, their proposed removal to "Postmen's Park" in 1932 being opposed by the Ward members, but their removal was carried out in 1934 and a plaque was placed on the wall of 107 Aldersgate Street to mark the boundary. Aldersgate Bars had previously been removed in 1754.

*Bunhill Fields Burial Ground.*—Although situated in the borough

of Finsbury Bunhill Fields, the famous cemetery of the Free Churches are maintained by the City Lands Committee on behalf of the Corporation of London. The graves of Susannah Wesley (mother of John Wesley), of Dr. John Owen, John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe, Dr. Isaac Watts and of William Blaker are still intact and the cemetery is opposite Wesley's Chapel and Wesley's House.

During the War of 1939-1945 considerable damage was caused by falling *debris* from buildings which had received direct hits and some of the headstones and plane trees in the cemetery were destroyed. Gardening work was suspended and until recently the grass and weeds formed a jungle almost breast high. Gardeners from the Works Department have effected considerable improvements and it is to be hoped that the pre-war system of management will be fully restored. Under this system the grass and flower beds were kept in good order, while numbered plates, which enabled a searcher to find a particular headstone, were affixed to the southern boundary wall, corresponding with numbers on a diagram in the caretaker's shed. Seats were placed at convenient intervals on either side of the tarmac path.

Searchers from all parts visit this cemetery and before the last War it was necessary for the Attendant to ring a warning bell a few minutes before closing time in order to clear the grounds. In those days, also, a handbook containing inscriptions on some of the headstones and tombs was on sale in the Attendant's hut and there are many tales of delighted searchers from overseas who had been enabled to trace the grave of an ancestor.

Americans form a large proportion of searchers in normal times, for kinsmen of the Pilgrim Fathers, who landed in New England on Christmas Day, 1620, are traceable in Bunhill Fields, first used for burials in 1665 and not closed until 1852.

An Act for the preservation of the ground as an Open Space was passed in 1867 and the Corporation of London has been responsible for its upkeep since 1869. The present writer, when Chairman of the City Lands Committee in 1923, was called upon to renew John Bunyan's nose, which had been broken and removed, either by a mischievous urchin or, more probably, by an American souvenir hunter, and it is said that the Works Department keep a store of Bunyan's noses, but that now in place, and from its appearance only recently fixed, is somewhat of a misfit.

American and Canadian visitors appear also to have a deep affection for Dr. Isaac Watts' gravestone, and many have expressed surprise on finding that he was an Englishman.

“ Let dogs delight to bark and bite  
For God hath made them so ”

and

“ How doth the little busy bee  
Improve each shining hour ”

are as well known in New England and Eastern Canadian homes as in these islands.

It is rumoured that tentative suggestions have been put forward to transform this Cemetery into a "Garden of Rest" by clearing away headstones etc. and creating an open space. Notable graves would be left *in situ*, but the majority of headstones would be relegated to positions against the boundary walls.

Any such proposals would offend Free Churchmen throughout the English Speaking World and it is to be hoped that if they are brought forward the Common Council will reject them by a decisive majority.

*Cornhill Pump.*—It is recorded that a well was built in Cornhill in the year 1282, but history is silent concerning it until the re-discovery of the spring in 1799 as a result of the sinking of the pavement. In that year a pump was erected by subscription from the Bank of England, the East India Company and the Fire Offices, Banks and Traders in the Ward, but owing to the bad state of the water the pump handle was removed about 1875, a little earlier than the chaining of the handle of Aldgate Pump. The Medical Officer of Health had advocated the closing of all pumps in the City and in 1866 he provided statistics of impurities found in the water from 35 public pumps. It is gratifying to learn that the purest came from Guildhall Pump, which may have tapped a tributary of the Walbrook. The foulest of all was in St. Nicholas Olave Churchyard. After the closing of Cornhill Pump a cattle trough with drinking fountain supplied with New River water was erected in the vicinity. On 3rd November, 1898, pursuant to a report of the Street Committee, the Common Council agreed to relieve the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association of all further expense for the maintenance and supply of fountains and troughs in the City, and gifts of that kind have since been made by the Association on the understanding that they would be serviced and maintained by the Corporation.

*Holborn Bars.*—Stone obelisks about seven feet high with the City Arms mark the site of the Bars which are said to have been removed during the XVIIIth century. A drawing of Middle Row, Holborn, in 1685, shows one of the present stones surmounted by a lamp. They mark the western limits of the City at the end of Gray's Inn Road and opposite Staple Inn.

*Paul's Cross.*—A paper on Paul's Cross was read to the Association on January 31st, 1949\* by the Deputy Keeper of the Records, who now reports that this memorial is labelled "Fountain" on the Ordnance Survey, on the Plans for the Reconstruction of the City and on the Declaratory Area Maps, the word having survived from the fountain which occupied the site before the Memorial Cross was erected. "Historians repeat one another". The fountain in question was presented to the borough of Hornsey in 1910 and was erected in the pleasure gardens there.

*Royal Exchange.*—Outside, on the north wall are statues of Sir Hugh Myddelton (Projector of the New River) by Samuel Joseph,

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\*See page 14.

and of Richard Whittington (Four times Mayor) by John Carew. At the East end, under the clock, is a statue of Sir Thomas Gresham (Founder of the Royal Exchange) by William Behnes. The weather vane is the Grasshopper from the first Royal Exchange.

Inside, in the south east corner is a statue of Charles II by Grinling Gibbons. This formerly stood in the centre of the second building. In the north east corner is a statue of Queen Elizabeth (who opened the first building) by M. L. Watson; in the centre a statue of Queen Victoria (who opened the present building) by Thornycroft; in the south west corner a statue of the Prince Consort by J. G. Louth and in the north west corner a statue of Abraham Lincoln by Andrew O'Connor. The Elizabethan statue of Sir Thomas Gresham, which was saved from the first and second buildings seems to have been removed to Mercers' Hall and to have perished there in the destructive fire of 1941.

Other statues from the Cornhill front of the second building of Charles I, Charles II and Sir Thomas Gresham by John Bushnell are in the Central Criminal Court.

*St. Brides and Bridewell Precinct Schools.*—Figures of a boy and girl of the period of Queen Anne (probably 1711) are at the entry from New Bridge Street. A proposal to remove these to the City of London School is recorded in the *Times* of 8th June, 1949. Similar figures of a boy and a girl are to be seen on a building, possibly a former Vestry House, in Bishopsgate Churchyard. These are about 4 ft. high in niches at each side of the doorway.

*Smithfield Garden and Fountain.*—The note on page 5 of the printed Report concerning the Fountain in Smithfield Garden, maintained under the Bowes Bequest, omits mention of the statue above the fountain. It is a life size figure of a naked woman and the Chairman of the Central Markets Committee, after consultation with Superintendent Millman and the Medical Officer of Health, decided that the lady appeared to be "in an interesting condition". In order to preserve the reputation of the Corporation of London he thereupon provided a wedding ring, which was affixed and may now be seen on the third finger of her left hand. So far, it has not been stolen, but if this information arouses cupidity it is fair to issue a warning that the ring is only 9 carat gold.

*Statues not Otherwise Recorded.*—Three statues from the front of Guildhall Chapel of Edward VI, Charles I and Elizabeth, by Nicholas Stone, are standing on the staircase leaving from Basinghall Street to Guildhall Library.

No other omissions have so far come to light but the Deputy Keeper of the Records hopes that anyone who can find or recall an outdoor monument that has escaped discovery will bring it to his notice. In any case, we should be grateful to A. J. Osborn of Broad Street Ward, for initiating the enquiry which produced the printed Report.

Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the "Wilkes Memorial, sinking perceptibly into the gentlemen's lavatory in Ludgate Circus", was found to be no more than an obelisk of stone or brick,

set up by the Blackfriars Bridge Committee in 1775 for the support of four lamps to enlighten the footway; the City Arms, the year of our Lord, and the name of the Mayor being engraved upon it.

John Wilkes was Lord Mayor in 1775.

#### RIDER.

At the close of this paper certain Members expressed dissent for that portion of it which dealt with the tentative suggestion of transforming Bunhill Fields Burial Ground into a " Garden of Rest " and pointed out that the project had been a live issue before the City Lands Committee for some years past and Meetings had been held with the Wardens of the Free Churches on the subject.

Sir Cuthbert then said that the views expressed in his paper were his own personal views, and were not to be looked upon as propaganda in encouraging Members to vote against the scheme when it is presented to the Common Council.