

SKYLINE



February 2023



Spiral staircase within The Monument photo: Angelo Hornak

the magazine of the **FRIENDS OF THE CITY CHURCHES**

✦ Noticeboard ✦

JOHN REYNOLDS

As regular readers will know, *City Events*, our diary listing services and other events such as recitals and lectures, is published fortnightly online, and this has taken place since September 2020. If you have not actually accessed *City Events* before now, look at: <https://www.london-city-churches.org.uk/cityevents.html>

It should be added that we obtain a significant number of 'hits' every two weeks when a new edition goes online. With the publication of our extended edition covering the Christmas period up to 31 December we reached something of a watershed. Before the pandemic lockdown we published a printed edition nearly every month (two editions covered July & August and December & January). As churches reopened gradually after lockdown ended, it was decided to publish online only. Now, with the opening of churches effectively back to normal, perhaps we have reached a point where we can consider recommencing a printed edition each month.

The publishing of *City Events* at whatever frequency, and whether printed or not, involves a production process. The editorial team consists of two persons, myself as contributor to printed copy and editor, most ably assisted by a fellow Friend. She produces the section covering the opening hours of the City churches, the regular and special services, together with a concise listing of other events in each church: music recitals, concerts and lectures. Her section we call the Churches' Section. I amplify the secular events, often listing complete programmes of participants and the pieces to be performed. This is the Events Section. I also write the front page article, paying particular attention to events that 'catch the eye'.

If *City Events* were to be published as a printed version it would have to be distributed to the churches, the City libraries and the City Information Centre, as was the case up to the end of January 2020. This was carried out by a small team of volunteer Friends, including me.

At this point I must turn to my role in all of the above. I retired from work exactly 30 years ago, and with the celebration recently of a significant birthday I have reached a point where I wish to embark on a second retirement. There are other family responsibilities that have recently arisen which add to my wish to stand down from editorship of *City Events* after some 20-plus years of involvement with it. The distribution element is also affected adversely since advancing years have caused mobility issues. I should add at this point that my indispensable fellow worker on *City Events* wishes to continue with her role in producing the Churches' Section of the publication, a regular compilation of great merit as loyal readers will testify.

Thus, to put it simply, we need a new editor of *City Events*. Any Friend who is interested and needs perhaps to know more about this most rewarding voluntary work is warmly invited to contact me by email: cityevents@london-city-churches.org.uk



PHOTO: NICHOLAS TORRY

MALCOLM TORRY, PRIEST IN CHARGE, ST MARY ABCHURCH

Thank you to David Jessop for his welcome in November's *Skyline*, and to so many others, as I begin my new ministry.

It was nearly a year ago that the Archdeacon of London, Fr Luke Miller, proposed that I should serve as Priest in Charge at **St Mary Abchurch**. I visited the church with him, met everybody, agreed, and was licensed to the voluntary and part-time post at the end of August.

We have started work on all three of the central tasks:

- To work with others to provide the governance that a Guild church requires: St Mary Abchurch now has an electoral roll and a Guild Church Council. If you wish to be involved, contact me on malcolm@stmaryabchurch.org.uk before the April elections.
- To work with others on the refurbishment of the Grade I Christopher Wren church: we now have a plan for all of the work that needs doing, and are in the process of raising the substantial sum of money required.
- To work with others to

LESLEY THRIFT

Just a reminder:

it is a Watcher's responsibility to find a replacement. Contacting the Rota manager is the last resort. Once the swap has been effected, then please notify me and the Rota Manager so that we all know what's going on.

Volunteers needed:

- Cleaning St Mary Abchurch
- Editing *City Events*
- Editing *Skyline*
- Selling advertising space in *Skyline*
- Events organisation

EDITORIAL

Long-term Friends will remember Steve Cook, and the walks he led. His wife Sue has written sadly to say that he died on 17 December. We shall miss him, and our sympathies go to her.

develop a role for St Mary Abchurch that is coherent with both its history and its current context: we are developing an educational role. My interest is, particularly, the relationship between the Christian faith and social ethics. This, of course, is quite apart from my connection with the Friends, although I count it a privilege to be working alongside them.

The editor has asked me to say something about myself. Following university, and two years administering means-tested benefits at Brixton's Supplementary Benefit office, I trained for ordination, and subsequently served in parishes in south-east London.

Alongside that full-time ministry, I retained an interest in social policy. In 1984 a group of us formed the Basic Income Research Group (now the Citizen's Basic Income Trust), to research the feasibility of paying to every individual an unconditional Basic Income. For 30 years I gave half a day a week to this, then in 2014 it became a full-time commitment. Now there are many more doing the necessary research and facilitating the debate, so it's time for me to return to licensed ministry: hence my arrival at St Mary Abchurch.

Happy new year! Let's highlight the best news: Jonathan Causer has completed the index for *Skyline* and its predecessor Newsletters. The index is now online. The purpose is simply to assist in locating articles, and we assume that the relevant issues will be to hand on your shelves. If anybody really needs an article, please contact the editor on skyline@london-city-churches.org.uk

Something has happened, and it is not a nice something: volunteers, and not just within FCC, have evaporated. I was discussing this with a school friend, and she suggested that statutory maternity leave was to blame. 'Our generation' of women was used to 'being volunteered': '6th Form privileges' it was called. When our children were born, on the whole we stopped working; old habits die hard, so we found volunteering distractions. Women now, on the other hand, my friend maintained, tend to go back to work while their children are still very young. This argument, however, only holds water up to a point: what about all those women who have no children? What about the men? A cursory look at the Watchers' list will reveal similar numbers of each sex, whether parents or not: and we are in the main in our 70s, 80s and 90s: where are the 60-year-olds? Is everybody now working full-time until the age of 75? Appeals have rung out from this column for help with – you name it. A couple of people have come forward to help with cleaning **St Mary Abchurch** (thank you, but please would more Watchers lend a hand, perhaps while Watching?) Sue-Anne James no longer can: a

permanent committed volunteer would be a boon. Please see the box listing all the volunteers we need. Put brutally with no new Friends stepping forward, all these goodies will crumble to fond memory.

Skyline is fortunate in its printers. Micropress are doing everything in their power to keep their prices down. Postage does remain a major consideration. The Trustees decided that we could move from a quarterly magazine, to three issues a year: February, June, October – that might even give me the odd week off! We shall stick with 16 pages.

Last year was devoted to Grinling Gibbons, and now we immerse ourselves in Sir Christopher Wren. It will be harder to find new angles on a man so central to our concerns, but last November Mary Milne-Day discussed his childhood, and now Mark Parsons (pp6-7) shows him translated or exported. It is disputed how little or much Wren was involved with the Monument. I'm not afraid of argument, and Angelo Hornak's interior shot was compelling for the front cover.

Peter Browne has asked me to draw Friends' attention to the programme of Gresham College Lectures on the many different aspects of Wren the polymath. The Diocese of London has written to the Trustees asking for volunteers to help with the Wren300 project: <https://squaremilechurches.co.uk/wren-300/research/> or if you wish to be part of the programme with primary school children: contact.wren300@london.angican.org

For whatever reason we did not sell many Christmas cards this year, and so we are having a sale. Instead of £5 for 10, they are on offer until March at £3 for 10 for the two new designs; or take pot luck on previous years' cards at £2 for 10, in each case plus postage. Keep them till you need them.

JUDY STEPHENSON

WHITTINGTON – MAN, MYTH AND MAYOR

Six hundred years ago, on 26 March 1423, Richard Whittington died. Surely everyone knows ‘Dick’ Whittington. Poor boy from the West Country, beaten by a cruel cook: ran away, married the boss’s daughter and became Sir Richard Whittington, Lord Mayor of London. It’s all there in Renold Elstracke’s 1590 portrait (shown right). Except he wasn’t poor, he didn’t marry his boss’s daughter, he was never knighted, nor was he ‘Lord’ Mayor – and there was no cat. So what really happened: who was Richard Whittington, and why should we still remember and celebrate him today?

Richard was born in Pauntley, Gloucestershire around 1350. As third son of Sir William Whittington, a minor landed gentleman, he had no hope of inheritance. However, his father had good contacts and apprenticed him to the Mercers’ Company – then, as now, premier livery company – specialising in luxury goods such as velvet, silks and cloth-of-gold. By 1379 aged 29 Whittington was well enough established to have to contribute 5 marks (about £3,000 today) towards a civic gift. England was headed into choppy times: Richard II’s turbulent reign was terminated in 1399 by his cousin Henry Bolingbroke (Henry IV), who was succeeded in 1413 by bellicose Henry V. Three very different monarchs, yet Whittington worked hand-in-glove with all three.

Richard II loved conspicuous luxury. The King’s Wardrobe was the official store for royal bling, and from 1392-94 Whittington sold some £3,500 (£3.7m today) of mercery to the Wardrobe. He also sold large quantities of mercery to Robert de Vere, Richard’s favourite, Thomas Woodstock, Richard’s uncle, John of Gaunt and Henry Bolingbroke.



© NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Besides being a highly successful Mercer, Whittington became a serious money lender to the Crown: between 1388 and his death Whittington made 59 such loans totalling over (in today’s money) £30m, and indeed was the only individual Londoner to lend Richard money in his final unpopular years. Richard II was perennially short of cash. It surely is no coincidence that after his major purchases of Whittington’s mercery, Richard II granted the Mercers’ Company its first Charter in 1394, nor that in 1395 Whittington was elected Master Mercer for the first time.

Whittington had also been cultivating his civic role: he was elected Common Councillor for Coleman Street Ward in 1384, and Alderman for Broad Street Ward in 1393, and then of Lime Street Ward from 1397 till his death. In 1393 he was also elected Sheriff by the liverymen of London, showing he was trusted by its citizens. On 6 June 1397 Mayor Adam Bamme died in office. Two days later King Richard appointed Whittington Mayor – a

high-handed contravention of the City’s right to appoint its own Mayor. Furthermore, within days Whittington had persuaded his fellow citizens to pay the King a fine of some £10,000 (£10m today) to restore the City’s confiscated liberties. Nevertheless, the City grandees must have appreciated Whittington’s facility with Richard, as later that year they elected him Mayor for the ensuing year also. During this second mayoralty Whittington helped develop the City’s international trade by establishing Blackwell Hall (Guildhall Art Gallery stands on that site) as the sole place where non-City and alien – ie foreign – merchants could buy and sell cloth.

When in 1399 Bolingbroke deposed Richard to become Henry IV, Whittington seamlessly transferred allegiance. He had after all provided Henry the necessary luxuries for his two daughters’ weddings. Henry installed Whittington on his first Council in 1399, and in 1401, unsurprisingly, the Mercers elected him for a second term as Master. However, the new monarch brought new problems. Richard had repaid almost all Whittington’s loans in cash. The loans to Henrys IV and V were far greater than those to Richard, but the state coffers were empty. Sadly, there is no truth in the story of Whittington’s making a virtue of necessity by burning the King’s promissory notes, saying ‘don’t these smell sweeter than cedar?’ Instead, to pay off his loans and provide income, Henry IV granted Whittington the right to export wool without paying tax, and appointed him to various key and remunerative posts: Collector of Wool Subsidies (1401-03 and 07-10), Mayor of the Staple of Westminster (1405 till death), and Mayor of the Calais Staple (1406-13). Whittington was elected Mayor for the third time in 1406, and Master Mercer in 1408. He also acquired other civic roles: custodian of forfeited goods; member of Courts of Oyer and Terminer; supervisor of papal revenues; seeking out Lollards and their property; and helping supervise the development of Westminster Abbey and Hall.

In sum, although his Mercer business diminished, Whittington became extremely wealthy. However, he appears to have had no wish to flaunt his success. He bought a 'great house', la Rirole, adjoining his parish church of **St Michael Paternoster Royal**, but no country mansion nor estate. He seems to have wanted to keep his capital liquid and working. He also engaged in considerable philanthropy, giving money towards: land for his church (Whittington Gardens today) and its rebuilding; Rochester Bridge; a library in Greyfriars; and a refuge in St Thomas' Hospital for unmarried mothers – whose names were to be kept confidential. Most famous perhaps was his 128-seater 'long house' public lavatory flushed by the Thames, with almshouse over the top. This was not the City's first public lavatory – the Romans had provided that, but it was the first to be segregated by gender.

In 1402 Whittington married



Old Library, Guildhall

Alice, daughter of Sir Ivo FitzWaryn, a Dorset landowner. Little is known of their married life save that they had no children, and that by 1410 she was very ill, and died in 1412. She was buried in a special tomb in St Michael Paternoster Royal, in which Whittington himself was later to be laid (hence the John Hayward window). Whittington continued his civic and mercantile life, and in 1419 was elected Mayor for his fourth and last term. It was distinguished by an almighty row with the Brewers' Company over pricing and measuring ale. Whittington was fighting for his Londoners to have fair value, but the Brewers believed themselves victimised. He may have been unreasonable, but he was still held in very high regard, and his friend and Town Clerk John Carpenter smoothed things over.

In 1422 Whittington drew up his will with four executors. At his death on 23 March 1423 there were no descendants, so it was an impersonal will. Whittington was determined to give all that he had to charity for the betterment of his fellow man. As well as his almshouse he founded a College of Priests to pray in perpetuity for Alice's and his souls, together with those of his parents and 'supporters' including Richard II. He left money for the re-building of Newgate Gaol, and better food for its prisoners; re-building the south gate of Barts Hospital; drinking fountains in Cripplegate and Hythe; the flooring of the new Guildhall and its windows, and establishment of its Library. The care of his Almshouse and College he entrusted to his Mercers' Company, along with a chest of cash, jewels and muniments thought worth about £5,000 to continue his good works – the 'Charity of Sir Richard Whittington'. Today it is worth some £120m. Rightly it was said of Whittington that he gave away money with both arms.

So what of the tale of a poor boy who seeks fortune in a big city, owning nothing but a strangely gifted cat which rids a foreign ruler of a plague of rats? The ruler then pays



From the Ash Players' poster

ten times the ship's value for the cat, and so the boy becomes rich. At the end of 16c this story was circulating in a number of European countries, each with its own choice of local hero. Indeed, the story strongly resembles a much earlier Persian tale. When the story arrived in England in the early 1600s, around whom to weave it? Whittington's success, wealth and generosity were known, but there were no portraits, no descendants etc: he was the ideal candidate. So, starting with a play in 1605, improved over time by songs and ballads, the pantomime evolved including even **St Mary le Bow**.

Whittington was never knighted (the Charity's title is an honorific) and in his day the Mayor was not 'Lord Mayor'. He was not poor, Sir Ivo was not his boss, and he had no cat. He was four times Mayor of London, three times Master of the Mercers' Company, balanced the needs and capricious wants of three disparate monarchs, and throughout strove for the good of his fellow man. When he died he gave all that he had for the benefit of others – benefits which are still being shared today. We should definitely celebrate this life, well lived and completed 600 years ago this March. ✨

With grateful thanks to the scholarship of sometime Mercer historians Anne Sutton and Professor Caroline Barron.



PHOTOS © NATIONAL CHURCHILL MUSEUM, FULTON

MARK PARSONS

THE WREN CHURCH FEW LONDONERS HAVE VISITED

As Friends, we enjoy visiting and learning about each church. We admire the differences, the subtle similarities, and the remarkable fact that so many have survived. We also mourn the lost churches, and often find visiting the ruins and parks where some once stood, a gentle connection to the past. The small park at Love Lane and Aldermanbury offers the unique opportunity to discover both a ruined churchyard and a rebuilt church. The pleasant park is in the City, but to visit the church, we must leave the United Kingdom altogether.

St Mary The Virgin, Aldermanbury was one of several Wren churches burned by enemy incendiary bombs on 29 December 1940. The fires left only blackened stone walls and columns. Due to changes in the weather, the planned second wave of heavy, explosive-laden bombers was cancelled. Those bombs would have reduced the burned churches to rubble.

After the war, St Mary Aldermanbury sat as a darkened ruin, while other priorities were addressed. Many of the damaged churches were scheduled for repair, but some faced demolition due to severity of damage, alternative use of the space, and reduced church attendance. Proposals for St Mary Aldermanbury included saving the unique east wall only. But before St Mary could be demolished, she became the object of a plan by an American college to build a new chapel.

Westminster College is in Fulton, Missouri, pretty much in the centre of the USA. It is a small private college with 600 students. The town of Fulton has a population of 13,000. The college was founded in 1854 to train Presbyterian ministers, with a curriculum evolving to focus on leadership skills. Women were admitted from 1979. As part of the leadership programme, conferences have been held since 1936 to discuss international issues, including one in

1946 when Winston Churchill was the speaker. It is there that he gave what became known as his famous 'Iron Curtain' speech. By the early 1960s, the college wanted to build a memorial commemorating this speech. That became America's National Churchill Museum. The museum and chapel projects were combined, and an idea formed to move an historic church from London.

Several war-damaged churches were considered, including **St Alban Wood Street, St Michael Paternoster Royal, and St Anne and St Agnes**. At one time the plan for Wren's unbuilt **St Mary Lincoln's Inn Fields** was also considered.

People on both sides of the Atlantic worked together to overcome the many financial, political and logistical issues. Westminster College supporters included some well-connected business and political leaders. Contacts were made, including with Harry Truman, former President of the US, who obtained Sir Winston's support.

After three years of negotiations, the last approvals and agreements were in place, such that in April of 1964 groundbreaking ceremonies were held in Fulton, and planning began in London for the removal of St Mary Aldermanbury. Lost portions, such as the lead cupola and

the interior wood and plasterwork, were recreated using 19C drawings, and photos taken before the war. The stated goal was for the church to be re-erected 'exactly as designed by Sir Christopher Wren', with 'the incongruous pierced parapets and window tracery added . . . in 1865 . . . not be preserved or re-used'. Actual removal work at the church began in July 1965, and was completed by the end of the year.

The plan was carefully to dismantle St Mary, with each stone's being numbered and tracked using a detailed diagram. Each stone was to be cleaned, and then numbered by chiselling. As work progressed, it appears this system broke down, with chalk numbers placed on many of the stones. Other stone was added, some from the original Portland quarries, and some from **St Swithin, London Stone**, which was being demolished at that time. The stones were to be packed so that they would be unloaded in proper order for reassembling. But, because donated shipping services were being depended upon, the two original loads were repacked into six lots as ballast in ships. Then, once in the US, these were placed on as-available rail cars, some dusty from hauling coal, obscuring the chalk numbers.

As the 7,000 stones eventually arrived in Fulton, they were unloaded and spread out over several acres in order to sort out which stone belonged where. Most had to be cleaned again. *The Times* of London called it the

biggest jigsaw puzzle in architectural history.

Wren's original building methods had lasted nearly 300 years, and therefore were pretty sound by any standard, but St Mary was rebuilt to modern US building codes. This meant welded steel framing and a reinforced concrete tower core. Newspaper photos of the time and the Churchill Museum website give a good idea of the changes to the internal structural fabric. The church was built on a huge poured concrete box, the undercroft that became the Churchill Museum.

And yet, the church was painstakingly rebuilt to what strived to be Wren's original plan. This was due to the efforts of Marshall Sisson, the accomplished British architect, teaming with British and US professional and crafts persons, to replicate not the Blitz-destroyed version, but the pre-Victorian original Wren design, inside and out.

Three significant changes were made to Wren's design. The shape was altered slightly to make it a rectangular building instead of the skewed footprint of the pre-Fire foundation of 1437. An organ loft was built at the west end. Finally, a new window was cut into the tower to add light on to the staircase leading to the museum below.

The new church benefited greatly from the involvement of Noel Mander, the famed London organ builder. He had been in London on 29 December 1940 on leave and working as a volunteer fireman. In

separate interviews he reported being near St Mary Aldermanbury and **St Lawrence Jewry** as the churches burned, with heated air blowing through the organ pipes, making a 'shrieking in agony' sound. Later, as his organ business grew, and as he became involved in church restorations, he helped find original bits and pieces of other churches for the rebuilding of St Mary, including plate from St Anne and St Agnes, a set of candlesticks from **Westminster Cathedral**, portions of an organ case from a 1741 organ in a Woolwich parish church, a gilded crown and mitre from St Michael Paternoster Royal, plus many other contributions. (**Westminster Abbey** and **St Paul's Cathedral** were approached but declined.) His firm also built the gorgeous tracker pipe organ that is now in the new St Mary.

The church of St Mary The Virgin Aldermanbury, a Wren church that could have vanished, is now safe. Combined with the National Churchill Museum in Fulton, Missouri, USA, she is a major tourist destination, often used for events, weddings, and university services. It is delightful to connect with a bit of London in the middle of America. ✨

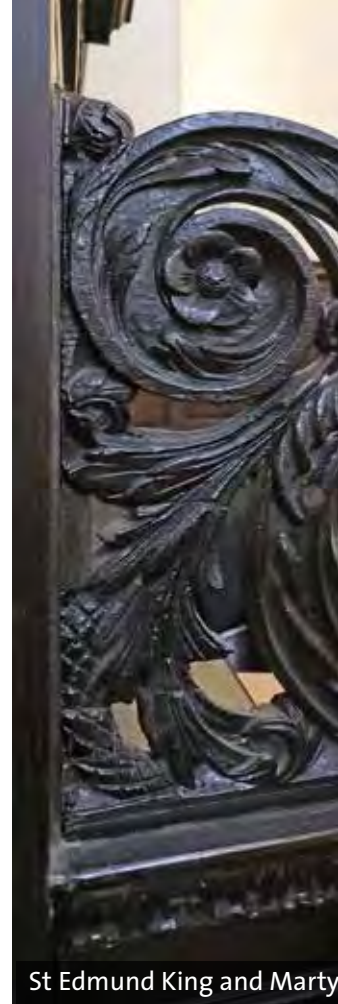
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St Andrew Holborn



St Edmund King and Martyr



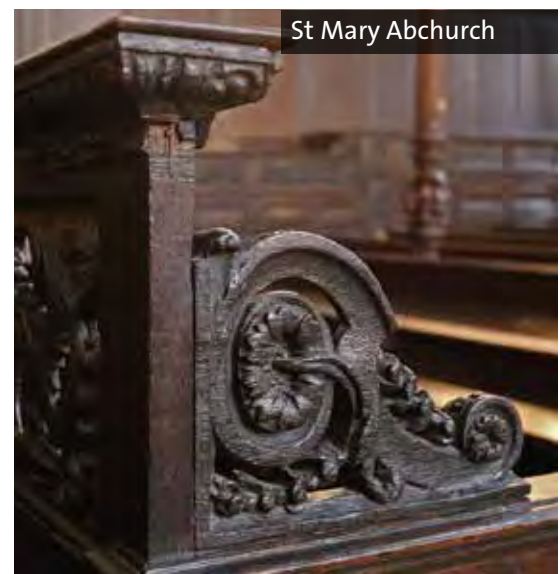
St Peter Cornhill



St Vedast alias Foster: gentle decoration



St Margaret Pattens: graceful volutes around the tondo



St Mary Abchurch



St Michael Cornhill



St Martin Ludgate

JOHN BETHELL

VOLUTES AND SCROLLS IN WREN'S CHURCHES

The word 'volute' comes from the 17c French, where it is used to describe the scrolls of Classical Greek architecture; these scrolls can also be seen in the Fibonacci sequence, and Alan Turing was interested in both their natural and mathematical manifestations.

Renaissance Florence has Santa Maria Novella, which influenced Inigo Jones when he remodelled the west end of old **St Paul's Cathedral**. The Baroque 'Wrenaissance' embraced volutes and scrolls.

This photographic essay shows their complex variety: delicate and monumental; in dark oak, in stone, in wrought iron, in gold; inside and out. The editor has condensed John Bethell's text.



St Clement Eastcheap



The K4 Memorial In St Margaret Pattens

There are many monuments and reminders in the City churches of the loss of lives incurred by the armed forces in the two world wars of 20c. One of the least well-known and mostly overlooked, is the K4 memorial in **St Margaret Pattens**, which, in its simplicity, and the largely self-inflicted tragedy that it records, reminds me in some ways of the Loos Cross in **Holy Sepulchre**.

This evocative memorial can be found on the corner of the north aisle and the nave. It commemorates the sailors who lost their lives in a catastrophic submarine accident in WW1. The incident was so embarrassing that it was completely hushed up by the authorities for over 60 years, and not officially admitted until as recently as 2002, after the last survivor had died.

The accident occurred on 31 January 1918, when five K class submarines, (a class which had an extremely poor record in terms of safety, speed and manoeuvrability), a battlecruiser, a cruiser and a destroyer all ran into one another during an exercise off the Firth of Forth. The K4 sank with the loss of its entire crew of 59 men. The wreck is today preserved under the Protection of Military Remains Act.

The memorial takes the form of a wooden triptych,



with closing doors, inside which are inscribed the names of all the lost sailors. The inscription below the closed doors reads: 'To the proud and undying remembrance of my husband Commander David de Beauvoir Stocks, RN DSO Legion of Honour who was drowned January 31st 1918 serving his King and Country and in memory of all those who died with him'.

I think it is one of the simplest, and saddest, memorials to be found anywhere in the City.

SHIRLEY KARNEY

SIR HENRY WOOD MEMORIAL HOLY SEPULCHRE LONDON, THE NATIONAL MUSICIANS' CHURCH


At the Choral Eucharist of the Friends of the Musicians' Chapel, notice was drawn to the chapel itself: first of all the greatly improved lighting system which was installed thanks to the generosity of Mrs Moira Whitty; then to the fact that the Memorial to Sir Henry Wood (1869-1944) had been restored by The Friends of the Musicians' Chapel. The photograph shows how much this has enhanced the memorial.



Above it of course is the wonderful window depicting Sir Henry Wood directing the Proms, and also showing his playing the organ in the church. Present at the service was Lee McLernon, Chairman of the Proms Charity, who had brought the wreath from the last night of the Proms to

place in front of the memorials of Sir Henry. A bronze bust sits in front of the organ at the Royal Albert Hall for the duration of the Proms, and on the last night it is decorated by the Prommers with a laurel wreath. The Proms were founded in 1895 and Sir Henry was invited to conduct the first in The Queen's Hall.

The Service on 2 November was a Choral Eucharist with music from Victoria's *Officium Defunctorum* (Office of the Dead) 1605. The Priest in Charge The Revd Nicholas Mottershead, Director of Music Peter Asprey with the Choir of The Holy Sepulchre made a memorable evening. The music was composed by Tomàs Luis de Victoria (1548-1611) for the requiem service of Empress Maria of Austria.

The next service for the Friends of the Musicians' Chapel is on Wednesday 17 May at 5pm. 

PETER BROWNE

ALL HALLOWS BARKING BY THE TOWER

There are so many treasures to see in *All Hallows by the Tower* that it would be easy to ignore the Saxon arch. It was only discovered thanks to the Blitz in 1940, when two attacks devastated this ancient City church.

The plasterwork covering a filled-in arch so as to function as a wall had collapsed, revealing a Saxon arch: part of a late 7c building, a little shorter than the present church.

This Saxon arch stands as an early example of architectural re-cycling, for instead of the usual arrangement of smaller stones that span the opening, Roman floor tiles have been used, a simple and attractive solution.

The church itself contains many valued objects, from the elegant and



well-displayed Lord Mayor's sword rests to the poignant memorials of ww2, but the crypt too houses a museum. Here in its original place and at the ground level of Roman times, are a section of tessellated floor from a 2c dwelling, and many other artefacts, both Roman and medieval, which were discovered during the rebuilding.



PHOTO: DAVID JESSOP

CAROL SERVICE

Monday 12 December saw **St Mary Abchurch** in celebratory mode for the FCC carol service: the eighteenth (and final) carol service arranged by Nancy Branson. The boys from the City of London School Chamber Choir, directed by Richard Quesnel and accompanied on the organ by Callum Anderson, were a joy. The only fly in the afternoon's ointment was that The Revd David Goodburn was unwell and unable to attend, but he is now making good progress, and sounds like himself again.

The Christmas message was given by The Ven Luke Miller, who talked about the signs of Christmas: the star, the wise men, the Virgin: signs recognisable then and now. The Revd Malcolm Torry gave the bidding prayer and read the seventh lesson. The others were read by Friends.

The church was full: the mood festive. Tesco came up trumps with mince pies and the wherewithal for mulled wine. That was drunk, as was tea and juice; there was also a mountain of cake, baked by the usual suspects. Christmas and other cards, tea towels and books were bought in quantity.



BOOK REVIEW

THE VICAR OF ABCHURCH

DAVID JESSOP

144 pages
Austin and Macauley, 2022;
£7.99 paperback (ISBN 9781398448391), £11.99 hardback (ISBN 9781398448407) and ebooks

SUE-ANNE JAMES

This first novel, written by our own David Jessop, is a delightful read.

The characters portrayed are very realistic, generating empathy from the beginning. They develop into a narrative to which the reader can easily relate. The locations are in a small area of the City of

London. The plot is sympathetically narrated, focusing on the church of St Mary Abchurch, which in this fiction needs to be brought alive, and not only as a historical, architectural treasure. It has a unique character of its very own.

As the compelling story continues, it makes one think. Some readers may find it divorced from the reality of attitudes and experience of the majority of people. It is, in some respects, an idealised view of the way in which the power of one good Christian man can influence those around him. At the same time that man is dismissed by the very people who should appreciate the values he strives to maintain.

This is, universally, an excellent read, not just for Friends, who have a special interest.

CAIUS GABRIEL CIBBER, SCULPTOR

If Caius Gabriel Cibber is remembered at all today it is probably because he was the father of Colley Cibber, the actor-manager, playwright and Poet Laureate of somewhat questionable ability. However, the father became one of Christopher Wren's favourite stone carvers, creating for him the panel at the base of the Monument to the Great Fire of London, decorative figures for colleges in Oxford and Cambridge, a wealth of material in and around Hampton Court, and latterly working alongside Grinling Gibbons on **St Paul's Cathedral**.

According to *Transactions of the Wren Society* (Vol xv, p38), in the period January-March 1698, the Danish-born Cibber, was paid £280 for carving, *in situ*, the eight great keystones of the arches that support the dome of St Paul's Cathedral. Each keystone measures five foot by seven foot – that's roughly the size of a domestic mattress - and projects as much as eighteen inches.

This mammoth undertaking was executed ninety feet above the floor of the church, tucked in immediately beneath the Whispering Gallery, where these amazing confections meld with the accompanying decorative mosaics and carved mouldings. Yet, seek as I might, I was astonished to find that even though this great monument had been scrutinised from basement to belfry, just about every stone having been measured, drawn or photographed in the minutest detail, by all and sundry since the time it was built, yet – narry a sign of the keystones, nor so much as a description of them can be found.

Indeed, you will have to dig deep to find any information about



East keystone, above the choir opening, St Paul's Cathedral

PHOTO © GEOFF DANN

this sculptor, one of the leading practitioners of his day, for, apart from Harald Faber's monograph of the 1920s, and descriptions of his work in various country houses, he has been consigned to the footnotes of history, from which I am labouring to rescue him.

In order to correct this gross oversight I persuaded my friend Geoff Dann to bring to bear his skills with a camera, and having obtained clearance, one morning we joined the throng of tourists in the Cathedral, and set up his tripod, clipped on a telephoto lens and focused on our subject. Once the focus was established it was a simple matter to move the equipment around the outer edge of the floor, which was marked by a wide band of dark stone so the distance was constant. We were all done and dusted within the hour. The results were nothing short of stunning!

I have yet to find a guide to the individual keystones, although there are any number of explanatory notes regarding the mosaic-covered spandrels with which they are inextricably linked. As regards the iconography behind them, the first group of four needs very little interpretation. All eight of the

keystones incorporate the crossed swords that appear in the coat of arms of the Diocese, and they are liberally decorated with palm fronds and stylised acanthus leaves. Two more bear the images of winged cherubs, holding up festoons of fruit and flowers, and the remaining two incorporate grey, bearded seers, with rusticated backgrounds, known to be one of the most expensive finishes available in a master carver's pattern book, while gilding of the same merely serves to add to the cost of the job.

It is tempting to think of these two individuals as St Peter and St Paul, who at one time shared a feast day, 29 June, while nowadays St Paul's conversion is celebrated 25 January, but neither of them is carrying the usual attributes of keys or sword. If one of them were to be Moses, one might expect him to be sporting the traditional horns, and who, then, would the other figure be? Aaron, perhaps? Unlikely, I think.

However, a chance remark by Justine Taylor, Archivist, the Worshipful Company of Ironmongers, leads me to suspect that the gentlemen in question might be none other than two early Bishops of London, St Mellitus and St Erkenwald. ✨

WARD, WILKINS AND WREN: THE ORIGINAL 'WWW'

During 17c two intellectual giants overshadowed the activities of many others. The two were, of course, Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1726) and Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723).

There were any number of polymaths and savants active at the time, whose reputations were just as great in their own spheres of activity.

During the late 1650s and early 1660s the Royal Society came into being with the objective of promoting 'physico mathematical experimental learning, to meet to discuss science and run experiments'. Two of the 40 founding members of the Royal Society were Seth Ward (1617-1690) and John Wilkins (1614-1672). Both were, at some time, clergymen at **St Lawrence Jewry**.

Seth Ward was a mathematician and professor of astronomy at Oxford, where he became friends with John Wilkins. Both were interested in the establishment of a universal language that could be understood by all. In 1654 Seth Ward published, in conjunction with John Wilkins, *Vindiciae academiarum*, making public his interests in continental schemes for a universal language.

When in late 1660 Seth Ward lost his chair of astronomy, he was appointed by Charles II as vicar of St Lawrence Jewry. Sir Christopher Wren succeeded Seth Ward as Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford. In 1662 Seth Ward was elected bishop of Exeter where he proved to be an extremely able administrator, restoring buildings to their proper use and recovering much church property.

On 17 March 1667 Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) recorded in his diary: 'Archbishop Laud and the Bishop of Exeter, Dr Ward, are the two bishops that the King doth say he cannot have bad sermons from'. In that same year Ward was translated to the wealthier See of Salisbury. In 1669 he invited Sir

Christopher Wren to survey Salisbury Cathedral. Wren took a week to prepare a two-page report, which was lent to someone and subsequently lost. Wren did not keep a copy! When Seth Ward died in 1684 following a long struggle with dementia he was buried in the choir of Salisbury Cathedral.

John Wilkins was a theologian and natural philosopher, becoming vicar of St Lawrence Jewry in 1662, Dean of Ripon in 1663, King's Chaplain in 1667 and Bishop of Chester in 1668. On Sunday 12 February 1665 Samuel Pepys, out of curiosity, attended St Lawrence Jewry to hear Wilkins preach but was 'not satisfied with him at all . . . I was well pleased with the church, it being a very fine church'. The following year, 1666, Wilkins lost everything in the Great Fire: his church, his vicarage, his library and manuscripts.

During his lifetime he published a number of significant works including *Discovery of a world in the Moone*, discussing the possibility of communication by a flying machine with the moon and its supposed inhabitants. Thirteen propositions were put forward together with supporting arguments outlining the probability of life on the moon.

Later, in 1668 John Wilkins published an *Essay towards a Real Character and a philosophical language*. This built on his previous work with Seth Ward. Real Character was intended to allow easier communication between scholars, diplomats and natural philosophers among others. It was meant to be a supplement, not a replacement, of existing languages using symbols as the basic building blocks to construct every possible notion or idea. On 30 November 1667 Samuel Pepys had dinner with 'good company, I choosing to sit next Dr Wilkins . . . and others whom I value'. Wilkins described some details of his

forthcoming book. Pepys concluded they'd 'had a good discourse'.

On 15 May 1668 Samuel Pepys bought a copy of the book. On 17 May made his boy read from the book before bed, and on 5 July got his wife to read the book to him in the morning as his eyes were 'wrought pretty'.

In 1656 Wilkins married Robina French, née Cromwell, widowed sister of Oliver Cromwell. His death in London in December 1672 was probably caused by the medicines used to treat kidney stones. He was buried in St Lawrence Jewry, as was his widow in June 1689.

Ward and Wilkins were great friends, having been imprisoned together with Samuel Ward, Seth Ward's tutor at Cambridge, in 1642 during the Civil War. They lodged together during the Restoration, after they had been deprived of academic appointments bestowed by Oliver Cromwell. Both Ward and Wilkins returned to religious life, having obtained Divinity degrees from Oxford in 1648 (Wilkins) and in 1654 (Ward) subsequently making significant contributions to the Church.

Despite the dominance of Newton and Wren, there were many lesser-known men making significant contributions to the intellectual and ecclesiastical life of the country during 17c. ✍

FOOTNOTE

- The works of John Wilkins and Seth Ward are easily obtainable from various internet sources.
- Oliver Lawson Dick, ed *Aubrey's Brief Lives*, Penguin, 1949
- John Henry ODNB 'Ward' 25 May 2006; 'Wilkins' 8 October 2009, OUP
- Robert Latham, ed, *The Shorter Pepys*, Penguin, 1987
- Adrian Tinniswood, *His invention so fertile: A life of Christopher Wren*, Pimlico 2001
- John Wilkins, *An Essay towards a Real Character and a philosophical language*, 1668
- John Wilkins, *The discovery of a world in the Moone*, 1638

Where there is Brass • 10

IN THE LION'S MOUTH

The brass to an unknown lady, c. 1535, St Helen Bishopsgate

The church of **St Helen Bishopsgate** has the finest collection of figure brasses remaining in the City with **All Hallows Barking by the Tower** a close second. Both the church and its brasses have suffered over the years, the church undergoing at least three restorations between 17c and 1893. The most recent was in April 1992 following an IRA bomb placed outside the Baltic Exchange, which did considerable damage. A year later a second bomb exploded in Bishopsgate leaving the church further damaged. These events provided the opportunity for the church to undergo a complete restoration under the direction of the architect, Quinlan Terry. This allowed the floor level to be returned to its original medieval level. The brasses were removed, mainly from the south transept, and placed in new slabs on the walls. The brass discussed in this article, is now mural near the pulpit.

The brass to an unknown lady is something of a mystery as it is not mentioned in any of the likely sources, John Stow's *Survey of London*, (1603), John Weever's *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (1631) or John Strype's *Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster* (1720). The possible reason for this may be that the brass had been covered by pews at some date and over time remained hidden. What may be the earliest mention occurs about 1805 when the artist Thomas Fisher drew the brass. His illustration shows the figure 32 inches tall, wearing a pedimental headdress, partlet and gown with striped long sleeves ending with frilled cuffs. A girdle round her waist is held in place by a buckle of three rosettes. Hanging from her neck is a chain

with a Tau cross. Around the figure is an heraldic mantle bearing a lion rampant with three wounds on the shoulder. The 1924 edition of the *Survey of London* suggests that the lion on the surcoat may be the arms of either the Bolbeck or Robsart families. The arms assigned to the latter family are *Vert a lion rampant Or, vulned in the shoulder*, but definite proof for the family or an individual is lacking. Any connection of the Bulbeck family with St Helen is not forthcoming.

The likelihood of the brass's commemorating a member of the Robsart family is slim, as the family originated from Syderstone, Norfolk. At some date, probably in the late 19c it was suggested that the brass commemorated Elizabeth Robsart née Kerdeston, widow of Sir Thierry Robsart. She

was the grandmother of Amy Robsart, who became the first wife of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who died in 1560 in mysterious circumstances. To complicate matters, Elizabeth in her will asked to be buried beside her husband in the chancel of the church at Syderstone, Norfolk. Since then the chancel has been re-paved and no memorial to the Robsart family is in evidence. It is possible that due to her age Elizabeth retired to the nunnery of St Helen, passing her final years here. In about 1535 a brass to her memory was placed in the nun's aisle on the north side of the church at St Helen.

The brass would have been a cenotaph if her request for burial at Syderstone was indeed carried out.

Fisher's illustration, mentioned above showed the brass still in its original slab which measured 6'3" x 3'2" with the indent for a large shield above the figure. The brass had no indent for an inscription, and would have relied on the heraldry to provide identification of the figure.

A similar figure to that in St Helen can be seen in **Lambeth St Mary** (now the Garden Museum) commemorating Lady Katherine Howard in 1535. She is attired in costume similar to the brass at St Helen, although the arms shown on the mantle depict a number of family alliances. ♀



SOURCES

- J E Cox, *The Annals of St Helen's Bishopsgate*, London 1876
 M Stephenson, *A List of Monumental Brasses in Surrey* 1921
Survey of London vol. IX The Parish of St Helen Bishopsgate Pt 1 1924

Letters to the Editor

Gwyneth Deakins writes: Friends will be interested to know of filming that took place at **St Benet Paul's Wharf** for a programme broadcast on s4c on 28 January, and which will be put on BBC iPlayer.

It is not a broadcast service, but an item about the church and its Welsh connections, and will feature a piece by Huw Edwards (all in Welsh of course, but you can sometimes get English subtitles on s4c. You can for rugby commentaries anyway).



Aneurin was also interviewed. The cameraman and producer were at St Benet when Mary Milne-Day and I were watching in December, to take still shots of the exterior and interior. How lucky that it was a bright sunny day.

It would be nice if the programme encouraged more Welsh people to visit St Benet – Watchers, stand by for a rush in 2023 - and perhaps the fee will help the church to get a few more repairs done.



Alexey Moskvina

PHOTO: DAVID JESSOP

Roger White writes: Well! What a vast improvement upon last year's 'zoomed' Carol Service. Two cameras and someone to select them (at the right time too). And because we could hear every word we were really 'there': what a difference. There were many times that I really marvelled at your ingenuity in using the limited

facilities you had, such as close-ups of the reader from the top camera, even the organist. So, you must have had at least one cameraperson and a director person.

I do thank Nancy Branson and her team, especially Alexey Moskvina for really letting us in this year. It was much appreciated by your viewers. Well done. [see p11 Ed]

Elaine Turner writes: Although the use of **St Peter Cornhill** as a study centre keeps the church open and functional, the building itself receives little love. To the south of the altar, a beautiful font languishes behind increasing piles of clutter. (*photo below*) Tony Tucker describes it as 'original, octagonal font and cover with a carved dove and cherub heads'. Stephen Miller suggests (*London City Churches*, Metro Publications Ltd, 2011): 'the font dates from 17c, whilst its carved cover is a rare survivor from the pre-Wren church'. It needs to be seen! As for the 'ornate Hanoverian chest' (Mervyn Blatch *A guide to London's churches*, Constable, 1978), you would be hard pressed to know it was there: look carefully!

Couldn't some pressure be put to bear on St Peter (or **St Helen Bishopsgate**) to reinstate the font to its proper place at the church entrance, where it could be seen and admired as it deserves?



Diary

Any suggestions for future events should be sent to events@london-city-churches.org.uk

The ballot will be held on **Thursday 16 February**.

Please use the booking form and remember to enclose a stamped sae. Please allow a generous week for your tickets to arrive.

1 Tuesday 7 March
10.45 for 11

Regimental connections with the City Churches

Walk with Anne Marie Craven
Several City churches have strong associations with the Army, Navy and Air Force in 21c. It is hard not to be moved by the memorials to heroic chaplains, soldiers, sailors and airmen of 20c which we shall also discover on this walk.

£10 per person

Meet by the font All Hallows,
Barking by the Tower

Thursday 9 March
6pm for 6.30

ArchiCantiores

return with a programme of words and music 'Comfort in Winter's Cold'.

Music by English, French and German composers including Byrd, Campion, Eccard, Goudimel, Othmayr, de Sermisy, Tavener, Vaughan Williams

Words by English wordsmiths: Shakespeare, Pepys, Munden, Comins

Tickets on the door: £16,
FCC £14, under 18s free

St Mary Abchurch

Wednesday 22 March
10.20 for 10.30

Watchers' sign-up meeting

St Michael Paternoster Royal

2 Wednesday 19 April
3pm

Memorial service for Trustee Brian Evans

Booking essential; there will be no tickets

St Mary Abchurch

3 Saturday 22 April
10.45 for 11

Fleet Street: Estates One and Four

Walk with John Finn
St Bride and the Street of Ink – unearthing the lost 24/7 world

of London's newspaper trade.
£10 per head

Meet Queen Anne's statue
outside St Paul's Cathedral

4 Wednesday 24 May
10.45 for 11

City Grandees in Tower Hamlets Cemetery

Walk with Anne Tickell

One of the Magnificent Seven, established once burials were forbidden in City churchyards, this cemetery has examples of all the different types of funerary memorials in a beautiful setting.

£10 per person

Meet Mile End underground station, ticket hall

5 Wednesday 7 June
2.30 for 3

In memory of Sir Christopher Wren

The Bishop of London will be present at a service of Evensong, followed by refreshments.

Booking essential; there will be no tickets

St Mary Abchurch

6 Thursday 8 June
6 for 6.30

Sir Christopher Wren and his churches

Illustrated lecture by Tony Tucker

£10 per person

St Mary Abchurch

7 Saturday 1 July

Chairman's Outing: The churches of Romney Marsh

Slightly less early

Much postponed, still eagerly anticipated. The coach will meet Friends at Ashford International station at 11am for an exploration with a specialist guide.

£40 per person + £20 optional lunch

Meet Ashford International Station. Precise details will be on the tickets

Monday 3 July
3pm

FCC Annual General Meeting

St Mary Abchurch

— PLUMS —



↪ **Katrina Bradley, administrator at St Lawrence Jewry, writes:** On investigation, it seems the arrow section of the weathervane is formed from the incendiary bomb which destroyed the church interior. The bomb lines up with the 'shock wave' going through the grid iron.



↪ **Alfred Moore correction:** when he died in 1924, his estate of £17,463 translates to about £740,000 in today's money.

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