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RESIDENTIAL LONDON AND THE BOROUGHES

CHELSEA

Chelsea leads its charming life beside the Thames, not oblivious of the distinguished lives it has harboured but quite at ease with that splendid company and, unconcerned about its reputation, adopts all sorts of real people with supreme indifference. Old china made in Chelsea is less rare today than the buns for which it was once more famous.

When Chelsea was a village up river from Westminster, over the brook Westbourne, kings loved it and there they built them their retreats. It adopted its tone in those far off village days and it has never changed its tone or been untrue to its traditions. The chosen home of Fame, it remains unspoiled and like some of the pensioners in its Royal Hospital it never grows old or shabby or decayed. It is still the home of genius and the quiet, unassuming partner of the CITY in some of its greatest glories. It is now a Borough of the great Metropolis and it remains the loveliest of the places where men and women live.

It begins its history as a Saxon village with its Manor. In the eighth century the Pope sent his emissaries to England to reform the religion and these legates held their synod at Cealchythe (Chelsea). In the reign of Edward the Confessor, Thurston, Archbishop of York, having received Chilchelle (Chelsea) from the King, conveyed it to Westminster Abbey. The charter by which Edward confirmed the grant is preserved in the British Museum. In Domesday Book the name is written Cealchylle and also Chilched. In the reign of Henry VII the old Manor was in possession of the Bray family whose tomb is the oldest in Chelsea Old Church. From the Brays the Manor House was bought by Henry VIII. At that time Sir Thomas More was living "at my pore howse in Chelcith." The Manor next became a part of the marriage jointure of Queen Catherine Parr, sixth and last wife of Henry whom she survived. She lived in the old Manor House with her fourth husband, Lord Seymour. Later the house was owned by the Duke of Northumberland, father in law to Lady

Jane Grey, and after his execution on Tower Hill his Duchess continued to hold it. Queen Elizabeth, who, as a young and inconspicuous princess, had lived there with her stepmother, Catherine Parr, afterwards gave the Manor to Lady Katherine Howard, widow of the great Lord Howard. It remained in the Howard family for several generations till bought by the Duke of Hamilton in 1639. During the Commonwealth it was seized and sold by the government but the agents of the Hamiltons bought it and held it for the family. Not long afterwards it was sold to Charles Cheyne and finally in 1712 Sir Hans Sloane, founder of the British Museum, bought it from Lord Cheyne. The descendants of Sloane, the Cadogans, are still the owners of the property but the old Manor House has long since disappeared.

Another ancient Manor House, the site of which is known, was Shrewsbury House, built in the reign of Henry VIII by the Earl of Shrewsbury whose grandson, the powerful sixth Earl, was one of Elizabeth's favourites and the keeper of Mary Queen of Scots during a part of her imprisoned life. Shrewsbury's second wife who survived him many years and inherited the Chelsea house was a very remarkable woman. He was her fourth husband and each of the four was enormously wealthy. During her final widowhood therefore she had great possessions, the greater part of which she left to her son by her second husband, Sir William Cavendish. This son, William Cavendish, was created Baron Cavendish and Earl of Devonshire and was the first of the distinguished line of noblemen represented in later history by the Dukes of Devonshire. After the death of the first Earl of Devonshire, Shrewsbury House passed out of the family. Thereafter it had different owners at different times, and it would appear that this old mansion was the original home of the famous Chelsea China Manufactory, but this has not been definitely established. However that may be, Shrewsbury House was finally the place where a celebrated pictured wall paper was made.

I believe it can be proved that people are born in Chelsea, but one never hears about them. Perhaps its wonderful gardeners are born there but those inhabitants of Chelsea who, though perhaps no greater are better known, all appear to have been born elsewhere. Sir Thomas More was born in Milk Street, Cheapside. Sir Hans Sloane was born in Ireland. Nell Gwynne was born I do not know where. Joseph Addison was born in Wilts. Sir Robert Walpole was born in Norfolk. The Kingsleys were born, one in Devonshire and

one in Northamptonshire, George Eliot in Warwickshire, Thomas Carlyle in Ecclefechan, Dumfriesshire, Leigh Hunt in Southgate, Turner and Rosetti in London, Whistler in Lowell, Massachusetts and Henry James in New York. All these and many more went to live in Chelsea because they loved it. Walk where you will, you are reminded of them at every step, till entering Chelsea Old Church



Number 16 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea.

you find yourself among them. One of the oldest tombs, though not the very oldest, is that of Sir Thomas More with its epitaph by himself. The latest tomb is that of Henry James.

I believe the legend that Henry VIII married Jane Seymour secretly in Chelsea Old Church some time before the public wedding. Somehow the fine old church confirms it in my mind and tells me to believe it.

But the great living glory of Chelsea is the Royal Hospital founded by Charles II. There is a legend that it was suggested to the King by Nell Gwynne, but others say that the idea originated with Sir Stephen Fox, Paymaster General. Doubtless both stories are true. The pensioners give Charles himself all the credit and still celebrate his birthday annually. It is a truly Royal foundation, formerly supported by the Army and in later years by the Nation.



Number 6 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea.

The annual May flower show in the grounds of the hospital where the decorative instincts of Nature are in alliance and collusion with the decorative Arts of Man is always a scene of beauty triumphant. Perhaps to some minds it may recall the vanished scenes in the adjacent Ranelagh Gardens where in eighteenth century days, the wealth and beauty and fashion of London used to come to walk and take the air and see and bravely to be seen.

MAYFAIR

If the name of Chelsea conceals a meaning associated with the background of a Saxon Manor, a meaning that leaves modern scholars perplexed, the name of Mayfair presents an image that reveals at once the earlier history of the district. It is a fascinating name in whose engaging sound there is nothing obscure. In Stuart times the country north of Piccadilly was open country, and there in the green fields an annual fair was held in the pleasant month of May. It probably started after the Restoration and, beginning on the first day of May each year, lasted fifteen days. In the last year of the seventeenth century, the advertisements in the London Gazette announced that the two first days of the Fair would be for the sale of leather and live cattle. So it appears that there was marketing, but we are given to understand that the amenities and chief business of the fair included music, plays, jugglers, boxing matches, prize fights, gaming, lotteries and bull baiting. In 1708 "the yearly riotous and tumultuous assembly—called May Fair" was suppressed because it was pronounced "a public nuisance and inconvenience." It is said to be hard to put down a good thing, and we find May Fair revived after a few years and going strong throughout the eighteenth century. Then in the reign of George III some residents of Piccadilly, disturbed by the uproar that reached them from the fields, brought about its removal. In the meantime we are told that the Fair was very popular and that the nobility of London especially came in great numbers. The fashionable district had a fair beginning and good start.

It was said many years ago that the district known as Mayfair contained more ability and intelligence than any space of equal size in the world. When we consider the number of its great houses formerly the residences of great men, the claim appears to be justified. It continues to share with its southern neighbour Belgravia the fashionable life of London.

The names of Mayfair and Belgravia are unofficial. The districts to which they apply are included in the official divisions of Westminster and Marylebone. They are usually regarded as the most select and desirable residential districts of the West End, a name applied to the whole region from the west boundary of the City right through Westminster, Holborn, Paddington, Marylebone, Chelsea and Kensington. In this wide region the higher life of

London for the most part resides and there the best shops and hotels are located.

THE METROPOLITAN BOROUGHS

We are now brought face to face with the geography and government of the Metropolis, for the six names that I have just used belong to places which, though presenting no break in the continuity of streets and houses, are in effect distinct cities for municipal purposes and are called boroughs.

When a Londoner speaks of The Borough he means Southwark, which lies on the south side of the river as you come over London Bridge. But Southwark is only one of the boroughs of which there are twenty eight in all. Each borough has its Mayor, Aldermen and Council, just as though it were a separate city, and the way in which the inclusion of these Metropolitan Boroughs was effected calls for comment. London has grown by accretions, or by allying with itself the parishes that came gradually within the sphere of its expanding influence. The inclusion of new districts had to be accomplished without affecting the independence and separate existence of the CITY or coming in conflict with the rights of its Corporation, or in any way encroaching on its constitution. Therefore each parish as its time came to be brought under the Metropolitan jurisdiction was made a borough by converting the Parish Vestry into Mayor, Aldermen and Council. Each borough went on managing its own affairs, and was brought into harmonious relationship with all the other boroughs and with the CITY by means of an invention called The London County Council, a body having control of all matters requiring uniformity of action throughout the Metropolis and leaving to the borough councils those powers that are capable of local administration. The London County Council however does not exercise the same authority within the CITY that it exercises among the boroughs. Within those ancient boundaries the City Corporation remains supreme and no other municipal body in the Metropolis, or anywhere else for that matter, rises to the dignity of that unassailable system of mediæval government.

While we have in mind this august distinction let us be careful to observe that the form of local government in each borough is simply a copy of the City Corporation, namely, Mayor, Aldermen and Council. When the newspapers quote the utterances of a Labour Mayor in the borough of Poplar, or some other borough having

advanced ideas, we may be pardoned if we have a sense of something incongruous in London's political legacy. But we are apt to forget that the Lord Mayor of London is today, as in mediæval times, chosen by the trade guilds, the labour organizations that were already in existence when the oldest London records were made.

The boroughs to the West of the CITY are Westminster, Holborn, Paddington, Marylebone, Chelsea, Kensington, Fulham, Hammer-smith, St. Pancras. To the East are Bethnal Green, Poplar and Stepney, corresponding to the East End; to the North are Finsbury, Shoreditch, Hackney, Islington, Hampstead and Stoke Newington; on the South side of the Thames are Southwark, Bermondsey, Battersea, Camberwell, Wandsworth, Lambeth, Greenwich, Woolwich, Deptford and Lewisham. For administrative purposes Charing Cross is considered the centre of the Metropolis and any parish of which the whole is included within a 15 mile radius or of which any part comes within a 12 mile radius is included in the Metropolitan Police District, always excepting the CITY.

Besides the City Corporation, the Borough Councils and the London County Council, there are no less than 170 bodies in all having jurisdiction over parts of the government of the great City. The mere figures are enough to show that it is a complicated machine. It is moreover entirely unlike the municipal government of any other city in the United Kingdom and different from everything else, notwithstanding the fact that it has served as the model for so many cities in all the world. It is something that could not be copied.

Having given this complete account of the government of London I hope to make it still more clear by means of an illustration. For this purpose I will take Southwark. After long and laborious research into the relation of Southwark to the general scheme of things, my net result consists in three clearly established facts as follows. (a) Southwark is a borough of the Metropolis. (b) It is a ward of the CITY. (c) It is neither the one nor the other.

It is a borough because it has had a Charter since Norman times and has sent a representative to Parliament since 1296. On the other hand, it is not a borough because it has neither Mayor, Aldermen nor Common Council of its own. Hence it is called *The Borough*.

It is a ward of the CITY because it was granted to the CITY by a Charter of Edward VI. On the other hand, it is not a ward of the CITY because it sends no Alderman to the Guildhall and is not represented on the Common Council that meets in the same place.

Hence it is designated the Ward of Bridge Without. As a borough it can acknowledge no jurisdiction on the part of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen and neither can it have any share in the Corporation. As a ward of the CITY, it forms part of the same Corporation and no one can possibly have any kind of jurisdiction within its boundaries or interfere in any way with its affairs except the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Common Council of the CITY OF LONDON.

Of course any one can see at a glance that a machine like that could not possibly work. It is nevertheless a fact that it works better than any city government that has ever been devised.