

The story of St Paul's



In one night, 4 September 1666, the Great Fire of London destroyed four-fifths of London – including 13,000 houses, 87 churches and St Paul's Cathedral: the towering centrepiece of the City.

Dr Ann Saunders, Suburb resident, vividly describes the horrors of that night in her latest book *St Paul's: The Story of the Cathedral* (Collins & Brown, £25), and what followed from it. Emergency work included rushing in loaves and cheeses from the countryside to feed homeless Londoners and the demolition of tottering remains – a risky task, which killed three workmen (as accounts for coffins and payments to widows reveal). Soldiers from the Tower of London were brought in to use gunpowder. Then rebuilding started.

Where the medieval Cathedral had stood, Christopher Wren was commissioned to design a

new centrepiece for the City. Planning alone took nine years, with Wren's original ideas rejected by the clergy as being incompatible with the new, Protestant forms of worship for which two civil wars had only recently been fought. After compromise had been reached, the actual building then took another thirty five years.

Ann Saunders' lively account of these events has a very modern ring to it. Political infighting, price disputes with suppliers (the quarrymen of Portland stone), personality clashes, accusations of fraud, pilfering of materials and equipment from the building site.....nothing changes, it seems. (There was even a terrorist scare when, after completion, it was rumoured that the dome had been rigged to fall on Queen Anne when attending a service below). To finance the great

work, a tax was imposed on all coal entering the City, but from time to time funds ran out and work was held up.

Wren gave up all other work (although young, he had been a professor of astronomy at Oxford as well as designing the Sheldonian and other buildings) in order to concentrate on St Paul's. As the years went by, he married – and lost – two wives; two of his children and a beloved sister died too. Towards the end, in his 70s, he was so infirm that he had to be hauled up into the dome by means of ropes and a basket in order to inspect the work. Monarchs and prelates had come and gone, a war had begun and ended, but Wren endured through all until, in 1723, he died at the age of 91.

Wren's achievement was that of many others too – the hundreds of masons, draughtsmen, sculptors,

woodworkers, glaziers and others – who brought their skills to the great work. Wren acknowledged their part in this by inviting, not a VIP, but two of them to lay the foundation stone.

St Paul's survived the Second World War, despite being bombed, through the heroism of fire-fighters. Like those in New York after 11 September, they have their memorial, outside the Cathedral – one of many illustrated in the book by the admirable photographs of Sampson Lloyd. (Another memorial is to Lutyens, whose work is so familiar to us in the Suburb.)

Ann Saunders is not only a considerable scholar (Fellow of University College, London and author of the award-winning *Art and Architecture of London*) but writes with a felicity that gives ancient stones and old documents a fresh life.

ELIZABETH COCKBURN

Easton Lodge and Audley End outing

The RA Events Committee has been busy organising an exciting excursion to Audley End and the Gardens of Easton Lodge.

We set off at 9.30am from the Free Church car park on Saturday 13 July, arriving at Easton Lodge for coffee at about 10.30am. The historic gardens of Easton Lodge date back over 400 years. Their most renowned owner was the Countess of Warwick, 'Darling Daisy', mistress of Edward VII. In 1902 she commissioned leading Edwardian designer Harold Peto to create stunning formal gardens that were the talk of the day. Abandoned in 1950 after the demolition of the main house, the gardens were forgotten for nearly 45 years. In 1993 an ambitious restoration programme was started. Today the 23 acres of gardens have a magical atmosphere as the splendour of a century ago is gently revealed, allowing the visitor to imagine their past glories and enjoy their tranquil present.

The gardens at Easton Lodge have now been placed on the National Gardens Register by English Heritage as a 'Garden of National Importance'. The ongoing restoration, which includes Peto's magnificent Italian Sunken Garden with its ornate 100 foot balustraded pool, has proved to be as big an attraction to visitors

as the mature gardens are throughout the seasons.

The exhibition in the dovescot has original photos, paintings, prints, drawings and written memories of the house, garden and, of course, 'darling Daisy'.

At 12.30 we set off for Audley End, arriving at 1pm. Lunch and tea are available in the parterre restaurant or, if you wish, you can picnic in the extensive grounds. Audley End is one of the most magnificent houses in England. The main structure is little altered since the front court was demolished and the east wing came down in 1753. The rooms are a blend of many generations of taste.

An added attraction on the day of our visit is the royal progress of King Charles. As part of the Royal Heritage celebrations, Charles II visits the fascinating country house that he bought in 1669 for a weekend of royal revelry, pomp and pageantry.

We leave at 5pm, arriving back (traffic permitting) at about 6.30pm. The trip costs £20 per person to include morning coffee and biscuits, and entrance fees to Easton Lodge and Audley End. If you would like to come, please contact Anne Crawley, 116 Willifield Way, NW11 6YG, 8455 7618.

Wordsearch winner

The winner was Austin Heady who has lived on the Suburb for 48 years, first in Heath Close and now in Corringham Road. He has been (semi) retired as a medical

statistician for 20 years. He belongs to the University of the Third Age in North London and will use the book token to buy books for study in the reading circle.

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WORDSEARCH

COMPOSERS

In the box below are concealed the names, having four or more letters, of twenty European composers of serious music. Their names may be read forwards, backwards, upwards, downwards or diagonally. BARTOK has been ringed to start you off. Can you find the names of 19 more? Entries should be listed on a post card or a sheet of paper. They should be sent to 'Wordsearch', 117 Hampstead Way, London NW11 7JN and should give the name, address and telephone number of the sender. The closing date for entries is June 8th 2002. The sender of the first correct (or nearest correct) entry drawn after the closing date will receive a book token for £20.

H	I	I	N	I	C	C	U	P	B	K	V	S	J	U
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A	Y	O	B	T	M	A	B	T	S	V	Y	R	Z	Y

ROSALEEN COX

WORDSEARCH ANSWERS

The books of the Old Testament in the box of the last wordsearch were: Amos, Daniel, Deuteronomy, Esther, Exodus, Ezekiel, Ezra, Genesis, Habakkuk, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Job, Jonah, Joshua, Kings, Leviticus, Micah, Numbers, Ruth, Samuel.

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