



KING'S COLLEGE LONDON ARCHIVES

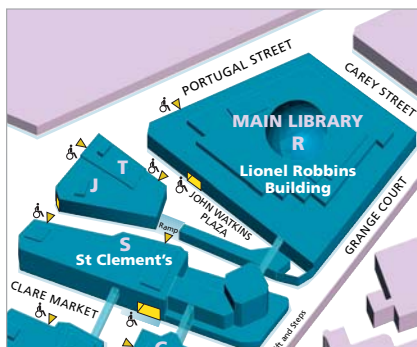
King's College Hospital, Portugal Street, Lincoln's Inn, 1860

A CORNER OF LONDON

THE LIBRARY QUADRILATERAL

In *LSE Magazine*, summer 2006, **George Kiloh** wrote about the history of the Clare Market area before LSE arrived. Here he reveals more about the patch of land now home to the Library and other notable School buildings.

Today's quadrilateral showing Cowdray House (J), the Lakatos Building (T) and the Lionel Robbins Building (R)



The Library quadrilateral is a historic site. It is one of the more interesting parts of the School, having included various inns, an early workhouse, a burial ground, a school and King's College Hospital (above). It now contains the Lionel Robbins building, Cowdray House and the Lakatos building.

Portugal Street dates from the late 16th century, though its current name came later. Originally the south side of Lincoln's Inn Fields was known as Portugal Row because the Portuguese embassy was there. Carey Street appears to be named after Nicholas Carey, a local landowner of the first half of the 17th century when the area was first turned to housing; its first known mention was in 1708. Whatever its origins, in later years the term Carey Street became synonymous with financial difficulty thanks to the presence there of the Bankruptcy Court.

Like the rest of the area the site was in agricultural use till relatively late. The southwestern edge

belonged to the Holles estate, and the rest to Lincoln's Inn Grange, which stood on the middle and southern part of the site. By the 18th century the Grange had become, or had been rebuilt as, an inn with a large courtyard. Much later, the corner received the John Watkins Plaza (built in 2003 and named after the eminent philosophy professor) which stands over a basement area.

In Portugal Street there was a cemetery. A letter to *The Times* complained about it as early as 1838. Thereafter there were frequent references to the nuisance that it constituted. In 1848 it was estimated that more than 5,500 bodies had been interred in the confined space of the Portugal Street graveyard in the preceding 25 years. The graveyard was closed to fresh burials after the cholera outbreak of that year and the dead were taken elsewhere. Acts of Parliament in 1849 and 1852 regulated burials more effectively, giving powers to the General Board of Health and the Privy Council to prohibit new burials on



Above, left to right: Portugal Street and the Library building today
The John Watkins Plaza
The Library's spiral staircase
Cowdray House on St Clement's Lane

‘The Library site was fortunate in having had a near miss from an air raid in both world wars’

grounds of health. Shortly after 1852 the bodies were taken from Portugal Street and reburied in the suburbs.

Burials had continued despite the long-time existence of a poorhouse on the same site. Although the parish had run a poorhouse earlier, in 1770 it built a proper workhouse out of some of the houses along Portugal Street constructed in 1674. It was capable of housing 300 people. It had 30 rooms as well as offices, and must have been as crowded as the houses that the poor had left behind. The earlier system relied on each parish to take action for its own inhabitants. St Clement Danes ran its workhouse from 1771 to 1836. The site was not in use when in 1839 King's College, searching for premises close to its own building in the Strand, leased the old workhouse for their new hospital and built on it. When they had finished, most of the Portugal Street frontage was left open, with a large yard behind it. Opened in 1840, the hospital initially had 50 beds but very shortly expanded to 140. A contemporary picture of the hospital (previous page) shows a four-storey L-shaped structure that appears to have embedded within it an older, gabled building.

The quadrilateral in the 1900s

In 1903 the decision was made to shift the whole of the King's hospital. The old Portugal Street hospital was then leased by King's to WH Smith and Son, whose owner WFD Smith was chair of the KCH trustees – a position once held by his father. Smith's did not buy the freehold until 1954.

WH Smith and Son rebuilt the premises in 1913-16, and named it Strand House. The plan was to build three blocks, of which that facing Portugal Street and most of Carey Street was to be mainly offices, with the loading bays in the southern half of the Carey Street frontage. On its completion Smith's found the new building immediately requisitioned by

the government for use by the Postal Censor, and it was not until 1920 that they gained possession. Not long afterwards they installed a rifle range on the roof, with appropriate strong curtain walls, the last remnants of which were finally removed only in 1984.

Smith's used Strand House as offices and a warehouse for their book trade, which explained the heavy floor construction that was appropriate for the LSE Library when it opened there in 1978. It also explains the industrial look to the exterior of the building. Smith's left because inner-city warehousing had had its day.

The Library site was fortunate in having had a near miss from an air raid in both world wars. On the night of 13/14 October 1915 a German naval airship passed over the area. It dropped its first bomb in Exeter Street, with one death and ten injured; another outside the Lyceum Theatre in Wellington Street, killing 17 and injuring 21; one in the roadway at the corner of Drury Lane and the Aldwych; one slightly west of the entrance to Connaught House; two on the undeveloped site that later became Aldwych House; one on the Bankruptcy Court; another at the western end of Carey Street close to the junction with Portugal Street; and finally one in Lincoln's Inn New Square where a stone commemorates the event.

Then on 10 October 1940 a high explosive bomb, probably 50kg, landed at the corner of Carey and Portugal Streets. There were no casualties but a large crater was made in the road and damage to buildings was considerable, even if quickly repaired. The pocked and twisted brass plate of Strand House remains in place, with an explanatory notice. It sits next to the plaque placed there on the 100th anniversary of the foundation of King's College hospital, which appropriately acknowledges the generosity of WH Smith.

The Lakatos building and Cowdray House

The Library quadrilateral also includes the Lakatos building and Cowdray House, which have a very different history. Their plot involves St Clement's Lane, this section of which was historically called Gilbert Street, and part of what was then Gilbert's Passage. An option to build was taken by George Bell and Sons, publishers, who reserved the southern, larger portion and called it York House; they moved into it early in 1904. The *Church Times* took the northern part.

The whole was to the design of Horace Field (1861-1948), a well-known architect of the day whose offices were in fashionable Langham Place. Today is it is a listed building, Grade II. It is probably the School's most elegant building: stylish neo-Georgian rather than the clunky pastiche that became popular in the 1920s.

The corner of Portugal Street and St Clement's Lane has a mildly ceremonial entrance topped with a stone shield with the device of a bell and a Greek quotation which appears to be part of 1 Corinthians 3.7. The Authorised Version renders the whole relevant passage as '[5] Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed ... [6] I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. [7] So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but *God that giveth the increase*', the italicised piece being the translation.

George Bell and Sons was a firm of some repute. Founded in Bouverie Street in 1839 as an educational bookseller, it became a publisher concentrating on serious works and children's books. Despite its reputation the firm did not survive the post-1945 shakeout of British publishing and, following a resale, finally went out of business in 1989.

Part of the same development by Field, 7 Portugal Street is now the Lakatos building. It stretches back

to the break in the roof line opposite the Library door. The *Church Times* had been founded in 1863 by the Palmer family, who ran it largely as a vehicle for the Anglo-Catholic tradition of the Church of England, then vigorously reasserting itself. The *Church Times* continued their success on this site. The building made room for 20 typesetters, who used molten metal right up to the end of the tenancy in 1989, who were on the upper floors (where the exterior rain collectors still bear the initials CT). The twelve editorial and managerial staff were below. (Sir) Edward Heath (1916-2005) worked as news editor of the *Church Times* from January 1948 to September 1949. His parliamentary career began in February 1950 and he was prime minister between 1970 and 1974.

The *Church Times* had a lease, from 1954 from the Prudential, that expired in 1989. In November that year they moved out to Islington, and the Palmer family surrendered their interest to the Council of the Canterbury Press, the publishing arm of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. The premises were taken over by a multiplicity of small users and renamed Tymes Court in honour of its former occupants. In 1993 the School accepted free use of it from an anonymous donor who insisted that it should be used for the Centre for Philosophy of Natural and Social Science. The freehold followed in 1999. In 2001 Tymes Court was renamed after Imre Lakatos (1922-1974), a Hungarian academic who had shared very fully the vicissitudes of his country's difficulties and who left it after the unsuccessful rising of 1956. He joined the School staff in 1959 and ten years later became professor of logic.

The Library and the School

Negotiations by the School for Strand House began as early as 1963, when Smith's were still busy carrying out substantial modifications to the

building, but the agreement to buy from Smith's was made only late in 1970 and it was not until the end of 1973 that the School obtained the freehold (for £3.78 million). It leased Strand House back to Smith's. Smith's left at the end of March 1974, and the way was then clear to rebuild.

The cost of the conversion was estimated at £4.38 million, including all fittings. The University of London contributed £1.98 million on condition that the School found the remainder. It did so by an appeal that brought in enormous support from around the world. The appeal was a major campaign that included, perhaps as its highlight, a concert at the Banqueting House in Whitehall at which Geraint Evans performed under the baton of Philip Ledger, with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. It had public support, and that of HM The Queen Mother, who was chancellor of the University of London.

It was Lord Robbins (1898-1984) who led the appeal. He had joined LSE in 1925 and become a professor in 1929, a position he held until his early retirement in 1961; he was a life peer from 1959. He was then appointed chairman of the *Financial Times*, and he chaired the LSE governors from 1968 to 1973. His main national claim to fame was as chair of the enquiry into higher education that published its report in 1963 and provided the justification for the enormous expansion of student numbers that was then just beginning. When the new library was opened in 1978 it was named the Lionel Robbins Building.

Inevitably the time came for the ever-growing Library again to feel the pinch. In 1986 it was reported that storage space would run out in 1988; during the 1990s it became clear that the Library had outgrown the building in the form adopted after Smith's withdrawal, both in terms of books and users. The decision was made to rebuild it on its present site rather than attempt the impossible of again finding a new one close to Houghton Street. Norman Foster and Partners were commissioned to design the present building between 1999 and 2001, formally opened by the University of London chancellor, HM The Princess Royal. The results are now enjoyed by the current generation of students, and here this part of the story ends.

The story of LSE and its place in this corner of London, however, will continue. ■



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was LSE's academic registrar from 1996 to 2005.