

Institute *of* **Physics**

LONDON AND SOUTH EASTERN BRANCH REMS SECTION

Visit to Guildhall and Art Gallery Thursday 10th March 2005

This visit has been organised by Robert Thorne

The Guildhall

Although there is evidence suggesting that a civil hall stood on the site in the late thirteenth century the present Guildhall was built between 1411 and 1430. It is the seat of the corporation of London and has been the hub of City life from the Middle Ages, the scene of famous state trials, remonstrances to kings and parliament and clamour for reform as well as the setting for brilliant receptions for royalty, statesman and heroes. For administrative purposes a modern office complex has been added.

The size and magnificence reflects the unique authority of the City's government rooted in the ancient rights and privileges established before the Norman Conquest and which emerged as the first independent local authority in Britain.

The Guildhall ancient walls survived damage from the great Fire of London in 1666 and the Blitz in 1940; restoration was completed in 1973.

The impressive Great Hall, measuring 152' by 49'6" is the setting for ceremonial and civic events including the election of Sheriffs and the Lord Mayor together with the associated silent ceremony at which he formally takes office.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries crowds flocked here for the drawing of the state lottery.

The City's official standards of length, both imperial and metric units, are displayed.

Other parts of the Guildhall of interest are the crypt, the largest mediaeval one in London, the old library, which housed reference items until 1974 when the contents were moved to newly constructed premises, and the associated print room. The two latter locations are now used as reception halls.

The Guildhall Art Gallery

The Guildhall Art Gallery was established in 1885 to provide public access to paintings and sculptures acquired from the seventh century onwards by the corporation of London. Located next to the medieval Guildhall it was burnt down in 1941 and subsequently replaced by the current three-floor building, completed and opened to the public in 1999.

Terminals are available to use the "Corporation of London Library and Art Gallery Electronic" system which contains over 31,000 images and records of work of art held in the Guildhall Art Gallery and the Library's Prints and Maps section.

In 1988 archaeologists unearthed the remains of an Amphitheatre beneath Guildhall Yard. Entry to this area, which incorporates atmospheric light and sound effects is via the Guildhall Art Gallery

The programme is

- 10.30 – 10.50 Assemble at the exit 1 of the Bank Underground station
- 11.00 – 12.30 Conducted tour of the Guildhall to include the Great Hall, Old Library and Print Room and the Crypt
- 12.30 – 13.55 Lunch at the “Prodigal”
- 14.00 – 15.30 Guided tour of the Guildhall Art Gallery.

The total cost of the two phases is £5 pp and includes both guide and admission fees. Numbers are limited to 25.

