

**SOME ACCOUNT OF THE PROPOSED
IMPROVEMENTS OF THE WESTERN PART
OF LONDON, BY THE FORMATION OF
THE REGENT'S PARK, THE NEW STREET,
THE NEW SEWER, &C. &C.**

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Some Account of the Proposed Improvements of the Western Part of London, by the Formation of the Regent's Park, the New Street, the New Sewer, &C. &C. by John White

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CONTENTS.

CHAP. I.

Introductory Chapter	1
----------------------------	---

CHAP. II.

Upon the Regent's Park	17
------------------------------	----

CHAP. III.

Upon the proposed New Street	37
------------------------------------	----

CHAP. IV.

Upon the proposed New Sewer	55
-----------------------------------	----

CHAP. V.

Upon the proposed New Churches.....	77
-------------------------------------	----

CHAP. VI.

Conclusion	90
------------------	----

APPENDIX, No. I.

Letter from the late Mr. WHITE, to the late Mr. FORDYCE	i
--	---

No. II.

Messrs. LEVERTON & CHAWNER's Explanation of their Plan	iv
---	----

No. III.

Mr. NASH's Explanation of his Plan	xxi
--	-----

No. IV.

Report of Mr. TREADGOLD, Surveyor to the Com- missioners of Sewers for Westminster, &c. . . .	lxiii
--	-------

No. V.

Resolution of the Vestry of St. Mary-le-bone, of 26th March, 1811	lxxvi
--	-------

No. VI.

Explanation of the Design for a New Church	lxxxii
---	--------

Some Account,

&c. &c.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

January, 1814.

THE commencement of this year is perhaps one of the most memorable periods in the annals of Britain. This Island, which has been so long an asylum from religious persecution and civil oppression, and the generous ally of nations struggling for their natural rights, after exalting her naval and military fame to the highest pitch of glory, and alone standing firm in the great crisis of European Independence, is about to enter upon the harvest of her magnanimous exertions. The mighty deluge which had nearly overwhelmed the civilized globe, appears subsiding; the spires and turrets of ancient establishments begin to re-appear, and we are allowed again to hope that the ancient

land-marks of balanced power will be ascertained and secured by a lasting peace. Some monument of the arts, capable of impressing posterity with a sense of the dignity, opulence, and happiness of this nation, seems to be required to mark the epoch.

His Royal Highness the Prince Regent has manifested his anxiety for the embellishment and comfort of the Metropolis, by encouraging a design for the improvement of the large property of the Crown in the Parishes of St. Mary-le-bone and Pancras, now called the Regent's Park. He has likewise patronised the opening of a communication from Westminster to that part of the town, which might at once combine magnificence and usefulness.

The destruction of London by fire in the year 1666, afforded an opportunity which can never again recur, of rendering this city the most grand and convenient in the universe: the wealth of its population—their attachment to the spot—the recent restoration of tranquillity and social order,—and the talents, honesty, and temper of Sir Christopher Wren, were a rare assemblage of favourable circumstances; but the noble

designs of our great architect for the re-edification of the Metropolis were rendered abortive, and his liberal labours defeated, by the urgency of the inhabitants for immediate dwellings and depositories for their merchandize, and by the disputes about property ¹.

The eminent John Evelyn also suggested an admirable plan, in some respects perhaps superior, and certainly of a more simple character than that proposed by Sir Christopher Wren: its value was not, however, duly appreciated; and all the difficulties, delays, and nuisances we at present experience in passing through the city, are sad memorials of the want of judgment, foresight, and liberality exhibited by our ancestors ².

Since the period just adverted to, no person has offered more valuable suggestions to the public for promoting the magnificence and elegance of this great Metropolis than the late Mr. John Gwynn ³. The improvement of the communication to the western portion

¹ See Wren's *Parentalia*, p. 267.

² See a copy of it in Northhouck's *History of London*, p. 232. Lond. 1773.

³ See *London and Westminster Improved, &c.* Dodsley, 1766.

of the town seems to have been more immediately the object of his anxiety; but he did not forget how much a grand opening was required from the Mansion-House to the northern entrances into the city, nor the evils resulting from the crowded and narrow access to the Custom-House, and the pitiful accommodation that building affords to the merchants residing in this great emporium of the world.

It is to be lamented, that his judicious propositions have not been more attended to, and that the real or supposed interests of individuals have trespassed so much upon general arrangements. What a lamentable instance of the absence of system exists in the buildings in St. George's Fields! and this, notwithstanding Mr. Gwynn's remark, that it was almost the only spot about London then left which had not fallen a sacrifice to the depraved taste of modern builders. Since his time, fortunately all the proprietors of estates have not been equally negligent of what is due to taste and comfort; and of late years a much improved character of building has been adopted upon the estates of the Dukes of Portland and Bedford,

Lord Southampton, Mr. Portman, and many other persons; not, it is true, with equal judgment upon their respective estates: Fitzroy Square is however a monument of architecture; Portland Place a noble street⁴; and Bryanston Square, now building, one of the best examples of well constructed useful town residences.

The late Mr. Fordyce, the Surveyor-General of the Crown Lands, submitted to the consideration of the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury, in his first Triennial Report of December 1st, 1797, various suggestions for the improvement of the Metropolis; and he particularly notices the considerable estate belonging to the Crown, called Mary-le-bone Park, which had before been the subject of a memorial from him on the 27th of June, 1793. This memorial was submitted to the Treasury by Mr. Fordyce, in consequence of the late Duke of Portland having offered to accommodate the parish of St. Mary-le-bone gratuitously with six acres and a half of land near Primrose or Barrow Hills, part of his patrimonial estate there situated, for the

⁴ Fitzroy Square and Portland Place were executed from designs of those eminent architects, Messrs. Adams.