

Institute of Physics

LONDON AND SOUTH EASTERN BRANCH REMS SECTION Tour of City Churches and Broadgate / Barbican Tuesday 10 June 2008

This visit has been arranged by Robert Thorne

City Churches

During the mediaeval period numerous churches were built in the City area. With the exodus of a large number of the population to the suburbs the numbers declined and by 1662 only 87 remained and were destroyed by the Great Fire. Sir Christopher Wren was commissioned to undertake remedial action and over a period of about 46 years designed and supervised the building of 51 City Churches to serve the post fire population. These churches were designed with individual characteristics.

In the period 1786 to 1936 19 were demolished mainly for development purposes. There was severe damage to others during the Blitz; on one night alone 9 Wren Churches were hit by incendiary bombs. Restoration work has been successfully carried out on 14 but unfortunately 8 sites have been forsaken. In total the reductions result in only 24 of the original 51 Wren Churches now surviving.

The tour covers 10-12 of Wren's most well known City Churches and includes a conducted visit to the following;

1. St Stephen Walbrook. This church, built in 1672-80 is considered to have one of Wren's finest interior with a 63 feet high dome based on Wren's original design for St Paul's. It suffered some bomb damage during World War II and was later restored.
2. St Mary-le-Bow. There was a church on this site before the Norman invasion. Its bells once signalled the curfew for the City of London and are credited with persuading Dick Whittington to turn back and remain in London to become Lord Mayor. The building was badly damaged during the war in May 1941 and the bells crashed to the ground. Traditionally to be a real Cockney it is necessary to be born within earshot of the bells which rang again in 1961 to produce a new generation of Cockneys.
3. St Mary Alderman. Following the Great Fire of 1666 the church was rebuilt in the Gothic style.
4. St Lawrence Jewry. This church is the official church of the Corporation of London. It suffered extensive damage during the Blitz on 29 December 1940 and was restored in 1957.

Broadgate and the Barbican

As a result of German bombing the City suffered appalling damage and depopulation. During the post war period remedial actions were taken to provide facilities for city activities and residential homes. During the afternoon a gentle stroll of the resultant unique Broadgate and Barbican areas will aim at giving an insight to these intriguing developments.

To meet post war demands for copious flexible office space geared to the modern financial world the Broadgate complex was developed during 1985 - 1991. It has stunning architecture and public sculpture with squares, terraces, colonnades, plazas and water features designed as open air areas where people could meet, relax, eat, drink, talk and enjoy Broadgate's public works of art which are one of the great collections ever assembled in this country.

After the war the City of London decided on an ambitious programme to reverse the depopulation of the City by providing much needed housing to encourage people to move back. Construction work on the consequential Barbican project took place during the period 1965 - 1976 on a 40 acre bomb site and was designed to resemble a small walled town. The inflated cost of land resulted in a high unit concentration with a total of 2014 flats housing some 4000 tenants. However there is a considerable sense of openness with 8 acres of gardens and lakes which give almost complete individuality to each block of flats.

Amongst its many features the Barbican includes many entertainment venues, conference facilities, public places, high class restaurants and the Arts centre - Europe's largest arts venue.

In 2001 the Barbican complex was Grade II listed because of the special architectural interest for its scale, its cohesion and the ambition of the project.

The day's programme will be conducted by Anna Fenn, who many will remember has been our guide on previous occasions.

Lunch has been arranged at ESCA in the beautiful Chartered Accountants Hall built in 1890 at a special party rate of £15 per head. The menu consists of either starter or sweet, Fish and Chips or Caesar's Salad or a Pasta dish for main course, soft drink or glass of wine and coffee.

Numbers are limited to 20 at a total cost of £27 (including the lunch).

Programme

10.00 - 10.30 Meet at the Fish Street Hill exit at the Monument Tube Station

10.30 - 13.00 Tour of the City Churches

13.00-.14.30 Lunch

14.30 - 16.30 Barbican and Broadgate

Finish at Liverpool Street Station

This visit was originally planned to take place in the autumn of last year, but had to be cancelled because of a transport strike on the day. For various reasons, it may be necessary to change the programme in places. Members coming on the visit will be told about any changes in the timetable.