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THE MEDIEVAL BRIDGE IN THE GEORGIAN CITY: LONDON BRIDGE c.1730–1762

MARIE PRIOR

The remodelling of London Bridge in 1757–62 transformed the City’s famous street over water into a unified work of architecture. This article argues that the new visual scheme – an eclectic mix of classical and Gothic features – was a product of two phenomena: the anxieties of the Corporation of London concerning the growth of Westminster, and the perception of London Bridge not only as medieval, but as specifically Gothic. In doing so, this article seeks to emphasise the significance of this now-vanished building to the Georgian metropolis, and to highlight the holistic nature of developments along the urban Thames.

London Bridge is one of the most famous vanished structures in England. Begun during the final decade of the twelfth century, it served as London’s only permanent Thames crossing until the completion of Charles Labelye’s Westminster Bridge in 1750,¹ and endured until its demolition between 1831 and 1834, following the completion of John Rennie’s replacement.² The romantic image of the inhabited bridge has intrigued scholars and laymen alike for centuries, and the bones of its history have been laid bare in a succession of studies and monographs.³ It is easy to see why it has exerted such a pull on the collective imagination; it was clustered with a remarkable diversity of buildings for the major part of its long existence and, at almost 900 ft. in length,⁴ it presented a spectacular focus for the Thames riverscape.

Despite this, London Bridge has attracted remarkably little attention from art historians,⁵ and its place within the architectural history of Georgian

London has been largely ignored. This is especially surprising considering the scale of changes wrought upon the bridge during the 1750s and 1760s, and in particular the stylistically intriguing aesthetic imposed during the remodelling of 1757 to 1762. Orchestrated by the Corporation of London – the body with stewardship over the bridge – and overseen by the architects George Dance the Elder and Sir Robert Taylor, the remodelling transformed the most famous bridge in Georgian England from the overcrowded, dramatic, and frequently dangerous inhabited structure that most of us will associate with the name London Bridge, to a far simpler building in which classical and Gothic elements combined to form a unique new visual scheme.⁶ It is the purpose of this article to investigate these radical changes, and to explore the motivations behind this intriguing early use of a revived Gothic vocabulary. In doing so, this study will reveal that London Bridge was not only a significant aspect of the architectural landscape of the Georgian City of London, but that the intimate relationship which existed between the bridge and its guardian body was a driving force for changes to the bridge’s physical fabric, while perceptions of the bridge as essentially medieval influenced the aesthetic direction of those changes.

Never a simple river crossing, London Bridge was a topographically complex and dynamic aggregation of parts. In order meaningfully to explore the events of the mid century, it is first essential to establish the major characteristics of the bridge during the preceding decades. This will necessitate the use of images, but only to provide a



Fig. 1. Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, 'Panorama of London and Westminster: the City of London', detail of London Bridge, 1749. *City of London, London Metropolitan Archives, Guildhall Library Print Collection, cat. no. q8973529.*

frame of reference, as it is outside the scope of this study to approach the immense and intriguing subject of London Bridge in art,⁷ or the problematic issue of the relative accuracy of any particular depiction.⁸ Beginning with its most basic elements, London Bridge was composed of a gently canted carriageway over a series of low arches, supported by wide piers.⁹ The core fabric dated to the turn of the thirteenth century,¹⁰ while the pointed forms of most of the arches were almost certainly the result of later medieval reinforcements.¹¹ Although bulky, the piers required protection from the scour of the tides, necessitating the construction and augmentation of massive timber starlings, which resembled extended cutwaters.¹² Images indicate that the crowns of the arches were concealed by the lowest storeys of the bridge buildings (Fig. 1),¹³ the majority of which were timber framed, and given over to commercial and domestic uses.¹⁴ Most dated from 1685, having been constructed 'in a new and regular manner' as part of a package of improvements,¹⁵ but by the middle of the eighteenth century these 'new and regular' buildings had themselves attracted criticism for their state of disrepair.¹⁶

This tends not to be reflected in contemporary images.¹⁷ Instead, the impressive scale of the bridge and its principal landmarks provide the focus. This is most evident in Samuel and Nathaniel Buck's panorama of London of 1749 (Fig. 1), the largest and most detailed image of the mid-century bridge to survive.¹⁸ Starting at the City end, the Waterworks are the first identifiable feature, nestled between the west side of the bridge and the City shore. Founded in 1580 in order to supply water to parts of the City, and periodically expanded until 1792,¹⁹ the Waterworks were both a blessing and a curse. They contributed a small yet steady revenue to the Bridge House Estates,²⁰ while their expansion hastened the deterioration of the masonry and starlings.²¹ South of the Waterworks, a block of regularised buildings almost certainly represents 'The Piazzas'.²² This colloquial Italianate title was given to two sets of five terraces, one either side of the carriageway, designed by George Dance the Elder and completed in 1745. These replaced a section of dilapidated housing, and were distinguished by a colonnade fronting commercial premises.²³ Other key landmarks include St Thomas' Chapel (not featured on the Bucks'

panorama due to the perspective adopted), Nonesuch House, and the Stonegate.²⁴ Located on a pier off the east side of the carriageway, St Thomas Chapel had been founded shortly after the bridge itself,²⁵ and remodelled during the fourteenth century.²⁶ Dissolved in the wake of the Reformation, it had long been turned to secular use, and retained only a small portion of its superstructure in the early eighteenth century.²⁷ Situated on the pier between the seventh and eighth arches from the Southwark shore (at the southern end of the third block of bridge buildings depicted),²⁸ Nonesuch House comprised a ground floor in stone with three further timber storeys, and four domed timber-framed towers.²⁹ Constructed in 1577–79 as a replacement for the Drawbridge Gate,³⁰ it appears to have still presented a distinctive aesthetic until the remodelling. The Stonegate was a masonry gatehouse located very close to the Southwark shore (the narrow building to the left of the three houses with steep gables in the bottom right of the image), and had been widened in 1728.³¹

The inhabited bridge thus presented an impressive spectacle, but this was not to last. Indeed, the fashionable new Piazzas were in use less than twenty years before they, along with all other buildings on London Bridge, were destroyed. The relatively sudden shift from new building work to the complete clearance of the carriageway implies the existence of a significant catalyst, and that catalyst was almost certainly Westminster Bridge.³² Until the third decade of the eighteenth century, London Bridge had enjoyed an unchallenged monopoly on road traffic crossing the Thames.³³ The Lambeth Ferry had served Westminster,³⁴ but ferries were no challenge to the bridge, which itself had become a significant commercial thoroughfare due to the sheer volume of traffic funnelled across it.³⁵ The herald of change came in 1721, when a group of interested individuals made their first petition to parliament in support of a bridge at Westminster;³⁶ the following year, the first petition was raised against it.³⁷ Tellingly, this objection issued from the City of

London, the Borough of Southwark, the West Country Bargemen, the Company of Watermen, and the inhabitants of London Bridge;³⁸ in short, those who benefited from the commercial uses of the river and the unique nature of London's only permanent crossing. When, in the mid 1730s, the decision was made to site the new bridge as close as possible to the Houses of Parliament, the corporation protested again, citing the danger it posed to 'several Rights, properties, privileges and Franchises of this City'.³⁹ These responses can be read as a symptom of anxieties produced by the relatively recent rise of Westminster as a locale of fashionable living, and the consequent decline in aristocratic associations for London Bridge and the Square Mile;⁴⁰ anxieties which were almost certainly compounded by the atmosphere of potentiality and optimism generated by the project for the new bridge.⁴¹ Indeed, it is clear that – even before the commencement of the works – the prospect of a new bridge at Westminster brought about a reassessment of the condition and suitability of London Bridge.

In 1736, two years before work began at Westminster, Nicholas Hawksmoor produced a pamphlet entitled *A Short Historical Account of London-Bridge; With a Proposition for a new Stone-Bridge at Westminster: As also an account of some remarkable stone-bridges abroad, and what the best authors have said and directed concerning the methods of building them*.⁴² As much a product of patriotic enthusiasm for the new bridge as it was of concerns about the old, Hawksmoor's account constitutes the first in-depth published study of London Bridge. Unlike earlier accounts, which tend to take the form of anecdotal social histories,⁴³ Hawksmoor provides a more technical survey. The historical account is limited to a brief discussion of the construction of the stone bridge, and is itself merely a foundation for Hawksmoor's argument concerning the unsuitable nature of London Bridge to the contemporary metropolis, and the measures that might be taken to improve matters. For Hawksmoor, London Bridge

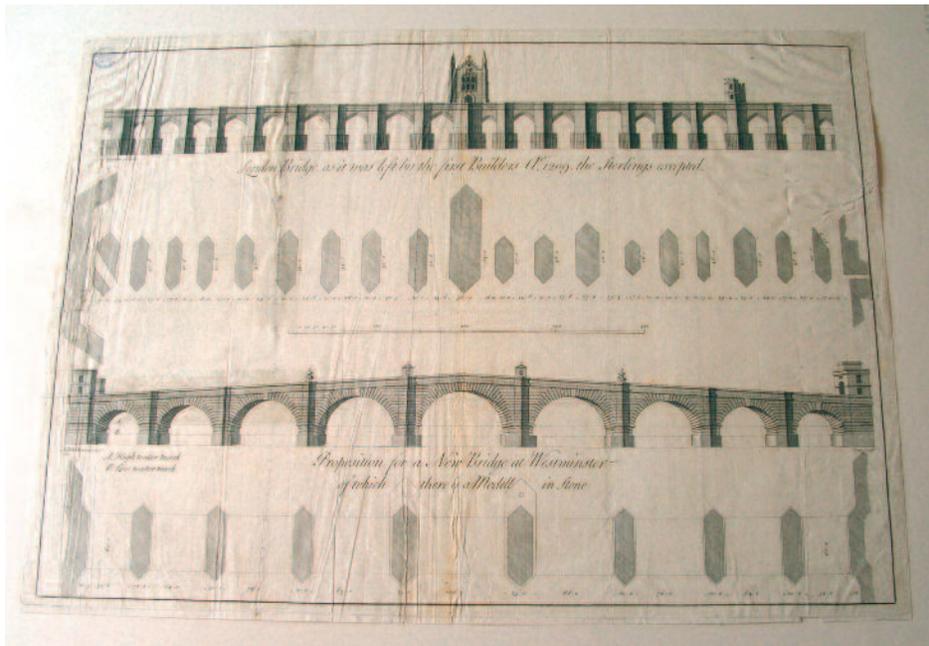


Fig. 2. Nicholas Hawksmoor, 'London Bridge as it was left by the First Builders AD1209 the Sterlings Excepted and Proposition for a New Bridge at Westminster of which there is a Model in stone, 1736'. This print extracts an image initially published in Hawksmoor's *Historical Account* (1736), appendix. *Westminster Archives Centre*, box 61, no. 24.

failed its city on several counts. The piers were too wide, the arches too narrow and numerous, and the whole was 'ill-contrived'.⁴⁴ Of the total length of the bridge, which he gives as almost 900 ft., he states that a waterway of 450 ft. would be available when the tide was above the starlings, but at low tide, that would decrease to a mere 194 ft.⁴⁵ This difference resulted in the famous weir,⁴⁶ described by Hawksmoor as 'many frightful Cataracts', which occasioned 'the Loss of Lives and Goods, and the Vessels, which are either thrown upon the Sterlings, or sunk within the Arches'.⁴⁷ Passage under the bridge thus presented a significant danger, but passage over the bridge was also problematic. Hawksmoor reports that encroachment of the buildings onto the carriageway rendered it unsafe for pedestrians, and too narrow even to allow two carts

to pass each other.⁴⁸ In addition to their practical failings, he perceived the bridge buildings to be an unattractive nuisance, and described the river-facing elevations to be 'so disagreeable, that it exposes the Skill of the Projectors, and sinks their Taste down to the lowest Barbarity'.⁴⁹

Hawksmoor's distaste for London Bridge as it stood during the 1730s is also revealed in his choice of illustrations. Indeed, an elevation of the contemporary bridge is conspicuously absent. Instead, Hawksmoor provides a plan of the piers which emphasises the narrowness and irregular span of the arches, and a reconstruction of the bridge 'as it was left by the first Builders' in 1209 (Fig. 2).⁵⁰ These are juxtaposed with a plan and elevation entitled *Proposition for a New Bridge at Westminster of which there is a Model in stone*.⁵¹ Although presented as a

comparison, this juxtaposition does not represent a contrast between the City of London and its rival, but is instead a celebratory vision of the metropolitan riverscape wherein the reconstructed London Bridge represents the very best of medieval ingenuity, and the proposition for Westminster provides direction for the immediate future. Much as Hawksmoor levelled criticism at the contemporary insufficiency of London Bridge, he reserved praise for the bridge it had been when newly completed.⁵² For Hawksmoor, the bridge of 1209 was a ‘great and laudable Undertaking’,⁵³ far better suited to the thirteenth-century city than the bridge of his day was to the contemporary metropolis.⁵⁴ It is thus unsurprising that he should choose that bridge to compare with his proposal for a new bridge at Westminster, and not the ramshackle and disharmonious entity of the 1730s. And it is equally unsurprising that his reconstruction should provide the basis for his own proposal for the remodelling of London Bridge (Fig. 3).

Hawksmoor’s reconstruction presents a fantasy of the medieval bridge, and one which reveals a strong perceptual association between London Bridge and the Gothic style. The almost triangular profile of the arches do not engage with either the actual variations in the size and shape of the arches as they appeared in Hawksmoor’s lifetime,⁵⁵ or the variations of curvature in actual thirteenth-century arches, but they do serve to emphasise the medieval

provenance of the bridge as discussed in Hawksmoor’s text. Likewise, the chapel, which Home points out is wrongly located,⁵⁶ takes an approximation of its mid-fourteenth century form, providing an emphatically Gothic accent to the centre of the bridge.⁵⁷ This feature would probably have been most familiar to Hawksmoor from post-medieval images of the bridge made before the superstructure suffered further changes, but like the arches it does not reflect the appearance of the bridge as it would have been in 1209.⁵⁸ Although these inaccuracies serve to emphasise a general uninterest in the detail and relative antiquity of medieval styles, they combine to present a positive vision of London Bridge that is fundamentally and essentially Gothic. This close association almost certainly emerged from the pointed form of the majority of its actual arches, and the remaining features of the fourteenth-century chapel as they stood during the early eighteenth century, and it is an association that Hawksmoor evidently felt was not inappropriate for this particular kind of secular civic building.⁵⁹

The awareness of London Bridge not only as medieval, but as specifically Gothic, is made explicit in a statement given by Charles Labelye in support of proposals for remodelling submitted to the City Corporation in 1746. By stating that ‘*London Bridge* so mended would be the finest and most commodious *Gothick* bridge in the world’,⁶⁰ Labelye both establishes a direct connection between that building



Fig. 3. Nicholas Hawksmoor, ‘Proposition for London Bridge to be Alter’d for the Navigation & the safety of the Passengers over it’, 1736. This print extracts an image initially published in: Hawksmoor’s *Historical Account* (1736), appendix. WAC box 61, no. 61, acc. 4048, first of three prints.

and a specific (if generalised) conception of architectural style, and the limitations imposed by that association. As a Gothic bridge, it could only be the best of its type; however, the implicit value judgement concerning style does not negate the possibility of the remodelled Gothic bridge being a prestigious building appropriate to the Corporation and the City. Labeleye's proposals made use of a design 'according to the Opinion of the Celebrated Architect Sir Christopher Wren' (Fig. 4),⁶¹ which incorporates new pointed arches built over select existing piers (the others to be removed), and a Gothic balustrade with what appear to be onion-domed and crocketed recesses set off the carriageway. Intriguingly, Labeleye contrasts this image with one that he labels 'The Plan and Western Front of London Bridge exclusive of the Houses with the Sterlings reduced'. This is not in fact the bridge of 1746 stripped of its buildings, but is an unattributed copy of Hawksmoor's reconstruction as he believed the bridge to have looked in 1209. By viewing the

contemporary bridge through the lens of Hawksmoor's reconstruction, Labeleye reveals the strength of the continued association between London Bridge and an idea of the medieval expressed through pointed architecture.

Labeleye's comparison was produced at the request of Richard Hoare, then Lord Mayor of London. The date of this request indicates that the Corporation were growing more anxious about their own position as Westminster Bridge neared completion, but that they had as yet not decided how best to proceed. Unfortunately, the extant records of the Corporation and of the Bridge House Estates do not provide a full account of the motivations of the patrons and architects. Hence these must be reconstructed as far as possible using the available evidence, which itself emerges from the records of the now-vanished buildings. Work began on Westminster Bridge in 1738, two years after the publication of Hawksmoor's pamphlet,⁶² and it was opened in November 1750.⁶³ The remodelling of

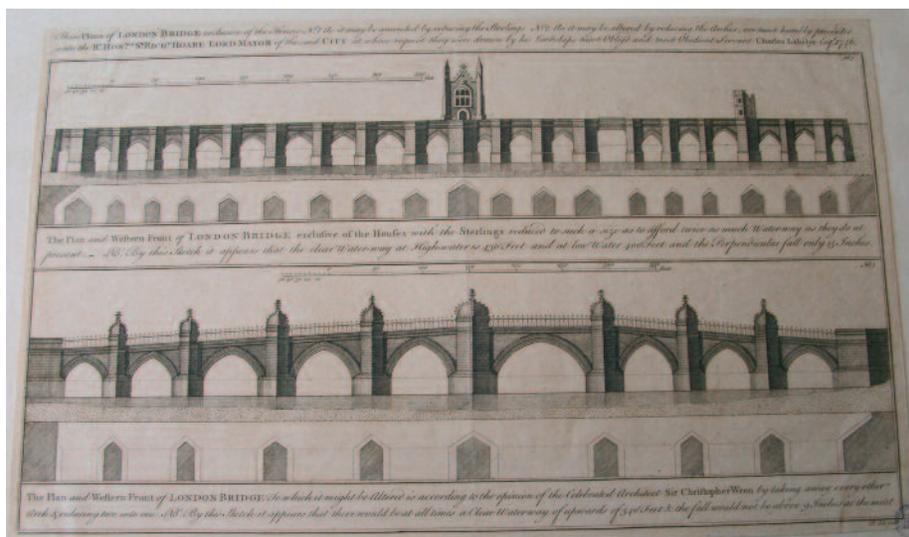


Fig. 4. Comparison between Nicholas Hawksmoor's plan and west front of London Bridge in 1209 (unattributed), and Charles Labeleye's drawing of Sir Christopher Wren's design for altering London Bridge, Charles Labeleye, 1746. *WAC*, box. 61, no. 61, acc. 4048, third of three prints.



Fig. 5. Joseph Farington, 'View of London Bridge including the Church of St Magnus and the Monument', 1790. etching. *London Metropolitan Archives, GLPC, cat no. q688762x*.

London Bridge began a mere seven years later,⁶⁴ under the supervision of George Dance the Elder, the Corporation's Clerk of the Works,⁶⁵ and the architect Robert Taylor,⁶⁶ and was assisted by parliamentary grants totalling £82,000 allotted between 1758 and 1765.⁶⁷ By 1762, the bridge had been transformed; no longer a disharmonious street over water, it had become a single, unified work of architecture (Fig. 5).⁶⁸

The similarities between Westminster Bridge and the remodelled London Bridge strongly indicate that the architects had Labeleye's project in mind when designing the new scheme. Westminster Bridge responded to the classical idiom exhibited in the developments of London's West End.⁶⁹ Faced in Portland Stone, fifteen round-headed arches

supported a gently curved carriageway lined with balustrades, but clear of buildings. The curves of the arches and carriageway were articulated with strong voussoirs and a corbelled cornice, and a succession of small half-domed recesses lined either side of the pavements to provide shelter for pedestrians (Fig. 6).⁷⁰ Each of these features was echoed in Dance and Taylor's London Bridge, where a series of half-domed pedestrian shelters projected above alternate piers, a corbelled cornice provided a strong horizontal emphasis on the river-facing elevations, and the Central Arch appears to have possessed accented voussoirs similar to those at Westminster (Fig. 5). The width of the remodelled scheme also appears to respond to the challenge posed by Westminster. The new bridge possessed a total width



Fig. 6. Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, 'Panorama of London and Westminster: the City of Westminster', detail of Westminster Bridge, 1749. *London Metropolitan Archives, GLPC cat. no. q8973529*.

of 42 ft., 30 ft. of which was carriageway, with 6 ft. pavements to either side.⁷¹ Dance and Taylor extended the full width of their bridge to 44 ft., thereby encasing the medieval fabric within a shell of brand new masonry.⁷² The whole was clad in white Portland Stone, and where previously the river-facing elevations had exhibited a rhythm of projecting cutwaters, Dance and Taylor brought the entire elevation – as viewed at high tide – onto the same plane, with only the cornice and the buttresses of the piers in relief.⁷³ The new facing provided a bright and clean aesthetic unity that the ancient and much-repaired bridge had lacked, while the open carriageway enhanced its function as a grand processional avenue into the City and one which – significantly considering Hawksmoor's criticisms – rendered the bridge wide enough for an uninterrupted flow of traffic.

Despite these similarities, the remodelled London Bridge was more than a mirror of Westminster. Although elements of the visual scheme provided a response to Labeleye's bridge, the form and ornament were also guided by the existing fabric, and by the perception of London Bridge as medieval in origin. The new Central Arch provided an appropriate focus for contemporary taste, as did a pair of

purpose-built toll-houses – situated on the approaches, rather than the carriageway itself⁷⁴ – but the scheme as a whole exhibited a remarkable eclecticism. Instead of attempting to classicise the entire fabric of the bridge, Dance and Taylor retained and augmented the forms of the variously sized and shaped Gothic arches. The exact extent to which these were manipulated is impossible to judge, as the architects' plans do not appear to have survived,⁷⁵ but the visual record provides a general indication of the extent to which the remodelled scheme responded to the core fabric. In J. T. Smith's engraving of 1814, the new work appears more emphatically pointed than the original fabric, the crown and apex of the arch having been raised significantly (Fig. 7). Photographs taken in 1921 of the land arch revealed during work on Adelaide House, and subsequent analysis of that feature, support Smith's depiction.⁷⁶ Thus, far from reducing the Gothic appearance of the majority of the arches,⁷⁷ Dance and Taylor appear to have exaggerated them, echoing the emphatically pointed arches of Hawksmoor's reconstruction and proposal. Although it may have been technically possible to construct classically inspired arches between the piers, these would have varied in span and headway, thus negating the

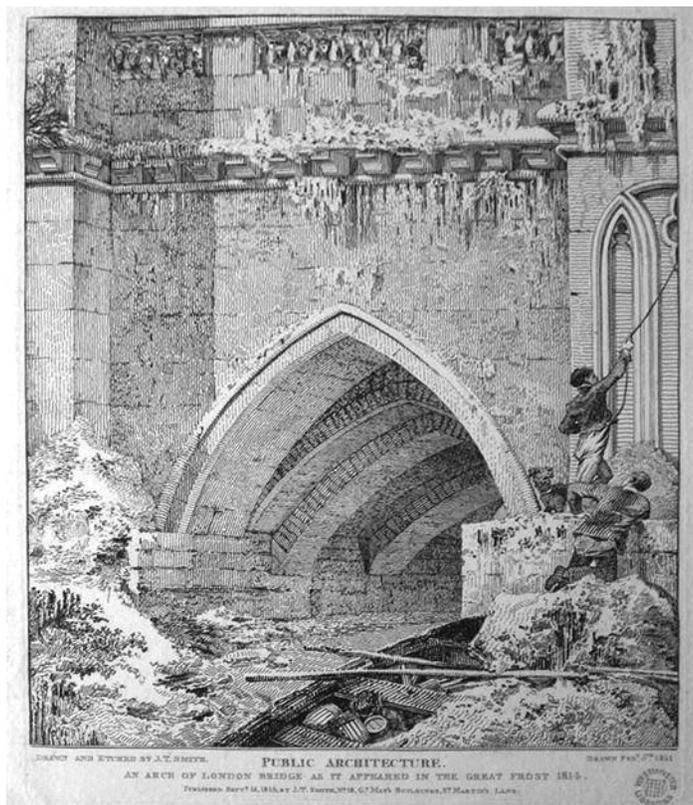


Fig. 7. J. T. Smith, 'An Arch of London Bridge as it appeared during the Great Frost 1814'. *WAC*, box 61. no. 28.

possibility of overall symmetry or any system of classical proportion. This would have robbed a classical scheme of any sense of gravitas, thus rendering it ridiculous. Gothic, however, was allowed to be uneven; the irregularity of the core fabric made this style the only appropriate mode of architectural expression for the area below the cornice, where the architects were required by the financial constraints imposed by the corporation to work more sensitively with the existing fabric.⁷⁸

In 1759, the *British Chronicle* reported that the bridge would be 'finished in the Gothic taste'.⁷⁹ This refers not only to the augmented form of the irregular pointed arches, but also to the ornament applied to

alternate piers. This feature has been mentioned numerous times in the literature,⁸⁰ but no satisfactory explanation has thus far been offered for its inclusion.⁸¹ The panels applied to the square buttresses of every second pier (alternate buttresses were half octagonal – as at Westminster) were simple in character, incorporating two blind lancets with internal cusping, surmounted by a quatrefoil, all of which appears to have been contained in a larger, rounded arch with a flattened crown. These details are not very clear on early images of the remodelled bridge, which also tend to distort the proportions and elongate the height of the piers.⁸² Later images display the details more clearly, for example

Farington's etching of 1790 (Fig. 5), and Smith's 1818 engraving (Fig. 7), and help to convey the prominence of this feature, and the way in which it was integrated into the overall design. But what prompted this particular manifestation of 'Gothic taste'? Regarding source material, there are two major contenders. The first is the perceived appearance of the west window of St Thomas Chapel, which appears in an engraving by George Vertue of 1748 with two lights, a very simple Y of intersecting tracery, and a quatrefoil above, although the enclosing arch is pointed and the lights are not cusped.⁸³ The other is a detail in the lowest register of the eighteenth-century work of the Towers of Westminster Abbey, designed by Hawksmoor and completed in 1745.⁸⁴ These incorporate similar pairs of cusped lancets nestled within a rounded arch, although unlike the features of London Bridge the panelling continues above. It is clear that the medieval fabric of London Bridge made it a special case, but this does not explain why the Corporation would have sanctioned the added expense of ornamenting the piers. Yet an explanation presents itself when the remodelled scheme is considered as a whole. If the classical elements are read as a direct response to anxieties about the Corporation's own place within the developing metropolis, a purpose for the Gothic features is revealed. A tie to the City's past, they emphasise the long provenance of the Corporation, and the medieval roots of its authority and identity.

Although the Gothic style was almost certainly adopted in response to the challenge of remodelling rather than rebuilding, it does not follow that it was a lamented choice. The combination of classical and Gothic styles was not without precedent; Hawksmoor's celebratory proposal of 1736 had made a feature of the strong if generic Gothic elements of his reconstruction, combined with an elegant pair of large, classical arches either side of Chapel Pier (Fig. 3).⁸⁵ Furthermore, the mid-eighteenth century revival of Gothic forms was far from isolated, following swiftly on the heels of the additions to

Westminster Abbey, and the screen of Westminster Hall installed by William Kent in the 1730s.⁸⁶ Three decades after the completion of the remodelled bridge, the corporation commissioned George Dance the Younger – son of George Dance the Elder and heir to his father's position as City Surveyor⁸⁷ – to provide a new façade for the Guildhall.⁸⁸ Like London Bridge, the core of the Guildhall was also medieval,⁸⁹ and the new work combined a revived Gothic vocabulary with allusions to another architectural style.⁹⁰ Although the Guildhall façade is far more elaborate than the simple ornament of London Bridge, the use of a modified Gothic vocabulary in two such significant public buildings appears to signify more than just an adherence to a particular form out of financial necessity. Instead, it reveals a growth in the significance of associations with the medieval past when forging and consolidating civic and corporate identity.

The remodelling of London Bridge simultaneously forged links with the medieval past and the fashionable present. It divorced the aesthetic from the core fabric, while uniting the idea of the bridge as medieval with a contemporary conception of medieval architectural style. No longer an inhabited bridge, it became one among a group of significant medieval buildings within the metropolis to incorporate a revived Gothic vocabulary. The new bridge issued a statement of the Corporation's ability to compete with the latest in Thames engineering, while providing an emphatic reminder of the ancient source of that patron's authority, a duality which was evidently perceived as appropriate to the identity of the Corporation of London. Working within an atmosphere of competitive anxiety, Dance and Taylor equipped the City with what was effectively a new bridge, and provided the Corporation with the opportunity to prove that London could compete with Westminster. It was a chance to ornament the Thames with a bridge that would not embarrass them with its ramshackle housing and incommodious carriageway. Unfortunately for the Corporation, the

success of this project was short-lived. The tides continued to take their toll on the fabric, the central arch had an unforeseen and dangerous effect on the current,⁹¹ and the starlings persisted in blocking the major part of the waterway. The remodelled fabric deteriorated quickly, and despite some preventative action by the Corporation, replacement swiftly became the only sensible option.⁹² But for a few brief decades the remodelled bridge stood between London and Southwark, testimony to the pressures and anxieties prompted by the developing metropolis, and to the significance of the medieval past in an age so dominated by the influence of classical antiquity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

- 1 For an authoritative study of Westminster Bridge, see R. J. B Walker, *Old Westminster Bridge: The bridge of fools* (Newton Abbot, London and North Pomfret (Vt), 1979).
- 2 Bruce Watson, Trevor Brigham and Tony Dyson, *London Bridge: 2000 years of a river crossing* (London, 2001), p. 166.
- 3 The earliest comprehensive study of London Bridge is Richard Thompson's *Chronicles of London Bridge*, which was published pseudonymously in 1827. The second major study, and the one which remains the most comprehensive work on the history of the bridge, is Gordon Home's *Old London Bridge* of 1931. John Hearsay's *Bridge, Church and Palace in Old London* (London, 1961) and C. W. Shepherd's *A Thousand Years of Old London Bridge* (London and New York, 1971) rely heavily on Home, and cover a limited expanse of the same ground. The most significant recent work is Watson, Brigham and Dyson's *London Bridge: 2000 years of a river crossing*, which was published following a long-running archaeological investigation by the Museum of London Archaeology Service. Also published since the millennium are Patricia Pierce, *Old London Bridge: The story of the longest inhabited bridge in Europe* by Patricia Pierce (London, 2001), and Bruce Watson's authoritative condensed history, *Old London Bridge, Lost and Found* (London, 2004).
- 4 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 162; Nicholas Hawksmoor, *A Short Historical Account of London-Bridge; With a Proposition for a new Stone-Bridge at Westminster: As also an account of some remarkable stone-bridges abroad, and what the best authors have said and directed concerning the methods of building them* (London, 1736), pp. 8–9.
- 5 Attention has begun to turn towards London Bridge as other elements of Thames culture are explored, for example Joseph Monteyne's analysis of images of the 1683–4 frost fair (Joseph Monteyne, *The Printed Image in Early Modern London: Urban space, visual representation, and social change* (Aldershot and Burlington (Vt), 2007, p. 224, pp. 228–89 and p. 230), but a significant amount of work remains to be done. Although very little in-depth study has thus far been accomplished, images of London Bridge remain popular as subjects for exhibitions, the most recent of which was 'Spanning the River: Artists' views of Thames bridges', held at

- the Guildhall Art Gallery in 2006 (D. McFetrich, *Spanning the River: Artists views of Thames bridges* (London, Guildhall Art Gallery exhibition catalogue, 2006). Although not a scholarly text, Peter Jackson's *London Bridge: A visual history* (London, 1972; 2002), is important in showcasing a selection of images unavailable elsewhere.
- 6 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 159–60.
 - 7 Although much work remains to be undertaken on images of London Bridge, in my doctoral thesis I took the first few steps towards mapping this new territory: M. F. Prior, 'Style, Perception and Identity: the gothic bridge in London and York c.1730–1881' (Ph.D. thesis, University of York, 2008).
 - 8 This is illustrated by a discussion of the form of the bridge buildings in Watson, Brigham and Dyson, pp. 98–101.
 - 9 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 85–89.
 - 10 Watson, *Old London Bridge*, pp. 73, 86; Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 119–27.
 - 11 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
 - 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 88–9, 100–01, 122–23.
 - 13 Also see Westminster Archives Centre (hereafter WAC) Box 61, 53A, and Sutton Nicholls's 1710 engraving, reproduced in Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–1.
 - 14 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 101–05.
 - 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 102–03.
 - 16 Home mentions several reports of instabilities and collapses in the houses on the bridge, for example the studio of eighteenth-century artist John Laguerre, which 'is described as being in a bow-windowed room projecting over the water, which trembled when the flow of the river came with its full force through the arches' (Home, *op. cit.*, p. 262, 265–66). For a discussion of the development of buildings on London Bridge, see: Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 96–105.
 - 17 In Hogarth's 'Marriage-a-la-Mode' VI: The Death of the Countess (1743), London Bridge is shown covered in tall, narrow houses which lean out of alignment with each other. This image echoes contemporary complaints about the state of the houses (David Bindman, *Hogarth* (London, 1981), pp. 79–81. Home, *op. cit.*, facing p. 263 and pp. 265–6).
 - 18 This is one panel of a five-sheet series, depicting the metropolis from Westminster to London; the full dimensions are 280 x 3175mm: R. Hyde, *A Prospect of Britain: The town panoramas of Samuel and Nathaniel Buck* (London, 1994), pp. 22 and 47.
 - 19 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 115–16.
 - 20 Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 556–57. For a description of other sources of revenue generated by the Bridge House Estates, see: Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 120–21.
 - 21 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 115, 162; Home, *op. cit.*, pp. 193–95; Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 558–66.
 - 22 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 103; Home, *op. cit.*, p. 320. The plan and road-facing elevation of Dance's 1745 terrace is reproduced in Home, *op. cit.*, facing 320, and Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp. 48–49.
 - 23 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
 - 24 St Thomas' Chapel was dedicated to the martyred Archbishop of Canterbury: Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
 - 25 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 109–14.
 - 26 Home, *op. cit.*, pp. 99–100; Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 111.
 - 27 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 112.
 - 28 Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 346–47; Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
 - 29 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 100, 109. Thomson records that Nonesuch House was prefabricated in Holland and fixed together using only wooden pegs, hence gaining its name through a measure of awe at its construction: *op. cit.*, p. 345.
 - 30 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 100.
 - 31 *Ibid.*, pp. 100, 105–6, 109.
 - 32 Watson, Brigham and Dyson suggest that the construction of Westminster Bridge directly led to the remodelling of London Bridge; they also note the basic visual similarities, but do not draw any conclusions from this: *op. cit.*, pp. 156–59.
 - 33 Until this point, London Bridge was the only permanent river crossing between Kingston Bridge, twelve miles upstream, and the sea: Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 156; Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
 - 34 Home, *op. cit.*, p. 253.
 - 35 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
 - 36 Walker, p. 46. This was not the first attempt to gain support for a new bridge at Westminster, but it was the first stirrings of the successful scheme.
 - 37 Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–46.
 - 38 Home, *op. cit.*, pp. 252–53.
 - 39 Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 58–59.
 - 40 John Summerson, *Georgian London* (London, 1945; 2006), pp. 10–47.
 - 41 J. Sweetman, *The Artist and the Bridge* (Aldershot and Brookfield, 1999), p. 40.

- 42 Hawksmoor's pamphlet was dedicated to Lord Sundon and Sir Charles Wagner, both of whom were parliamentary representatives for Westminster: Hawksmoor, *op. cit.*, p. 3. Hawksmoor's pamphlet is discussed in brief by R. J. B. Walker and Vaughan Hart, in relation to the scheme for Westminster Bridge, but no conclusions are drawn regarding perceptions of London Bridge: Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 27–28; Vaughan Hart, *Nicholas Hawksmoor: Rebuilding ancient wonders* (New Haven and London[?], 2002), pp. 227–29.
- 43 For example in Stowe's Survey of London, and the text accompanying John Norden's early seventeenth-century engraving of London Bridge: John Stow, *A Survey of London, reprinted from the text of 1603, with introduction and notes by Charles Lethbridge Kingsford* (Oxford, 1971; 2000), pp. 21–26. A tinted copy of Norden's engraving can be found at WAC, box 61, no. 60.
- 44 Hawksmoor, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- 45 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 162. Hawksmoor, *op. cit.*, pp. 8–9.
- 46 Walter Thornbury, *Old and New London* (London, 1889), II, p. 13; Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, 163.
- 47 Hawksmoor, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 49 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 50 *Ibid.*, appendix.
- 51 The model mentioned is almost certainly one of several presented to parliament in February 1736: Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 55–6.
- 52 Hawksmoor, *op. cit.*, pp. 8–11.
- 53 *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.
- 54 *Ibid.*, pp. 8–11.
- 55 The pointed form of a number of the arches of London Bridge during the first half of the eighteenth century was probably due to medieval rebuilding and strengthening, particularly after the collapse of two arches in 1437; the original arches were probably rounded in form: Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
- 56 Chapel pier was not at the exact centre of the bridge, as Hawksmoor depicts it; Home, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
- 57 The remodelling itself occurred between 1384 and 1397, and did not come to light until the early twentieth century: Home, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
- 58 For example Wyngaerde's panorama of London, c.1544, reproduced in Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 99, fig. 65.
- 59 Earlier in his career, he had defended the use of Gothic as an appropriate style for ecclesiastical architecture: Hart, *op. cit.*, p. 58).
- 60 Formatting as in original: Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
- 61 WAC, box 61, no. 151. A copy of this image is reproduced in Home, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
- 62 Home, *op. cit.*, p. 253.
- 63 Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 206.
- 64 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 159–60.
- 65 Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1600–1840* (New Haven and London, 2008), pp. 294–95; Jill Lever, *Catalogue of the Drawings of George Dance the Younger (1741–1825) and of George Dance the Elder (1695–1768): From the collection of Sir John Soane's Museum* (London, Oxford and New York, c. 2003), p. 394.
- 66 Colvin, *op. cit.*, pp. 1023–28.
- 67 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
- 68 Dorothy Stroud provides a brief description of the form of the remodelled bridge: Dorothy Stroud, *George Dance, Architect, 1741–1825* (London, 1971), p. 51. An overview of the remodelling can also be found in Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 27–8.
- 69 Summerson, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–35, 87–118.
- 70 For a discussion of the accuracy of Canaletto's views of Westminster Bridge, see Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 238–240.
- 71 Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 183; Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 157.
- 72 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
- 73 The cutwaters were still present, but were reduced in height. This can most easily be appreciated in Gordon Home's diagram, 'Seven phases in the evolution of old London Bridge, 1209–1831' in Home, *op. cit.*, facing p. 352.
- 74 Home, *op. cit.*, p. 267.
- 75 No such plans are lodged at the London Metropolitan Archives, which hold the vast majority of material relevant to Old London Bridge. An engraved design for the centring of London Bridge survives, executed in 1760: Lever, *op. cit.*, p. 412, pl. 152).
- 76 Watson, *op. cit.*, pp. 170–1; National Archives, Work 14/2072, 'Ancient Monuments: Old London Bridge (Archaeological Remains), London. Request from the public re. presentation.' (1921–1934); Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 170–71.
- 77 An engraving by Edward Cook of 1832 reveals that at least one of the arches appears to have been made elliptical, possibly due to the distance between the piers: Watson, Brigham and Dyson, fig. 119, p. 160).

- 78 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 158–59.
- 79 *British Chronicle*, 30 July 1759, reproduced in Home, *op. cit.*, p. 275.
- 80 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, p. 159; Pierce, *op. cit.*, p. 261; Home, *op. cit.*, p. 275; Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 70.
- 81 Only once is an explanation offered, and this somewhat dismissively: ‘The new square buttresses were decorated, no doubt for sentimental reasons, in Gothic taste and carved with lancet-shaped panels and quatrefoils’ (Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 70).
- 82 Examples of prints which display this feature include: WAC, box 61, no. 53B; WAC, box 61, no. 57B; WAC, box. 61, no. 59A.
- 83 Guildhall Library Print Collection (hereafter GLPC), cat. no. q6886766. This depiction is notably very different from Hawksmoor’s reconstruction, where the west window is decidedly Perpendicular. The interior of St Thomas’s Chapel was a popular subject for engravers. Other examples include: GLPC cat. no. q6887435; GLPC, cat. no. q6887257; and GLPC, cat. no. q6887139.
- 84 Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 232. C. Wilson, P. Tudor-Craig, J. Physick, and R. Gem, *The New Bell’s Cathedral Guides: Westminster Abbey* (London, 1986), pp. 49–51.
- 85 Hawksmoor, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- 86 J. Goodall, ‘The Medieval Palace of Westminster’, in C. Riding and J. Riding (eds), *The Houses of Parliament: History, art, architecture* (London, 2002), p. 64.
- 87 Summerson, *op. cit.*, p. 151.
- 88 *Ibid.*, pp. 155–6.
- 89 For a comprehensive archaeological survey of the Guildhall, see: D. Bowsher, *The London Guildhall: An archaeological history of a neighbourhood from early medieval to modern times*, 2 vols (London, 2007).
- 90 This other style has been identified as Indian, and interpreted as a celebration and assertion of the corporation’s links with the East India Company and eastern trade: Summerson, *op. cit.*, pp. 155–6. For the relationship between the Corporation of London and the East India Company, see H. V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and imperial Britain, 1756–1833* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 29–52.
- 91 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 160, 162; Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 533, 573–74.
- 92 Watson, Brigham and Dyson, *op. cit.*, pp. 160–62.