

CoreNet Global UK - Architectural River Boat Cruise

Thursday 4 July 2017, Festival Pier, Lambeth, London SE1

Guide: Benedict O’Looney

Cruisers: Members of CoreNet UK’s Chapter and guests

Since the foundation of CoreNet’s UK Chapter and even before we have organised a Summer Walk, lasting about an hour or so and looking in depth at the historic and actual buildings of part of London’s City, West End and South Bank. This year, for a change, somebody suggested that we organise a trip on the river, looking at buildings from the water rather than the street. So we did.



On a perfect summer evening, a group of 60 Chapter members and guests assembled on the dock in front of the Festival Hall, ready to board Viscount Cruises’ MV London Rose. The planned itinerary was to take us first upriver to Chelsea Harbour, before turning and following the tide down river to Canary Wharf, where we were to turn again upriver to our point of departure at the Festival pier. So, once aboard and greeted with a glass of Pimm’s, members and guests migrated up to the large back deck, where our guide for the evening lovely **Benedict O’Looney** was waiting for cast off and to begin his commentary. Astonishingly he managed to talk almost non-stop for two and a half hours, describing the buildings we saw and the architects responsible for each.

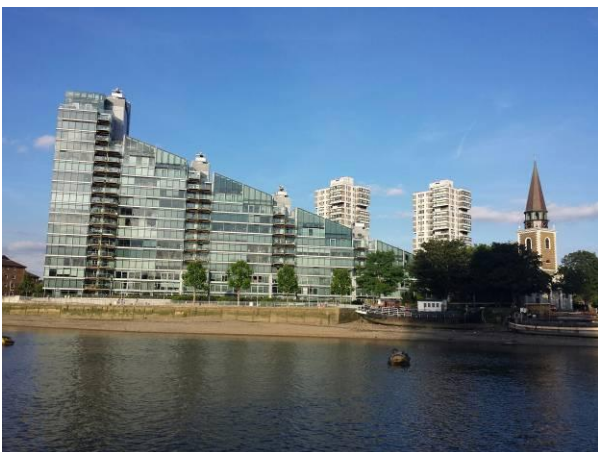
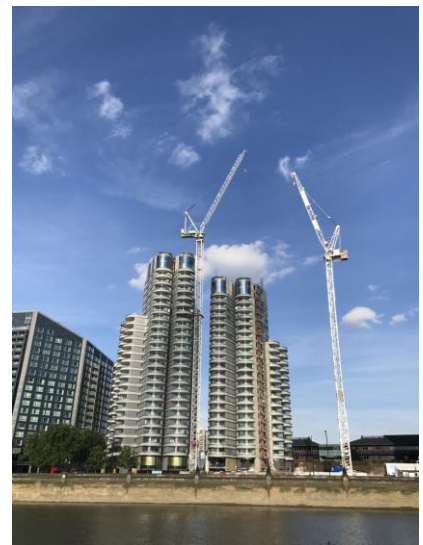
First Hungerford Bridge, once a suspension bridge replaced by Brunel’s cast iron structure in the 1830s and now surrounded by two hi-tech footbridges. Next Blomfield’s 1923 RAF memorial on the north bank, facing County Hall, designed in the Edwardian Baroque style by Ralph Knott, once the seat of the London County Council and now a hotel. Then a privileged view of the terrace of the Houses of Parliament, complete with marquees and MPs celebrating their nearing end-of-term, followed by a close-up of the Tudor brick of Lambeth Palace dating





from 1450. Under Lambeth Bridge next, and a fine view of Millbank Tower, a five-sided, seemingly lightweight glass construction in the style of Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, designed by Ronald Ward and Partners in the 1960s, swiftly followed by what was once the Millbank Penitentiary and is now (since the 1890s) Tate Britain, originally built to house the art collection of the sugar magnate Sir Henry Tate. Passing Pimlico with its ranks of Cubitt Renaissance revival terraced housing we were able to admire the monumental sculptures attached in 1907 to the piers of Vauxhall Bridge - who knew

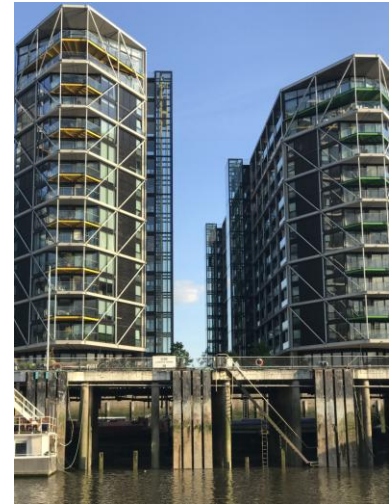
they were there? On then towards Chelsea Harbour, past the now demolished New Covent Garden Market and the new US Embassy still under construction, Gilbert Scott's giant Battersea Power Station undergoing restoration, and then three bridges: Grosvenor (railway) Bridge, followed by two suspension bridges - Chelsea and Albert at either end of Battersea Park - and then Battersea Bridge and Whistler's home, followed by the World's End flats and Lots Road Power Station.



Turning, we crossed towards the South Bank towards Battersea Old Church, dwarfed by Richard Rogers' Montevetro on a site once occupied by Hovis flour mills, followed by further largely residential developments on brown field sites. On to Battersea Park, once a swampy marsh, Benedict explained, until filled with spoil excavated from the site of the Royal Docks raising the level of the ground 15 or 20

feet and providing much needed green space for the local population. Eventually past Terry Farrell's MI6 building inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright, then St Thomas's Hospital with its Edwardian loggias, before Waterloo Bridge, and Blackfriars bridges (the rail bridge roofed with solar panels). Next Tate Modern with Herzog & de Meuron's Switch House,

contrasting strongly with The Globe theatre, with distant views of the Shard, and then under Cannon Street rail bridge with its massive ornamental piers, Glaziers Hall abutting London Bridge, the art deco Hays Wharf, and, facing Norman Foster's glass City Hall with its internal helical walkway, the Norman Tower of London, and the Victorian Tower Bridge, closely followed by the giant Butler's Wharf the first of many further closely packed historic Victorian wharf buildings converted now largely into residential units. Then, at Wapping, the HQ of the Thames River Police, the oldest force in England, founded in 1798 to protect shipping in the Pool of London, while further on the south bank the bascule bridge into the Surrey Docks where much of the timber used in the buildings of London was landed.



On then towards Canary wharf, passing Limehouse Reach and its celebrated pub The Grapes and collections of smaller houses, and Limehouse Marina with its links into the canal system which once covered much of England. Finally, looking down river we saw Millwall, originally an earthen embankment built to protect low lying farmland and topped with windmills - hence the name. Returning, we saw Thames Tunnel Mills and, behind, St Mary's Church Rotherhithe, rebuilt in 1714 by John James an associate of Sir Christopher Wren, in the Lower Pool before sailing once more under Tower Bridge and

finally landing once more at the Festival Pier.

All agreed it was a terrific evening, perfect weather and Benedict an amazingly knowledgeable guide. Thanks also to our sponsors: elementa and AECOM - who between them allowed the evening to go ahead, and to Herman Miller - who were to provide the umbrellas but in the end were responsible for the much more appreciated Pimms! Thank you to all of you who helped to make it happen.

Alison Sutherland