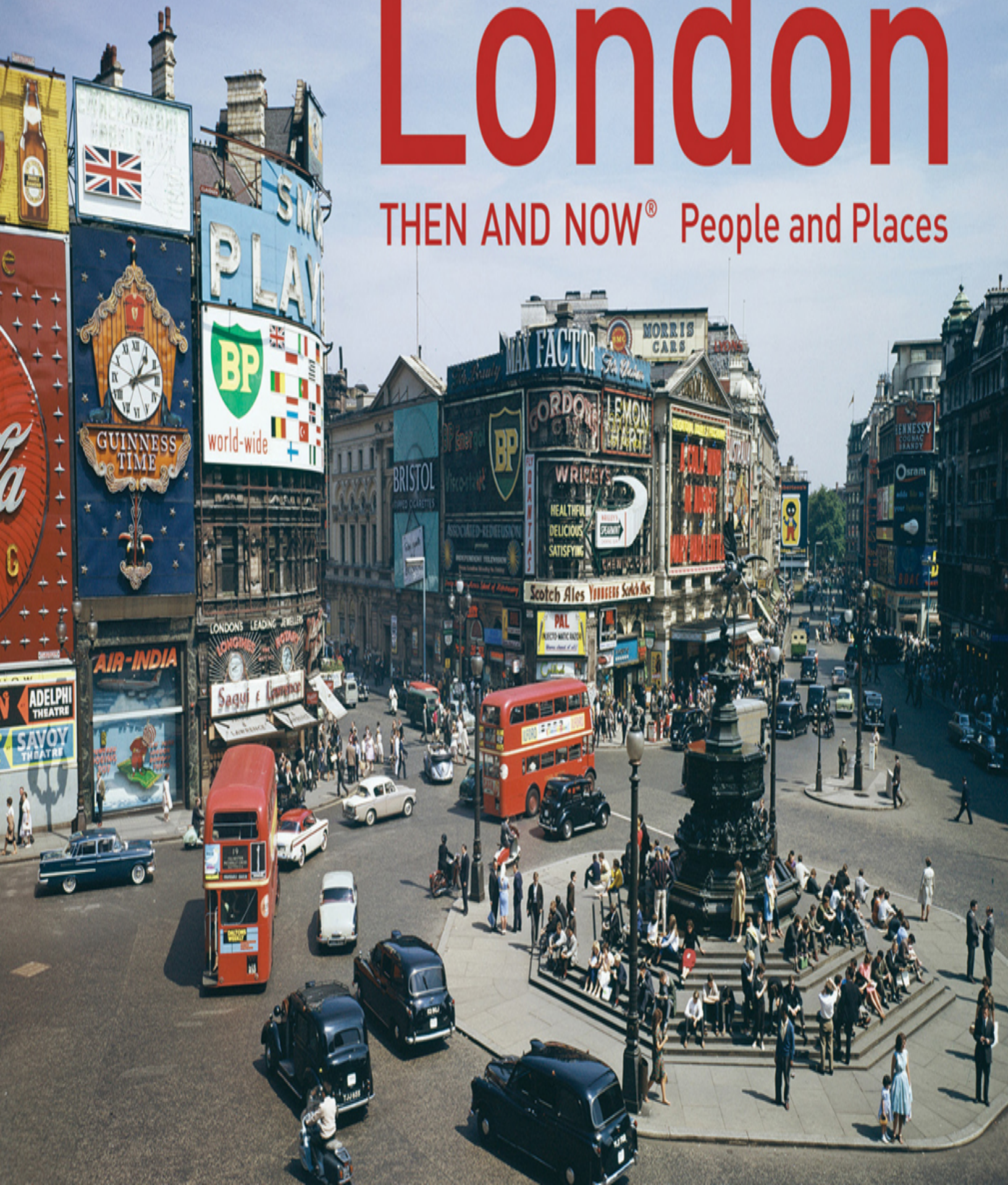


London

THEN AND NOW® People and Places



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Frank Hopkinson and Juliette Boulouis

CONTENTS

Trafalgar Square
Whitehall
Parliament Square
Westminster Bridge
Westminster Pier
Houses of Parliament
Westminster Abbey
Royal Aquarium
Buckingham Palace
Hyde Park Corner
Park Lane
Marble Arch
Oxford Street
Berkeley Square
Grosvenor Square
Shepherd Market
Regent Street
Carnaby Street
Air Street
Piccadilly
Haymarket
Leicester Square
Soho
Charing Cross Road
Covent Garden

Portsmouth Street
Holborn
Fleet Street
St. Paul's Cathedral
Smithfield Market
Barbican
Bank of England
London Bridge
Billingsgate
Hart Street
Tower Bridge
Borough High Street
Cannon Street Station
Blackfriars Bridge
Blackfriars Station
Waterloo Bridge
National Theatre
National Film Theatre
Waterloo Station
Old Vic Theatre
Brixton
Balham
Imperial War Museum
Vauxhall
Lambeth Palace
St. Thomas's Hospital
Southbank
Somerset House
St. Mary-le-Strand 222
Royal Courts of Justice
The Strand

Victoria Embankment 232 Savoy Hotel
Charing Cross Station
St. Martin's Place
Woolwich
Greenwich
Isle of Dogs
Royal Docks
Stratford
Stepney
Bethnal Green
Hoxton
Aldgate
Highgate
Hampstead
Alexandra Palace 282 Lord's Cricket Ground
Madame Tussaud's
Paddington Station
St. Pancras Station
King's Cross Station
University College
Post Office Tower
Bloomsbury
Kensington museums
Knightsbridge
Albert Hall
Hyde Park
Portobello Road
Kensington
Olympia
Earls Court

Victoria
King's Road
Chelsea
Putney
Fulham
Hammersmith
Barnes
Kew Gardens
Richmond-upon-Thames
Kingston-upon-Thames
Hampton Court
Hampton

Introduction

Then and Now books are a fairly straightforward concept: take an interesting vintage photo, go back to the same spot and photograph what is on the site today.

The photographers of the nineteenth century were never that keen on having many people in their photographs. Plate cameras with long exposures would create ghostly images of pedestrians who attempted any kind of movement. Thus many of the early images of London's buildings have very few people in them, with a few spectres lurking at the fringes.

With the increase in film speeds, and hence camera shutter speeds, the ability to catch the population of London going about its business became a much simpler exercise.

In this latest book from the Then and Now series, there has been a concerted effort to get people in the vintage pictures. Occasionally, there are famous faces, such as Rolling Stone Brian Jones leaving the West London Magistrates' Court, as well as anonymous ones, like the porters around Smithfield, Billingsgate and Covent Garden markets. The aim was also to present historic images from many different eras, so a group of punks loitering on the King's Road are not too far away from the preparations for James Abbott McNeill Whistler's funeral in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea.



The west front of Horse Guards Parade, Westminster, c. 1860. A crowd gathers round the Cadiz Memorial, an artillery piece on a pedestal.

The process of photographing the book has brought about many discoveries. The grand Columbia Market building in Bethnal Green was opened in 1869, demolished in the late 1950s, but the original gates (see [here](#)) next to Columbia Market Nursery School are still standing, and the vantage point taken by the Victorian photographer – across the road and on the first floor steps of an imposing Victorian tenement – can still be matched.

The scale of redevelopment of the City of London has been so extensive that any hope of finding the row of shops at

45, 46 and 47 Aldgate High Street appeared pretty slim, but they were still there (see [here](#)); a rare island of Victoriana holding out against the march of concrete, steel and glass.

Many of London's older buildings have been returned to their original guise having spent decades with subsequent additions. King's Cross Station and St. Pancras have had well-publicised rehabilitations, but in the 1960s the view of the Royal Naval College from the Observatory in Greenwich used to look down on allotments, not parkland. Go further back in time and the First World War image of Royal Engineers gives a view similar to today with tended paths and grassland, in the foreground at least. The rising towers of Canary Wharf beyond show the seismic change that has taken place in the Isle of Dogs.

Assembling the book involved a certain amount of detective work, too. There was an intriguing black and white news photo from 1913 of a smouldering Kew Gardens teahouse 'burned down by suffragettes'. Where was this Edwardian purveyor of Darjeeling and Lapsang souchong exactly? The photo, as you can see on [here](#), has a big clue: the position of the eighteenth-century Pagoda along with what looks like a cedar tree to its right. When there is major building work, although grand former structures will get razed entirely, often the road infrastructure around them remains the same. New buildings more often than not are put on the footprint of the old, just as properties in the city were rapidly rebuilt after the Great Fire to avoid the changes sought by Christopher Wren's new plan for London. The Pavilion Restaurant at Kew is built exactly where the old immolated teahouse stood. To the right of the Pagoda there

is a cedar tree which, very satisfyingly for the amateur sleuth, looks 100 years older.

As in many of the images, tree growth is a major obstacle to recreating the exact angle that the old photographer chose. London today is a much greener city than it was in the past and with photos such as the West Ham Technical Institute image on [here](#), a degree of creative licence was used. There would be no problem recreating the exact angle from the junction of Romford Road and Vicarage Lane, but the image would be very leafy. There has also been a prodigious expansion of road furniture and signage, the movement of statues and, occasionally, the destruction of whole blocks of buildings. All of this has happened in Piccadilly Circus. The view on [here](#) shows that the original Piccadilly Circus was formed by the junction of Piccadilly and Lower Regent Street, right outside Lillywhites. In 1885 a whole block of buildings was removed to create the space now occupied by the statue of Eros, which itself has changed positions since its unveiling.

In compiling the photos for this book, we have tried to avoid sites that have been bulldozed out of existence, with no point of reference to the original photo. The National Film Theatre (left) built on the Southbank for the Festival of Britain was an image that ultimately proved impossible to match up. It can be seen at the top left of the aerial photo on [here](#) and was demolished to make way for the Shell Centre. The turreted Victorian building to the left of this 1957 image still stands on the corner of Stamford Street, but there is now an office-block-turned-apartment-block where the photo would be taken from; just one of the many

challenges for the Then and Now photographer attempting to link past with present.



Nelson's Column, Trafalgar Square, 1908





Trafalgar Square, 1960





Trafalgar Square, 1960





Trafalgar Square looking towards Whitehall, 1948





Whitehall, 1901





Horse Guards Parade, Whitehall, c. 1895

