

arrangement of commons, so however significant in impact, Abercrombie's graphically well-produced proposals were relatively low-key in design terms and the proposed approach was pragmatic, applied with common sense. In this it responded to the conservative nature of public opinion.³⁷ By this stage it was clear that the non-design approach celebrated by Migge was engrained within English society; it certainly was not considered modernist.

The conservative approach resulted in a response from the MARS Group (Modern Architectural Research Group) - the English branch of CIAM (Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne) - who produced an alternative plan for London in a rather Corbusian manner that meant wholesale demolition of suburbs, to be rebuilt in parallel bands of high-rise housing interspersed by a park system (*fig. 49*). It shows the extent that park systems were now engrained as part of city planning, with this concept detailed by the landscape architect Christopher Tunnard (1910-1979).³⁸ This scheme pre-empted approaches in the post-war era when landscape architects became more generally involved in the design of open spaces, although in continued austerity there were few opportunities to provide any large new parks, which had to wait till the final decade of the twentieth century.

Acknowledgements

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FINSBURY CIRCUS: FROM MOORFIELDS TO CROSSRAIL

By Sally Williams

The beautiful public garden in the centre of Finsbury Circus in the City, currently largely obscured by unprepossessing hoardings courtesy of Crossrail, is located on arguably the capital's oldest place of public recreation - the Moorfields. These fields north of the City walls were recorded in use as such as early as 1173, having been given to the City in trust 'for the ease of the citizens' by a wealthy widow before the Norman Conquest.¹ Over the centuries the fortunes of this tract of land rose and fell, and it has undergone a series of makeovers as a place of public recreation, most recently when the private garden that had been enjoyed by residents of Finsbury Circus since c.1820 was 'thrown open' to the public in 1901. Its latest transformation will be revealed in 2018 when the fencing comes down.

The early history of the area that became known as Moorfields reveals some interesting stories: there is evidence of prehistoric human activity, an Iron Age burial site, and of course Roman occupation.² The City Wall, built by the Romans in the latter part of the second century, crossed the main channel of the now subterranean Walbrook River, which divided the Roman City in two, reaching the Thames at Dowgate.³ Flowing from rivulets in Islington and Hoxton, the western section of the Walbrook runs down City Road under the west side of Finsbury Pavement, passing into the City through a culvert described by John Stow in 1598 as a 'subterranean aqueduct'.⁴ The eastern section from Hoxton flows round the eastern side of Finsbury Pavement to another similar culvert in London Wall. As this land to the north of the City Wall was liable to flooding, it became known as *Fenbury* or *Moor*

37. Annabel Downs, *Peter Shepheard* (London: LDT, 2004); Jan Woudstra and Peter Blundell Jones, 'Some modernist houses and their gardens: Part 3: Sir Peter Shepheard's house and garden, 21 Well Road, London (1977-82)', *Die Gartenkunst* 19/2 (2007), pp. 399-410.

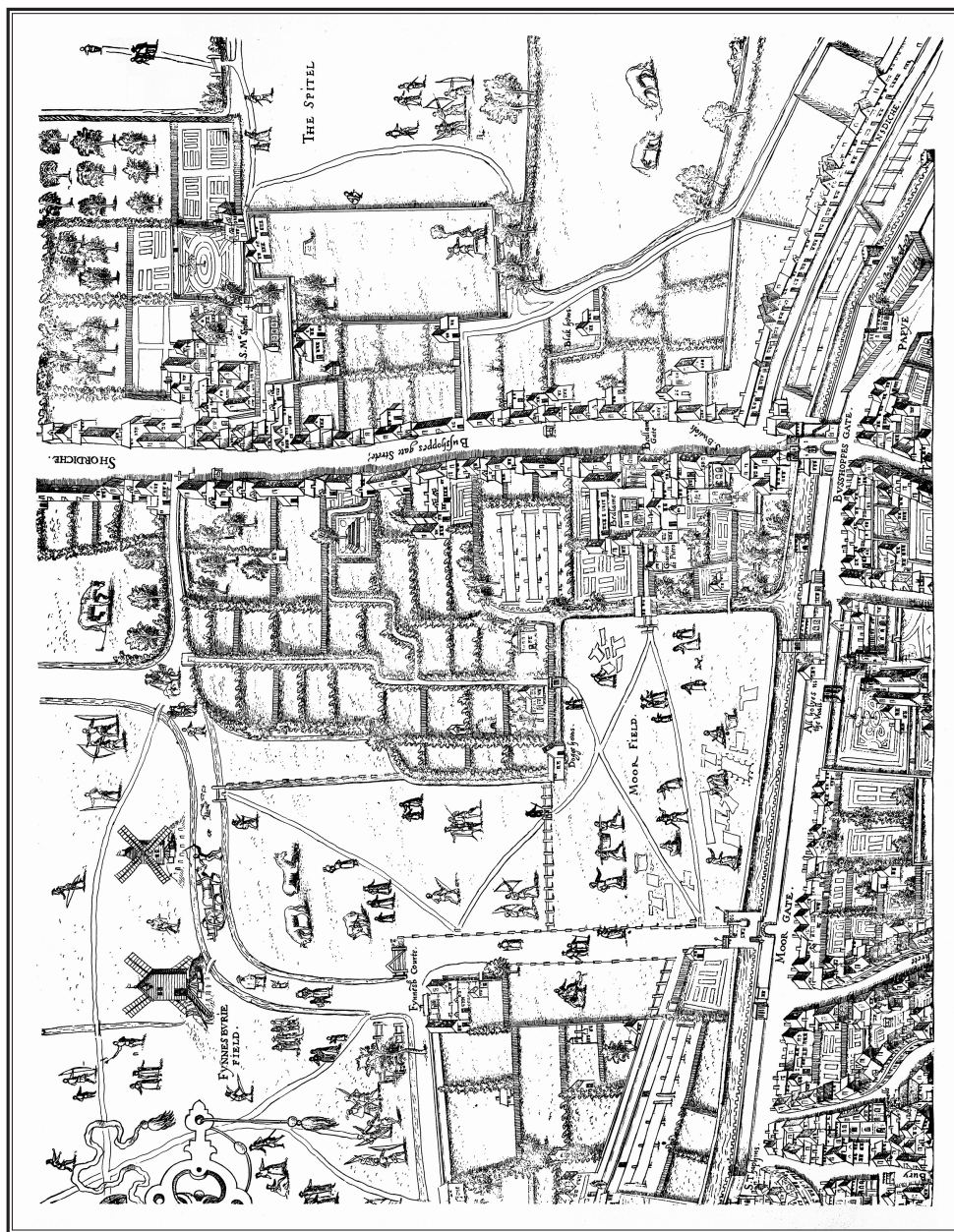
38. David Jacques and Jan Woudstra, *Landscape Modernism Renounced: The career of Christopher Tunnard (1910-1979)* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp.198-202.

1. See Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, *The London Square* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2012), p.19.

2. See City of London, *Finsbury Circus Conservation Area Character Summary and Management Strategy SPD*, adopted 14 July 2015, p.7. Evidence, including a flint tool and an Iron Age burial found during excavations at 12-15 Finsbury Circus, indicates that there may have been a small settlement on the banks of the Walbrook.

3. See Richard Trench and Ellis Hillman, *London under London. A subterranean guide* (John Murray, 1984; new edition 1993, reprinted 1994), pp.26-29.

4. Within the City wall the Walbrook was entirely culverted by the time the Agas map was drawn in c.1562.



50. Moorfields extract from the Copperplate Map, Frans Franken, 1559
(© MUSEUM OF LONDON)

Field.⁵ Like other London rivers, the Walbrook provided fresh water, although by the thirteenth century its lower reaches had become polluted and it was likened to an open sewer.

Little is known of the use of the Moorfields until the medieval period. The land here was not deemed suitable for the expansion of the City, which focussed towards the west, and it appears to have been used as a dump for the City's industrial and domestic rubble. In 1211 a 60-meter wide ditch was dug outside the City Wall and Roman ditch, in order to both defend the City and drain the marsh. Brick earth, excavated and re-deposited on the marsh, probably helped reduce flooding. In 1365 the Pelterers Guild ordered leather workers to live and work north of the City and evidence of a tanning pit has been found on Moorfields, as well as of horticultural activity.⁶ In 1411 the then Lord Mayor of London ordered the clearance of rubbish, and drainage ditches were established; and in 1415 a new City Gate - 'Moor Gate' - was commissioned to provide access to the area for recreation.⁷ Uses included the drying of laundry by City laundresses, and dryer parts were used for sports and recreation, such as ice skating when it froze over, with mutton bones adapted as early ice skates. In 1477 brick earth was quarried to repair the City Walls but brick pits led to large pools of standing water, resulting once again in the deterioration of Moorfields, and more rubbish accumulation. In 1512 Lord Mayor Roger Ardley made an unsuccessful attempt to drain the fen, which remained largely marshy wasteland. Some recreational activities took place, such as archery practice; cattle were grazed and in the middle fields there were dog kennels for the Lord Mayor's hunt (which took place further north) (fig. 50). Although in 1527 efforts to drain the land into the Walbrook had been successful, this cycle of rubbish dumping and ditch clearing appears to have continued until the early seventeenth century.

Then, in c.1606, 10 acres of the open ground were drained, planted with trees and laid out with gravel paths to form walks, with benches provided for resting, in order to create what has been dubbed London's first public park. It was evidently very popular. In 'The Pleasant Walkes of Moore-fields', published in 1607, Richard Johnson (1573-c.1659) heaped praise on the 'sweet walkes', laid out 'in the fashion of a crosse', recording that three hundred or more trees had been planted at the cost of private subscribers, in order to provide 'a pleasurable place of sweet ayres for Cittizens to walke'.⁸ James I, who had come to the throne in 1603, also commended the City of London for its efforts to beautify Moorfields for the benefit of his subjects. The City put stern measures in place to discourage misuse of the new recreation ground and a return to bad habits, erecting fearsome stocks to punish those that 'lay any filthy thing within these fields, or make water within the same to the annoyance of those who walke therein, which evill famous in times past has much corrupted mans senses, and supposed to be a great nourisher of diseases'.⁹

There were three distinct areas, marked Upper, Middle and Lower Moor Fields, which fell within two parishes and are shown in maps of c.1720 for Coleman Street Ward and Bassishaw Ward (Lower Moor Fields), and for St Giles Cripplegate and St Leonard Shoreditch (Upper and Middle Moor Fields) (figs. 51 & 52). The northern boundary of the Lower Moor Fields follows the line of Eldon Street and South Place today.

After the Great Fire of 1666 some Londoners who had lost their homes constructed temporary dwellings on Moorfields while the City was reconstructed,¹⁰ but the land remained largely unbuilt upon until the late eighteenth century. An exception was the construction in 1675-6 of Bethlem Hospital, which had been founded in 1247 as the Priory of St Mary of Bethlehem in

8. Longstaffe-Gowan, *op. cit.*, p.19.

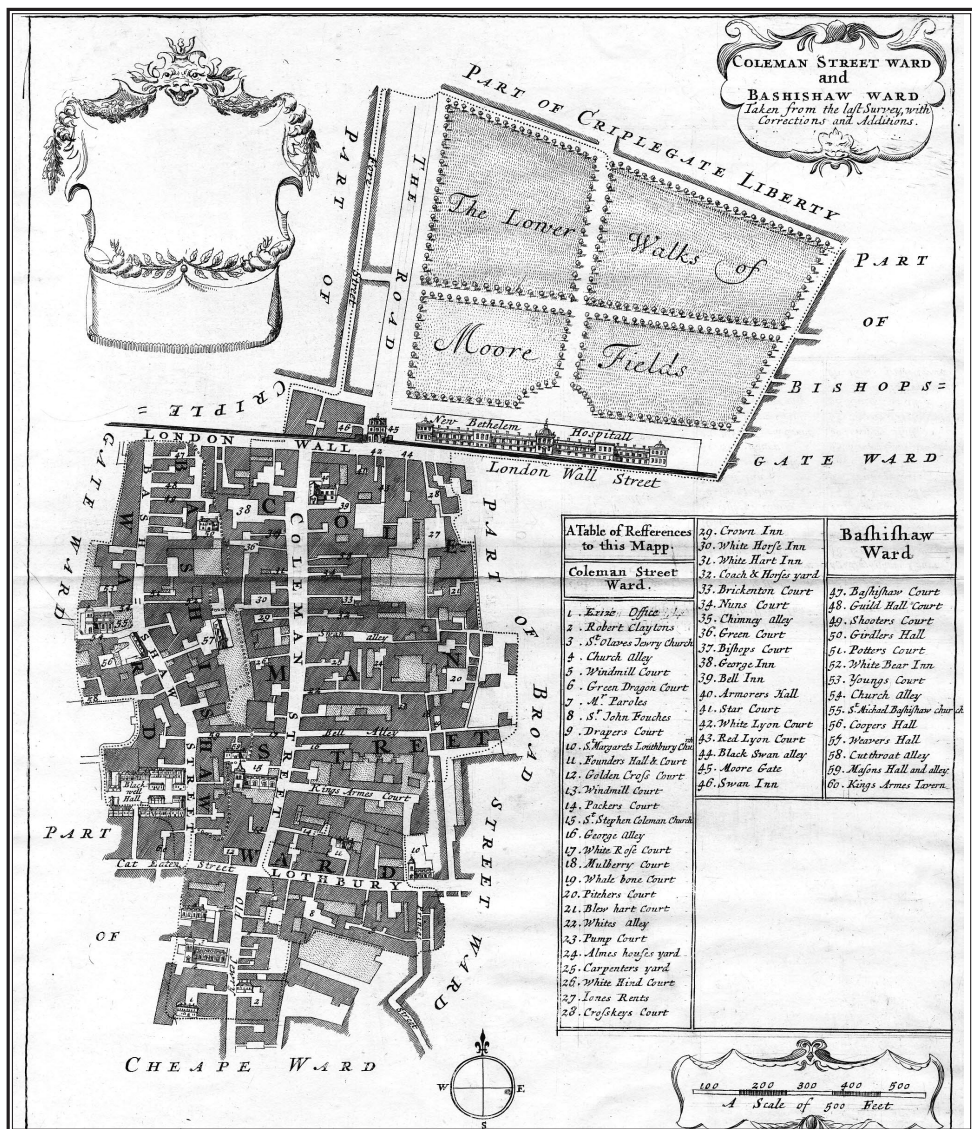
9. *Ibid.*, p.25.

10. John Evelyn's diary entry for 4 September 1666, while the fire was still raging, recorded that: 'the poore Inhabitans dispersd all about St. Georges, Moorefields, as far as highgate, & severall miles in Circle, Some under tents, others under miserab(l)e Hutts and Hovells, without a rag, or any necessary utensils, bed or board, who from delicatenesse, riches & easy accommodations in stately & well furnishd houses, were now reduc'd to extreamest misery & poverty.' See *The Diary of John Evelyn*, (Everyman's Library, new edition, 2006), p.450.

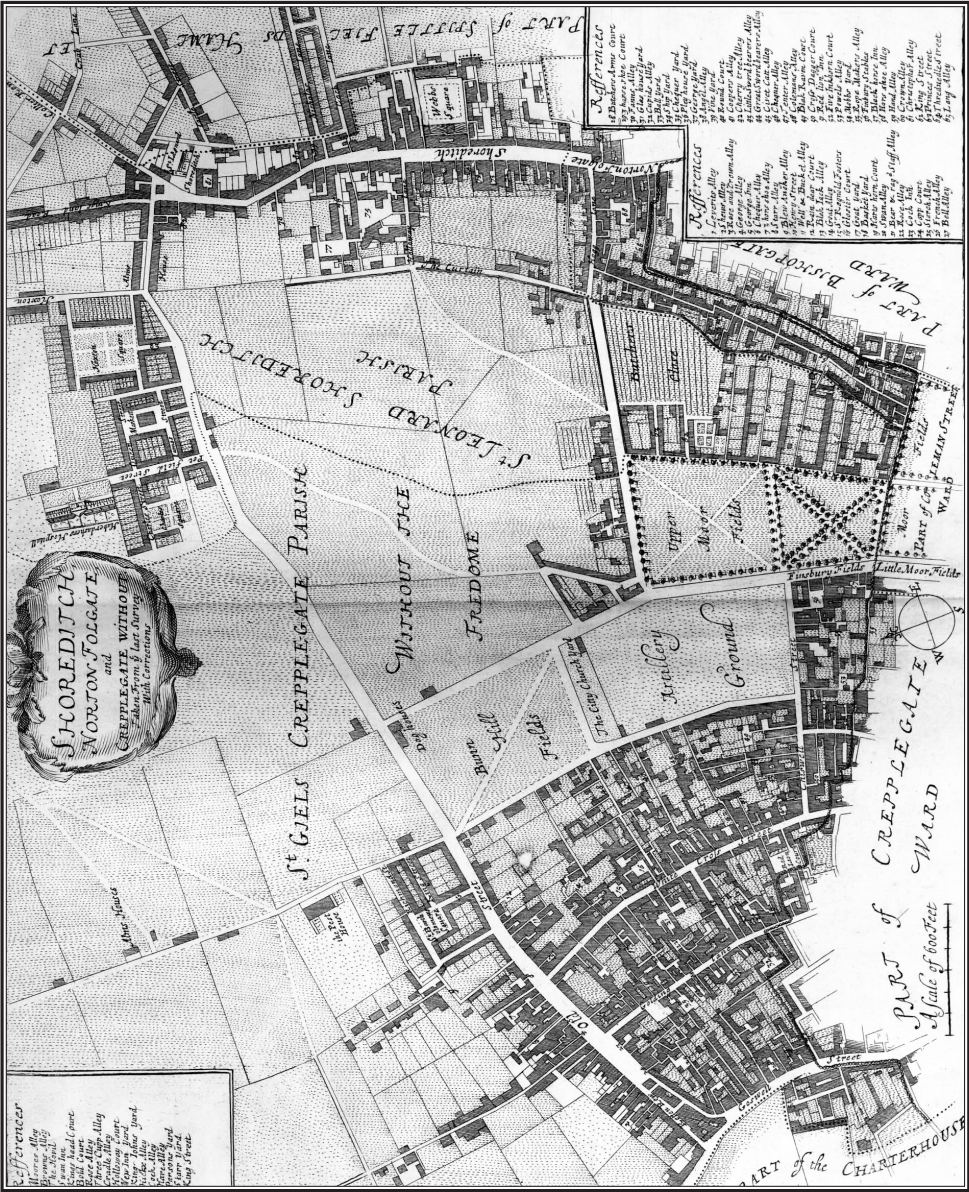
5. Despite this it appears the area was used for a Roman cemetery from the late 1st until at least the 3rd century although it was abandoned by the mid to late 4th century.

6. See *Finsbury Circus Conservation Area Character Summary*, *op. cit.*, p.7.

7. See John Stow, *A Survey of London written in the year 1598* (republished by Sutton Publishing Ltd, 2005, with an Introduction by Antonia Fraser), p.49.



51. The Lower Walks of Moore Fields: Map of Coleman Street Ward and Bashishaw Ward
Taken from the last Survey, with Corrections and Additions, 1720
(© THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)



52. Upper and Middle Moor Fields: Shoreditch, Norton Folgate and Crepplegate Without. Taken from ye last survey
With Corrections. Illustration to Stow's Survey of London, Vol. II, book 4, 1720. Etching and engraving
(© THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)

premises near Spitalfields.¹¹ The site, selected for its 'health and air', was to the north of the City Wall, encroaching on the south part of the Lower Moor Fields. Designed by architect, scientist and polymath Robert Hooke (1635-1703), it was the country's first purpose-built hospital for the insane and had an extensive and elaborate façade overlooking the fine walks of Moorfields, from which it was separated by railings. The famous sculptures of *Raving and Melancholy Madness* by Caius Gabriel Cibber (1630-1700) that overlooked the entrance did not deter the curious public, and Bethlem, or Bedlam, became a somewhat ghoulish tourist attraction (figs. 53 & 54).¹² However, it turned out that this imposing edifice had been built on unstable land that was once part of the old City ditch and this, together with inadequate foundations and indeed poor construction, caused it to deteriorate significantly by the late eighteenth century. It was eventually demolished in 1814 and the hospital moved to its next home at St George's Fields in Southwark (now the site of the Imperial War Museum).

In 1730 the Moor Fields had been re-landscaped in similar form to the original plan and to the west Moor Fields (later called Finsbury) Pavement became a fashionable promenade across the marshy land.¹³ The new City Road was built to the north in 1761 and Moorgate (and other City gates) were demolished in 1762,¹⁴ the stone used to stop London Bridge being washed away. In 1768 the land was leased by the City Corporation from the Prebendary of Finsbury and between 1775-1800 the Finsbury Estate (largely in Islington) was laid out on the fields north of Moorfields as a residential suburb by the City Surveyor, George Dance the Younger (1741-1825). Dance was purportedly one of the first architects to introduce formal planned crescents, squares and circuses in London. The

centrepiece of his scheme was Finsbury Square. Finsbury Circus, originally referred to on Dance's plans as the *London Amphitheatre*, was not implemented until Bethlem Hospital was demolished; a print of 1811 shows that by this time the area in front of the hospital was looking a little dishevelled (fig. 55). The layout of Finsbury Circus was undertaken by Dance's successor as City Surveyor William Montague, but was based on Dance's plan of 1802 (fig. 56) and the buildings of the Circus were influenced by the houses designed by Dance in Finsbury Square.

An alternative design in Sir John Soane's Museum dated 20 October 1808, *Plan A. For the general Improvement of the Site of Moorfields and Bethlehem Hospital as agreed to by the Select Committee of Bridge House Lands*, shows landscape details for a hemispherical garden (fig. 57), but nothing similarly detailed for the London Amphitheatre garden has been discovered. The Finsbury estate attracted doctors and surgeons serving wealthy residents, and the Royal Ophthalmic Hospital moved here in 1822. The London Institution – an educational institute and private library – had moved to Finsbury Circus in 1819 soon after it was laid out and remained here until 1912, the building later demolished in 1936. Rising rents in the later nineteenth century resulted in wealthy residents and medical professionals moving to the West End and the Royal Ophthalmic Hospital moved to City Road in 1899, later becoming known as Moorfields Eye Hospital. Pressure from larger commercial building led to the demolition of much of the domestic Georgian buildings in the area and none remain in Finsbury Circus, which became a focus of important British companies who built headquarters here, such as Britannic House for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (later renamed BP) built in 1921-5 and designed by Edwin Lutyens. St Mary Moorfields Roman Catholic church is the only church to survive in the area today.

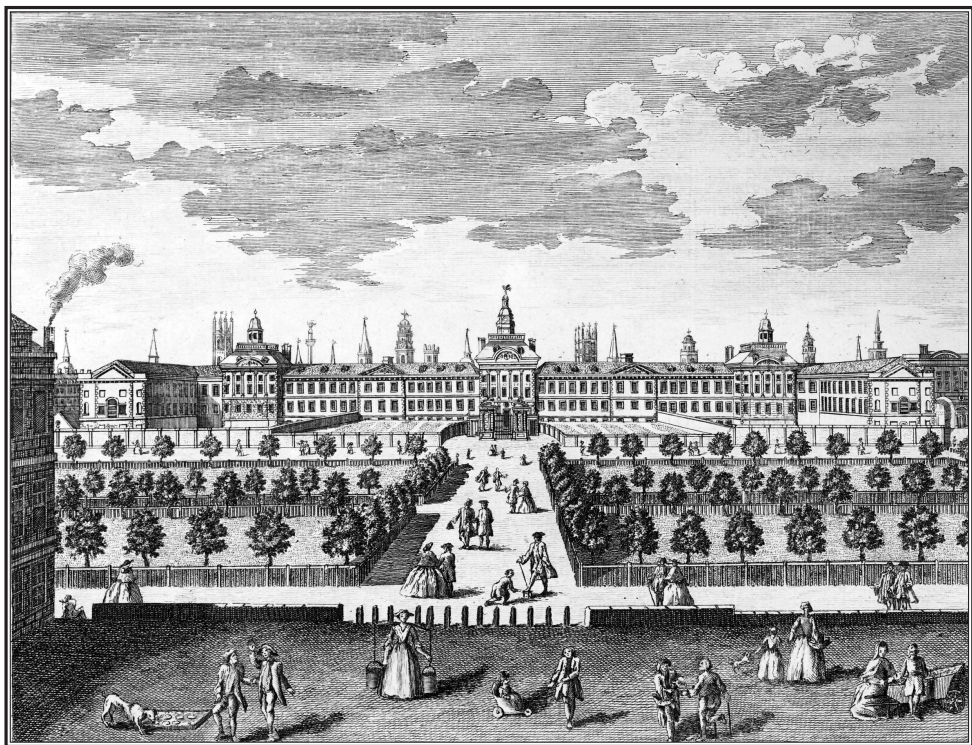
Although the early nineteenth-century plans for Finsbury Circus do not show any detail of planting, purely the elliptical shape of a garden with perimeter path and railings (fig. 58), some information can be gleaned from documents found in the City of London Corporation's archives. For example *Particulars of Works* dated 1814 detail work to be carried

11. A plaque marking the site of the first Bethlehem Hospital 1247-1676 is found on the wall of the Great Eastern Hotel in Liverpool Street.

12. Indiscriminate casual visiting was disallowed by order of the hospital's Court of Governors on 21 November 1770. Quoted in Patricia Alderidge, *Bethlem Hospital 1247-1997: A Pictorial Record* (Phillimore, 1997).

13. In the 1840s Finsbury Pavement was laid out giving better access to London Bridge. The part of the Pavement within the City boundary was later renamed Moorgate.

14. The City Wall continued to be dismantled throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.



53. *View of the façade of the new Bethlem Hospital, seen from the garden side with a walk down the centre, 1677*
Engraving on three plates, printed on three joined sheets
(© THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)

54. *The Hospital of Bethlehem, L'Hospital d'Fou. Printed for John Bowles, 1747*
(© THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)

out by *Masons, Smiths, Painters*, in order to form the elliptical garden and its surrounding stone-work, kerb, railings and gates. An *Indenture* of 1816 between the City of London and William Christie, Nurseryman and Gardener, determines works to be undertaken within the railings: Christie was to provide paths and level the ground, and to plant grass and clover, although there is no mention of further planting in his contract. Views of the London Institution c.1820 give an indication of the layout of the central garden, mainly laid to lawn with some shrubs or small trees and surrounded by distinctive railings (*fig. 59*). Conditions within building leases of 1822 include a clause that gave the contractor 'the use and enjoyment of the garden made in the said amphitheatre' subject to payment of a 'proportionate part of the expense of keeping and maintaining the garden in good order and condition'. Throughout the nineteenth century the garden was maintained under the auspices of a Committee of Leaseholders who contributed to its upkeep.

No definitive description of the garden has been unearthed, yet some indication of the high esteem in which it was held can be gleaned from various news items, such as those concerned with the threat to the garden from railway expansion in the early 1860s. A notice in *The Illustrated London News* of 3 January 1863 under 'New Railway Schemes' reported that 'the Great Eastern have given notice for extending their line from Shoreditch to Finsbury Circus and to construct a railway station there'. At the Grand Opening of the Metropolitan Railway on 9 January 1863, Mr Fowler, the company's engineer, said in his speech that 'its permanent terminus would be in Finsbury-Circus'.¹⁵ However, the residents of Finsbury Circus and other influential people mounted a vigorous campaign to prevent this, which was ultimately successful. Among those who campaigned against the railway station was Alfred Smee FRS (1818–1877), surgeon, amateur gardener and horticulturalist, and a long-time resident of Finsbury Circus, where he had lived since at least 1847. In 1861, in an article titled 'London as it is Today', Smee is quoted as describing the Finsbury Circus garden as 'the healthiest

open place, "the most important lung" of the city of London; and in its fine garden are trees forty-five, fifty-five, and sixty feet high, and hundreds of shrubs'.¹⁶ A tantalisingly undated plan of Finsbury Circus in the London Metropolitan Archives could possibly show the garden as it was then, or perhaps as it was intended to be laid out (*fig. 60*).

In 1863 a petition was presented to the House of Lords by Lord Redesdale against the Great Eastern station being built in Finsbury Circus, which led to condemnation of 'the sacrificing of open spaces like this in London to railway purposes' by the Earl of Derby and other Lords.¹⁷ Another news item reported that the Board of Works was also opposed to the proposed railway station.¹⁸ An amusing note in 'Echoes of the Week' in the *Illustrated London News* serves to confirm that the garden railings were at that time spiked:

We [...] surveyed a few of the vacant spaces which are to be so jealously guarded from the invasion of railway termini. We found nobody at all in Finsbury-Circus beyond a consumptive cat trying hard to commit suicide by impalement on the spikes of the railings.¹⁹

By 1864 the threat was overcome, and the *Illustrated London News* 'Column for the Curious' reported on 'the garden of Finsbury Circus, for the preservation of which a stand has been effectually made'.²⁰ Later that year the same column reported that:

Finsbury-circus is saved from the blatant iron courser – or, in other words, the Metropolitan Railway (Tower-hill Extension). Moorfields, with its associations of Bedlam and brokers' shops, have little to be cared for; but to sweep away the Finsbury garden, with its 700 shrubs, besides weeping trees of more than half a century's growth, by a railway raid would be downright desecration. The Hesperides did not more vigilantly protect the gardens of old than have the Finsbury-circus champions their refreshing oasis.²¹

16. *ILN*, 9 February 1861.

17. *ILN*, 28 February 1863.

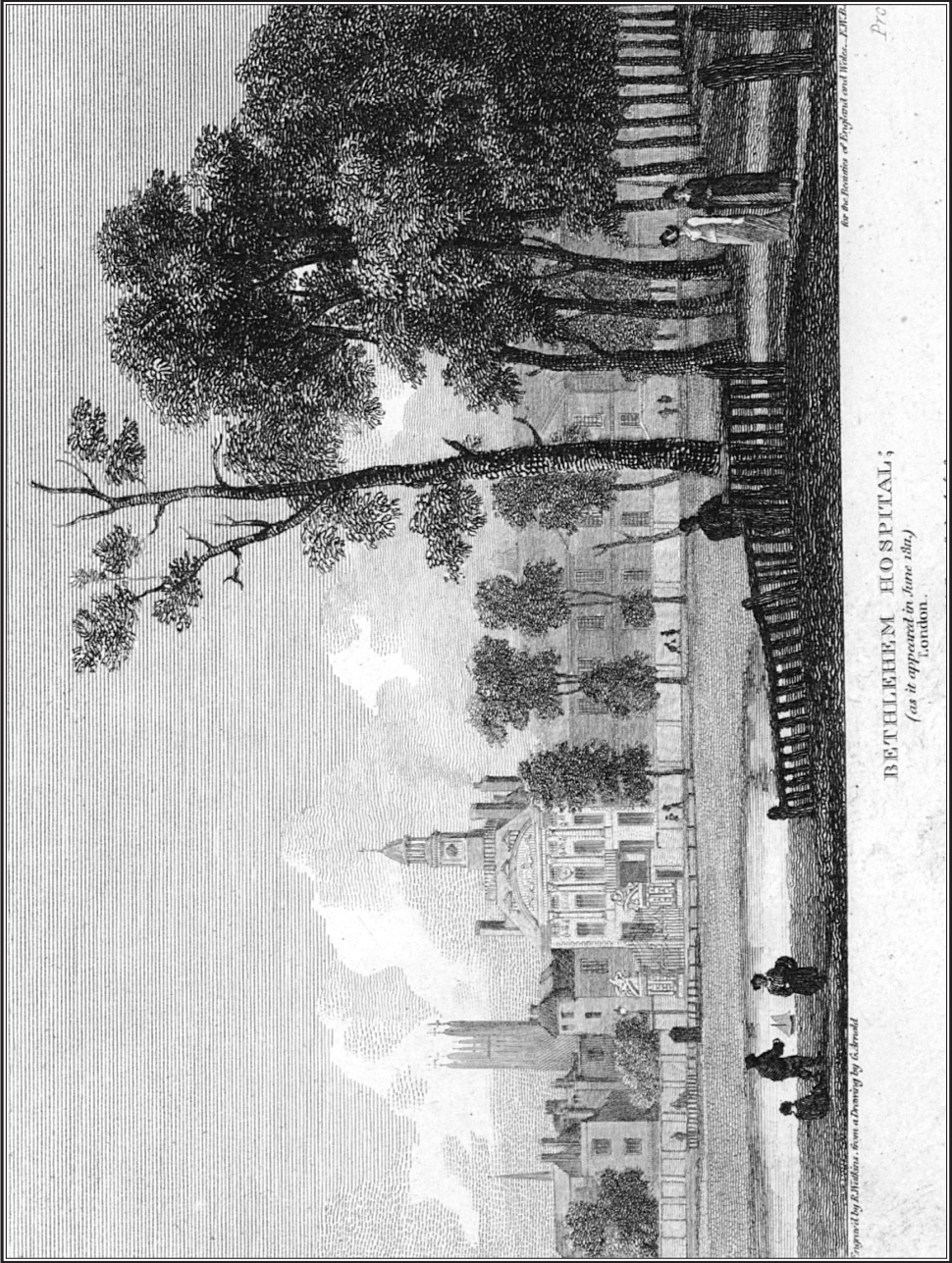
18. *ILN*, 4 April 1863.

19. *ILN*, 28 March 1863.

20. *ILN*, 30 April 1864.

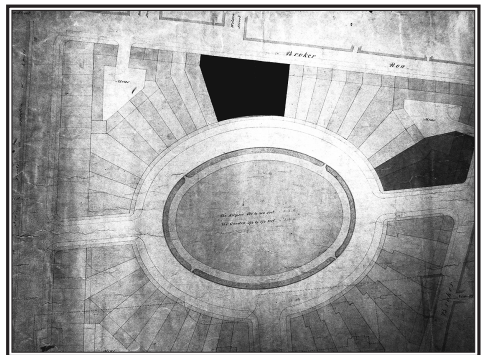
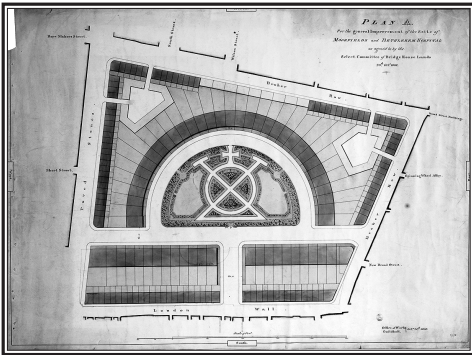
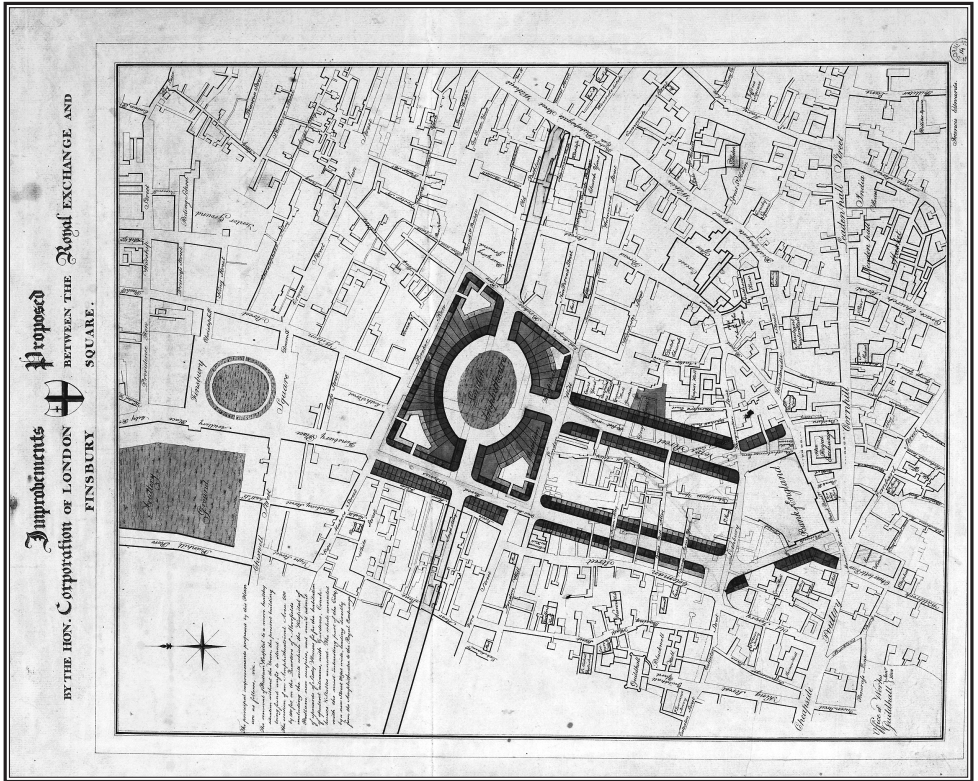
21. *ILN*, 20 August 1864.

15. Reported in the *Illustrated London News* (*ILN*), 17 January 1863.



55. View across the grounds towards the central building of Bethlem Hospital in Moorfields, in a state of decay, before its removal to St George's Fields. Illustration to *The Beauties of England and Wales*, a proof, etching, 1811
(© THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)

FINSBURY CIRCUS: FROM MOORFIELDS TO CROSSRAIL



56. George Dance, *A Plan of Proposed Improvements between The Royal Exchange and Finsbury Square, in the Wards of Coleman Street & Broad Street in the City of London*, January 1802
Engraving published by John Luffman, 1802

(© SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM, LONDON. PHOTOGRAPH: HUGH KELLY)

57. George Dance, *Plan A. For the general Improvement of the Site of Moorfields and Bethlehem Hospital, as agreed to by the Select Committee of the Bridge House Lands*, 20 October 1808

(© SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM, LONDON. PHOTOGRAPH: HUGH KELLY)

58. Moorfields: Plan showing Finsbury Circus, so called, 1815
(LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES, CITY OF LONDON COL/PL/01/048/A/012)

Although *The Metropolitan Railway Finsbury Circus Extension Act 1864* did enable the railway to construct its line beneath Finsbury Circus, the Act imposed conditions to safeguard trees and to restore the gardens, together with the requirement to make an annual payment of £100 towards their maintenance:

The railway engineers, by Act of Parliament, will for a time subject the garden to partial spoliation, but it will be protected during the operations, and restored wherever injured; and, the railway being carried through the circus in a covered way, after its construction the company are bound by their Act to restore the surface of the garden and to lay out the ornamental portion which may have been interfered with to the satisfaction of some person to be appointed by the Board of Trade. Sir Joseph Paxton would be a first-rate arbiter of this *Hortus Finsburiensis*. The railway company, moreover, are to contribute annually £100 to keep up the ornamental character of the grounds; and the contractors are to complete their work within four months, so that the weepers may raise their heads with joy at the Collective Wisdom of St. Stephen's.²²

Some years later, *The Metropolitan Railway Tower Hill Extension Act 1896* led to a tunnel being built across the garden but again provided for reinstatement and the annual maintenance payment of £100 endured. Both the Ordnance Survey map of 1894-6 and a *Plan for the Bridge House Estate* of 1896 show the position of the underground railway tunnel and indicate how the garden was laid out then, the latter plan marking a Green House and Summer House, as well as a Drinking Fountain.

The central garden was evidently a source of pleasure for younger residents of Finsbury Circus. An article in *The Graphic* written in 1898 reminisced about 'one of the choicest residential quarters for those who were obliged to live in the City. [...] The gardens above alluded to were in those days under the superintendence of one Jeremiah

Trimmer, who waged perpetual war against a number of naughty boys who played havoc with his flower-beds, and the tree-shaded pleasaunce was frequented by a bevy of pretty young Greek girls, who played croquet on the lawn'.²³ Its wood pigeons and occasional nightingale were remarked upon, as well as the 'chief glory' - 'a couple of very prolific mulberry trees, supposed to be the finest in the metropolis'.²⁴ References to the mulberries are found in the pages of the press into the early twentieth century,²⁵ with the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* reporting in 1915 that 'Mulberry trees in Finsbury Circus, London, are producing a fine crop of fruit, which, in accordance with an ancient custom, will be presented to the Lord Mayor'.²⁶ Another article at that time refers to the trees being considerably older than 100 years, with reference to a newly planted tree, which 'produced a few berries'.

As the area became more commercially orientated and there were fewer residential properties, the City Corporation sought to acquire its green space in order to throw it open to the public (finally successful with the passing of the *City of London (Various Powers) Act* of 1900).²⁷ This had actually first been mooted in the early 1870s when the Court of Common Council had appointed a committee to look into 'the best means of preserving to the use of the public the open spaces in the City, with especial reference to the gardens of Trinity Square and Finsbury Circus, and the inclosed ground surrounding St Paul's Cathedral'.²⁸ The City Surveyor's Office plan of November 1899 shows the garden layout just before it became a public amenity (*fig. 61*). Many of the occupants of Finsbury Circus objected to the proposal, but their unsuccessful campaign to prevent it provides an insight into what their private garden was like. A letter of objection in December 1898 refers to the garden's 'two good grass tennis courts and five beautiful weeping ashes and seats secluded

23. 'The Bystander' by J. Ashby-Sterry in *The Graphic*, Saturday 10 December 1898.

24. *City Press*, November 1899, in a report on the proposal by the City to open the garden.

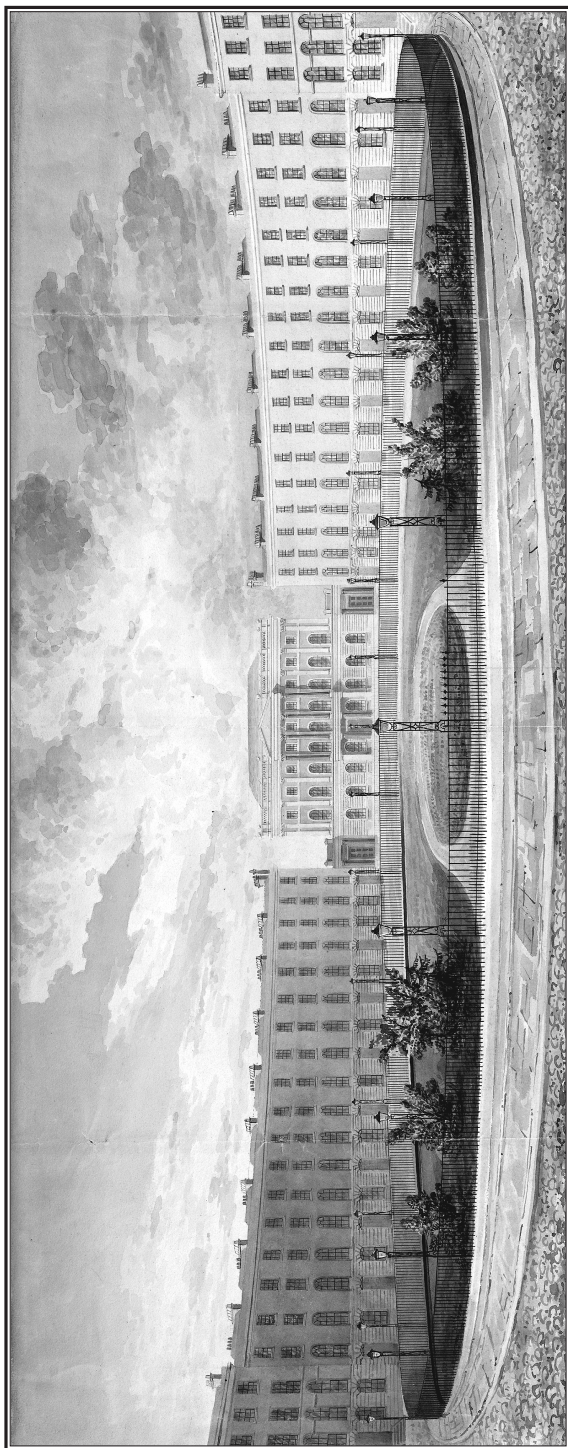
25. Numerous articles in newspapers in London and beyond refer to the mulberries in Finsbury Circus Garden.

26. *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, Thursday 26 August 1915.

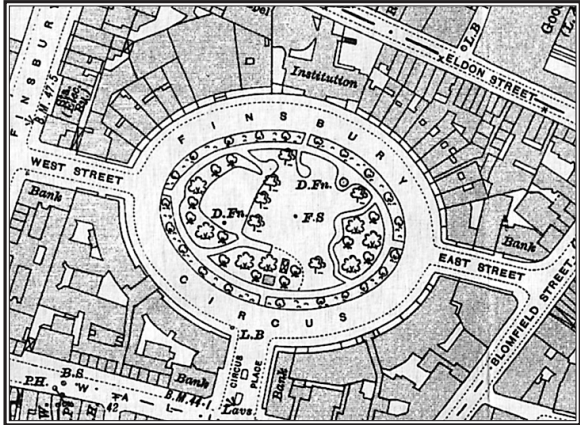
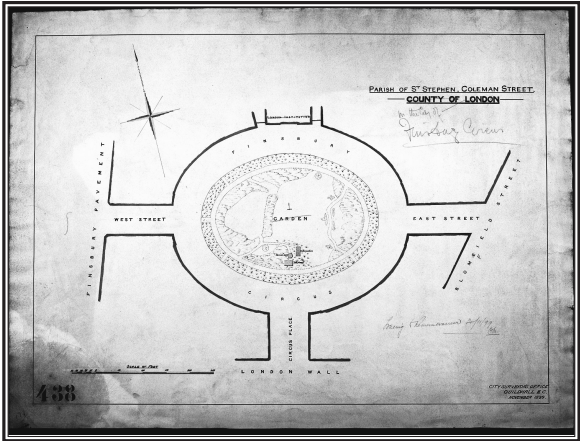
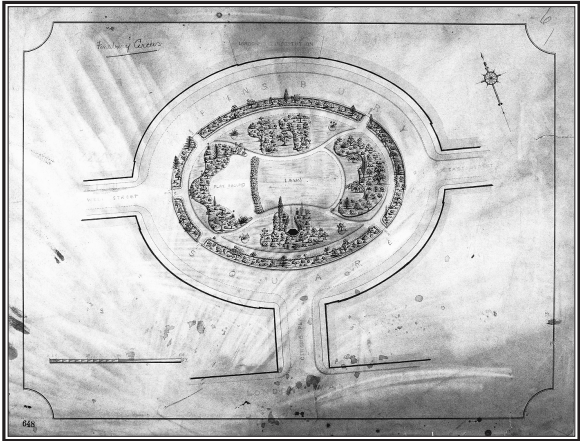
27. A prime mover in the campaign was Mr Alpheus Cleophas Morton, MP, deputy-Alderman of Farringdon Without and a member of the City Corporation's Streets Committee. Finsbury Circus became known as 'Morton's Park' among his peers within the Corporation.

28. *ILLN*, 31 October 1874.

22. *ILLN*, 20 August 1864.



59. London Institution c.1820
(COLLAGE, THE LONDON PICTURE ARCHIVE)



60. Finsbury Circus: Plan showing trees, lawns, undated
(LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES, CITY OF LONDON COL/SVD/PL/10/0648)

61. Plan of garden at Finsbury Circus, City Surveyor's Office, Guildhall E.C., November 1899
(LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES, CITY OF LONDON COL/SVD/PL/10/0024)

62. Finsbury Circus garden, detail from Ordnance Survey, 25 inch England and Wales,
Sheet London v.11. Revised: 1914, published 1916
(REPRODUCED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND)

beneath the boughs of other trees', and a 'small gymnasium not large enough for public use'.²⁹

The *City Press* reported on 2 November 1899 that 'The inhabitants of the circus are divided with respect to the advisability of assenting to the proposal' but the members of the London Institution were unanimous in the view that 'to through [sic] the garden open would impair the utility of the institution by robbing it of the quietude so essential for the purpose of study and literary recreation'. Rector William Fleming, residing in the Presbytery at 22 Finsbury Circus, was vociferous in his protest, also referring to depreciation of property values and his belief that 'ample compensation should be given' if the scheme went ahead:

I beg to state that it would be impossible to open the Garden of Finsbury Circus, without bringing into the neighbourhood daily all the roughs and loafers of Whitechapel to the great annoyance of all who daily come to the Circus on business [...] experience proves that it would not be safe for respectable children to use the garden if it were open to the Criminal classes.³⁰

In the *Minutes of Evidence* to the Select Committee on Private Bills on Tuesday 27TH March 1900, the testimony of Dr Frederick Gordon Brown and others, including the Finsbury Circus gardener Mr Algernon Tearle, provides further information about the use of the garden as well as the perceived disadvantage of 'throwing it open', indeed revealing somewhat alarming views of the odious public! Dr Brown, a surgeon, resident at Nos. 16 and 17 Finsbury Circus since 1856, and Treasurer for the Gardens since 1884, strenuously defended the need for its continued privacy: 'It is a very good garden, and we have the best lawn tennis lawn in London, with two courts, and the grass is always well kept there.' Finsbury Circus Lawn Tennis Club, of which Brown was Vice President, had been founded in 1879, but by then had only 2 members who were residents of the square, although the facility was used by clerks and medical staff from the London

Hospital at Whitechapel. In his evidence he referred to the gymnasium in the garden with 'a giant's stride, parallel bars, a place for jumping, and swings for the children', asserting that members of the public were already able to come to use these facilities, open any day, on payment of an annual subscription of 2 guineas. The public was also admitted on Thursday evenings from 6-8pm 'provided they behave themselves properly'. In addition the band of the City of London Police was granted the 'privilege of playing after 6 o'clock' and their wives and children were permitted to come in to listen, as well as 'any respectable persons during that time'. A constable or Beadle had been on duty in the Circus from 1877, paid by the Committee of Leaseholders,³¹ and tasked to maintain order: 'We used to have a great number of fights. A great number of printers' boys used to come in their dinner hours to settle their differences, which used to cause great crowds'.

Before it became a public amenity, Finsbury Circus garden hosted a variety of attractions, notably horticultural events.³² A notice in *London City Press*, 3RD June 1865, announced a 'grand flower show', organised by the newly formed United Horticultural Society. It was to take place on the grass plot in the centre of the garden with 'a grand display of every kind of horticultural produce proper to the season, in five tents, and with the band of the Victoria Rifles to render the affair thoroughly festive in character...' Reporting on its success and noting it was 'attended by persons from the whole of the surrounding districts', the event was fulsomely praised:

The show was an excellent one and it is intended to continue the experiment in future years. The proceeds are to be handed over to a fund for the relief of aged and disabled gardeners.³³

In 1876, the Duchess of Teck distributed the prizes at the City of London Flower Show³⁴ and in 1878 it was reported that the 'Ninth annual competition of the Society for the Protection and Encouragement of

29. Letter of 6 December 1898 from Dr Frederick Gordon Brown.

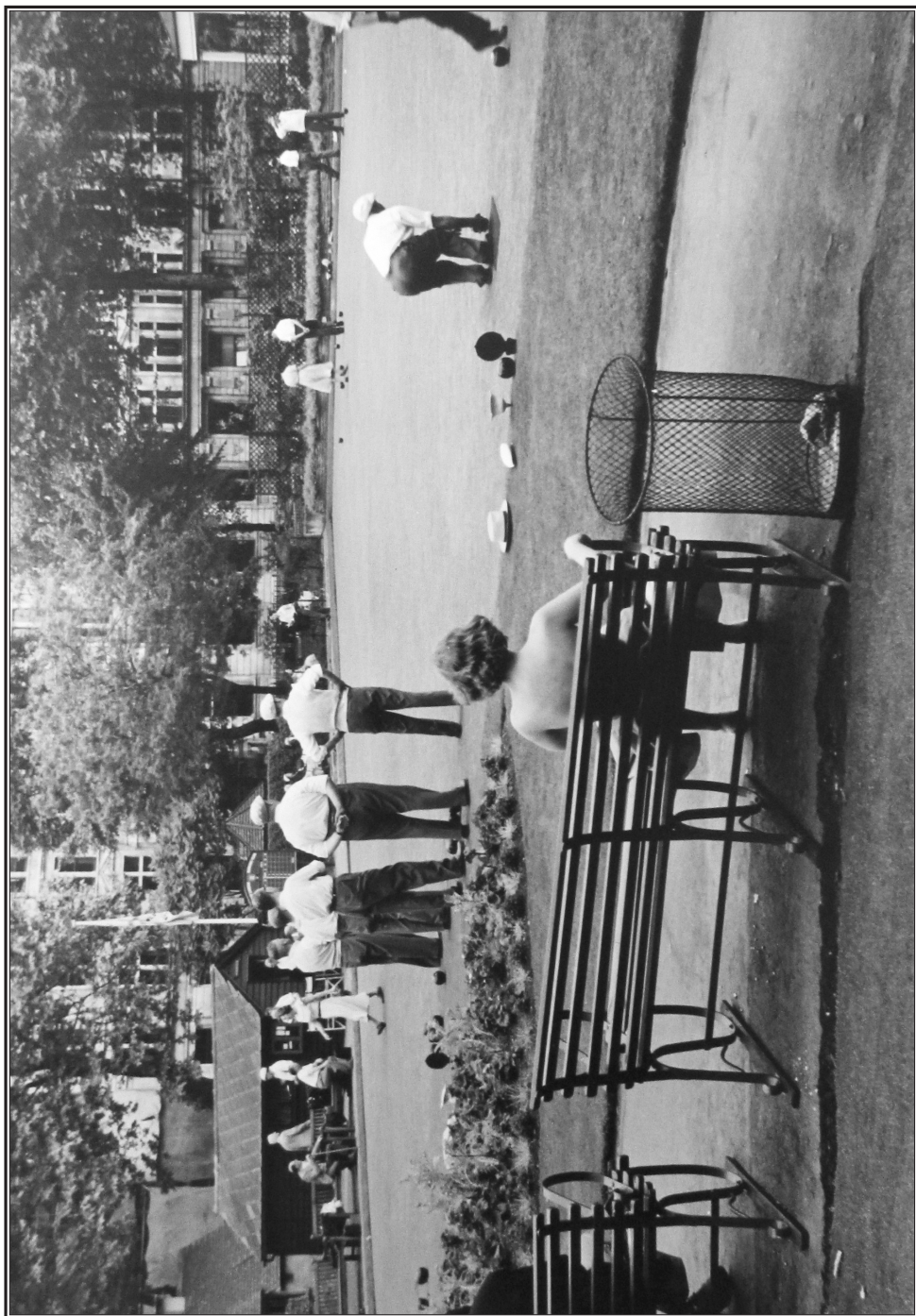
30. Letter to G. W. Baylis of 7 December 1898 signed by William Fleming, Rector; Nicholas Power, Curate; William J. Condon, Curate.

31. Comments in other documents refer to the inadequate protection afforded by the City Police against all manner of 'loafers', prostitutes and other ne'er-do-wells.

32. The garden saw other occasional usage: for example in the 1880s it was the point of assembly for the annual march-out and brigade drill of the City Volunteers, as reported in *ILN* 15 May 1880 and 13 May 1882.

33. *ILN*, 10 June 1865.

34. *ILN*, 15 July 1876.



63. Finsbury Circus bowling green, photographer Edwin Smith, 1957
(LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES, CITY OF LONDON SC/GL/PHO/A/230/005)

Gardening in the City was held on Tuesday in the grounds of Finsbury Circus, the Lady Mayoress, in the absence of Princess Beatrice, distributing the prizes.³⁵

The efforts of the Leaseholders to maintain the exclusivity of the garden ultimately failed and Finsbury Circus Garden was opened to the public on 25TH July 1901 by the Lord Mayor, an occasion marred by torrential rain. At the opening ceremony, the Chairman of the Streets Committee referred in his introductory remarks to 'this picturesque and prettily wooded garden' but the papers reported that 'owing to a storm of rain, the ceremony was of the briefest nature. Mr Frederick G. Painter handed a gold key to the Lord Mayor, who, without leaving his carriage, ordered the gates to be opened.'³⁶ The *Gloucester Citizen* reported on the occasion:

The severe thunderstorm which broke over London yesterday took people entirely by surprise, nothing of the kind being apparently threatened within a few minutes of the first thunder-crash. One of those who suffered inconvenience in consequence was the Lord Mayor himself, who had set out in some State to declare open to the public the gardens which have been laid out in Finsbury-circus. When the place was reached rain fell so heavily that the ceremony as arranged could not possibly be carried out, and the Lord Mayor made his dedicatory speech from the shelter of his carriage, to the accompaniment of deafening peels from overhead.³⁷

Prior to the formal opening, the City Engineer's report of 16TH April 1901 enumerated the necessary alterations to the garden's facilities, which included: remaking gravel paths throughout and widening those that were too narrow; clearing away the gymnasium, old summer-house etc.; establishing a new water service for watering 'the lawn, flower-beds etc.'; erecting iron dwarf-fencing and gates around all the paths and around 'the two weeping ash trees at the eastern end of the gardens'; repairing boundary railings and kerb, and painting iron-work;

installing new tree guards; providing an attendant's box at one entrance and notice boards at all entrances; installing 2 drinking fountains, 30 garden-seats and 40 or 50 garden-chairs; iron waste-paper baskets and enamelled iron notice-tablets; procuring tools for the gardener. He also stipulated that 'provision must be made for the extra planting of trees and shrubs, and for raising and levelling the turf borders at various places', going on to recommend: 'an ornamental iron shelter, which on occasions could be utilised as a band-stand'; a 'retiring-room for women'; repair of the 'existing brick-built tool-house' and 'if it is intended to raise sufficient plants for bedding-out purposes, a new garden-house, with heating apparatus, would have to be provided'. The total cost was estimated to be 'about £2,500' but the City Engineer pointed out this did not include laying on gas or electric light, or staffing in the form of a uniformed attendant and a gardener 'who will probably need assistance at certain times of the year'.

Responsibility for setting and laying out the garden was devolved to the Corporation's Streets Committee and paid for out of Rates money. The Streets Committee Minutes of the early twentieth century have numerous references to purchase of bulbs, plants, seats, railings, garden implements, noticeboards etc. as well as wages for the gardener, who was retained along with the Beadle when the garden was opened to the public. The original entrances to the garden were via gates in the north-west, north-east, south-west and south-east corners, and were altered to the current entrances on north, south, east and west sides. In 1902 a pink granite drinking fountain was installed, its rustic shelter inspired by the well designed by Philip Webb (1831-1915) for William Morris's Red House in Bexleyheath. A second fountain in Peterhead granite with brass spouts was set up by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain & Cattle Trough Association. An estimate for planting trees dated 5TH December 1904 from William Cutbush & Son enumerates supply of '14 Almond and 6 Italian Poplar Trees, also 20 stakes for same'; in addition '10 loads of top spit Loam (1/2 load for each tree)'.

35. *ILN*, 27 July 1878.

36. *ILN*, 3 August 1901: report including a photograph to mark the Opening of the Finsbury Circus Garden.

37. 'Our London Letter', *Gloucester Citizen*, Friday 26 July 1901.

In May 1906 it was announced that the City Corporation was to provide 'the children who play in Finsbury Circus garden' with a sand-pit containing 'real sea-sand', following the example of the Passmore Edwards Vacation School.³⁸ Two years later the City Corporation's sand-pit at Finsbury Circus was described 'as a means of attracting children thither from the streets'; the sand was 'obtained from Lowestoft, and special precautions are taken to keep it perfectly clean'.³⁹ The gardens were re-landscaped in 1909 but retained the serpentine paths and plane trees. The Ordnance Survey map for 1913 shows the layout but without showing a sandpit although the two drinking fountains are marked (*fig. 62*).

In 1925 a Bowling Green was provided following a petition by a number of City residents that was received by the Court of Common Council on 10TH July 1924 asking 'leave to construct and maintain a bowling green in the Garden of Finsbury Circus for purposes of recreation'. The Trustees of the City of London Bowling Club were granted a licence to construct the green on 23RD March 1925, with various regulations. A letter from the Town Clerk of 19TH September 1944 provides the information that 'The only grass in pre-war days was the bowling green [...], a small amount of grass round the green up to the footwalks and a small plot at each end of the gardens'. Until the 1960s, this was the City's only bowling green (*fig. 63*).

During World War II, the garden was used for allotments by the City Civil Defence Services, taking over a third of the ground except the bowling green. This was authorised by the Streets Committee on 13TH October 1942. However, a question was raised in the Court of Common Council of 21ST September 1944 by Oliver Bull, who pointed out that: 'The attempt to grow food in Finsbury Circus Garden having proved a distressing failure and the garden having been ruined at any rate for the time', proceeding to ask 'what steps are being taken this autumn either by putting some fresh grass or by any other means to make this once pleasant open space less of a

disgrace to the Corporation of London.' The Civil Defence Committee resolved to discontinue the arrangements on 6TH November 1944 and in early 1945 the Streets Committee invited tenders for the reconstruction and layout of the garden. Schemes and garden plans were submitted by three companies - Carters Tested Seeds Ltd, Sutton & Sons Ltd and A. Luff & Sons Ltd - which were referred to a Special Subcommittee on 5TH March for a decision. Their tenders made reference to the need to employ a team of at least 3 gardeners, questioned whether the bowling green should be kept and made recommendations for suitable plants.

By April 1945 Mr Luckhurst of Carter Page & Co. Ltd was advising the Corporation on Finsbury Circus Garden, amongst other things instructing the gardener on how to sow Californian Poppy. As reported at the 9TH October meeting of the Streets Committee, Mr Luckhurst would be arranging planting of spring bulbs and flowers 'at a cost not to exceed £100', and he had recommended that 'not less than the ten beds laid out last summer be planted with daffodils and hyacinths at an approximate cost of £200'. At the same meeting of the Streets Committee the Engineer was instructed to have the public air raid shelters removed and to carry out repairs to the greenhouse. Later the same year Mr Luckhurst expressed concern over 'the amount of shade caused by the large trees' and the adverse effect on the soil as a result.⁴⁰ Furthermore, he was 'very disappointed with the display this Summer and Autumn from the Dahlias planted in the long border overlooking the Bowling Green', and pointed out that: 'To be quite candid the only really suitable spot in the Gardens for growing flowers successfully is the site at present occupied by the Bowling Green, which is absolutely in the open.' The recommendations for the Summer Display provide information about the borders and flower-beds, which were in a variety of shapes: triangular, oval, circular, half-circular.

In 1947, in response to a report relating to City Trees in which one large plane in Finsbury Circus Garden is described as 'extremely unhealthy', exacerbated by the

38. *ILN*, 5 May 1906.

39. 'Notes - Mainly Personal' column, *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, Monday 17 August 1908.

40. In a letter of 12 October 1945.

FINSBURY CIRCUS: FROM MOORFIELDS TO CROSSRAIL



64. Finsbury Circus, gardens and bandstand, photograph, 1966
(LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL PHOTOGRAPH LIBRARY, COURTESY LMA - COLLAGE)

65. Finsbury Circus Gardens, 2006
(PHOTOGRAPH SALLY WILLIAMS)

'constant walking of the public on these beds' and compacting of the soil, the City Engineer suggested to the Streets Committee that a 'chestnut pale fence be placed around the garden as a temporary measure in place of the iron railings which were removed during the war'.⁴¹ In October a number of firms were invited to tender to provide chain link fencing, the successful company being The Darlington Fencing Company. Other post-war improvements included installation of a bandstand in 1955 with a railed seating area replacing shrubbery (*fig. 64*). The Bowling Green was considerably enlarged in 1968 and a new pavilion replaced the earlier garden structure; this pavilion was adapted as a wine bar in 1985. Re-landscaping works took place in Finsbury Circus Garden in the 1990s, including restoration of the bandstand. The garden is listed Grade II on the *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest* on Historic England's National Heritage List for England.

However, since 2010 Finsbury Circus Garden, with its impressive bowling green, picturesque drinking fountain, floral displays and sheltering London plane trees (*fig. 65*), has been largely obscured by hoardings within the Crossrail Liverpool Street construction site, due to be restored with new landscaping by Tom Stuart-Smith Ltd in 2017 as part of the launch of the Elizabeth Line, which comes into operation in 2018. Its reinstatement post-Crossrail is undoubtedly eagerly awaited by the many City workers and visitors who have been deprived of its restful atmosphere.

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of the garden at
Finsbury Circus following Crossrail
construction works

JOHN SPYERS' CHRONICLE OF THE DECAY OF REGAL SPLENDOUR AT HAMPTON COURT PALACE

By Todd Longstaffe-Gowan

On the 10TH May 2016 the 'Brown Advisor' - the modern champion of 'Capability Brown studies' - having visited the exhibition 'The Empress and the Gardener' at Hampton Court Palace featuring John Spyers' eighteenth-century topographical survey of the palace and its surroundings, was prompted to observe in his post 255, 'How serious is Hampton Court?': 'is this actually what the English landscape looked like, and have we for two and a half centuries since been living the lie that in the eighteenth century England's land was green and pleasant, when actually it was tired and old, neglected and sad. Has it taken all this time to make that lie a truth?' He continued to remark on the 12TH May in his post 257 that Spyers' drawings suggest that Brown 'took little care' of the palace grounds, 'from which he drew a considerable income after being appointed the master gardener by George III'; and he concluded on the 5TH June in post 260 that Spyers' drawings provide 'indisputable evidence' that Brown was 'neglecting Hampton Court'.

These are bold and provocative observations, which challenge our conventional views of one of England's most ingenious and celebrated landscape improvers. What better time to air them than during the tercentenary celebrations of Brown's birth? Who better to do so than the Brown Advisor who over the past year has wrestled playfully with hundreds of aspects of Brown and his oeuvre, and whose eccentric charm and unbridled enthusiasm for his subject has galvanised many persons to reappraise Brown and his enduring legacy?

Brown lived at Hampton Court from 1764 until his death in 1783, during which time he served as Chief Gardener to His Majesty at Hampton Court. For almost two decades the palace grounds were his centre of operations - from here he ventured forth to every corner of the kingdom to create some of Britain's most

41. Report to the Streets Committee on 10 June 1947.

1. The Brown Advisor [John Hibbs]: *300 Frequently Asked Questions about Capability Brown*.