



The History of London: The Urban Space. Introductory Remarks

Egyptian Hall, Mansion House
Wednesday 6th April 2011, 5pm- 7pm
The Rt Hon The Lord Mayor of London
Alderman Michael Bear

Dr Thurley, My Lord, Fellow Aldermen, Sheriff, Chief Commoner,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you all to Mansion House this
afternoon.

This lecture is the first of three, looking at London past and
present – and how we in the City can meet the challenges of the
future.

And it is particularly appropriate that I, as Lord Mayor, am able
to host these lectures.

The Mayoralty represents an extraordinary link with London's past. I am the 683rd Lord Mayor in the 821 years of the Mayoralty. And this gives it a continuity matched by few.

But the Mayoralty also remains a living institution, with a changing emphasis as each Lord Mayor comes into office. The Lord Mayor works to tackle the challenges we face now and in the future, especially on the important role the City has to play in the national, European and global recoveries.

And the Mayoralty also provides a unique platform for Government to set out its direction on its thinking at the different banquets and the events the City provides each year.

For myself, I am an adopted Londoner, like so many Londoners through the ages. Someone who has found their way to London to try to seize the opportunities the city offers.

And I have been fascinated by the history of London ever since I arrived here from South Africa thirty two years ago.

The City remains a global financial centre. And has stood at the heart of the world's trade for hundreds of years. From the days when the Romans first bridged the Thames. To the most modern, high tech financial institution, trading in futures, options or derivatives.

But it has also been at the heart of national and international politics. It was the Lord Mayor who put paid to the rebel Wat Tyler in 1381 – a scene depicted in one of the windows here in the Egyptian Hall. While Lord Mayor John Wilkes spent his time in office agitating for liberty - to the considerable irritation of Government and Crown alike.

And the City and London as a whole has bequeathed us an amazing architectural legacy.

It has continuity. In the wonderful Wren churches and livery halls – or those that escaped the fires of the Blitz. And in the life that goes on inside them.

But it has always embraced change. In the last twenty five years we have seen an unprecedented flowering of our built environment, to meet the needs of a modern global financial centre. And I was privileged to work on many of these buildings wearing my property development hat.

So these lectures will enable us to look at different aspects of the past, present and future of our great City.

The poet William Dunbar wrote in the fifteenth century that London was “a city of high renown” and “the flower of Cities all”.

This is as true now as it was then.

And who better to tell us about it than Dr Simon Thurley, the Chief Executive of English Heritage – the Government's chief advisor on the built environment? And an historian of high renown himself, not least as a former Director of the Museum of London.

Simon has described himself as a historian with a mission. He believes passionately that our past informs and shapes our future. And that, to make a great future for everyone, we need to understand and care for our past.

These are sentiments I endorse and applaud. And I very much look forward to hearing him this afternoon.

Simon, thank you.

600 words