

Frightfully Interesting Reading List 2 – St Paul’s and the City

Skies, thought Old Bailey, in a satisfied sort of a way. Never a two of them alike. Not by day nor not by night, neither. He was a bit of a connoisseur of skies, was Old Bailey, and this was a good ’un. The old man had pitched his tent for the night on a roof opposite St Paul’s Cathedral, in the centre of the City of London.

He was fond of St Paul’s, and it, at least, had changed little in the last three hundred years. It had been built in white Portland stone, which had, before it was even completed, begun to turn black from the soot and the filth in the smoky London air and now, following the cleaning of London in the 1970s, it was more or less white again; but it was still St Paul’s. He was not sure that the same could be said for the rest of the City of London: he peered over the roof, stared away from his beloved sky, down to the sodium-lit pavement below. He could see security cameras affixed to a wall, and a few cars, and one late office worker, locking a door and then walking towards the Tube. *Brrrr*. Even the thought of going underground made Old Bailey shudder. He was a roof-man and proud of it; had fled the world at ground level so long ago . . .

Old Bailey remembered when people had actually *lived* here in the City, not just worked; when they had lived and lusted and laughed, built ramshackle houses one leaning against the next, each house filled with noisy people. Why, the noise and the mess and the stinks and the songs from the alley across the way (then known, at least colloquially, as Shitten Alley) had been legendary in their time, but no one lived in the City now. It was a cold and cheerless place of offices, of people who worked in the day and went home to somewhere else at night. It was not a place for living any more. He even missed the stinks.

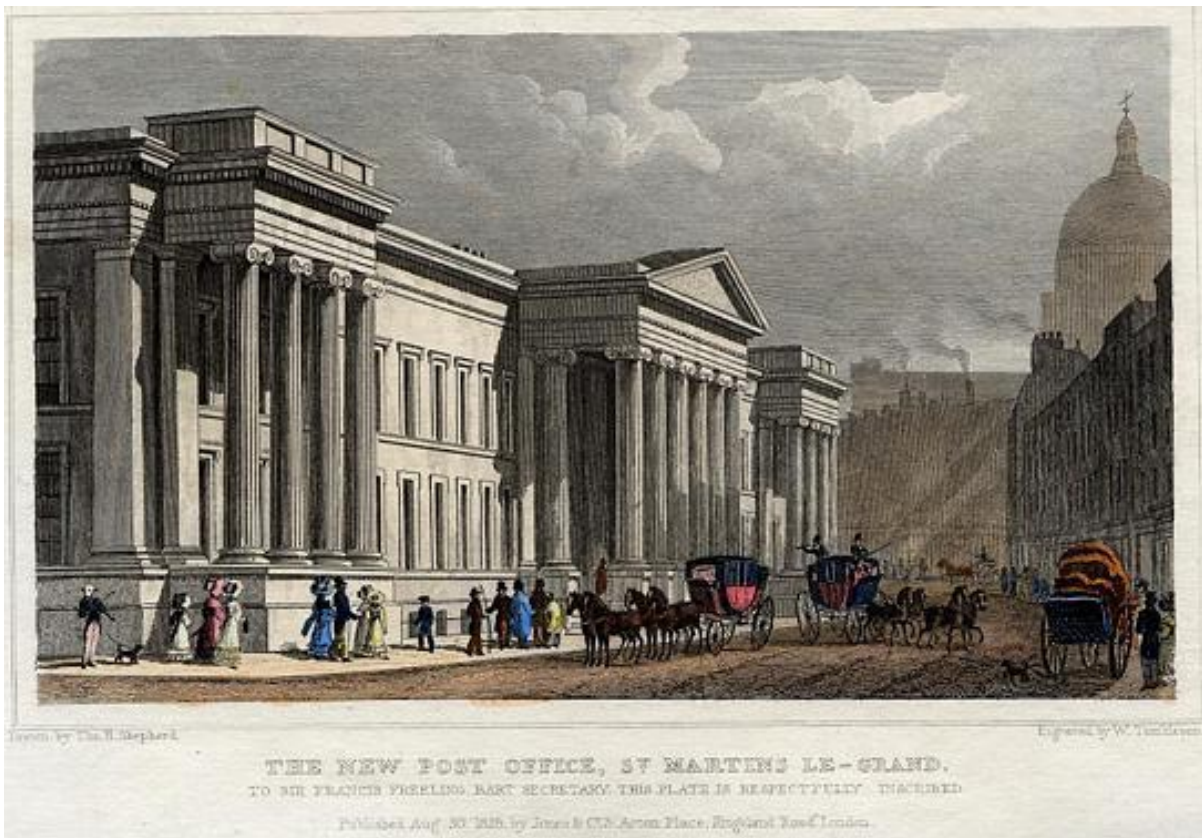
Neil Gaiman, Neverwhere, Chapter 8



St Paul's Survives (1940)



Doctor Who, 'The Invasion' (1968)



The London Stone.

Only it didn't look like anything mythic.

It didn't look magical.

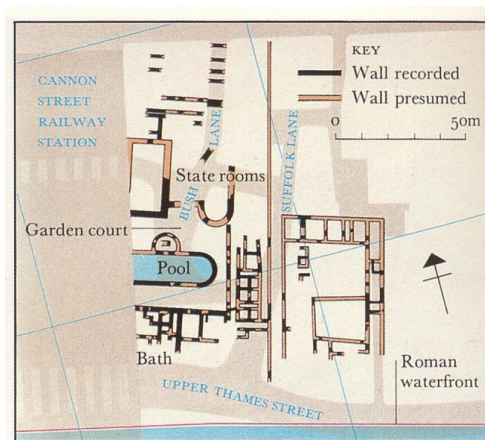
It didn't look especially historical.

It didn't even look interesting.

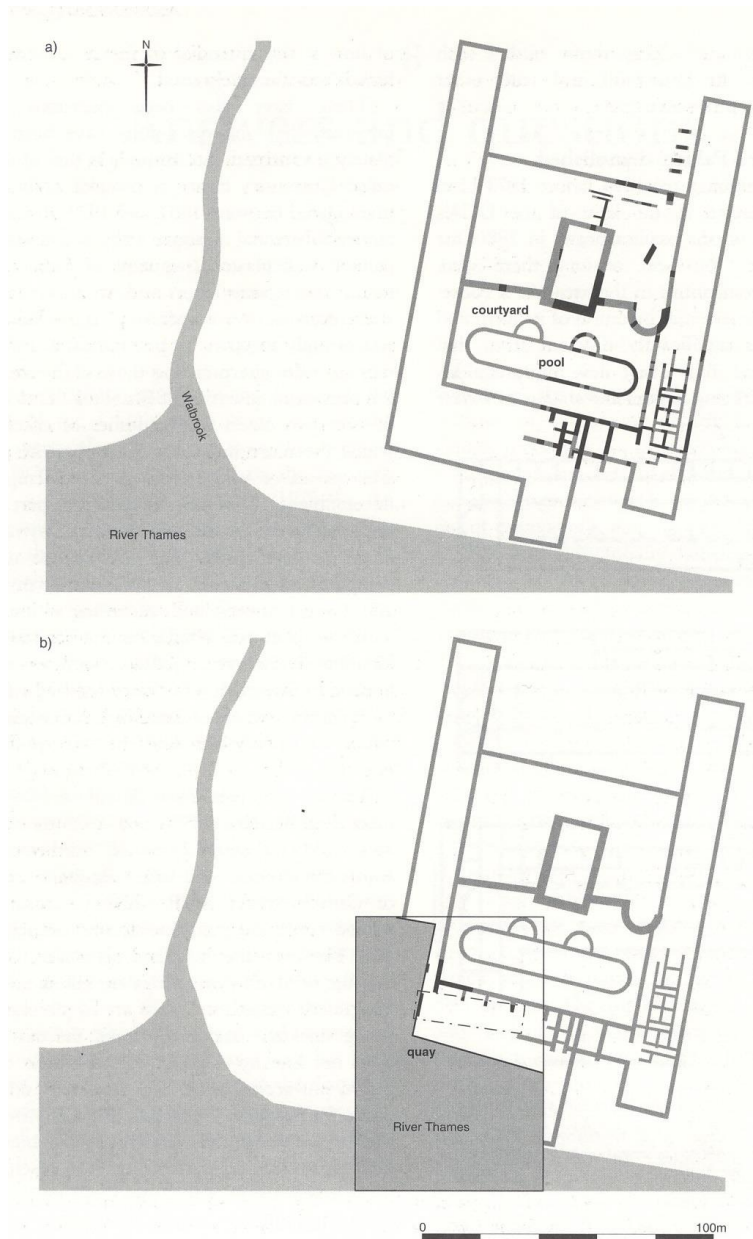
It *did* look like one of the dingiest, saddest, most forgotten buildings in London; a building without even the dignity of age.

True, there was something at pavement-level that throbbed with dim light, but the rest of the building was a ratty looking 1960s office block, dull-eyed with neglect and lack of tenants.

Charlie Fletcher, Stoneheart, Chapter 43, 'Behind Edie'



Plan of the remains excavated between 1961 and 1972 of the so-called 'Governor's Palace', superimposed on the current street pattern (from Jenny Hall & Ralph Merrifield (2000), *Roman London*², London, Museum of London, p.10).



(a) Plan of the 'Governor's Palace' as predicted in the 1970s; (b) revised plan after excavations in 1988-9 (from Gustav Milne (1995), *English Heritage Book of Roman London: Urban archaeology in the nation's capital*, Batsford/English Heritage, p.92 fig.66).