

Tekst 8

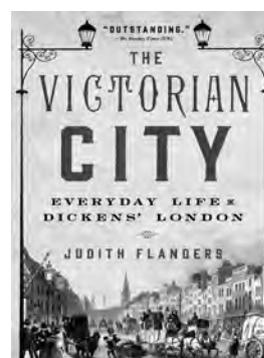
The capital's hidden past and present

LONDON BOOKS

based on an article by Andrew Neather

1 **W**ATCHING the BBC's wonderful and unmissable 1950s-set series *The Hour*, I often wonder where the outdoor shots of seedy Soho and other locales were filmed. Such is the gulf between today's streets and those of 50-odd years ago that it's impossible to tell. Yet that London is not really so distant: in the Fifties the city was already thoroughly modern – brightly lit shops and offices and mass public transit, an advanced metropolis.

2 In fact modern London is older still, as Judith Flanders reminds us in *The Victorian City: Everyday Life in Dickens' London* (Atlantic, £25). For the 19th century was when the capital changed from being essentially a collection of villages to an industrial world city. Dickens (1812-1870) lived on the edge of modernity. At his birth, plenty of London looked closer to medieval times. Until the construction of Vauxhall Bridge in 1816, there were just three Thames bridges in central London (Westminster, Blackfriars and London), necessitating a swarm of ferrymen. There were no closed sewers: in 1810, London's one million souls used 200,000 cesspits. Industrialisation changed all that. Grim urban conditions bore some resemblance to China's mushrooming cities today: by 1830 the city emitted a pall of smoke 30 miles across, with appalling air pollution in the teeming streets.



3 Early-Victorian planners never intended a metropolis. Todd Longstaffe-Gowan shows in *The London Square* (Yale, £30) how Georgian and Victorian architects continued the 17th-century tradition of squares surrounding fields or gardens. What they failed to foresee was how the fortunes of those squares would change in the midst of a vast city and its yo-yo-ing economy. Once-smart neighbourhoods underwent long cycles of decline and gentrification, most obviously in Notting Hill: fashionable when carved out of the Ladbroke estate in the 1840s, a near-slum by the Fifties, now the haunt of millionaires.



4 The city's remarkable growth had to be supported by a modern infrastructure, much of it below ground – the subject of *London's Labyrinth: The World Beneath the City's Streets* by Fiona Rule (Ian Allan, £19.99). Most of these subterranean spaces were created for just two purposes: the sewers and the Underground. Joseph Bazalgette's extraordinary sewer network was completed in the early 1860s using 318 million bricks. At the same time, construction started on the first Underground line, the Metropolitan: it opened 150 years ago on January 10.



- 5 Still, for all London's modernity, it is a historical patchwork – though many of its buildings are hidden from everyday view. This is the glory of Philip Davies' *London Hidden Interiors* (Atlantic, £40), a lavishly illustrated tour of the city's historic buildings. The library and geometrical staircase in St Paul's, the Victorian Gothic finery of the National Liberal Club (1887), Sir George Gilbert Scott's Italianate Foreign and Commonwealth Office: all are magnificent but normally hidden to Londoners. But you can get in to some of them – such as the Regent Palace Hotel's sumptuous art deco Grill Room (1915), now Brasserie



Zédel, off Piccadilly. Sitting there almost 100 years after it welcomed its first diners, I'm struck that they would find it quite familiar today. Perhaps modernity is not really so modern any more, after all.

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- 1p 31 How does the writer introduce the subject of the article in paragraph 1?
- A by explaining why he prefers 1950s London to the city as it is now
 - B by illustrating that London is a suitable location for period drama
 - C by listing which developments affected the city of London most
 - D by stating how much London seems to have changed over time
- 1p 32 What is the main point made about London in paragraph 2?
- A It became the centre for international trade in Dickens' days.
 - B It transformed beyond recognition during Dickens' lifetime.
 - C It was a rather unpleasant place to live according to Dickens.
- 1p 33 What does the example of Notting Hill in paragraph 3 illustrate?
- A that Londoners have always had a preference for the greener districts
 - B that parts of London have experienced huge fluctuations in prosperity
 - C that some areas in London attract wealthier people than other areas
 - D that the typical London city planning layout has helped the city thrive
- 2p 34 Geef van elk van de volgende beweringen aan of deze wel of niet overeenkomt met de inhoud van alinea's 4 en 5.
- 1 Door de aanleg van een ondergronds rioleringsstelsel kreeg de stad een moderne aanblik.
 - 2 Het ondergrondse metrosysteem maakt gebruik van tunnels die al eerder voor de riolering gegraven waren.
 - 3 Veel van Londens oude gebouwen hebben een nieuwe gevel gekregen.
 - 4 De menukaart van Brasserie Zédel is al honderd jaar ongewijzigd.
- Noteer het nummer van elke bewering, gevolgd door "wel" of "niet".
- 1p 35 Welk van de besproken boeken vindt Andrew Neather duidelijk zeer de moeite waard?
- Noteer de titel van dit boek.