buildings should be designed in such a way as to last long after their original purpose had been fulfilled. I can think of no better purpose for that deep subterranean space lit by those wonderful Diocletian windows than a Roman bath.

****

Andrew Jones' book about his wanderings around Mayfair and St. James's, *The Buildings of Green Park*, is published by ACC Art Books with a Foreword by Alain de Botton

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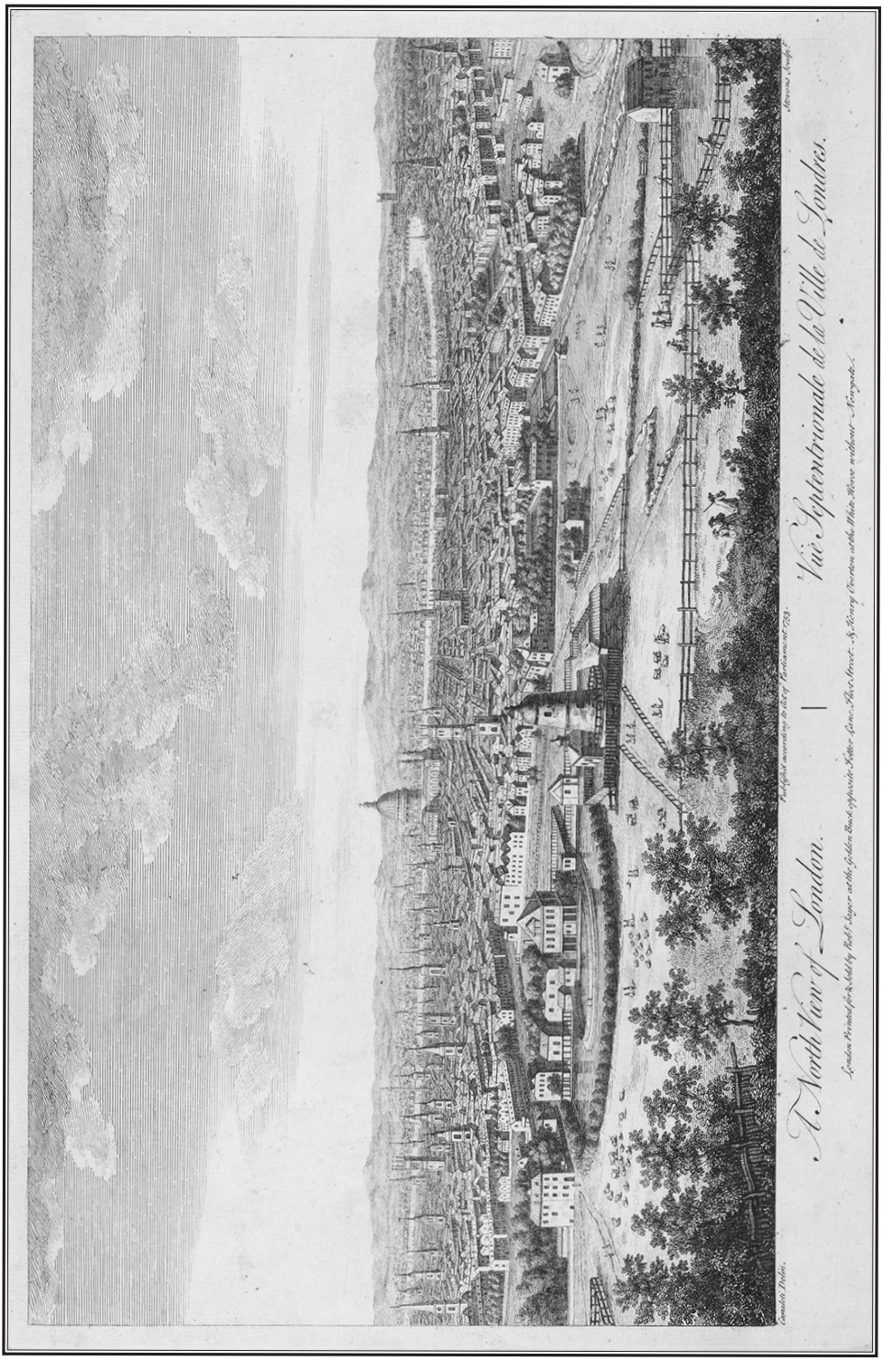
The New River Head, Clerkenwell, 1609 – 2020

By Diana Yakeley

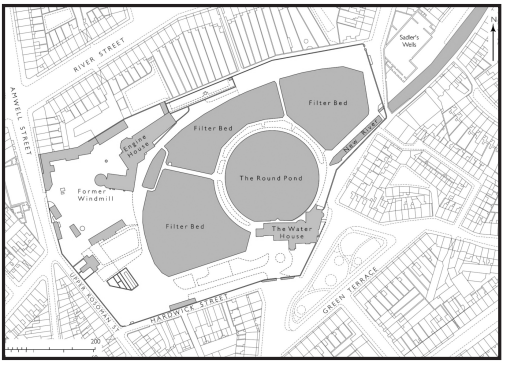
There can be few utilities more fundamental to a city than the provision of clean water. This essay sets out the background to the landscape of 'divers fair wells and fresh springs'[1] that surrounds New River Head, Clerkenwell, which was in continuous use for the supply of fresh public water to London from the early seventeenth century, and brings together the historic landscape ***(fig. 22)*** with the gardens that are present at the time of writing. The fields outside the City Wall north of St. Paul's Cathedral, where once herbalist John Gerard collected plant specimens, cattle grazed in rolling pasture and Londoners hunted wildfowl, are now, four centuries later, the former Headquarters of the Metropolitan Water Board, converted into private residences.

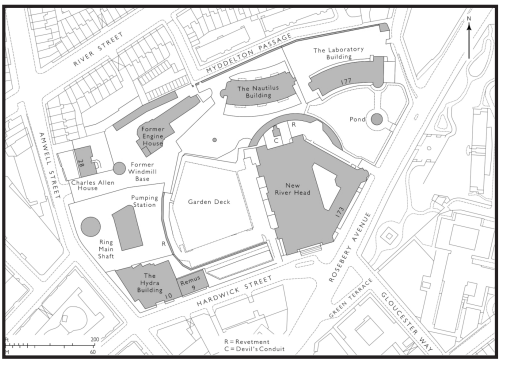
New River Head is considered one of the most historic sites in the London Borough of Islington and of national interest in the provision of a potable water supply over 400 years. However, by the late twentieth century the site was used mainly for administrative and scientific purposes rather than for the supply of water by London's Metropolitan Water Board (MWB), established in 1902 when the New River Company and other private water companies merged. In 1991 Islington Council produced a Planning Brief for the redevelopment of the New River land.[2] ***(figs. 23 & 24)*** At that time the site consisted of offices and laboratories, garages, stores and sheds, and listed structures including the base of a windmill, an engine house, plane trees and a garden. Two disused filter beds remained, and between 1997 and 1998 planning permission was granted for the conversion of the MWB's Laboratory Building and Headquarters Building to residential use, with a specific requirement to include landscaped gardens in place of the redundant filter beds. Public access to the gardens was also a requirement of the planning permission, as was the

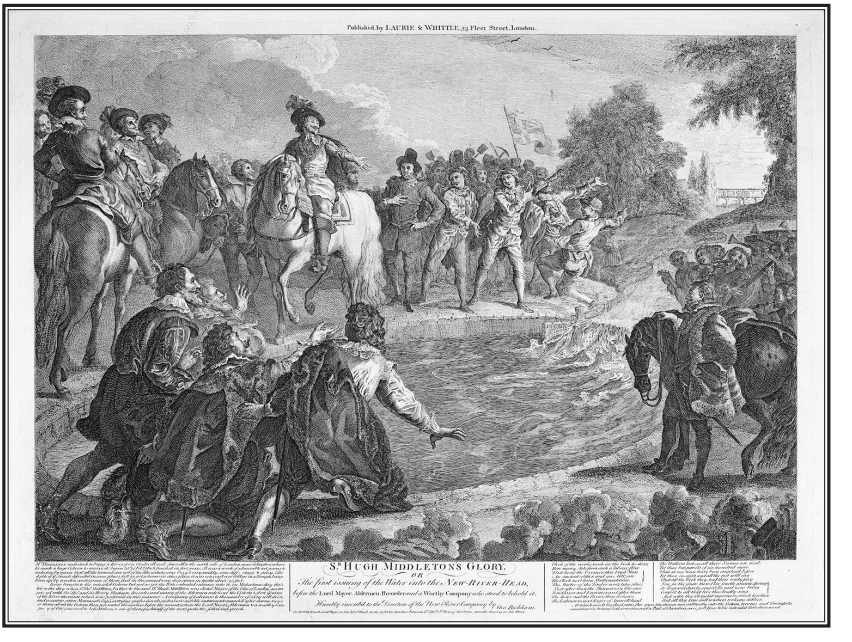
1. John Stow, *A Survey of London*, written in the year 1598, new edition edited by William J. Thoms, (London: Whittaker & Co, 1842), p.5.
2. Islington Planning Brief, 10 May 1999, *New River Head and Claremont Square*: draft revised Planning Brief.



22. *A North View of London*, engraving after Canaletto by Stevens, 1753. View of the City of London taken from the bowling green at Islington and showing New River Head waterworks in the foreground, with windmill tower
(image © London Metropolitan Archives (City of London))







23. New River Head, plan of the site *c.*1874
24. New River Head, plan, 2005. The New River Head headquarters building occupies the site of the Round Pond; the limited remains of one of the outer Filter Beds is visible on the western edge of the Garden Deck
(Both plans courtesy of Survey of London: Volume 47, Northern Clerkenwell and Pentonville, (2008), figs 211, 212)

25. George Bickham, *Sir Hugh Myddelton's Glory or the issuing of the water into New River Head*, engraving, *c.*1740
(image © London Metropolitan Archives (City of London))

preservation of the protected view of St. Paul's Cathedral from Amwell Street. Central to the site is the former Headquarters Building, itself built over the original round pond, which now has three distinct gardens surrounding it, covering the former filter beds. The ring main for carrying the capital's water still remains some 130 feet below in a 2.5 metre diameter tunnel encircling London for 80 kilometres, accessed from the north-west corner plot, referred to in planning documents as the Key Site.

To the Man on the Number Nineteen Omnibus passing New River Head today, the gardens might not seem of particular design interest, though the expanse of lawns and mature trees are welcome in this densely populated borough. Whilst the gardens are pleasant, there is little to suggest the history that lies, quite literally, below the lawns.

The History of New River Head

In the twelfth century the hilltop fields of what is now the borough of Islington (from the Saxon *Gisladune* meaning the dune or hill of someone called Gisla) were known as the Commandery Mantells and in the ownership of the Priory of St. John of Jerusalem. They were exempt from tithe by the Pope's privilege and by statute.[3] During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the Herbalist John Gerard (1545-1612) is said to have gathered wild orchids and 'the sappy roots of Ladie Traces', remarking that the White Saxifrage 'it groweth also in a great fielde by Islington, called the Mantels'.[4] He might also have observed the round or ducking pond on this sloping site.

London in the reign of Queen Elizabeth was confined to two main areas along the Thames, the City - the trading area, with the Tower of London at its eastern end - and a small settlement to the west at Westminster, with the Abbey and Palace of Westminster surrounded by fields and woodland.[5] Water was provided from stone conduits fed by springs and rivers, notably the Fleet River, or directly from the heavily polluted Thames. By 1600 the population of London had risen to *circa* 200,000 and further supplies of fresh water were urgently needed.[6] At the time there were about sixteen water conduits in the City of London providing water for a farthing a gallon via water carriers with casks suspended from a yoke across their shoulders, or long wooden barrels strapped to their backs.

Following the death of 2,798 people in one week during an epidemic of the Plague in 1603,[7] the Corporation of the City of London was forced into action and in 1609 gained an Act of Parliament that gave it powers to bring fresh water some twenty miles to London from springs at Amwell and Chadwell in Hertfordshire. On 28th March 1609 the City accepted an offer from the Member of Parliament for Denbigh, Hugh Myddelton (1560-1631), to carry out the works. Myddelton, a wealthy merchant and goldsmith, rather conveniently sat on the Parliamentary committee that considered this and alternative schemes. The chosen site where the '*New River*' would terminate was an area of chalybeate springs below Islington Hill with a pond 82 feet above the Trinity level to provide a good flow, and where the heavy clay soil would form a firm base for the holding pond.

Work to cut the channel from Great Amwell started in 1609 and would take a further four and a half years to build. As with many such infrastructure projects, the costs and logistics, including unhelpful landowners, proved rather more difficult both fiscally and logistically than anticipated, and work halted in 1610. King James I, observing matters from Lord Burghley's palace at Theobalds in Hertfordshire, was persuaded to intervene financially and agreed to invest half the costs in exchange for half the future profits. Work restarted and by 1613 water flowed into the round pond in Islington, built to enable water to be piped by gravity into the City through elm pipes. A small Water House was built to the south of the round pond containing stop cocks for the control of flow, and living quarters for the attendant, one William

3. William Pinks, *History of Clerkenwell,* Volume x, (facsimile) (London: Francis Boutle, 2001), p.491.
4. John Gerard, *The Herbal or General History of Plants: The Complete 1633 Edition, as revised by Thomas Johnson,* (Mineola New York: Calla Editions, 2015), p.492.
5. David Ward, *London's New River*, (London: Historical Publications, 2003).
6. Leslie Tomory, *The History of the London Water Industry 1580 – 1820,* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2017), p.16.
7. Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert, *The London Encyclopaedia,* (London: Macmillan, 2008), p.644.

Llewelyn, the Clerk of Works.[8] On 29th September 1613 water flowed into the round pond to much celebration and ceremony attended by the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London. A troupe of Welsh labourers, presumably brought from Hugh Myddelton's Denbigh constituency to carry out the digging, paraded around the pond bearing all manner of spades, shovels and 'instruments of laborious imployment', speeches were made, and the water flowed ***(fig. 25)***.[9]

Additional overflow ponds or waste ponds were eventually excavated around the perimeter of the round pond, and in the eighteenth century became the overflow beds that are, today, the basis of the gardens. From this time the round pond became known as the Inner Pond, and the new beds known as the Outer Pond or Overflow Pond. The Inner Pond was encircled by a walkway and landscaped with flower beds and tree planting ***(fig. 26)***.[10] The original pond was wharfed with oak boards to receive the water and surrounded by a brick wall constructed by a bricklayer to the Company, Stephen Boone, who also built chimneys and other parts of the Water House.[11] Water was then distributed through wooden water pipes to the City; the elm pipes were made with a pointed end that was connected to the hollow end of the next pipe ***(fig. 27)***.[12]

Following the success of the New River Company, the growing affluence of the City and an ever-increasing population, the Water House was enlarged in 1693, and then again in the 1780s ***(fig. 28)***. The Company's surveyor, Robert Mylne, lived there with his family for the next forty years. James Tyrer's 1805 map of Clerkenwell shows planting beds beside the Water House, and a nineteenth century watercolour shows trees and shrubs behind the walls of the property, as well as water pipes in the foreground ***(fig. 29)***.

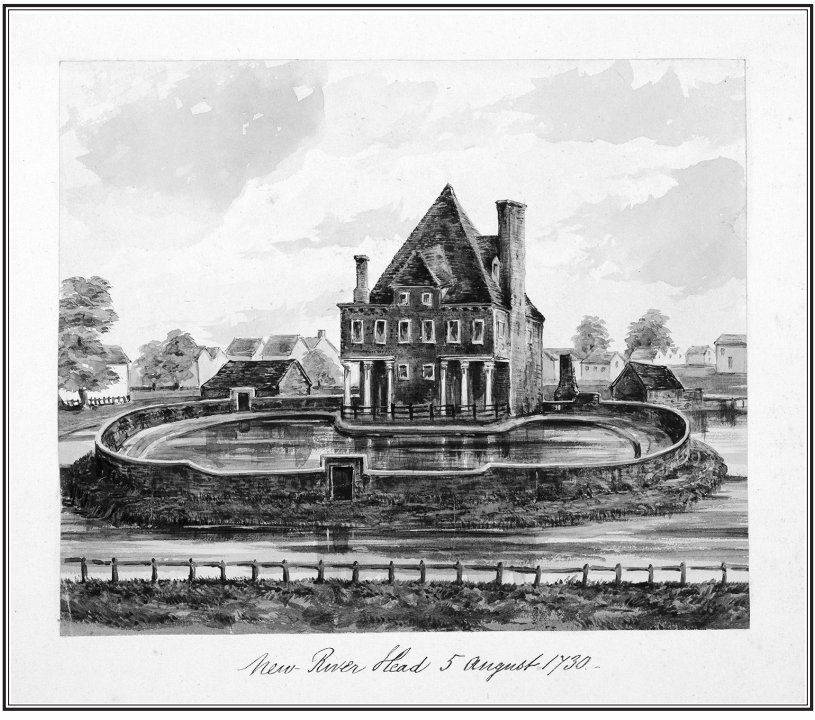
The Elm Pipes needed a rolling programme of replacement or maintenance. There were other problems too. In 1754 a two-foot long carp had to be taken out of a stop cock, and a 'fine freshwater eel' weighing twelve pounds three ounces was taken out of one of the pipes leading down to Smithfield.[13]

A pleasant walk in the eighteenth century, uphill from the stench of the City, might involve taking refreshment from the numerous tea houses, a 'pye house', or enjoying other less salubrious entertainments such as bear baiting, wrestling and cock fighting, which became popular at this time. A contemporaneous map shows a hut marked 'Spencer's 'breakfasting hutt' on New River land is indicated near the road to Islington, advertised 'Fine Hyson tea at sixpence per head'. Likewise 'a cat with two legs to be seen gratis' and 'young fellows and their sweethearts, who are drinking tea and coffee… repeating love songs and broken scraps of low comedy'.[14] In 1728 a rambling 50-page ode to Hugh Myddelton by William Garbott describes the perils of lust and 'jilts', ladies of pleasure, as well as the garden of New River Head and its white swans ***(fig. 30)***.[15]

In the early nineteenth century London was ravaged by cholera, and there were four major outbreaks between 1832 and 1866 when tens of thousands of people died. Cholera had spread from Asia by 'persons coming from the continent' and quarantine regulations were put in place ***(fig. 31)***.[16] In 1849 Dr John Snow found evidence that the disease could be traced to contaminated water, and in 1852 the Metropolis Water Act was passed. Amongst other measures, the one that affected the New River Company most directly was that water for domestic use had to be filtered. All open reservoirs within five miles of St. Paul's were to be covered, a requirement that would prove costly to the Company, and result in higher charges to their customers.[17]

The filter beds covered an area of two and a half acres and were divided into three compartments to enable draining work to take

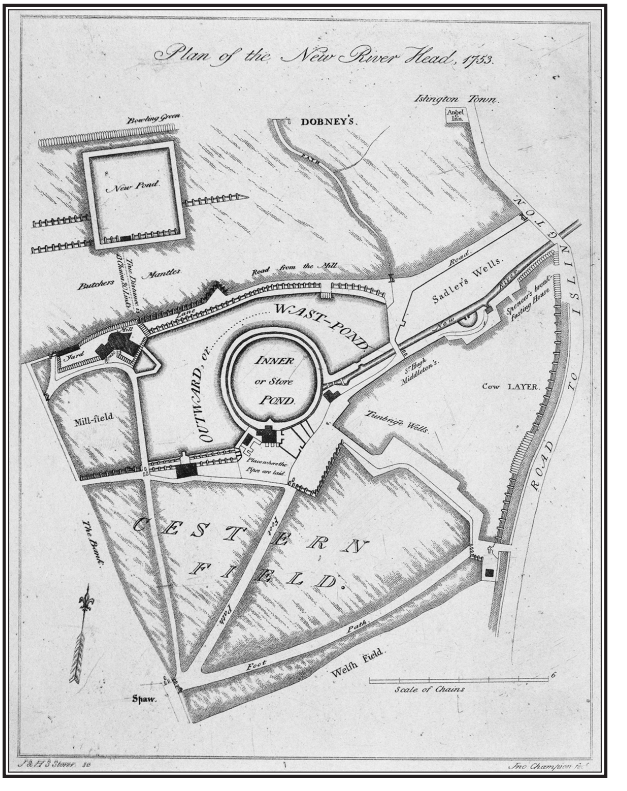
8. G.F. Stringer, *Some Descriptive Notes on The New River Head*, (Clerk of the Board, Metropolitan Water Board pamphlet, 1927), p.24.
9. Stringer, *Some Descriptive Notes, op. cit.*, p.19.
10. Pinks, *History of Clerkenwell, op.cit.,* p.456.
11. John Gough, *Sir Hugh Myddelton: Entrepreneur Engineer,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). The Water House has been attributed to Inigo Jones, though unsubstantiated.
12. Islington Local History Centre, Metropolitan Water Board files L5.73. During the Great Fire of London in 1666 people broke into the pipes to find water, which caused the pressure to drop and made extinguishing the flames more difficult. Some 300,000 of these elm pipes were made and can still be found discarded but not removed when new concrete mains are installed.
13. Liza Picard, *Dr Johnson's London: Everyday Life in London in the Mid 18th Century,* (London: Orion, 2001), p.24.
14. Pinks, *History of Clerkenwell, op.cit.*
15. William Garbott, *New-River, A Poem*, p.21.
16. *The London Gazette*, 27 May 1831, p.1027.
17. Ward, *London's New River, op. cit*.

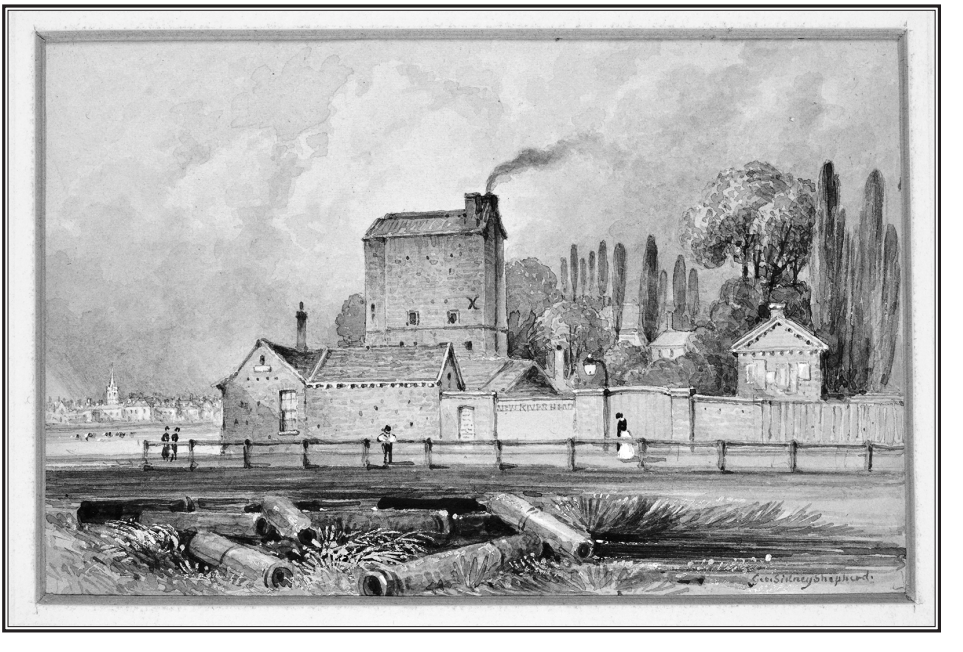




26. Unknown artist, *New River Head, 5 August 1730*, watercolour of The Water House and Round Pond
(image © London Metropolitan Archives (City of London))

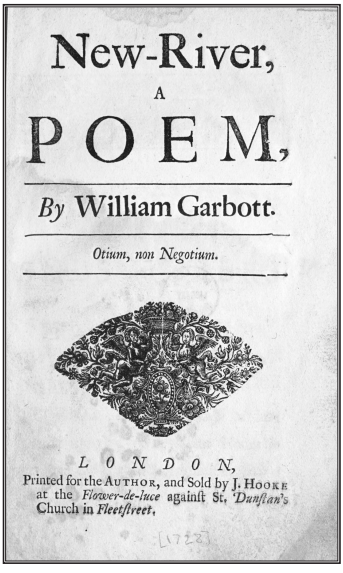
27. '*ELM TRUNKS FOR CONDUIT PIPES DUG UP NEAR ST. ANNE'S, SOHO:* There are drawings in the Soane Museum showing the wooden waterpipes, like these, which were used to carry water from New River Head over the Holebourne for the citizens. Trunks used for conveying the fresh water supply were of elm, which of all timbers best withstands the exigencies of heat and cold. The New River Co. had a wharf at the bottom of Dorset Street (running out of Salisbury Square) where the elm trunks were landed and bored. Shaftesbury Avenue was opened February 26, 1887, and the excavations laid these old pipes bare.'
(Reproduced from 'Wonderful London', 1926, Volume iii)



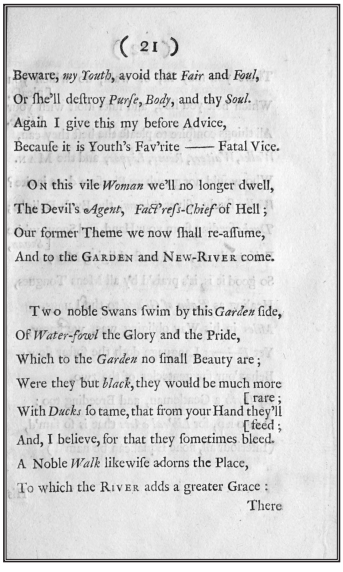


28. John Champion, *Plan of the New River Head, 1753*, engraving. This shows extended water ponds and land to the south that formed part of the New River Estate. The distance from the windmill, centre left, to the New Pond is shown as '18 chains and 20 links'.
(IMAGE © LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES (CITY OF LONDON))

29. George Sidney Shepherd, *New River Head: Exterior frontage also showing pipes*, watercolour, 18--.
(IMAGE © LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES (CITY OF LONDON))



New-River,
A
POEM,
By William Garbott.
Otium, non Negotium.
LONDON,
Printed for the AUTHOR, and Sold by J. HOOKE at the *Flower-de-luce* againſt St. *Dunſtan's* Church in *Fleetſtreet*.

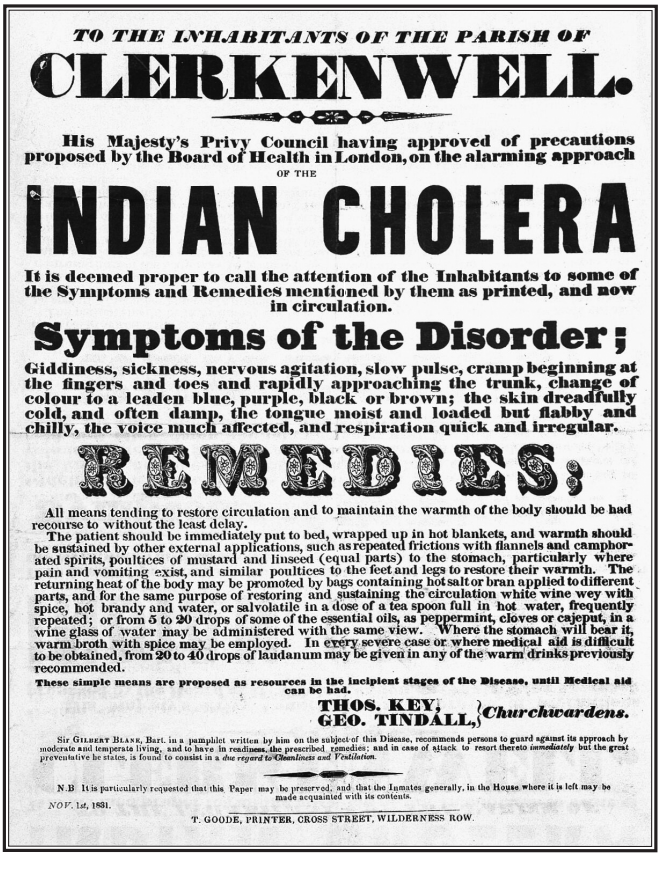


(21)

Beware, *my Youth*, avoid that *Fair* and *Foul*,
Or ſhe'll deſtroy *Perſe*, *Body*, and thy *Soul*.
Again I give this my before Advice,
Becauſe it is Youth's Fav'rite —— Fatal Vice.

On this vile *Woman* we'll no longer dwell,
The Devil's *Agent*, *Fact'reſs-Chief* of Hell;
Our former Theme we now ſhall re-aſſume,
And to the GARDEN and NEW-RIVER come.

Two noble Swans ſwim by this *Garden* ſide,
Of *Water-fowl* the Glory and the Pride,
Which to the *Garden* no ſmall Beauty are;
Were they but *black*, they would be much more [rare;
With *Ducks* ſo tame, that from your Hand they'll [feed;
And, I believe, for that they ſometimes bleed.
A Noble *Walk* likewiſe adorns the Place,
To which the RIVER adds a greater Grace:
There



TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE PARISH OF

CLERKENWELL.

His Majesty's Privy Council having approved of precautions proposed by the Board of Health in London, on the alarming approach
OF THE

INDIAN CHOLERA

It is deemed proper to call the attention of the Inhabitants to some of the Symptoms and Remedies mentioned by them as printed, and now in circulation.

Symptoms of the Disorder;

Giddiness, sickness, nervous agitation, slow pulse, cramp beginning at the fingers and toes and rapidly approaching the trunk, change of colour to a leaden blue, purple, black or brown; the skin dreadfully cold, and often damp, the tongue moist and loaded but flabby and chilly, the voice much affected, and respiration quick and irregular.

REMEDIES.

All means tending to restore circulation and to maintain the warmth of the body should be had recourse to without the least delay.

The patient should be immediately put to bed, wrapped up in hot blankets, and warmth should be sustained by other external applications, such as repeated frictions with flannels and camphorated spirits, poultices of mustard and linseed (equal parts) to the stomach, particularly where pain and vomiting exist, and similar poultices to the feet and legs to restore their warmth. The returning heat of the body may be promoted by bags containing hot salt or bran applied to different parts, and for the same purpose of restoring and sustaining the circulation white wine wey with spice, hot brandy and water, or salvolatile in a dose of a tea spoon full in hot water, frequently repeated; or from 5 to 20 drops of some of the essential oils, as peppermint, cloves or cajeput, in a wine glass of water may be administered with the same view. Where the stomach will bear it, warm broth with spice may be employed. In very severe case or where medical aid is difficult to be obtained, from 20 to 40 drops of laudanum may be given in any of the warm drinks previously recommended.

These simple means are proposed as resources in the incipient stages of the Disease, until Medical aid can be had.

THOS. KEY,
GEO. TINDALL, } *Churchwardens.*

Sir GILBERT BLANE, Bart. in a pamphlet written by him on the subject of this Disease, recommends persons to guard against its approach by moderate and temperate living, and to have in readiness, the prescribed remedies; and in case of attack to resort thereto *immediately* but the great preventative he states, is found to consist in a *due regard to Cleanliness and Ventilation.*

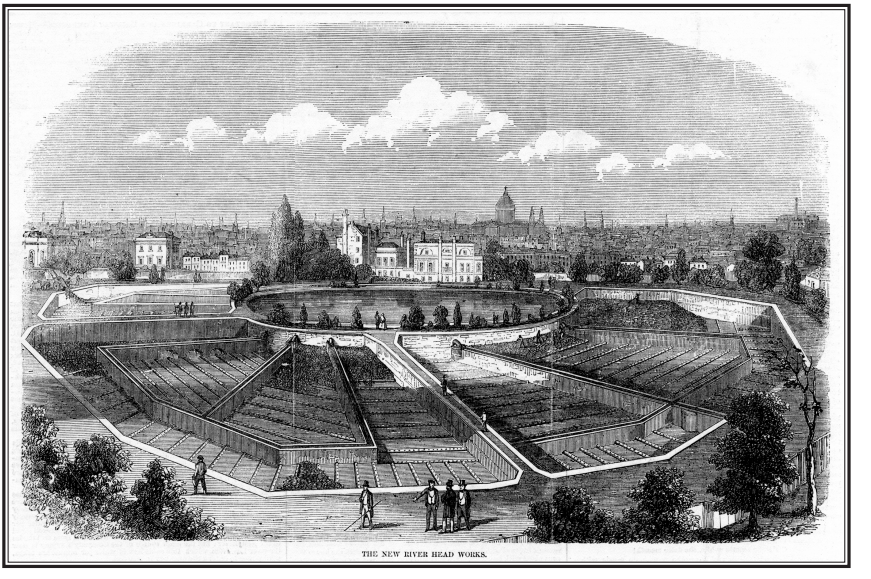
N.B It is particularly requested that this Paper may be preserved, and that the Inmates generally, in the House where it is left may be made acquainted with its contents.

NOV. 1*st*, 1831.

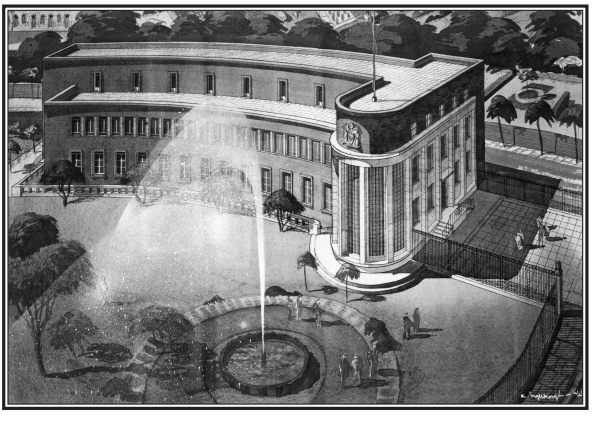
T. GOODE, PRINTER, CROSS STREET, WILDERNESS ROW.

30. *New-River, A Poem.* William Garbott, *c.*1722, title page and extract (page 21)
(Public Domain Mark. Courtesy of the Wellcome Collection. New-River, a poem / [William Garbott])

31. Broadsheet warning the Inhabitants of the Parish of Clerkenwell about 'the alarming approach' of the Indian Cholera, 1831.
(Reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY) licence, courtesy of the Wellcome Collection. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)







32. 'The New River Water-Works', *Illustrated London News*, Saturday 22 November 1856.
Filter beds under construction with a view of St Paul's Cathedral
(© Illustrated London News Ltd/ Mary Evans)

33. New River Head: View of the Inner Pond and outer filter beds from the roof of the Engine Shed, April 1914
(Courtesy ©Thames Water Archive)

34. *Exuberant Perspective* by Raymond Myerscough Walker RIBA for the Royal Academy exhibition 1938
(©RIBApix)

place independently of each other *(fig. 32)*. The filtering medium was five feet in thickness, consisting of sand and gravel. The water percolated through this medium into a tunnel and was pumped by steam engine to a reservoir to the north, located at Claremont Square. In Arthur Hassall's *a Microscopic Examination of the Water Supplies to the Inhabitants of London* (1850),[18] even the water from New River Head was condemned as impure, although not carrying cholera.

The Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries

The Inner Pond covered an area of three quarters of an acre, held 70,000 gallons of water and was encircled by a walkway of planting, trees and shrubs *(fig. 33)*. In 1902, under the Metropolis Water Act, the New River Company was merged along with seven other London water companies to form the new Metropolitan Water Board, which then established its headquarters at the New River Head site. The decision was subsequently taken to build a new Headquarters building on the site of the round pond and its former Water House, thus rendering redundant the use of the, by then, limited New River water supply.

The Headquarters Building, designed by Herbert Austen Hall and now listed Grade II*, was built in 1915-20. In 1936-38 a new Research Building (now known as The Laboratory or Lab Building), was erected over the site of one of the easternmost filter beds of the Outer Pond. Modern Movement in style, it was designed by architects Stanley Hall, Easton & Robertson and is now listed Grade II *(fig. 34)*.

In 1973 the Metropolitan Water Board and the Thames Conservancy were taken over under the terms of the Water Act 1973 by the Thames Water Authority, which in 1989 became a private company. In that year an Urban Plan was commissioned by Thames Water plc to consider new uses for the whole waterworks site and headquarters building, which suggested some radical landscaping.[19] The plan included ambitious suggestions for 'a vigorous, more urban attitude' and recommended a '55m water wall' with a weir and pond adjoining a glazed pedestrian piazza, 'a waterfront amenity' to reflect the site's previous history. The economic depression of the early 1990s may have coloured Thames Water's decision not to adopt these ideas. In 1996 Thames Water sold the site to Berkeley Manhattan.

The garden between the east wing of the Headquarters building and the neighbouring Sadler's Wells Theatre is known as the *Rose Garden*, the area to the north is the *Nautilus Garden*, and an *Elevated Deck Garden* is to the west, covering a car park. All are well maintained and a valued amenity to the flats that they surround, as well as supporting habitat for birds and small mammals, and encouraging bees and other insects. A north-west corner of the site, containing listed structures such as a base to a windmill and the engineering house, has no existing garden although some landscape features are of interest. Original cobbled pathways between outbuildings have remnants of metal rails set into them.

The Rose Garden

Prior to the construction of the Research Building there appears to have been an existing garden for the Headquarters offices, which is shown in a floodlit view of the building taken in 1935 in the Thames Water Archive. This shows the garden with stone wall structures and a stone centrepiece, none of which remain today *(fig. 35)*. Despite a great deal of Thames Water archive material there is limited mention of gardens save for scant visual images. The Research Building faces the Rose Garden and little has changed since then although a tree planted to commemorate the Coronation of HRH Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 appears not to have survived *(fig. 36)*.

The Rose Garden is the oldest of the three outer gardens, enlarged when the Laboratory Building was built in 1938, the curve of the building reflecting the outer edge of the old filter bed to the east of the site. The garden extends to the edge of the original Inner Pond *(fig. 37)*. The somewhat municipal curved rose beds could be said to reflect the plan of the original round pond and filter beds, and low Buxus hedging and a *Quercus pubescens*

18. Arthur H Hassall, *a Microscopic Examination of the Water Supplies to the Inhabitants of London, (*London: Samuel Highley, 1850), p.148.
19. Cecil Denny Highton, architects, *Urban Plan for New River Head,* January 1990, for Thames Water plc. Collection of New River Head RTM company.





35. New River Head: A floodlit view of the garden in 1935
(Courtesy ©Thames Water Archive)

36. Chairman of the Board and directors of the Metropolitan Water Board planting a tree to commemorate the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 outside the Research Laboratory Building
(Courtesy ©Thames Water Archive)





37. The Rose Garden and fountain, with the Lab building to the rear, 2019
(Photograph the author)

38. The revetment of the Inner Pond, visible from the Rose Garden, 2019.
Constructed in 1613 it was relined in *c.*1850; the Devil's Conduit can be seen in the centre
(Photograph the author)

provide green interest. Public access to the garden is on alternate Sundays, although rarely taken up.

The revetments to the Inner Pond surrounding the Headquarters building are Grade II listed and are visible from the garden, as is the curious *Devil's Conduit (fig. 38)*. This conduit served originally as an extension to the White Conduit, which supplied piped water to the Greyfriars Monastery (later Christ's Hospital, on Newgate Street).[20] It was discovered in the garden of No. 20 Queen Square, dismantled at the expense of the Duke of Bedford, and re-erected here in 1927, a Mr F.L. Dove lending the Board one of his stonemasons to restore and repair the mediaeval stonework.[21]

The Nautilus Garden

The Nautilus Building apartments designed by Nicholson GDA architects, were built in 2001 on land formerly occupied by various structures related to the waterworks, and now have a garden for the benefit of the new development. It is built over the central outer pond or filter bed and is managed separately from the other two gardens. This garden has a small circular ornamental pond and fountain, a wisteria-clad wooden pergola for shade, and densely planted flower beds, with roses and lavender. Paths are of gravel between curved areas of lawn.

The southern edge of the garden follows the curve of the Inner Pond revetments to the rear of the Headquarters building. A public viewing platform to the north, accessed from Myddelton Passage, was a requirement of planning permission, with display panels charting the history of the site. This is accessed through iron gates but is usually padlocked in contravention of the Islington Section 106 planning condition, due to ongoing misuse by drug addicts.

Myddelton Passage forms a boundary wall along the northern edge of the former filter beds and has interesting historic graffiti incised by bored policemen patrolling the area *circa* 1806. The numbers and letters are said to relate to the collar numbers of policemen and the local police station, G Division. The origins of this custom remain obscure.[22]

The Elevated Deck Garden

When Thames Water sold the site to Berkeley Manhattan in 1996, this, the largest of the defunct filter beds, had been used by Thames Water employees as a car park *(fig. 39)*. As parking spaces were still considered a desirable asset in the late 1990s, the developer erected a substantial concrete deck over the designated spaces and laid turf and some minimal planting over a four-inch layer of subsoil, with the intention of developing on this area in the future. A planning application to build further flats in 1998 was turned down by Islington Council's Planning Department, citing loss of amenity space, loss of the visible openness of the outer pond and its listed revetments, and obscuring of the Strategic Viewing Corridor of St Paul's Cathedral from Amwell Street.

This garden has been maintained to a high level over twenty-three years, mostly by garden contractor Alfie Bines, and has become mature and densely planted under the supervision of a director of the New River Head Right To Manage (RTM) committee. Areas for sitting at communal tables are provided, and a barbeque made available for tenants *(fig. 40)*. A secluded arbour with seating is surrounded by large pots of flowers grown for scent and areas of lightly cultivated coppice and wildflowers are left undisturbed for wildlife. Large custom wood planters hold mature trees, and a policy of bee-friendly planting is in place, as is a limited use of chemicals. Despite the garden being on the substantial concrete roof of the car park, the large area of lawn is thriving, as are the plants. A hose pipe ban in 2012, ironically imposed by Thames Water, caused the grass to die, and lawn and planting had to be replaced. The lawn was re-sown with drought tolerant Oasis grass seed.[23] The protected Viewing Corridor of St. Paul's from Amwell Street runs

20. N. Pevsner and B. Cherry, *Buildings of England: London 4 North*, (Penguin, London, 1998), p.611.
21. Stringer, *Some Descriptive Notes, op. cit.*, p.52. Established in 1781 Dove Brothers was a prominent Islington building company, sadly closing during the recession in 1993.
22. Philip Temple, ed., *Survey of London: Volume 47, Northern Clerkenwell and Pentonville*, (London: London County Council, 2008) pp.192-216. British History Online. Accessed 5 March 2020. http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol47/pp192-216.1918. The National Archives, WORK 16/26/8.
23. From files held in NRH RTM company office.

diagonally across this garden and it is unlikely that any building will be given planning permission in the future.

Well-documented files kept over twenty-three years by the tenants' RTM company show that *Phytophthera* Fungus affected the whole of the southern bed in 2006, and that timber planters have to be replaced on a regular basis. Foxes and squirrels have colonised the wilder areas adjacent to the revetments and bees are actively encouraged by the selection of any replacement plants. Composting bins are provided for tenants to use and the resulting compost used on flower beds. A plan for the management of the garden is drawn up with a director of the New River Head RTM company and a budget for future expenditure is set. Good records are kept in the building, containing invoices, quotes and notes on planning issues. Planting choices are becoming more adventurous, less municipal and there is colour at all times of the year. So extensive is the lawn that an air ambulance helicopter used it to land, somewhat unexpectedly, following an accident.

Internal Courtyard Garden

A small internal courtyard garden within the Headquarters building forms a light well for the apartments and at present is maintained by garden contractor Alfie Bines. The origins of this space date back to the 1920s when the building was erected, part of the design by Herbert Austen Hall.

Conclusion

From John Gerard foraging for medicinal herbs in the sixteenth century to Sir Hugh Myddelton's commercial venture to bring fresh water into London, through the age of pleasure gardens and tea houses, Plague and Cholera, to a convenient helipad in the twenty-first century, New River Head has remained a significant, if unusual, landscape. Lottery funding enabled the route of the New River from Hertfordshire to be restored and it is now a valued amenity for walkers, a green wildlife corridor, and a linear park from Hertfordshire to Islington.[24]

In September 2013 The Amwell Society celebrated 400 years of the New River on the Deck Garden by enacting, in words and music, the history of this site.[25] Children from the neighbouring Clerkenwell Parochial School (built by William Chadwell Mylne for the New River Company in 1830), sang specially composed songs, with others from the diverse community that surrounds this estate, and a video was recorded. The history of the New River is not only part of the rich heritage of London's infrastructure and engineering past, but also of the pleasure gardens that grew up around the numerous wells on land leased to the Company.

It is fitting in this narrative that Myddelton House, Enfield, named after Sir Hugh, was the home of renowned horticulturalist and plantsman, the late E.A Bowles (1865–1954).[26] The New River cut through the original Enfield garden on its way from Hertfordshire, and the course of this remains in the gardens today. Bowles gave his name to over forty varieties of plant and was a leading figure in the Royal Horticultural Society. It would be a tribute to his work if some of his named varieties were planted in the Deck Garden today.

Now, four hundred years on, a 'speaking' statue of Sir Hugh Myddelton stands forlornly in the foyer of Islington Town Hall, replacing one of another former Clerkenwell resident, Lenin. On Islington Green stands a stone fountain and statue of Sir Hugh, the man who brought potable water to the people of London, surrounded by a small municipal garden, carefully tended by Islington Council. Myddelton's contribution to the social history and landscape of London is not forgotten.

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24. https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/planning/apa-islington/accessed 12 March 2020.

25. *New River Amwell* 2014, https://youtu.be/mZpnTCPT4_Y.

26. Built by Henry Carrington Bowles, last Governor of the New River Company.





39. New River Head, Metropolitan Water Board, photograph, 1973. The western filterbed was used as a car park for MWB employees and is now the site of the Elevated Deck Garden (image © London Metropolitan Archives (City of London))

40. Elevated Deck Garden, 2019
(Photograph the author)