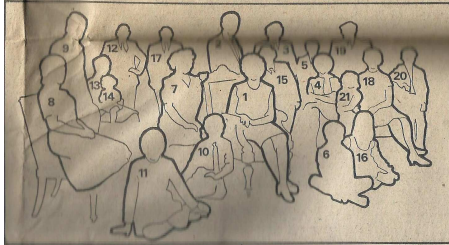


# A family gathering to mark Royal Silver Wedding



PICTURE: PATRICK LICHFIELD

In this picture taken specially to mark their Silver Wedding on Nov. 20, the Queen and Prince Philip are joined in the White Drawing Room at Windsor Castle by other members of the Royal Family.



1. The Queen, 2. Prince Philip, 3. The Prince of Wales, 4. Princess Anne, 5. Prince Andrew, 6. Prince Edward, 7. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, 8. Princess Margaret, 9. The Earl of Snowdon, 10. Viscount Linley, 11. Lady Sarah Armstrong-Jones, 12. The Duke of Kent, 13. The Duchess of Kent, 14. Lord Nicholas Windsor, 15. The Earl of St Andrews, 16. Lady Helen Windsor, 17. Prince Michael of Kent, 18. Princess Alexandra, 19. Mr Angus Ogilvy, 20. James Ogilvy, 21. Marina Ogilvy.

ON  
WEATHER  
...FORCE



● Enjoying the tranquillity of Balmoral during a break from Royal engagements.

# THIS MAN STRIDE

◊ He's always so pleased if the greengrocer or the ladies of the launderette have liked *The Main Chance* ◊

by EDMUND WARD



THREE THINGS surround us all our lives — air, buildings, and the law. But buildings are torn down or replaced, the air grows fresher or fouler. And the law changes in the same way.

This is why *The Main Chance* on Friday, is a new series. A lot of the rules have changed and David Main is adapting them, using them, sometimes skating round them to solve the problems his customers push across the expensive desk. They could be your problems.

Since 1972, when Main was last seen using wits, energy and dedication on them, the solutions have changed—with more trouble for solicitors to face.

Drive a car? Like a drink? There have been some very neat points of law on breathalysers lately.

Live in a furnished room? Or have one to let? There's now usually security of tenure for furnished rooms. Problems both ways if you either want to move yourself or shift a tenant.

Find your corner grocer a bit edgy? It's because he spends his evenings filling in V.A.T. forms and is likely to snarl at you: "We used to be a nation of shopkeepers. Now we're a nation of tax-collectors."

If all this sounds a bit political, it is. Parliament—your elected representatives—*makes* the law. And even Parliament—like you—is surrounded by the law. The British Government recently suffered its first defeat at the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Because a prison inmate who wanted to sue a prison officer for damages was

David Main—the part for which *TVTimes* readers voted him top TV personality in 1970. He is about eight pounds lighter, still lives in Battersea. "So I can see the trees and run two miles a day in the park without being mistaken for an escaping burglar. Not good for the Main image, that."

The physical fitness is professional. A part like that of David Main makes great demands on stamina as well as artistic creativity "Besides," Stride says, "it was always good enough for Olivier and he taught me my trade—or as much of it as I can claim to know."

The trade began for him with a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. After that, National Service and some hesitation about an acting career. Then plays with Peggy Ashcroft, and most of the other great names, Romeo in Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*, then five years at the National Theatre under Olivier, playing the leading modern and classical roles.

Stride's National Theatre experience was, incidentally, of great benefit to me. When the series first started, I had a theatre-going secretary. She learned I was about to work with Stride, gasped "I'd queue standing on broken glass to see him", doubled her efficiency and after that it was no trouble to get typing done on Sundays.

Stride still has the theatrical approach to television. This means an unselfishness, an unstarlike consideration and co-operation which is the vital factor in welding together a cast of actors and actresses into a company which produces a level of ensemble playing like a good orchestra. According to Stride:

ON McFARLANE



Strong rapport on screen and off... John Stride with fellow-performer Margaret Ashcroft

get stuck into the job and act."

Two examples. Stride has one of the smallest dressing-rooms in the long corridor of them at the Leeds studios. "What the hell, the shower works and it's nearest the exit if ever there's a fire." Second, any new actor nervous about his 10-line part will be found near Stride on the studio floor. I've seen Stride coach an actor seconds before stepping in front of camera to be word, gesture, and expression-perfect in his own four-page speech.

Preparation is all. Stride arrives at the rehearsal rooms over a taxi garage near the Oval very well-prepared indeed. A lot of this is due to his wife, actress April Wilding, who helps Stride go over scripts with a fine-tooth comb and whose comments are shrewd, and invariably constructive. "Do you think Edmund wants to be specific about which Peasants' Revolt you're talking about? It'll make a difference to that Magna Carta reference earlier."

In Leeds, before recording an episode, Stride turns into an amiable monk. In the dressing-room, there is a drinks tray—again the theatrical tradition and one I have occasional cause to be grateful for—but Stride sips Perrier water. There is a choice of four-star hotels but Stride stays in an anonymous flat, and is fast asleep by 9.30 after his chicken salad on the night before recording.

It should, however, be said firmly that Stride puts the same amount of dedication into relaxing.

After a series, he does a disappearing act with April, usually towards a beach with guaranteed sunshine and handy for a variety of Michelin-starred restaurants. "The way I'm collapsed on that beach, kid, even the jellyfish are jealous. April, peel me a grape."

While you're watching the series, John Stride will probably be bicycling round Battersea. He's a shade secretive about this, claims he hates to see his own performances. April, as usual, is probably right when she says: "He prefers to get other people's opinions of his work. But he's always very pleased if our greengrocer or the ladies in the launderette have liked it."

Stride is a private man, concealing shyness with an extrovert charm. But he's also capable of turning out in crowds and rain for a charity walk. Which cost me £5 at 25p a mile and Stride a blistered Sunday when he was supposed to be resting in the middle of a hard schedule.

In his complexity, Stride finds the attributes in himself which make for his impeccable playing of David Main. The research, the preparation—"nothing beats homework"—

the energy, the refusal to suffer fools or time-servers gladly (where his language can be emphatically non-legal) the same ambition to be good at his job. Acting.

In *The Main Chance*, Stride is surrounded by a cast which shares his views—without pomposity and with a lot of private humour. Stride shouting at John Wentworth, gowned as a Recorder for his Henry Castleton part: "Tell the Judge to get his frock on straight or I'll get Danny La Rue to give him lessons."

Margaret Ashcroft, playing Henry's daughter, and bringing to the part her own deeply-felt social convictions, telling Stride and Wentworth in a coffee-break ad-lib: "I may be only the junior partner in this practice, gentlemen, but you still owe me 60p for sandwiches."

Glynn Edwards playing Walter Clegg, the ex-policeman turned solicitor's legman, stands next to John Wentworth. Wentworth, dapper, white-haired, patrician, a Roman pro-consul, pillar of the law. Glynn—boating enthusiast—in his barnacle-scraping gear. Wentworth: "If you appeared before me in court in that nautical dustman's outfit, Glynn, I'd have no hesitation in giving you six months." Edwards: "Wish you would. I'd get David Main to appeal, sue you for false arrest, make a packet." They go on to talk about pub music halls, another of Glynn's passions—his wife is a star performer in one.

John Batt looms in—legal consultant to the series, co-creator, writer of four of the episodes. "Didn't have time to read Ray's script again on the plane back from Amsterdam but I'll bring the point up with learned counsel this afternoon." He means it and the counsel will be a QC.

Batt solves problems for each script which would cost hundreds of guineas for a customer in real life. I told him this once. He said: "I don't see the difference. A character in a script is a customer in real life. He or she must be treated as such. There is no such thing as fictional legal advice. Either get it right, leave it alone or obtain an authoritative second opinion."

There is a meeting with Ray Jenkins—who wrote three episodes—out of breath from a meeting of the Executive Council of the Writers Guild. Sensitive writer, adept at peeling the thin onion skins of ordinary emotion and feeling and the sort of scrum-half who would break both your shin-bones in the first tackle. "Don't see it, John," he says. "The law's wrong." John Batt thinks, quotes David Main. "It often is."

# Excavation of Roman city to take 100yrs

By Our Environment  
Correspondent

**I**F the hopes of archaeologists are realised the entire remains of the Roman city of Uriconium at Wroxeter, Shropshire, will be excavated and put on permanent view.

But Mr Philip Barker who, with his Birmingham University colleague Dr Graham Webster, has been organising "digs" in the central part of the 204-acre area during the past 10 years, said last night that the task was so great "I cannot visualise it being completed in less than a century."

The site, as reported in *The Daily Telegraph* yesterday, has been bought by the Environment Department from Lord Barnard, 49, its owner, for an undisclosed sum. Most of it is covered by ploughland and pasture, though a massive wall of the baths is a dominating feature.

## Whitehall decision

Mr Barker, Senior Lecturer in Archaeology in the university's extra mural department, emphasised that while an excavation programme arranged for this year would go ahead, long-term plans for continued work would have to be decided by Whitehall.

"As archaeologists we are, of course, hoping that even if it is not in our lifetimes, people will again be able to walk through the streets of Uriconium, or what remains of them, just as they can, for instance, in Pompeii," he said.

"Because it has not been much affected by agriculture or urban development, it is by far the largest Roman site surviving in Britain."

Dr Webster, Reader in Romano-British Archaeology, said he would like to see a small amount of money set aside by the Government annually to finance the excavations on a gradual basis.

He felt priority should be given to the re-excavation of the forum, which was extensively exposed in the 1930's, and also to bringing the adjoining basilica fully to light.

On Tuesday, November 30, 1936, the 80-years-old Crystal Palace was destroyed by fire. Sir Winston Churchill, on his way home to Westerham, stopped to watch it burning. "It is the end of an era," he said. In a series of four articles Peter Smith describes that fateful night.

# The death of the Crystal Palace

IT was just after 7 pm when Crystal Palace Staff Fireman William Ferguson started his rounds on that cold and fateful night in the November of 1936.

It was cold even inside the great glass building, and he shivered slightly as he began his measured tour of inspection. He could hear the wind outside as it whipped up its strength along the wide and straight length of the Parade. When the wind blew here it blew hard, for Sydenham Hill was the second highest point in London and a landmark for miles around.

He passed through the north side of the Palace and along the nave. Long before his time there had been a transept here, created for the tropical plant displays and monkey house, but it had been destroyed by fire in 1867 along with an unfortunate chimpanzee who could not be released from his cage in time.

Luckily the wind had been blowing the flames away from the rest of the building and the Crystal Palace had been saved for the continued—as the Illustrated London News put it—"gratification and social improvement of the people".

As he walked through the semi-gloom of the central transept—sometimes known as the Great Transept—with its vast canopy of glass and iron stretching more than 170 feet above his head he could hear a small group of musicians rehearsing quietly in the concert room nearby.

There were about 20 of them in all, both men and women. They were all members of a Beckenham orchestra who practised at the Palace nearly every week.

He moved slowly along the 187 feet of the main building, past the huge plaster statues which gazed out impassively on the impressive expanse of the gallery and exhibition area, checking the fire points with a precise and methodical care. Past the famous organ, which figured so prominently at the Christmas concerts, and down towards the south transept where the Baird Television Company had its laboratories.

It was about 7.30 and Ferguson was approaching the general offices beside the main entrance. During the first half of the Crystal Palace's life an average of 2,000,000 people had passed through every year, and two new railway stations were built nearby to deal with the visitors.

After the 1914-18 war its popularity had waned and the great Victorian enterprise

began to fade into sad decline. But under the managership of the dynamic, adventurous and devoted Sir Henry Buckland the crowds were coming back.

His task was a mammoth one, which required new ideas. Built at a cost of nearly £1½ million, the Crystal Palace had never been a going concern.

Ten minutes later Ferguson had passed the ladies' room at the rear of the offices and was just walking towards the south nave when he noticed a dim red glow inside. He went back to investigate and found flames growing steadily along one wall. Stunned, he ran for help, but already the fire had gained a hold on the dry wooden floorboards and, even as he sounded the alarm, it was spreading with frightening speed toward the centre of the Palace.

Sir Henry, who lived on the premises, was just leaving his house to post a letter with his daughter. Crystal—named after the building—when he was stopped by shouts from the central transept. He told his daughter to go home and then made his way towards the noise.

Ferguson had by this time returned to the blaze with Fireman Clarke and several workmen, but realised with a sick horror that already the fire was almost out of control.

"At that time the north end of the rest room was well alight," he told Pc Parkin, the first policeman on the scene, later.

"With Staff Fireman Clarke I got a hose to bear on it. Realising it was too big for us I got on to the telephone exchange at about 7.50 pm and asked the girl to call the fire brigade. Then Clarke and I continued to play water on the fire until forced to leave by galleries falling. I have no idea what caused it."

Sir Henry arrived, followed by the musicians aroused from their rehearsals by the commotion. He assured them there was no danger. It was only some five minutes later that they were told to evacuate the building before the fire overtook them.

One of the members of the orchestra, Mr W. H. Honnor, recalls the moment graphically. "We were hardly able to get out. One of the women members went out to see if her car was safe. She returned to say that the Palace was well ablaze above the central transept.

"As I was getting out on to the parade the front of the transept fell right out on to the road in one great mass."

The flames had by now driven back Ferguson and Clarke and were reaching toward the wooden orchestra platform,

racing up to the galleries and spreading along the floor.

Unlike the fire in 1867 the wind was blowing back along the building from the north-west. This, together with the shape of the Palace itself, created a wind tunnel effect fanning the first few embryonic flames high into the night. Within ten terrifying minutes the blaze had engulfed the concert room and had swept down the nave and into the south transept.

Pc Parkin's beat had taken him past the front of the building and he had watched in awe the sudden, almost explosive first moments of the fire. He helped several struggling musicians get clear and then raced for the telephone hearing as he did so the glass smashing like rifle shots inside the Palace.

At 7.45 he called Penge Fire Brigade and was joined five minutes later by Inspector Hussey and Pc Woollard from the nearby Gipsy Hill police station.

All attempts at fighting the blaze from the inside had by now virtually ceased, for nearly all of the central transept was well alight and whole sections of glass were being blown on to the Parade by the tremendous waves of heat.

Pc Parkin had broken into the car park near the main entrance and, despite falling glass and intense heat, he managed to push clear five cars by smashing their side windows and releasing their handbrakes, before being forced back by the flames.

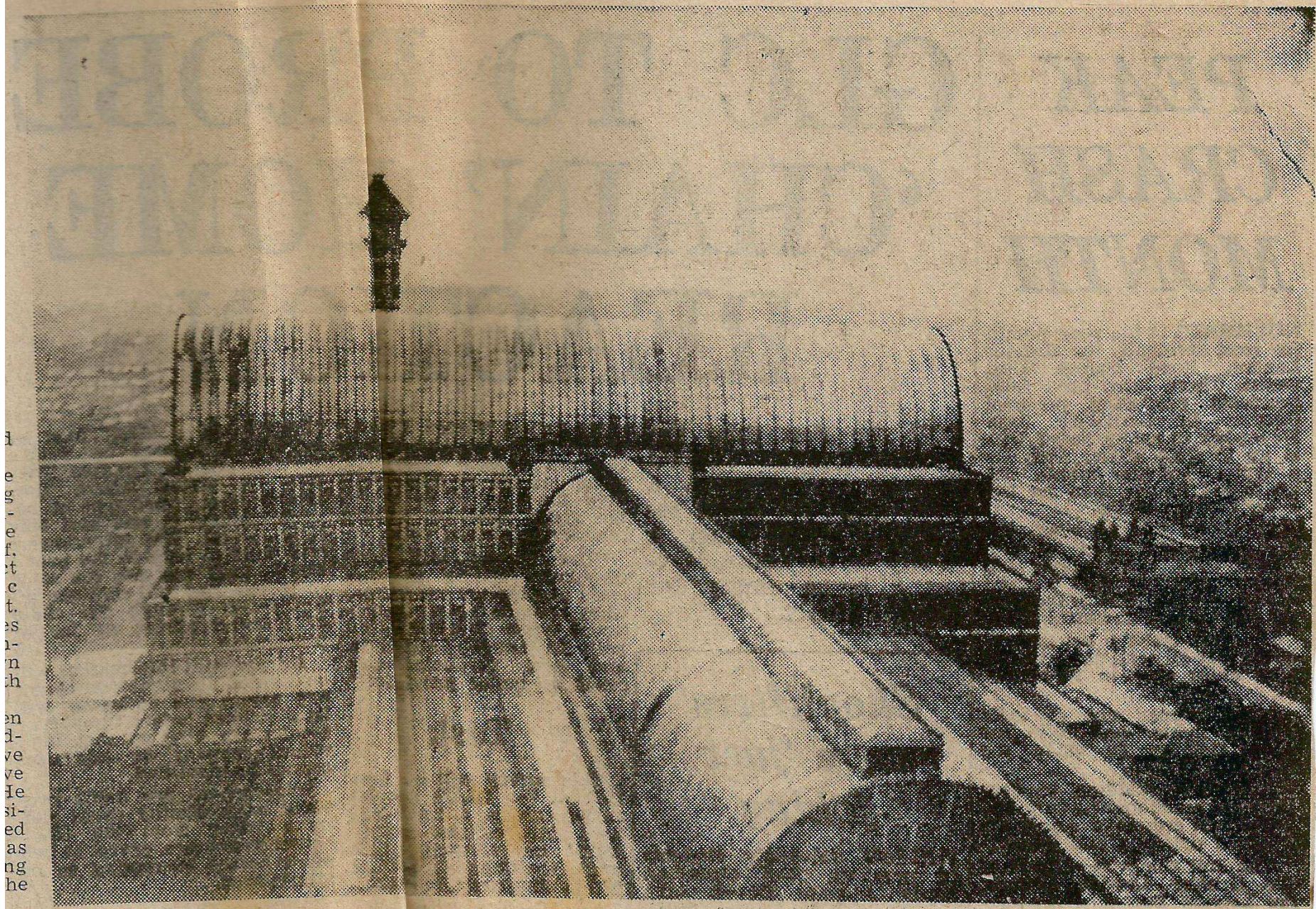
This incident was mentioned in the official police report on the fire by Inspector Hussey who wrote—"Pc's truncheon damaged by this action (scratched) and this will be dealt with separately."

The local telephone exchange were having their switchboards jammed by frantic calls from the public warning of the blaze. By the time the first firemen arrived at 8.03 the fire, caught on the wind as it raced through the shattered glass of the main building, had reached 300 feet into the air.

Their task was clearly hopeless from the start and already merely one of containment, for within half an hour of the fire's discovery the Palace was ablaze almost from end to end.

It was Monday, November 30, and the last moments of the Crystal Palace, for 85 years an international landmark and bold assertion of Britain's greatness, were to be seen from as far away as Margate. It was to be the biggest fire seen in London before the blitz, and a disaster which was to provoke argument and controversy for years to come.

[To be continued]



A view of the central transept.

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# The death of the Crystal Palace

SIR Henry Buckland, his clothes stained and torn, told his story to huddles of newsmen. He was almost incoherent with grief and tears ran down his face. For 22 years he had managed the Palace and as he witnessed its rapid destruction he said:

"Had this happened tomorrow the consequences would have been even worse, as the cat show was booked for December 1, and there would have been hundreds of exhibits in the building.

"I cannot think how the fire started but I am afraid the

## Concluding Peter Smith's story of the destruction of a landmark.

poor old Palace can never be replaced."

Driving slowly through the backstreets of Norwood, Mr Alan Warwick viewed the blaze from several aspects.

"As I sat there I wondered how it could have happened. It was thought later that dust and rubbish beneath the floorboards could have caused it, and that a cigarette end smouldering in the rubbish produced a sort of explosive effect. I think the thing that struck me most, and indeed everyone I have talked to since, was the dreadful speed with which the Palace was engulfed."

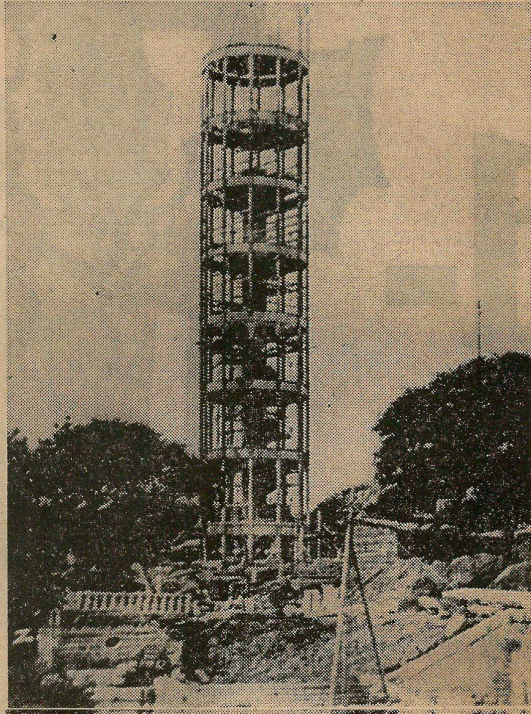
Some theories later suggested that the fire was deliberately started by an agent of the Government who feared the massive glass structure might help to direct enemy bombers over the capital.

Mr Kenneth Kiss, who lived in Norwood for many years and is currently researching for a book about the Crystal Palace, agrees with Mr Warwick that rubbish beneath the building could have been responsible for the suddenness of the blaze.

"There was plenty of air space beneath the floorboards, the wood was dry and the dust and litter under the Crystal Palace was years old. It was an obvious fire risk. The two previous fires at the Palace (there was a fire in 1920 which destroyed the Crystal Palace Theatre) must have given sufficient warning to the owners that the building was made of beautifully combustible material.

"A large proportion of the blame therefore must be put at the door of the Crystal Palace Company and its shareholders."

At about 10.30 the central transept collapsed with a tremendous roar. The crash could be heard five miles away. Molten glass and embers flew high into the air and the ground shook as huge sections



of the iron framework folded slowly in on itself like a pack of cards.

"We saw the great central arch crash slowly and with finality into the great roaring embers," Gordon Warren recalls. "The heat was intense, the reflected glow of the flames on the Anerley Hill tower (the South tower) added to a sense of awe-inspiring destruction."

Mr Warwick watched the savage spout of fire as the middle of the building collapsed, from a hill a mile away.

"It was the end. The end of the Crystal Palace and the end of an era.

"I can remember standing there with a feeling of an incredible sense of loss as part of my life fell in ruins. Some people, I know, thought the building vulgar but to me it was grand; immensely so. An impressive place of my youth. Now it was no more."

Mr Herbert Maur, staff photographer of the Daily Mail, was flying over the scene at that point and looking down, recalls, "From the million lights of London rose a distant raging inferno. As we approached it became a lake of fire."

The police cordon was broken in several places as the crowd surged closer to watch the final moments of the Palace. The police were booed and jeered as they tried to regain control and several arrests were made when onlookers refused to give ground.

Through the smoke and flames colourful tropical birds from the Crystal Palace aviary could be seen scattering into the night, and an aeroplane, swooping low over the blaze, was caught in the fierce updraught of the fire and was seen plunging down towards the roof tops before, with a sudden surge of power, it managed to regain height.

Deep wedges were cut into the crowd as terrified spectators fell back screaming from rivulets of molten glass which flowed down past the twisted coils of hose pipes from the collapsed central transept, and a loudspeaker van nudged its way through the tight knots of onlookers urging them to go home.

The fire was now visible over the fire was now visible over the eight counties and MPs half-way through a debate at the House of Commons crowded the committee rooms and terraces to watch.

Most of the 700 employees at the Palace were among those on Sydenham Hill and some of the women were seen falling on their knees and weeping.

11.00 flames leapt to the south tower. Water was poured on them and after half an hour they were put out.

By midnight all that was left was the luminous skeleton of the north nave and the two towers, standing starkly and strangely lost in the glow from the burning wreckage.

The Duke of Kent arrived in his car after driving from the West End and in evening dress and white silk scarf, he chatted with the exhausted firemen as they relaxed briefly at a coffee stall.

By this time the police were at the Crystal Palace in force. More than 550 constables, with 62 sergeants, 21 inspectors, seven sub-divisional inspectors, two chief inspectors and two superintendents helped master a situation which could so easily have turned into chaos.

To have controlled a crowd so large without anyone suffering serious injury was a magnificent tribute to their courage and skill.

The flames had now died for there was little for them left to feed on. Many of the firemen and policemen, who nearly all had been at the fire from the start, were dismissed. Some remained to watch the crackling embers until the morning.

Lewis Ball and his wife surveyed the red hot wreckage from the window of their home until the early morning. More than 500 tons of glass lay in molten pools between the huge grotesquely shaped twisted spirals of nearly 10,000 tons of iron. It was to smoulder for days.

By 3.00 on Tuesday morning it was all over. About 500 people still remained of the crowd, unwilling to leave; mesmerised by the scene of devastation.

Mr Warwick returned briefly to the smoking ruins before going home. "I knew then the extent of what we had lost. My childhood memories came flooding back. The wreckage looked so pathetic somehow."

Sir Henry Buckland stayed until the very end. The 60-year-old manager stood disconsolate and forlorn before what remained of the Palace.

"Tonight, in a few hours, we have seen the end of the Crystal Palace, yet it will live in the memories of not only Englishmen but the whole world," he said.

The crowd had begun to dwindle as the heat of the fire subsided and the cold November wind shrunk the remaining few onlookers into their overcoats. There was no



# A social history of Norwood

IT WAS the night of November 30, 1936, and the fearful blaze glowing at the top of Sydenham Hill drew hundreds to the fiery hilltop to witness the destruction of the Crystal Palace. It was the end of an era, the end of a grand story, but to one man in that silent jostling crowd it was the beginning of another.

That man was Alan Warwick, and from the ashes of that great disaster a book was born—"The Phoenix Suburb," a social history of Norwood from its earliest beginnings to the present day.

His researches began as a hobby, grew into a wealth of detailed information—a pool of knowledge into which many dipped—and developed finally, and fortunately, into a book.

It is a labour of love, long awaited by local people, and is assured of an immediate, if limited success.

As a resident of Norwood all his life, Mr Warwick retains clear and colour-

ful images of his early years in the area. These images are brought into sharp focus in his book and help provide a fine balance between the more factual accounts of the building of the Crystal Palace and the development of the canal and railway.

The book traces the beginnings of the suburb from the early days when it stood huddled in the shadow of the great trees of the North Wood, then to the makings of the village with its colourful collection of gipsies, charcoal burners and farmers. It details the building of the Palace and its eventual destruction, followed by the sad, slow decline of the area to its present-day stagnation caught in the limbo between progress and the past.

It is very much a history of people, both ordinary and distinguished, infamous and famous. Mr Warwick gives us a unique taste of the times through the eyes of those who lived in them.

## Detail

He has injected flesh and blood into his story of Norwood, mapping out its development with an awesome eye for detail but never letting the facts and figures become turgid or unwieldy. His sense of fun and his ready appreciation of the absurd, romantic and comic keep the account fresh and readable.

Mr Warwick shows us the route taken by the canal which meandered from Croydon and through the woods of Norwood, attracting angler and picnicker alike. He tells us of the atmospheric railway sliding its silent way on a cushion of air before the advent of steam.

The story of the Beulah Spa makes for fascinating reading. He paints a wonderful picture of the time, using newspaper accounts and the descriptions of those who spent long summer afternoons there drinking the healthy water and enjoying the company of the famous and fashionable.

We hear the scandal which rocked the village when Norwood's parish church overloaded its graveyard with corpses, and how people feared and respected the gipsies that lived in the woods nearby.

And then came the Crystal Palace and it was as though the world had suddenly dropped from the sky. The small town, the retreat of the famous and influential, almost over night began to flourish. This great building of glass was acclaimed as the eighth wonder of the world and everyone flocked to see it.

Mr Warwick describes the visit of young Queen Victoria when it was opened to the public in 1854 . . .

"As a spectacle and pageant, the opening ceremony was more imposing than that of the Great Exhibition of 1851. There were Indian princes in white jewelled turbans and robes of gold and silver. There were the uniforms of Field M.

Generals and Admirals, while Coldstream Guards and the Honorable Artillery Company surrounded the dais."

All was pomp and circumstance, colour and glitter. The famous concerts, the balloon ascents and pageantry and passions. Typically, the author relates a touching love story which flowered in the beautiful gardens of the Palace. The blend of the significant and insignificant, grand and parochial is most effective.

## Disaster

And then came disaster. In one tragic night Norwood's finest jewel was snatched from the hilltop, leaving its scar till this day.

"Those desolate empty spaces on either side of the fine roadway are as accusing as a deserted concentration camp," writes Mr Warwick. "In the mind's eye one can still see the shadowy forms of the two lost buildings which once graced them and gave the Parade meaning."

The book ends on a hopeful note. Fears that the Triangle in Upper Norwood would disappear to make way for development seem now to have finally abated. Much of the suburb has been preserved and will continue to be preserved with the help of such organisations as the Norwood Society and the Crystal Palace Triangle Community Association.

Speaking at the recent launching party for his book, Mr Warwick admitted that some of his research had had to be condensed or left out because of lack of space. He said he considered it impertinent for anyone to attempt to write a history of the area in which he lives.

But if this be the case many people in Norwood will think themselves fortunate indeed for this superb and authoritative piece of impertinence.

"The Phoenix Suburb" is published by The Blue Boar Press, 26 Marksbury-avenue, Richmond, Surrey, at £2.85. —P.S.

# The death of the Crystal Palace

WINSTON CHURCHILL, returning to Downing Street for a meeting from his home at Chartwell, was said to have watched the end of the Crystal Palace standing by his car in his famous slippers and declaring as he scrooped toward the towering flames—"It is the end of an era."

But no one knew the truth of those words better than the thousands of shocked onlookers who converged, silent and awe-struck, upon the fierce blaze throughout that long and tragic night.

Almost within the shadow of the Palace 27-years-old Lewis Ball had been putting the final touches to his new home. Married only two days before, he and his bride were anxious to begin their honeymoon while their honeymoon lasted.

It was just after 7.30 when he left his flat to return a painter's plank he had borrowed from one of his friends. As he reached the top of his road and turned right towards the Parade he looked up and followed the dark and familiar lines of the huge glass structure which loomed up before him.

All of his youth had been spent in and around the great building. His father had been a fireman there after being invalided out of the London Fire Brigade after the first world war and Lewis remembered taking his lunch up to him while he had been on duty.

As a boy he would walk the rounds with him, watching as he tested the pumps in the famous indoor fountains where the goldfish swam. It was a long job for there were 50 hose points in the building (each could develop 100 pounds per square inch) to check.

Sadly the old Palace had fallen on hard times and the glorious extravaganzas of the Victorian days were no more. But there was plenty still mas coming with its circus, concerts and shows, it would be like old times again.

He looked towards the central transept, then slowed almost to a stop. There was a fearful red glow inside the glass. For a moment it looked like one of the Brock fireworks displays, which frequently attracted large crowds to the Crystal Palace. But as he walked nearer he saw flames leaping up within the lowering glass arches and figures running along the Parade.

"People were streaming towards it from every direction. I just stood there. I just stood there and thought 'My God the building is on fire' and all I could think of was what were we going to do at Christmas."

News of the disaster swept the darkening streets as fast as the fire itself had gripped the Palace, and already its ferocity had lit up a vast area of suburban landscape.

For 17-years-old Gordon Warren that night had begun

much like any other. At Brixton Roller Skating Rink it was hot and dusty with bustling youngsters jostling for space. Suddenly, above the roar of metal on wood could be heard shouts of exclamation and surprise. Gordon stopped someone and listened in disbelief to the news. There was a rush for the doors and within minutes he was astride the back of his friend's motorbike speeding toward the glowing hilltop.

Luckily, knowing a family who lived opposite the Crystal Palace, he managed to by-pass the growing crowds of spectators and, dodging past a police cordon, climbed to the roof of a house.

"The word 'holocaust' springs easily to the lips when re-

**Continuing Peter Smith's story of that fateful night in 1936.**

picturing in one's mind the full horror, the magnificence and the majesty of the fire from this position," he recalls.

Already, buses filled with people drawn by the blaze could be seen trundling hastily through the thick pockets of smoke.

Mr. A. Methingles, manager of the Crystal Palace Hotel, stood in the forecourt of his public house watching the savage spectacle less than 25 yards away.

"It was amazing to see how quickly the flames spread," he remembers. "Within 20 minutes part of the building fell in. It was like a hellish pillar of sparks that went up into the sky. It was a hideous sight."

The first groups of scattered onlookers drew as close as they could to the blaze before the heat and the policemen drove them back. The cold wind protected many from the searing heat which by now could be seen glowing white hot along the east iron arches of the building.

Beckenham Fire Brigade had arrived and already half of the London fire service was on its way. A hasty conference of senior firemen was called to discuss the situation. Above the roar of the fire policemen called for Gas Board officials in the crowd, and with their help gas points near the Palace were traced and sealed off.

The crowds were beginning to gather in force along the Parade and a growing army of police had difficulty in controlling the converging phalanxes of sightseers which threatened to burst the hastily erected barriers.

Among them was civil servant Mr. Ruben Kefauver, who had just arrived at Herne Hill station after working late at the Board of Trade.

"We were the last bus to get anywhere near the Palace," he remembers. "The police soon cordoned the Palace area and all vehicles were turned back

some distance away. This created an amusing example of a profitable initiative. Spivs appeared from nowhere, and jumping on running boards offered to guide motorists to a place to park. For a mile around the Palace the roads and even gardens of houses were filled with cars as people came from all over Greater London."

Some residents of Upper Norwood near Sydenham Hill had moved furniture into their front gardens should they be asked to evacuate their homes if the fire became uncontrollable.

Mr. Alan Warwick, local historian, author and founder of the Norwood Society, an organisation pledged to better the area's amenities and conserve the best of its past, was returning home from London when he heard news of the disaster on the radio.

He remembers driving at breakneck speed through the busy streets and parking some distance from the crowds. He had lived in Norwood all his life and had no difficulty in selecting the best route to the fire.

"As I walked towards the Parade the whole of the Palace seemed to be incandescent. I managed to get on to the Parade itself, although to this day I don't know how because by that time the police had cordoned off that area. The crowds, like myself, were silent. This awesome scene of destruction had stunned us all and I could only feel shocked and deeply grieved by it."

Author of a recent book on the Crystal Palace, Mr. Patrick Beaver, recalls how he made his way as a young child through the streets on that night.

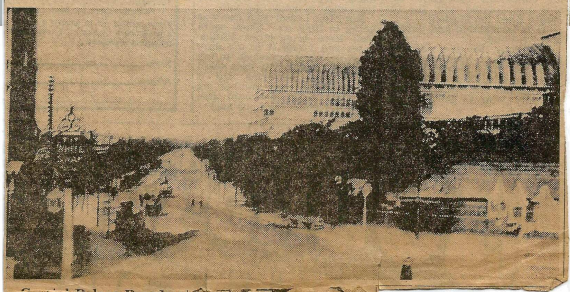
"I was at that time living four miles from the Palace and although far too young to be allowed out alone after dark, I made my way as if mesmerised towards that ever-increasing glow of fire in the sky which I had first seen from the window of my home."

As more and more people flocked toward the blaze the police reported difficulty in forcing a way through for the firemen who were by now arriving at regular intervals.

Inspector Hussey commented later in his report: "While I have not had a complaint I feel that some of the late arrivals of the fire brigade must have experienced some difficulty in getting through. Although every effort is generally made by the public to facilitate the fire brigade."

It was now just over an hour since the fire had begun and it was increasing by every minute in its savagery. To many of those silent onlookers the question which stood most starkly in their minds, and a problem which has since proved difficult to unravel, was how the Palace could burn so fiercely.

(To be continued)



# The death of the Crystal Palace

"The buildings were constructed of glass, iron and wood," observed Mr Kelf-Cohen, who had by now positioned himself at the very limit of the police barrier in front of the central transept. "By 1936 they were all over eighty-years-old. In many cases, as was easily seen, the wood had rotted and iron rusted. Once the flames got hold there was no stopping them. The Palace buildings were a vast mass of inflammable material."

Despite the sheer magnitude of their task the police had to deal with less dramatic problems during that long night.

## Sightseers

Complaints were made by residents living near the Crystal Palace that sightseers anxious for a good view had trampled down flower beds, pulled down paving and even knocked down walls. Many families could only stand by helplessly and watch as huge wedges of excited people filled their gardens and doorways.

Above the roar of the flames could sometimes be heard the faint buzz of aeroplanes chartered by sightseers flying from Croydon airport, circling like moths around a candle, above the blaze.

Captain Van Weyrother, of the KLM (Royal Dutch) airlines, was piloting a charter flight carrying seven English passengers returning from India on that night. As he passed over the coast at Margate he could see the fire clearly lighting up the skyline.

## Clouds red

"I first saw the blaze when my machine was reaching Margate," he told a group of newsmen who met him at Croydon airport when he landed. "The clouds were red. By the time we reached Chatham it was possible to see that it was the Crystal Palace that was on fire."

Most of the fire brigade's efforts were now directed on saving the two 284 feet Brunel towers—each contained 150,000 gallons of water used to drive the fountains in the Crystal Palace gardens—and thus the surrounding property. Many homes lay huddled in the shadow of these monsters and those families who had not already left were told to leave immediately.

Each tower was connected to the main building by a maze of underground ventilation shafts and through these dense clouds of smoke from the blaze poured upward.

"I watched the smoke gushing high into the air from the top of the south tower," said

Mr Warwick. "It was like a huge factory chimney."

He, like many others, was prepared to stay all night at the blaze until the famous building collapsed. There was a strange sense of personal loss among those which watched. Leaving would have seemed a betrayal of an old friendship. The Palace had figured so largely in their lives that it became a sort of duty to remain until the end.

## Confining Peter Smith's story of that fateful night in 1936.

To Gordon Warren and his friends perched high up on a roof it seemed in a way fitting that this grandiose Victorian giant should die spectacularly.

"The poor old Palace, to become as it had done for the past couple of decades a white elephant show-place, had at last come back into the news. "Like a ship that has outlived its usefulness, it was being scuttled in a sea of flames with full burial honours."

The funeral pyre was indeed an awesome sight. Like a fallen star it lit up the hill on which it stood for miles around and

main building. Some of them were perched high above the ground directing water down into the flames from turntable ladders.

Wedged in the crowd, young Patrick Beaver's impressions of the fire must have etched themselves deeply on his mind. "The familiar iron arches were silhouetted against the roaring inferno like the bars of a huge furnace and it was obvious, even to me that the brass-crested firemen dwarfed against a backcloth of flaming fabric, were fighting a losing battle."

## 100,000 crowd

The police now estimated the crowd to be in the region of 100,000 and St John Ambulance cadets moved among the tightly packed onlookers dealing with cases of fainting.

Moment by moment the blaze increased in its intensity. More than 350 firemen with 61 appliances were now converging on the Palace and it was shortly after the last of them arrived that the first, and miraculously the last, serious injury of the night occurred. Fireman Freeborn of Earlsfield was taken to Norwood Cottage Hospital after being caught full in the face by flames from a falling archway. He was treated for burns but was not detained.

Mr Kelf-Cohen watched the flames attack the central transept and recalls: "The firemen struggled desperately but the odds were heavily against them."

"The fire was raging high above them on the Palace buildings, which were themselves the highest part of the ridge. They just could not get sufficient pressure through the hoses to have any effect."

Water was still being poured on to the south tower which at one point seemed in danger of buckling which would have sent a torrent of water down upon the houses below. Mr Kelf-Cohen echoes the thoughts of many in the crowd at the time.

## Helpless

"From the firemen's point of view the situation was maddening. There was a huge mass of water high above them which could have given them all the pressure they required to master the fire. But, of course, no one had ever thought of fixing hydrants to the water pipes in the two towers, so the firemen were helpless."

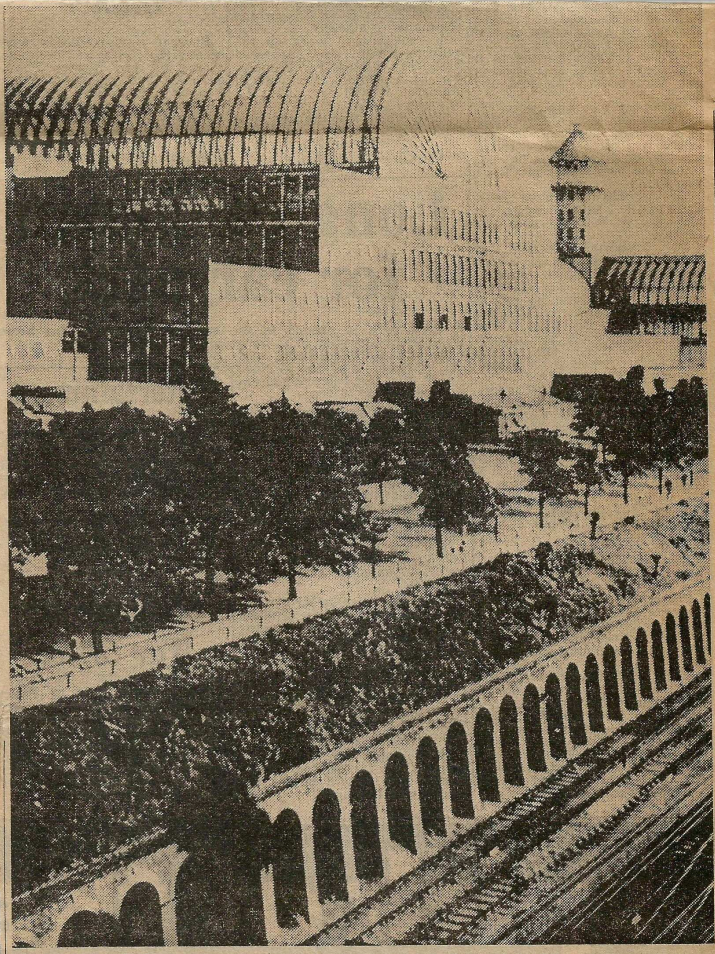
The whole area of the magnificent Palace gardens were now bathed in an eerie red glow from the fire as parts of the building collapsed. As the huge flaming skeleton fell a grey army of rats could be seen scuttling like an incoming tide through the carefully tended flower beds and past the statues and fountains.

For weeks afterwards the area was to be plagued by them.

The Palace cat would have gone berserk had she seen them but she was busy plunging again and again into the burning building trying in vain to rescue her new-born kittens. She somehow survived her ordeal to become one of the heroines of the night. (To be continued).



Sir Henry Buckland on the morning after the fire standing looking up at the ruins of the north nave. In speeches to the shareholders of the Crystal Palace Company he seemed convinced that an electrical spark near a gas canister caused the blaze.



A view of the centre transept looking across Crystal Palace Parade from the high level station.

large crowds, who had been unable to get near to the fire itself, gathered on Blackheath and Hampstead Heath to watch the disaster unfold. An enterprising pedlar on Streatham Hill was hiring out field glasses at "twopence a look."

But to Lewis Ball and his young wife the scene was a less traumatic one. "We stood and watched the fire for an hour or so and decided to leave for a whilst drive we had organised nearby. There weren't many people there I seem to remember."

The firemen were under the command of Major Morris (Captain Shaw, his counterpart at the 1867 fire, immortalised in a Gilbert and Sullivan song, gathered his firemen at The Palace by putting them aboard a train. He found it quicker than using horses.)

The firefighters were pouring



## WELSHMAN ANSWERED IN HINDI

Daily Telegraph Reporter  
DOCTOR who wrote a  
note in Welsh about a  
patient he sent to  
for examination

## Kenneth More 40 years an actor

**K**ENNETH MORE, celebrating 40 years as an actor yesterday, was in good company at a Variety Club of Great Britain luncheon given at the Savoy Hotel as a tribute to his popularity and success.

The occasion was, too, given by the Variety Club in appreciation of Mr More's services for the Club's work for children's charities.

Among the guests were (FORE-GROUND): Andrew Ray, with

Nyree Dawn Porter, co-star in "The Forsyte Saga," and standing (FROM LEFT): Ian Carmichael; Geoffrey Keen; Raymond Francis; Sir Billy Butlin, the Club's chief barker (president); Stella Button; Eric Barker; and Arthur Askey.

Davy Kaye, as master of ceremonies, is standing in front of Sally Anne Howes; Doris Barry; Cardew Robinson; Ronnie Corbett; and Jack Watling.

## MICKEY TO WELCOME EMPEROR

By IAN BRO  
in Los Ang  
THE Son of H  
visit the  
place on ea