

# A most confusing private museum

## The Thomas Layton Project

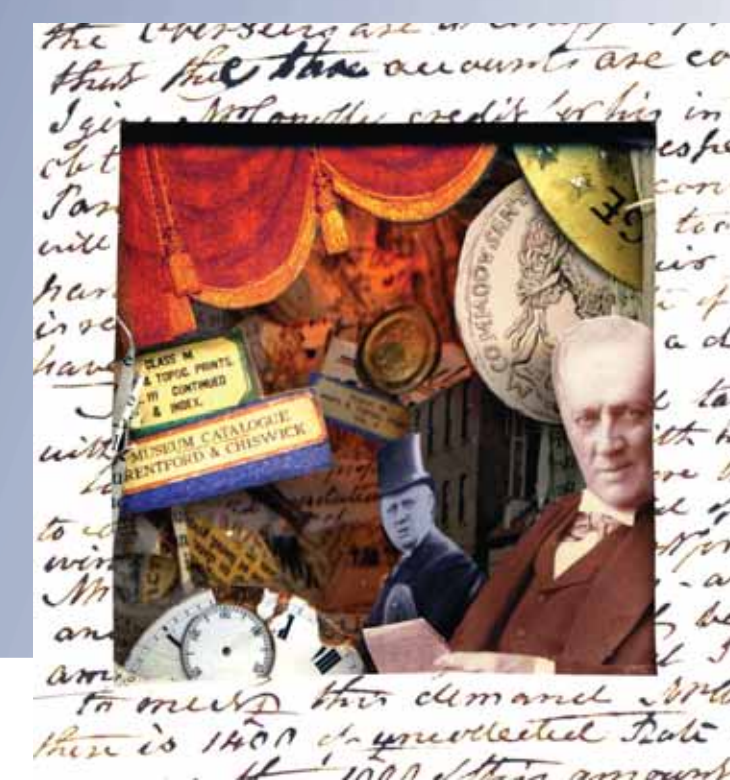


Illustration by Tracy Galer



Thomas Layton

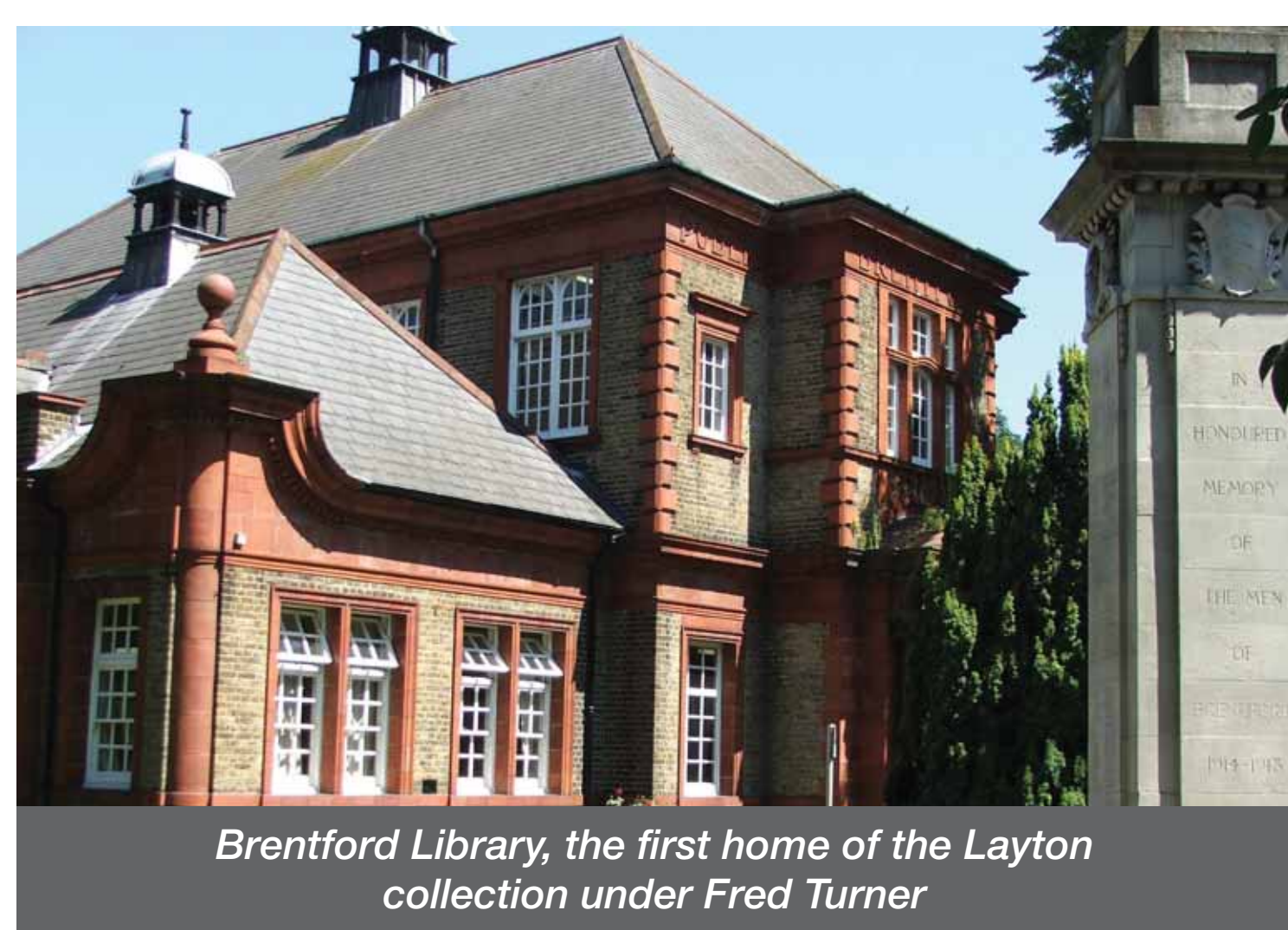
Welcome to this exhibition about local benefactor and Victorian councillor Thomas Layton (1819 - 1911) and the large collection of antiquities, archaeology and books he gave to Brentford.

Before the Layton Project, books and objects from his collection have not been displayed together since the 1930s, when they were exhibited at Brentford Library.

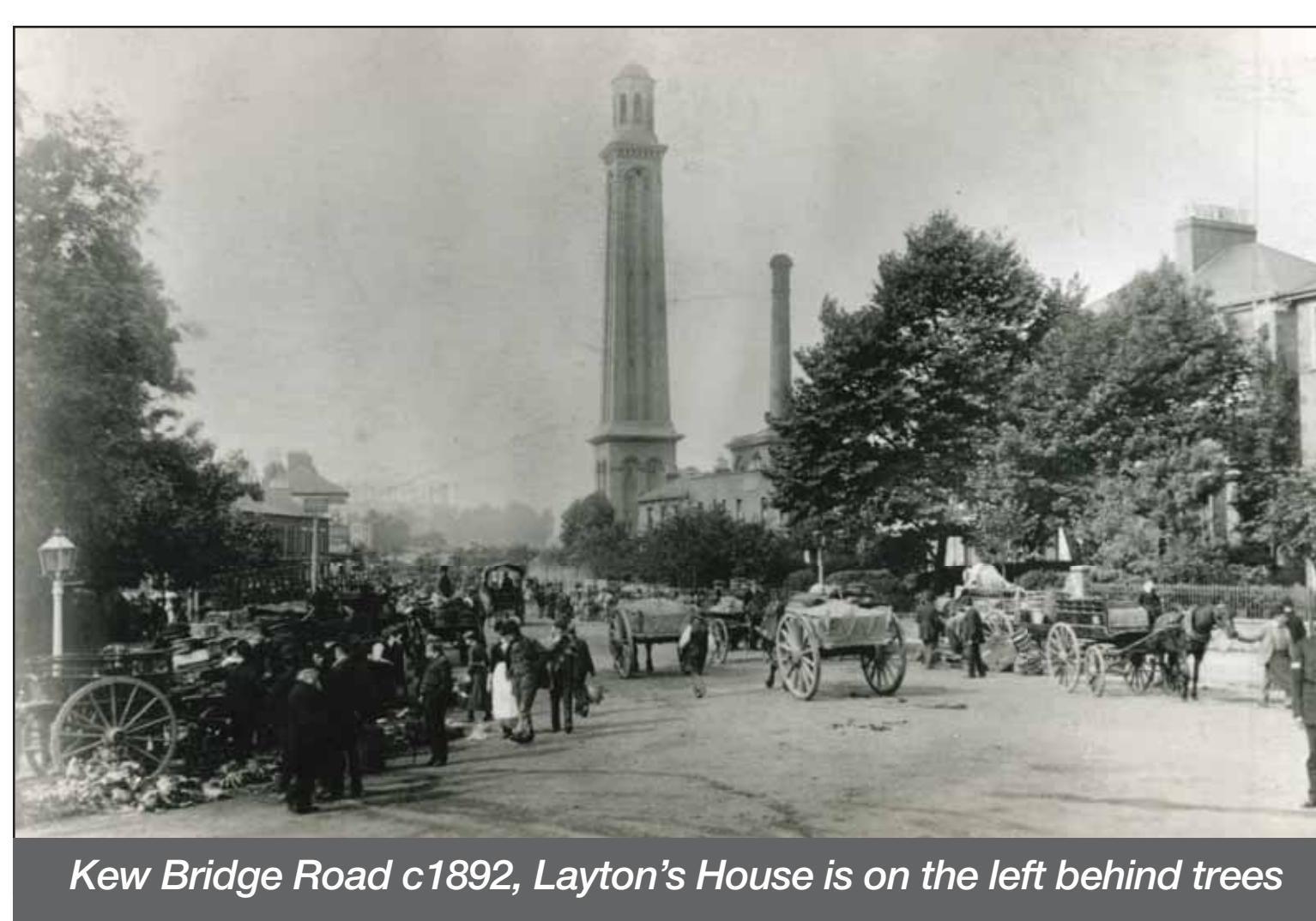
This exhibition will tell Layton's story, explain his collection and what happened to it after his death and reveals what Brentford was like in Layton's day.

I hope you will enjoy this taste of what the Layton Collection has to offer. If you can, please visit our web site: [www.thomaslayton.org.uk](http://www.thomaslayton.org.uk) where you can find more information, including places in London to see some of the objects Layton collected.

The Layton Project and this exhibition are supported by the Thomas Layton Memorial and Museum Trust, the London Borough of Hounslow together with CIP and are funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.



Brentford Library, the first home of the Layton collection under Fred Turner



Kew Bridge Road c1892, Layton's House is on the left behind trees



Thomas Layton and the Library Committee 1900

My thanks go to: James Wisdom, Mike Carman, Janet McNamara, Andrea Cameron and Miss Betts, Trustees of the Layton Trust; Jon Cotton, Christie Pohl and Kate Linden at the Museum of London; James Hales, Dean Sully and the MSc Conservation Students of the Institute of Archaeology, University College London (UCL); Olivia Gooden of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF); Victoria Northwood (Hounslow Borough Archivist), James Marshall and Catherine Taylor (local studies librarians, Hounslow & Chiswick); Vanda Foster of Gunnersbury Park Museum; Lesley Bossine of Kew Bridge Steam Museum; Paul Fitzmaurice, Sally-Ann Coxon, Christine Hayek and Peter Bailey, volunteers of the Layton Project; Jennifer Flippance, web-developer; Keith Voles, graphic designer; Val Bott, Carolyn Hammond, Shirley Seaton and Diana Willment, local historians and researchers, for their support and aid.

**Mike Galer - Layton Trust Project Officer**

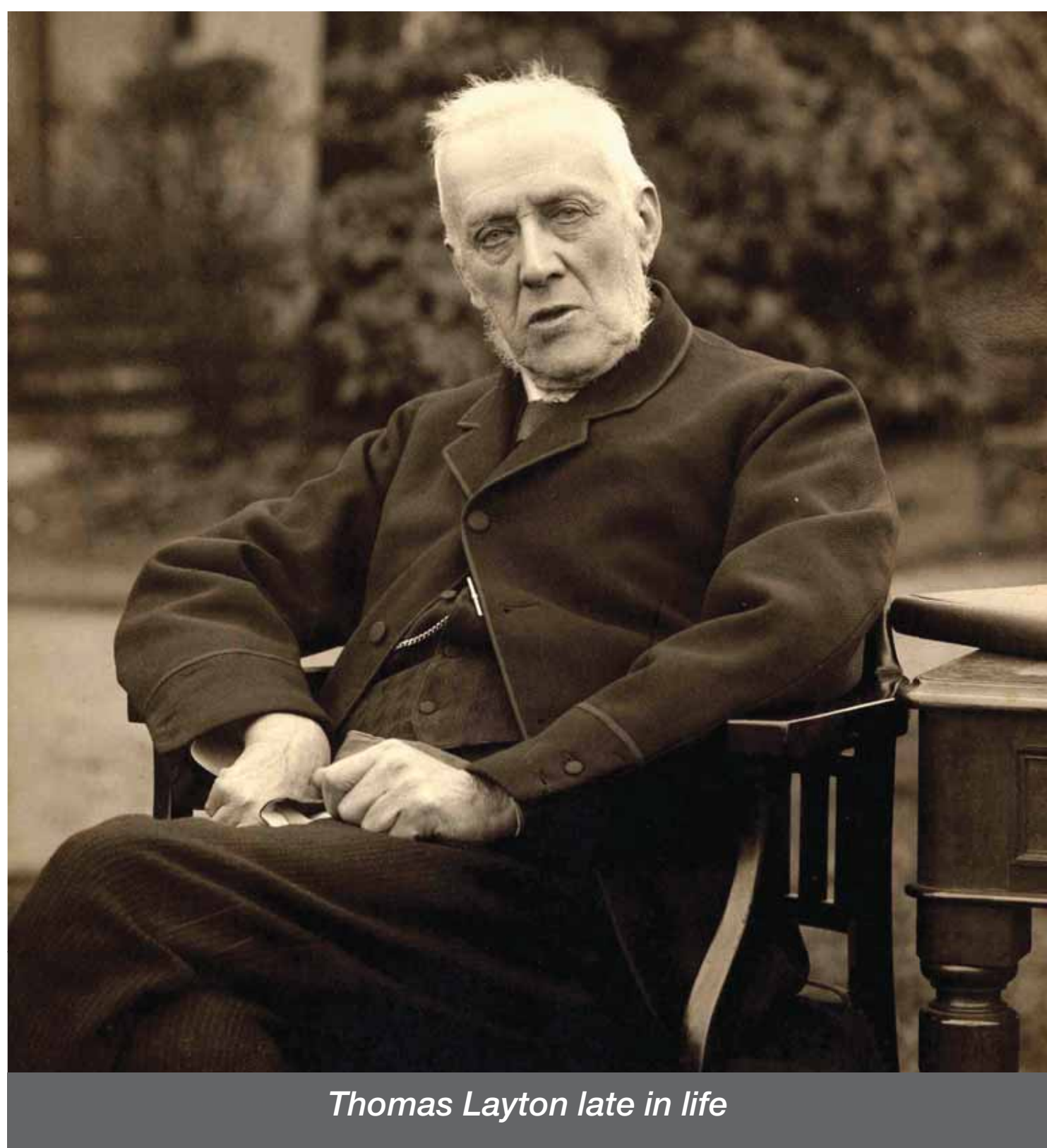


# Who was Thomas Layton?

## Thomas Layton FSA (1819-1911)



Thomas Layton FSA



Thomas Layton late in life

Thomas Layton was a keen antiquarian and obsessive collector of books and all things old from an early age. He was especially interested in local items and things from the Thames, but collected from all over the world. He was a successful business man and served Brentford as elected councillor for over 50 years. He deserves to be celebrated as a local benefactor and a great Brentford character.

Layton took over his father's businesses as a coal merchant and lighterman - a 'lighter' is a an unpowered flatbottom boat for carrying heavy loads especially on canals. Lightermen worked on these boats. Layton was also involved in dredging the river commercially.

At the age of 53 he married Alice Fullard. They had no children and she died in 1888.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1868 and exhibited there a few times. His collection was highly regarded (and envied) by the learned men of the Society and long talked about after his death.

In old age Layton lived as a recluse at his home beside Kew Bridge. He continued to collect until his house and 30 outhouses in the garden were full. He died aged 92 on 4 September 1911.



Brentford Market and Kew Bridge Road c1892-3, Layton's House is on the left behind the trees



Layton and the Urban District Council c1894

As well as making provision for a museum in his house, Layton left money to St George's Church, his housekeeper, workers' charities, hospitals and animal sanctuaries.

Layton lives on in his collection and its legacy for the people of Brentford.



# Who was Thomas Layton?

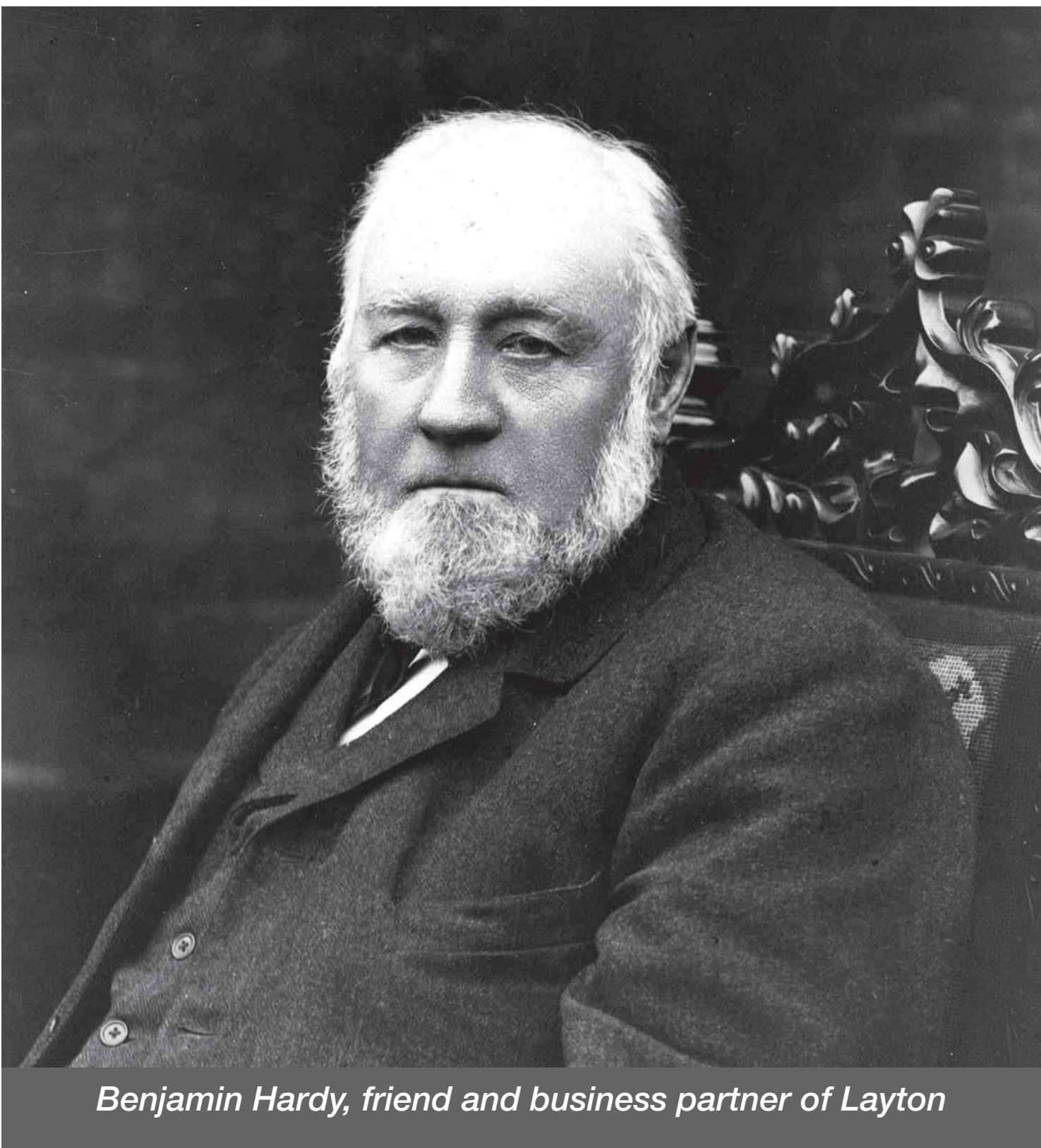
## Poor Law & Charity Work



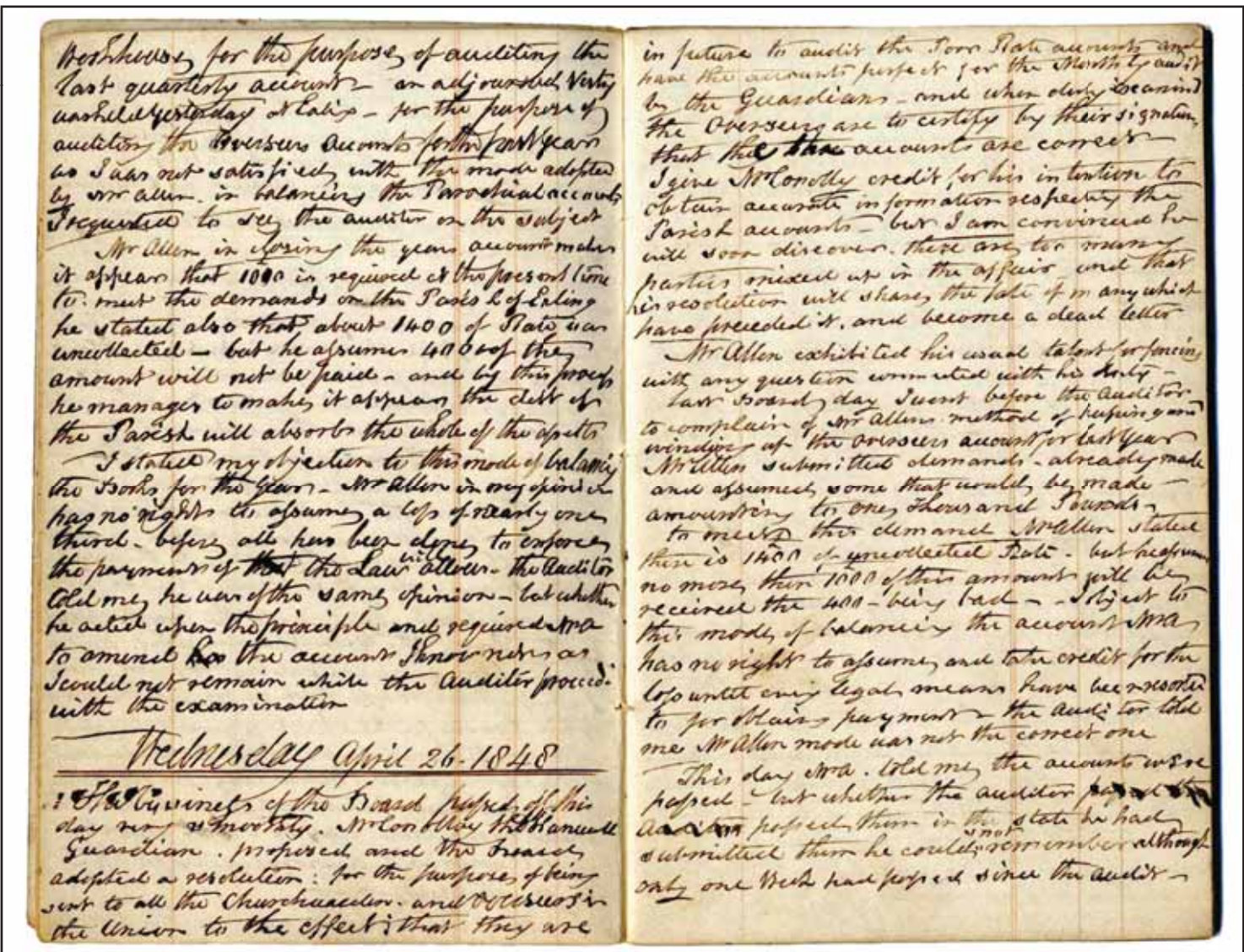
Thomas Layton FSA

In 1836 as a consequence of earlier national legislation ten local parishes combined to form the Brentford Poor Law Union. From as early as 1837 Layton was a member of the Board of Guardians in charge of poor relief and by 1841 one of the three Guardians of the Brentford Union. It is this board which helped build a new Brentford Union workhouse on the east side of Twickenham Road at Isleworth in 1837-8 and a Brentford Union Infirmary in 1894.

Between 1895 and 1902, the old cruciform workhouse was totally rebuilt with an infirmary being erected on the site of the previous workhouse, and a new much larger workhouse erected to the south-east. The new buildings were based on a pavilion block layout designed by WH Ward of Birmingham.



Benjamin Hardy, friend and business partner of Layton

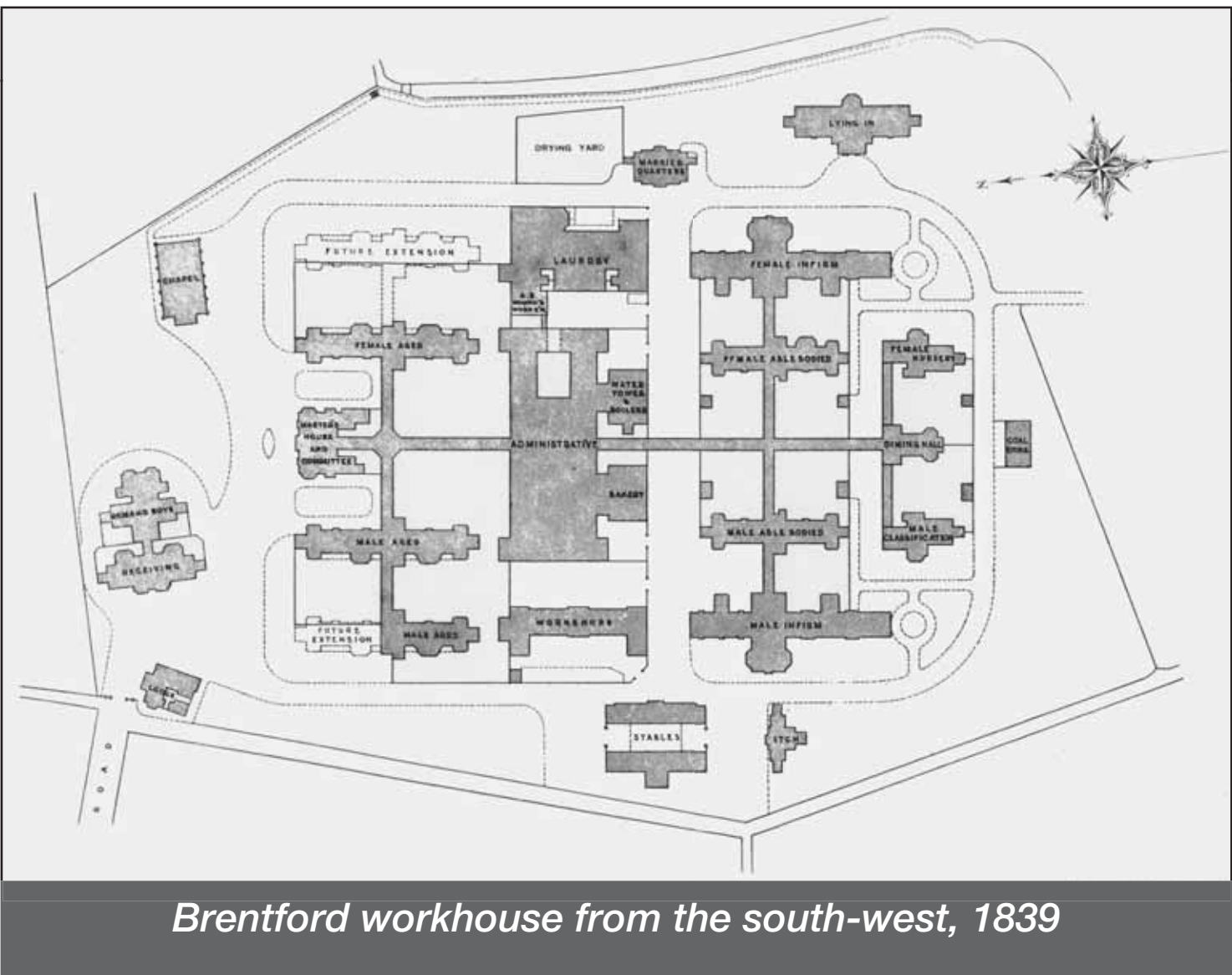


26 April 1848 entry in Layton's diary

From around 1930, the infirmary part of the site became known as the West Middlesex Hospital. Between 1931 and 1948 it was the West Middlesex County Hospital, and then reverted back to the West Middlesex Hospital. Unfortunately most of the old buildings have now been demolished but as recently as 2001 the male and female infirmaries at the south of the site were still in use.

Layton took his duties as Guardian very seriously. An entry in one of his diaries from 26 April, 1848, is full of his criticism of his fellow Guardians. Layton writes: "Mr Allen exhibited his usual talents for fencing with any question connected with his duty."

On another occasion he was concerned about the loss of his hearing following an illness. He was worried that he would not be able to do his job properly, but his hearing soon returned. Layton's business partner and friend, Benjamin Hardy served as Chairman of the Board of Guardians for many years.



Brentford workhouse from the south-west, 1839



Brentford workhouse block plan, 1902 ©Peter Higginbotham

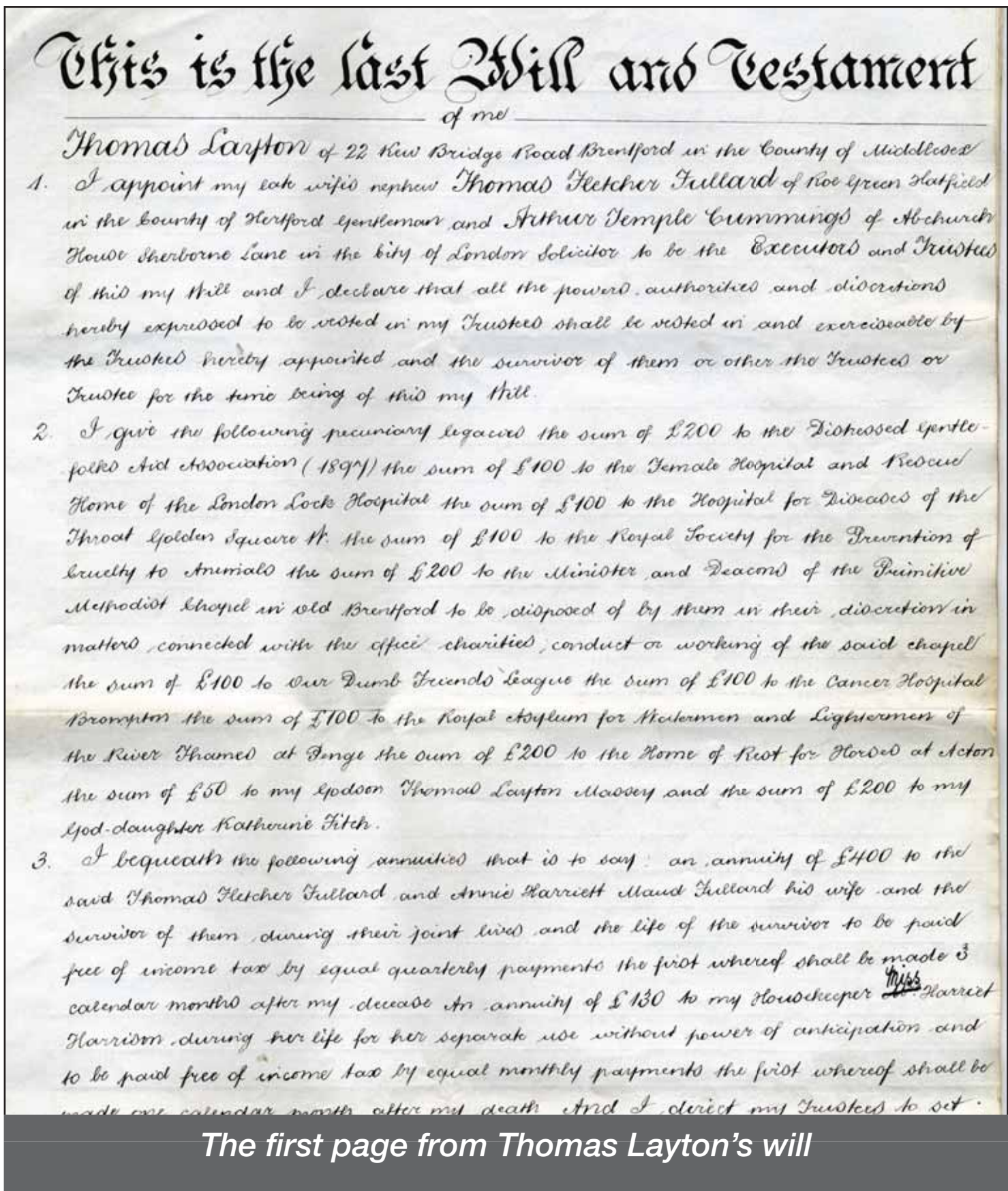


# Who was Thomas Layton?

## The Will & correspondence



Thomas Layton FSA



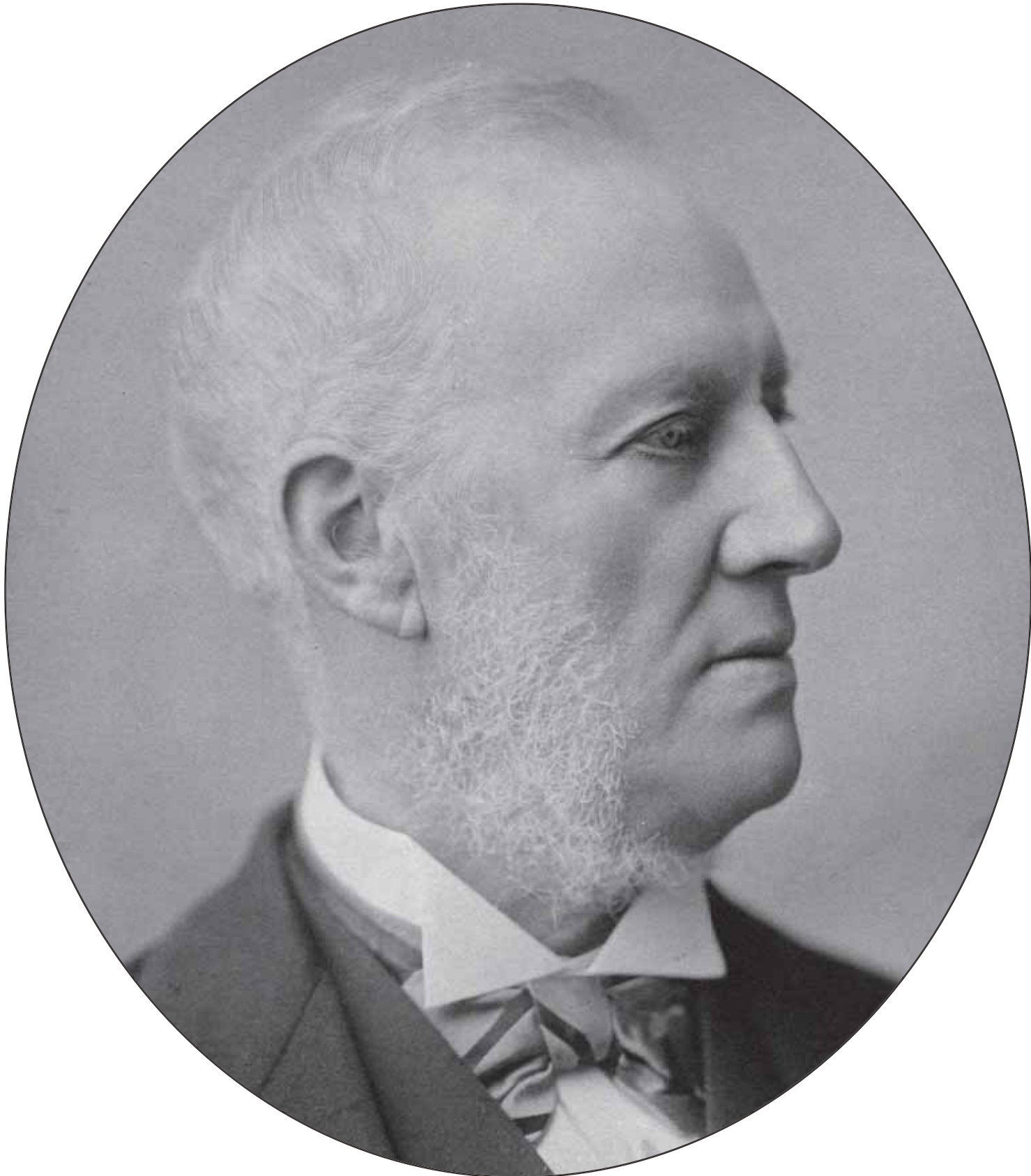
The first page from Thomas Layton's will

The correspondence also shows that Layton was not afraid of mixing business with pleasure. Two letters dated some years apart from Charles Tupper, the secretary of the Society of Antiquaries, indicate that Layton was supplying coal to the Society. While Tupper praised Layton both times on objects he had brought in, he takes the opportunity to complain and berate Layton about the poor quality and sulphurous coal that had been supplied.

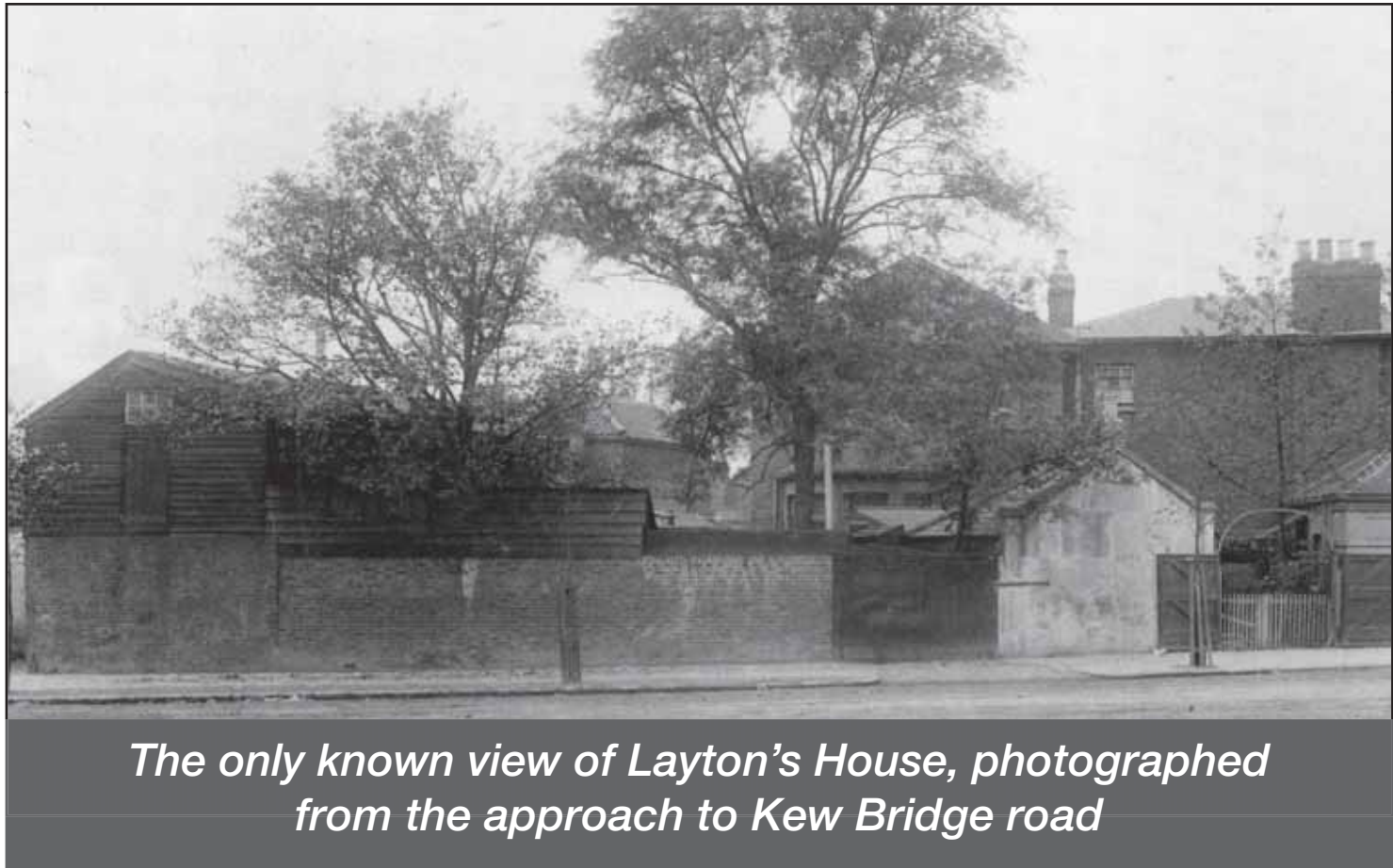
Thomas Layton's will tells us the most. Apart from annuities to his nephew, Thomas Fletcher Fullard, he gave a number of small legacies to various Charities of London and Brentford including: the Distressed Gentlefolks Aid Association, the Royal Asylum for Watermen and Lightermen of the River

Thames and the RSPCA. He even provided a pension for his housekeeper, Miss Harriet Harrison who was allowed to live in the house for a year after Layton's death.

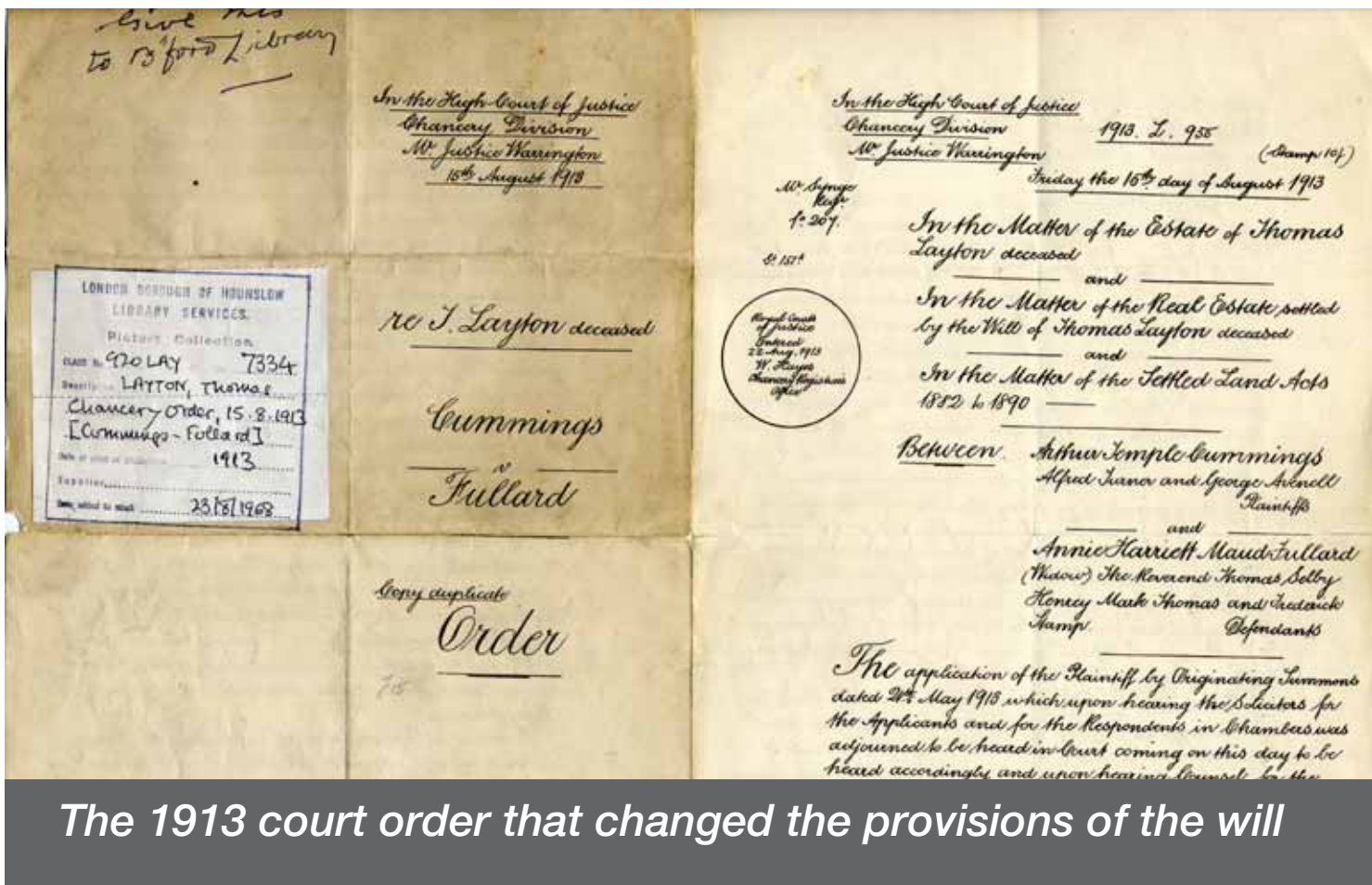
The will sets out his provisions for a Museum for his antiquities, placing the sum of £20,000 and all his objects under Trust for the people of Brentford. The Trustees were given various powers to appoint curators and look after the collection, but Layton stipulated that children under the age of 18 were not to be permitted - a provision which is ignored today! Layton perhaps made a mistake in allowing his nephew and wife to stay in a house already full of objects and books. There was no room for both the Museum and the Fullards which led to the will being contested. The objects and books were rescued by Fred Turner, the local librarian and Layton's wish to have a Museum in his house was never fulfilled.



An undated portrait of Thomas Layton



The only known view of Layton's House, photographed from the approach to Kew Bridge road

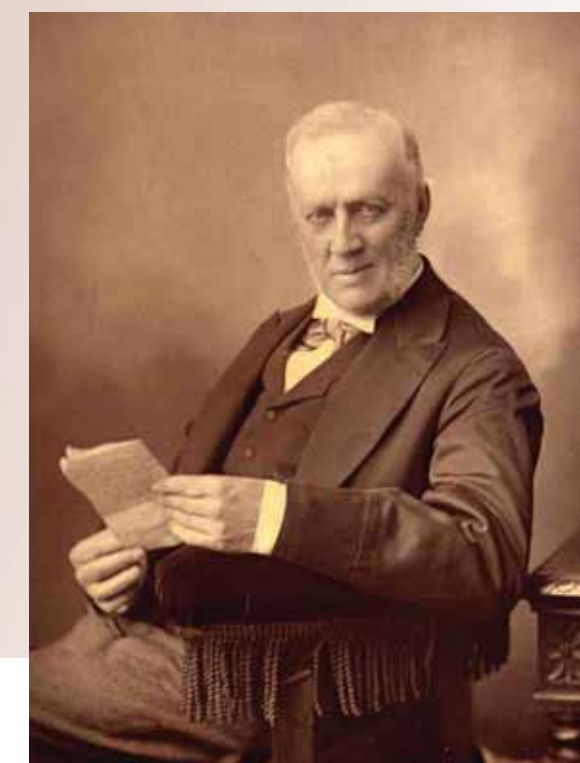


The 1913 court order that changed the provisions of the will



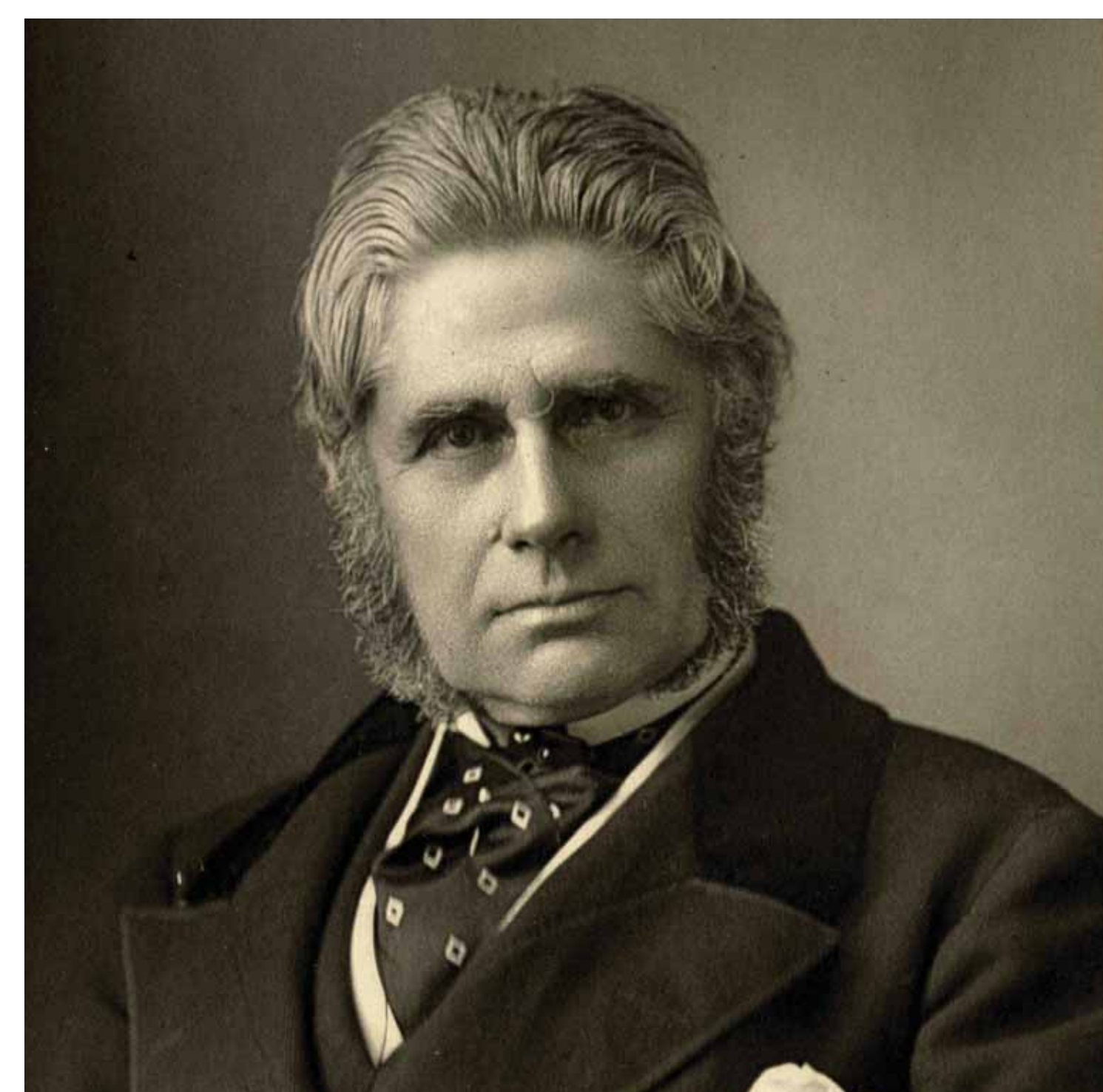
# Who was Thomas Layton?

## The Society of Antiquaries

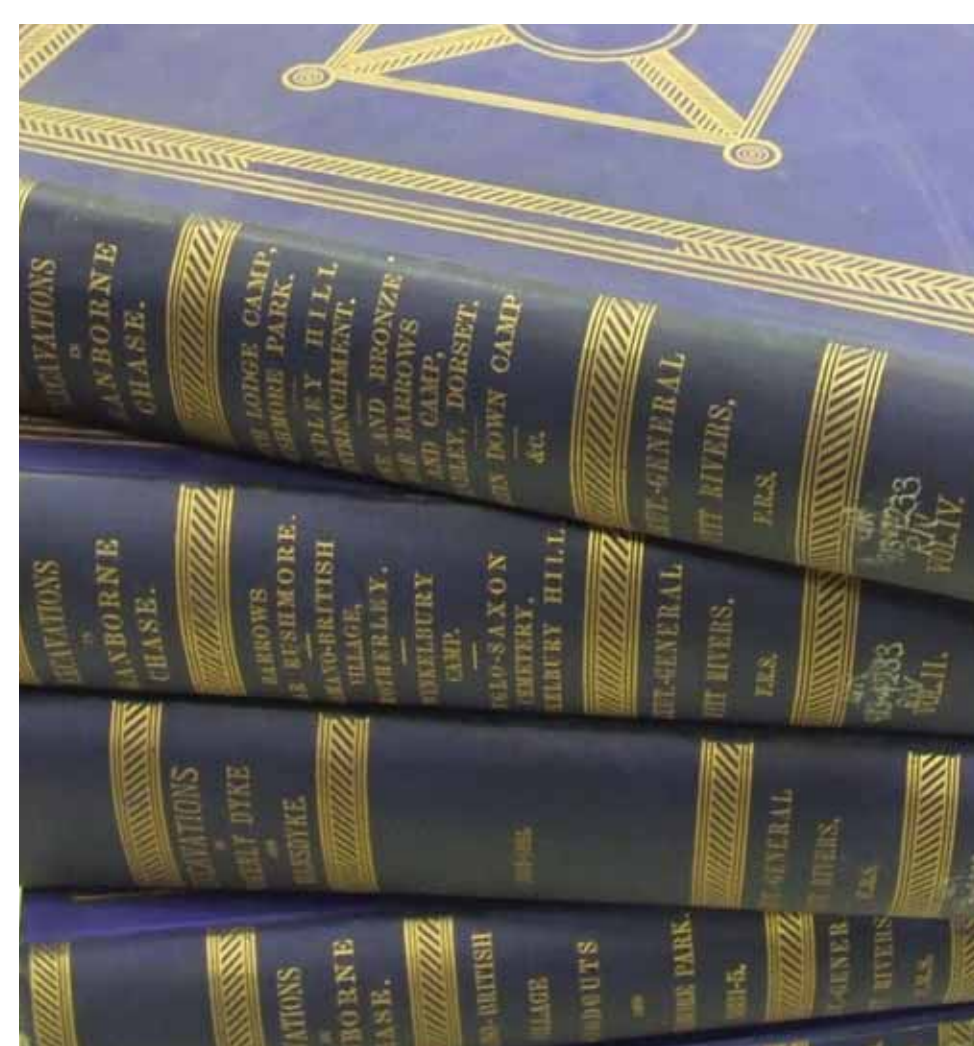


Thomas Layton FSA

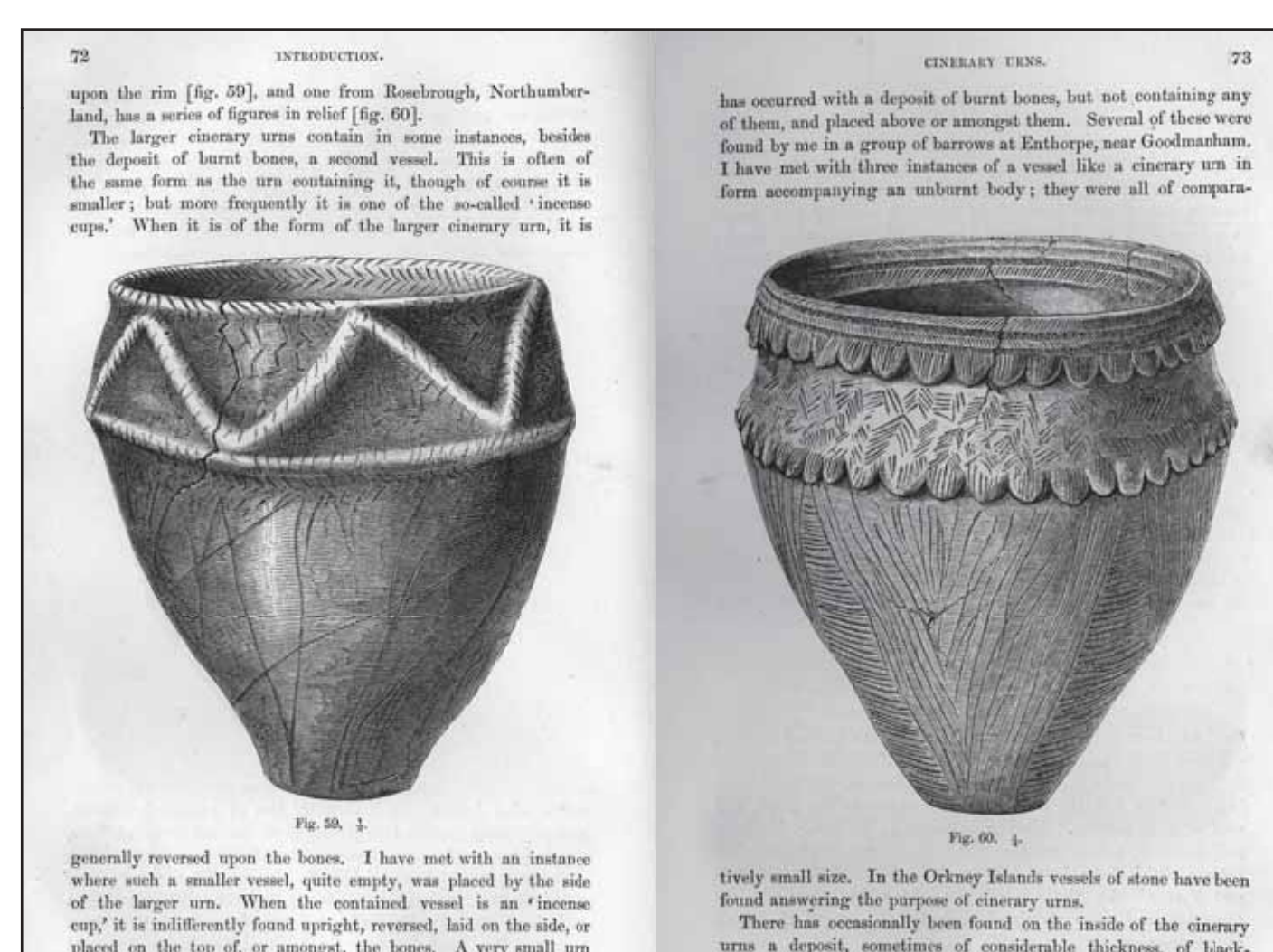
Thomas Layton was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries at Somerset House in 1868, after many years of attendance, earning the right to put FSA after his name. He was to remain an active member until his death in 1911 and he is mentioned many times in the minutes of the Society. He associated with some of the great names of early British archaeology when the discipline was not quite a science. His collection was much admired and envied by other members which included scholars and archaeologists now regarded as pioneers of the field including Charles Hercules Read, Augustus W Franks, General Augustus Henry Lane-Fox Pitt Rivers, Canon Greenwell, John Evans and Charles Tupper.



General Augustus Henry Lane-Fox Pitt Rivers, FSA, FRS, one of the 'fathers' of modern archaeology



The volumes of Pitt Rivers' 'Excavations in Branborne Chase'

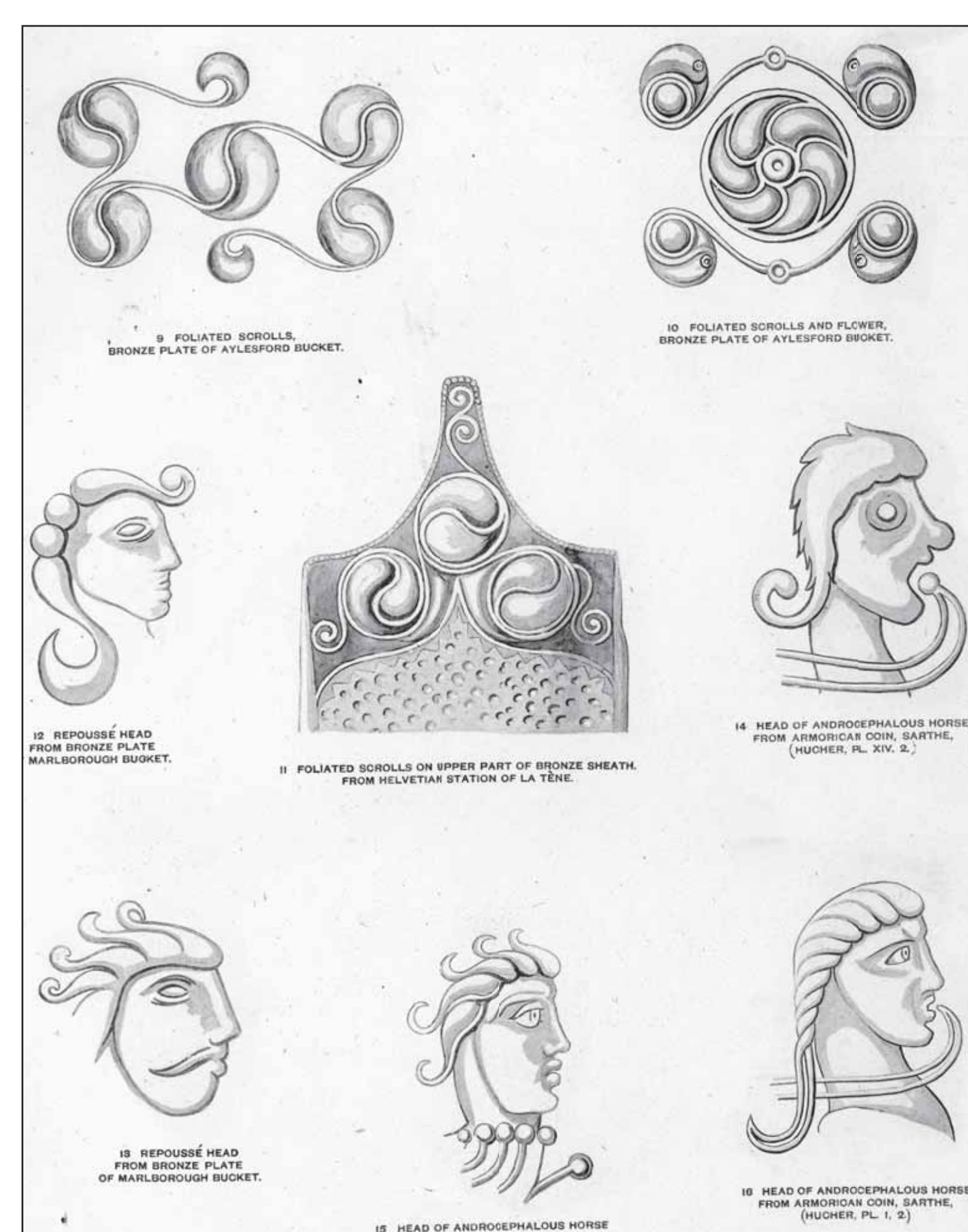


A page from Pitt Rivers' "Excavations in Branborne Chase (Book 7414)"

Although he brought many objects to show to other members and contributed to exhibitions, he never lectured or wrote articles about his finds, preferring to leave that to others. Many of the objects now on display at the Museum of London and the Roman sword now at the British Museum were first displayed at the Society.

Even after Layton's death his collection was frequently talked about at the Society. Members like Read had always hoped the collection would go to the British Museum and was disappointed that Layton gave it to the people of Brentford. Read described the collection in 1911 as "every conceivable thing" and "the most confusing private museum that it has ever been my fortune to see." As late as 1918 Layton's collection was still being talked about at the Society as a wonderful thing and many members had been to see objects arranged by Fred Turner at Brentford library.

The Society of Antiquaries carries on its work today at its present home at Burlington House, Piccadilly - and the library there can be visited by appointment. The Society has existed in its current form since 1751, with origins which are much older. Its members are limited by Royal Charter and now, as in Layton's day, it is only possible to attend a meeting if invited by an existing Fellow of the Society.



A page from an article entitled "Late-Celtic Urn-field at Aylesford, Kent" by John Evans, FSA from Archaeologia: miscellaneous tracts relating to Antiquity, second series volume ii, 1890 (Book 12315)



# Who was Thomas Layton?

## Timeline



Thomas Layton FSA

| DATE       | LAYTON   | BRENTFORD  | LONDON & ELSEWHERE   |
|------------|--|--|--|
| 1819       | Thomas Layton born on 18 May, Strand on the Green  |  | Queen Victoria born on 24 May, Kensington Palace   |
| 1820s -30s |  | Gasworks built   |  |
| 1825       | The Layton family move to 22 Kew Bridge Road   | Water pumping to West London begins from the Grand Junction Waterworks Company (now Kew Bridge Steam Museum)   | George Stephenson's first public steam railway runs from Stockton to Darlington  |
| c1837      | Becomes a member of the Brentford Board of Guardians   |  | Queen Victoria comes to the throne, aged 18  |
| 1838       |  |  | National Gallery opens   |
| 1840       | Churchwarden of St George's  |  | Queen Victoria marries Prince Albert, Duke of Saxony, Prince of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha  |
| 1841       | Great flood in Brentford, Layton is one of the three Guardians of the Brentford Union who visit victims immediately afterwards in order to offer aid                                     |  | Isambard Kingdom Brunel's Great Western Railway completed between London and Bristol   |
| 1843       |  |  | Nelson's Column completed,Trafalgar Square   |
| 1848       | Keeps a diary from April to July covering meetings of the Board of Guardians   |  | First railway bridge across the Thames at Richmond   |
| 1849       |  | Brentford station and first railway line is opened to London Waterloo  | Cholera epidemic; 14,137 die in London   |
| 1851       |  |  | The Great Exhibition opens on 1 May in Hyde Park   |
| 1853       |  |  | Start of the Crimean War; ends in 1856   |
| 1857       |  |  | Queen Victoria opens South Kensington museum (later known as the Victoria & Albert Museum). Indian Mutiny leads to British government takeover of East India Company, formalising the British Empire |
| 1858       |  | First newspaper to cover Brentford, the Middlesex Chronicle begins   | Work begins by Joseph Bazalgette on a new sewerage system, completed 1868  |
| 1859       |  | Brentford Dock (designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel) opens   | Charles Darwin's On the Origin of Species is published   |
| 1863       |  |  | First underground railway,The Metropolitan line opens  |
| 1868       | Election to Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries   |  | St Pancras station opens   |
| 1870       | Father (Thomas Jewell Layton) dies aged 87   |  |  |
| 1871       |  |  | Royal Albert Hall opened by the Queen  |
| 1872       | Aged 53,Thomas Layton marries Alice Symonds (1833-1888) on 23 December at Islington Registry Office  |  |  |
| 1873       |  | Brentford was labelled 'stagnant and disgraceful' and,'the filthiest place in England' (Brentford Advertiser, Oct 1873). Kew Bridge freed from tolls                                     |  |
| 1874       |  | Brentford Local Board formed.The Board also take over the Brentford Volunteer Fire Brigade   |  |
| 1876       | Becomes chairman of Brentford's Local Board  |  | Alexander Graham Bell gives first public demonstration of the telephone  |
| 1877       |  | Drinking fountain installed at Kew Bridge by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association  | Serious flooding of the Thames occurs  |
| 1878       |  |  | The Salvation Army established   |
| 1879       |  |  | The Zulu War; battles of Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift in January   |
| 1883       |  | Brentford Sewage Pumping Station, Pump Alley built   | Brooklyn Bridge completed, New York  |
| 1886-7     |  | St George's 18th century church rebuilt on the original site   | Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887  |
| 1888       | Alice dies on 29 January of gallstones and cancer; buried 4 February at Ealing cemetery  | Flower, fruit and vegetable market established by a passing trader outside the Express Tavern, Kew Bridge  | Jack the Ripper stalks the East End of London  |
| 1893       |  | Market expands and moves to official site near railway line, Kew Bridge.   | Labour Party founded by Keir Hardie  |
| 1894       | Chairman of the Brentford Urban District Council   |  | Tower Bridge opens   |
| 1895       |  | Brentford Baths built, Clifden Road  |  |
| 1897       |  | New fire station building begins on Brentford High Street  | Opening of the Tate Gallery  |
| 1898       | New Brentford Fire station opens on the High Street (now a restaurant). Thomas Layton, recorded as Brentford Urban District Councillor; attends a celebratory dinner at the Castle Hotel | Floods wash away the single Brentford lock; a gauging lock is built soon after   | Waterloo & City line constructed. HG Wells writes <i>War of the Worlds</i>   |
| 1899       |  |  | The Boar War starts, ends in 1902  |
| 1900       |  | Lines for electric trams are laid in Brentford High Street   |  |
| 1901       |  |  | Queen Victoria dies; Edward VII comes to the throne  |
| 1903       |  | Present Kew Bridge constructed and opened by King Edward VII   | First powered flight achieved by the Wright brothers near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina   |
| 1904       |  | Public library opened by its benefactor Andrew Carnegie  |  |
| 1906       |  | Large covered market hall is opened on the site now occupied by the Fountain Leisure Centre and Capital Interchange Way  | The London tube network expands rapidly  |
| 1909       |  | Brentford Bridge widened.The Brentford Monument unveiled in Ferry Lane (now outside the County Court in Brentford High Street) is constructed from two pillars taken from the old bridge | The painter William Hogath's house is opened as a museum after being restored and refurnished by Colonel Shipway   |
| 1911       | Dies 4 September in Brentford, aged 92, buried in Ealing cemetery with his wife  |  | First London aerodrome established at Hendon   |
| 1913       |  | New tower added to St George's church, partially paid for by the £1,000 bequeathed by Thomas Layton in his will for a peal of bells  |  |



# *What happened next?*

## The Layton Museum Trust



Books in the Layton Collection

On his death Layton left £20,000 and his collection to the people of Brentford. The Layton Memorial and Museum Trust was born. It was to form a museum in his house at 22 Kew Bridge Road. His dream of a museum in his memory was never quite realised because his will was too complex. Much of the collection, however, survives today.

The will allowed Layton's nephew and family to live in his home after his death, preventing it from being used as the Museum.



Brentford Library shortly after 1905, Fred Turner is standing in the doorway



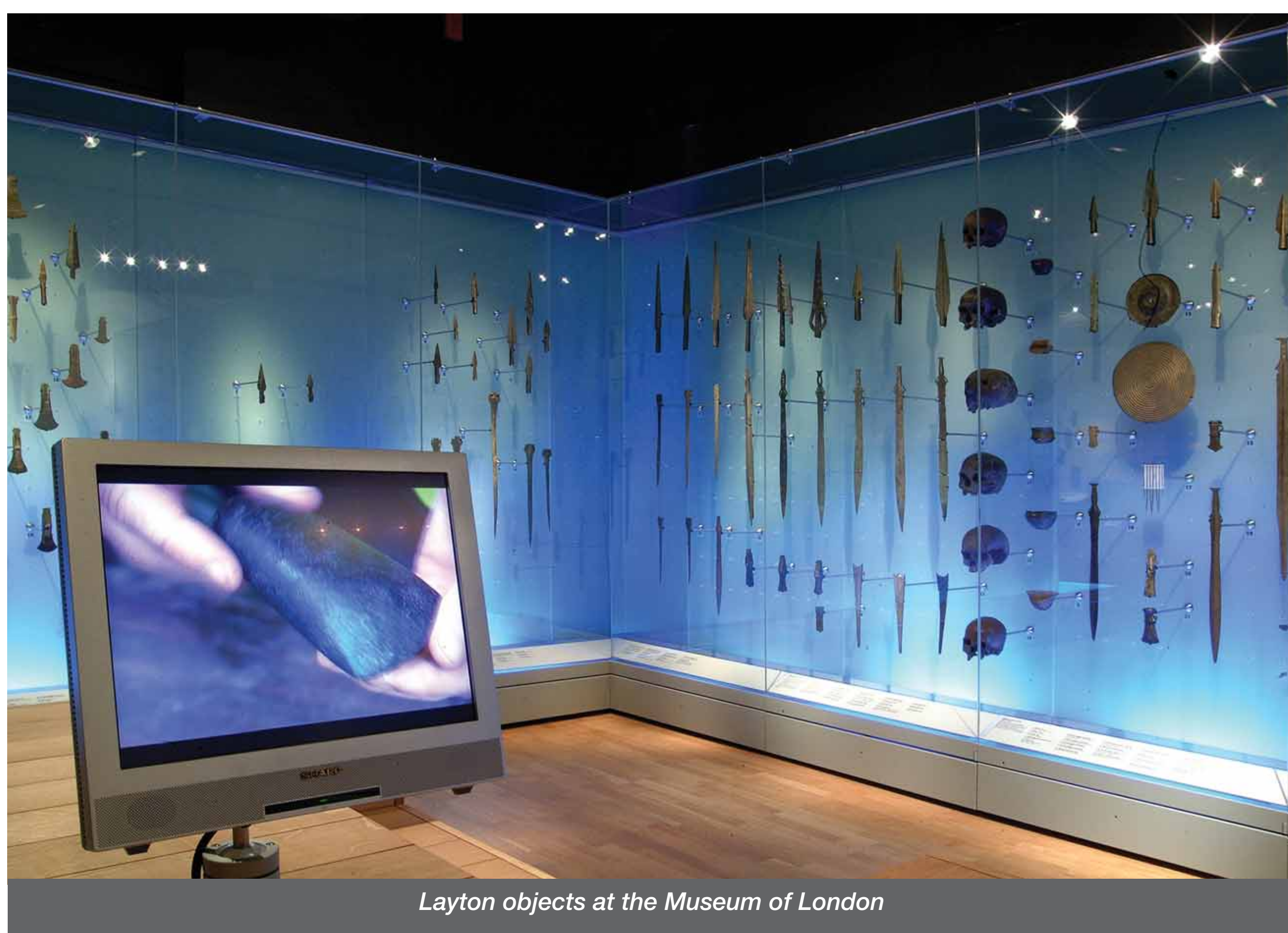
A book needing restoration

A 1913 Court Order allowed the collection to be removed and stored at Brentford Library. Fred Turner, the librarian, catalogued the collection. Under his care Layton objects and books were displayed at Brentford Library until he retired in the 1930s. In 1914 an auction, lasting some days, was held at Layton's house when the remaining curios, furniture and other odds and ends were sold.

In the 1950s temporary homes and poor storage led to fears for the collection's future. In 1959 most of the archaeological and ethnographical items, along with the coins and medals, were moved to what is now the

Museum of London where many of Layton's prehistoric objects can be seen today. Some objects were also passed to Gunnersbury Park Museum at Brentford.

The books in particular suffered damage and loss during the 1970s and '80s. After a local campaign, a permanent home for the books, prints and paintings was provided at the new library in the Treaty Centre, Hounslow in 1988. Restoration began soon after and continues. The Layton Memorial and Museum Trust continues its work today to realise Layton's dream.



Layton objects at the Museum of London

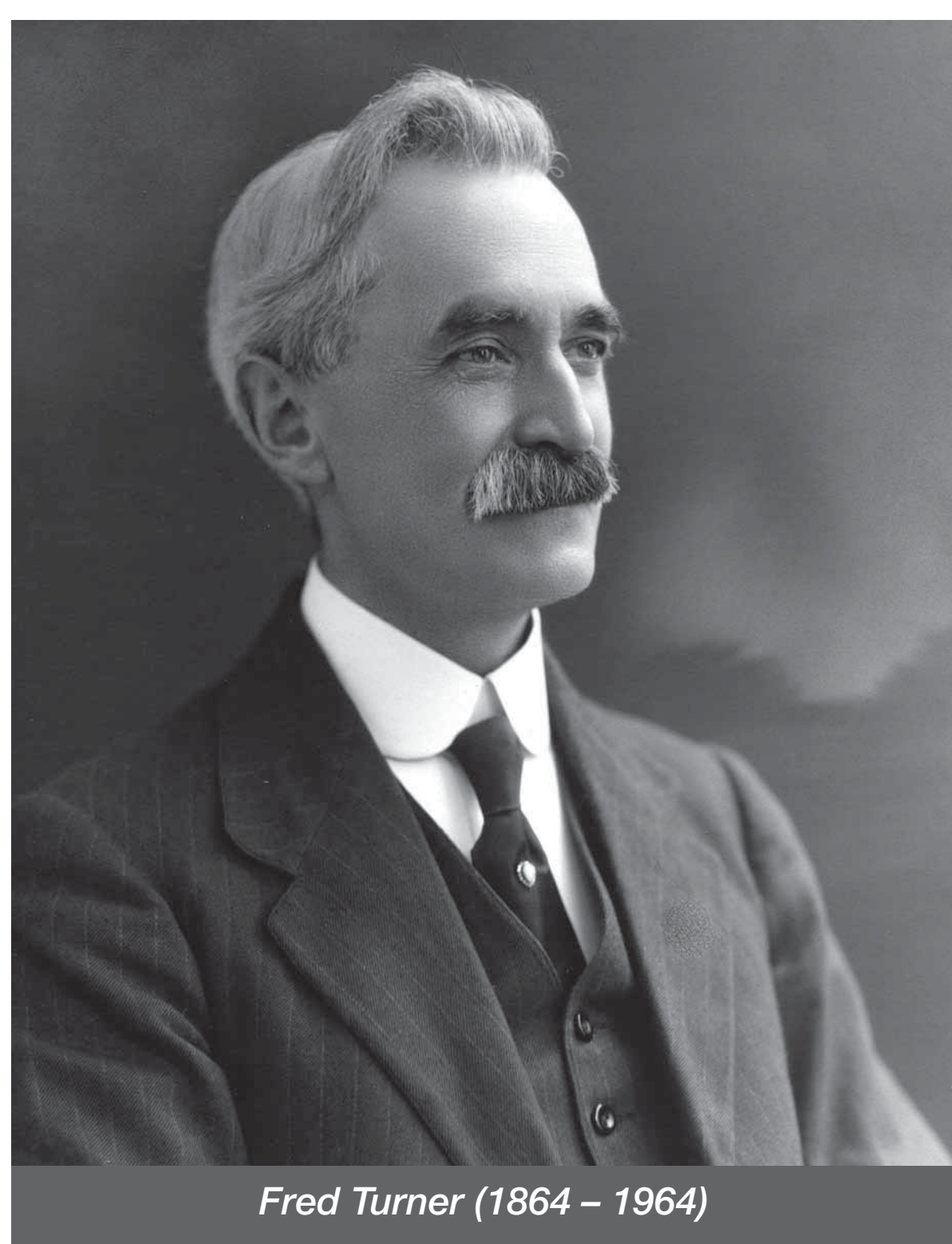


# What happened next?

## Fred Turner (1864 -1963)



Books in the Layton Collection



Fred Turner (1864 – 1964)

| Accession No. | Date of Acquisition | Author                | Title                     | Class. | No. of Vols. | Bound in |
|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------|--------------|----------|
| 1618          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |
| 1619          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |
| ✓ 1620        | July/50             | Chadwick, David (J.)  | Life of Thomas Chadwick   | 488    | 1            | 1812     |
| ✓ 1621        | Sept/14             | " : Gregory (A.)      | Life of Thomas Chadwick   | 488    | 1            | 1789     |
| 1622          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |
| ✓ 1623        | Sept/14             | Chadwick, Andrew (W.) | Life of Andrew Chadwick   | 488    | 2            | 1803     |
| ✓ 1624        | "                   | " : Ford (H.)         | Life of Andrew Chadwick   | 488    | 1            | 1810     |
| 1625          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |
| 1626          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |
| ✓ 1627        | Sept/14             | Chadwick, Thomas (J.) | Life of Sir John Chadwick | 488    | 1            | 1795     |
| 1628          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |
| ✓ 1629        | July/50             | Chadwick, David (A.)  | Life of Thomas Chadwick   | 488    | 1            | 1809     |
| 1630          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |
| ✓ 1631        | Sept/14             | Chadwick, David (A.)  | Life of Thomas Chadwick   | 488    | 3            | 1795     |
| 1632          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |
| ✓ 1633        | Sept/14             | Chadwick, David (A.)  | Life of Thomas Chadwick   | 488    | 3            | 1801     |
| 1634          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |
| ✓ 1635        | Sept/14             | Chadwick, David (A.)  | Life of Thomas Chadwick   | 488    | 1            | 1807     |
| 1636          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |
| ✓ 1637        | Sept/14             | Chadwick, David (A.)  | Life of Thomas Chadwick   | 488    | 2            | 1795     |
| 1638          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |
| ✓ 1639        | Sept/14             | Chadwick, David (A.)  | Life of Thomas Chadwick   | 488    | 2            | 1810     |
| 1640          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |
| 1641          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |
| 1642          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |
| ✓ 1643        | Sept/14             | Chadwick, David (A.)  | Life of Thomas Chadwick   | 488    | 4            | 1805     |
| ✓ 1644        | "                   | "                     | Life of Thomas Chadwick   | 488    | 1            | 1810     |
| ✓ 1645        | July/50             | "                     | Life of Thomas Chadwick   | 488    | 1            | 1810     |
| 1646          |                     |                       |                           |        |              |          |

A page from one of Turner's handwritten stock books of the Layton collection

Fred Turner was the librarian and curator at Brentford library and Museum from 1889 to 1930. He rescued and catalogued most of Layton's collection and his records are still used today. He helped to make sense of Layton's collection and wrote about him, Brentford and the library in his 1922 book "History & Antiquities of Brentford". Without Turner it is doubtful whether so much of Layton's collection would have survived.

Fred (Alfred) Turner was born in 1864 in Wolverhampton to working-class parents. He studied at Wolverhampton free library and joined the staff there aged just 15. He worked his way up, until 1889 when he was appointed librarian of Brentford after the local board and Thomas Layton voted in favour of a free library paid for out of the rates. On securing the position he promptly married his sweetheart Louisa Jane Holmes.

The first library was in Clifden House where the council offices were housed and opened in January 1890 with 2662 books. Under Turner the library grew in popularity and he was accomplished in acquiring free and cheap books, donations and introducing innovations such as evening lectures. Room at Clifden House was soon exhausted and various schemes were suggested to expand or move to new premises, but there was never enough money. In 1902 American millionaire and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie provided £5,000 for a new library, which was designed by Nowell Parr. It opened in 1904 when Layton presented a silver-gilt key to Mr Carnegie. By 1926 the library had 25,000 books and housed over 11,500 objects including most of Layton's collection of antiquities.

In his last annual report Turner expressed his pride in having reduced the Layton collection from a "bewildering state of confusion" to "order and usefulness". He died in 1963 aged 93.



Laying the foundation stone 1903, Miss Emily Stallabrass presented a bouquet to the Countess of Jersey. Layton and Turner can be seen in the crowd



The opening of the library 1904. Carnegie sits in the middle with Layton to his left; Turner stands behind



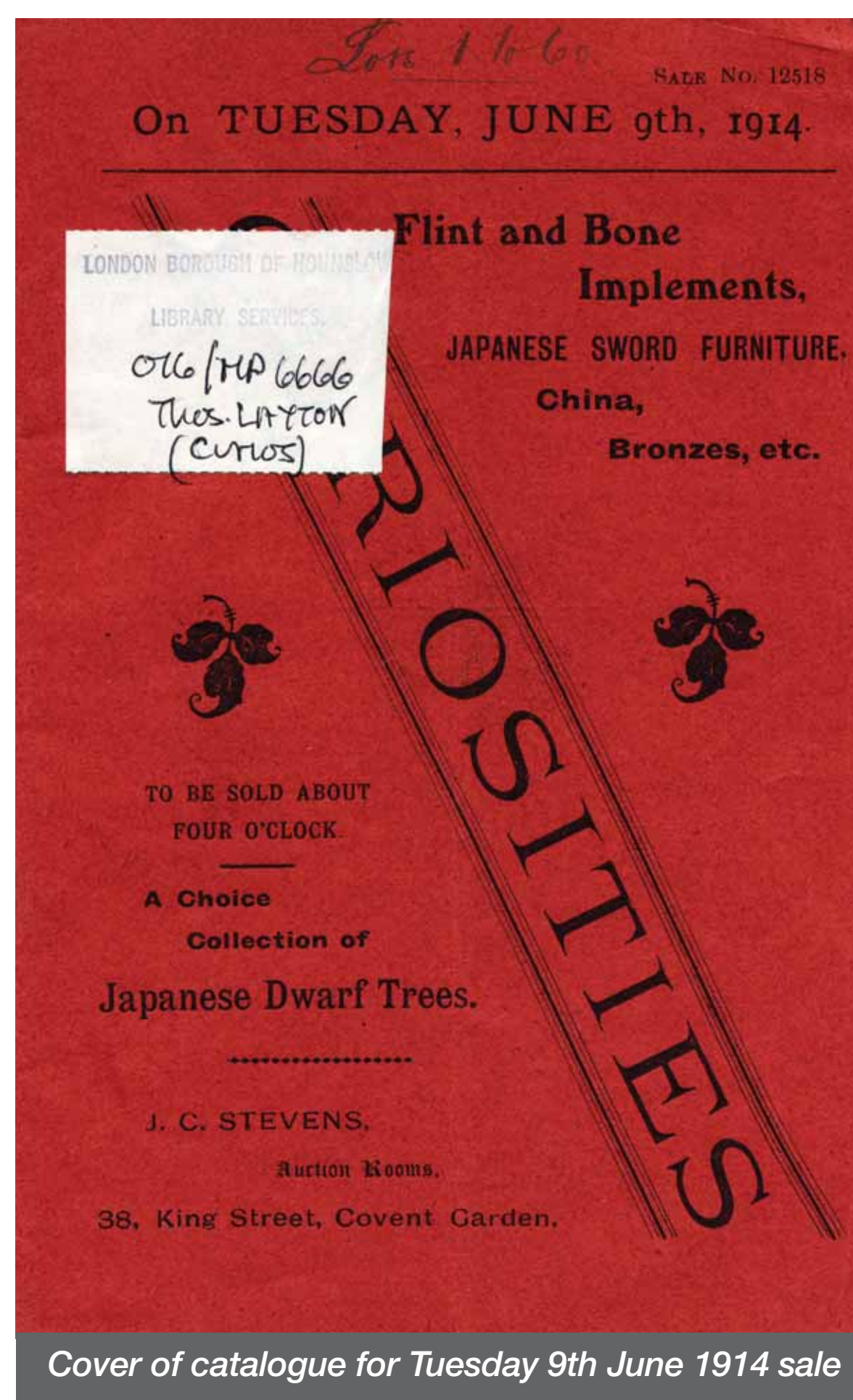
# *What happened next?*

## House Sales - 1914

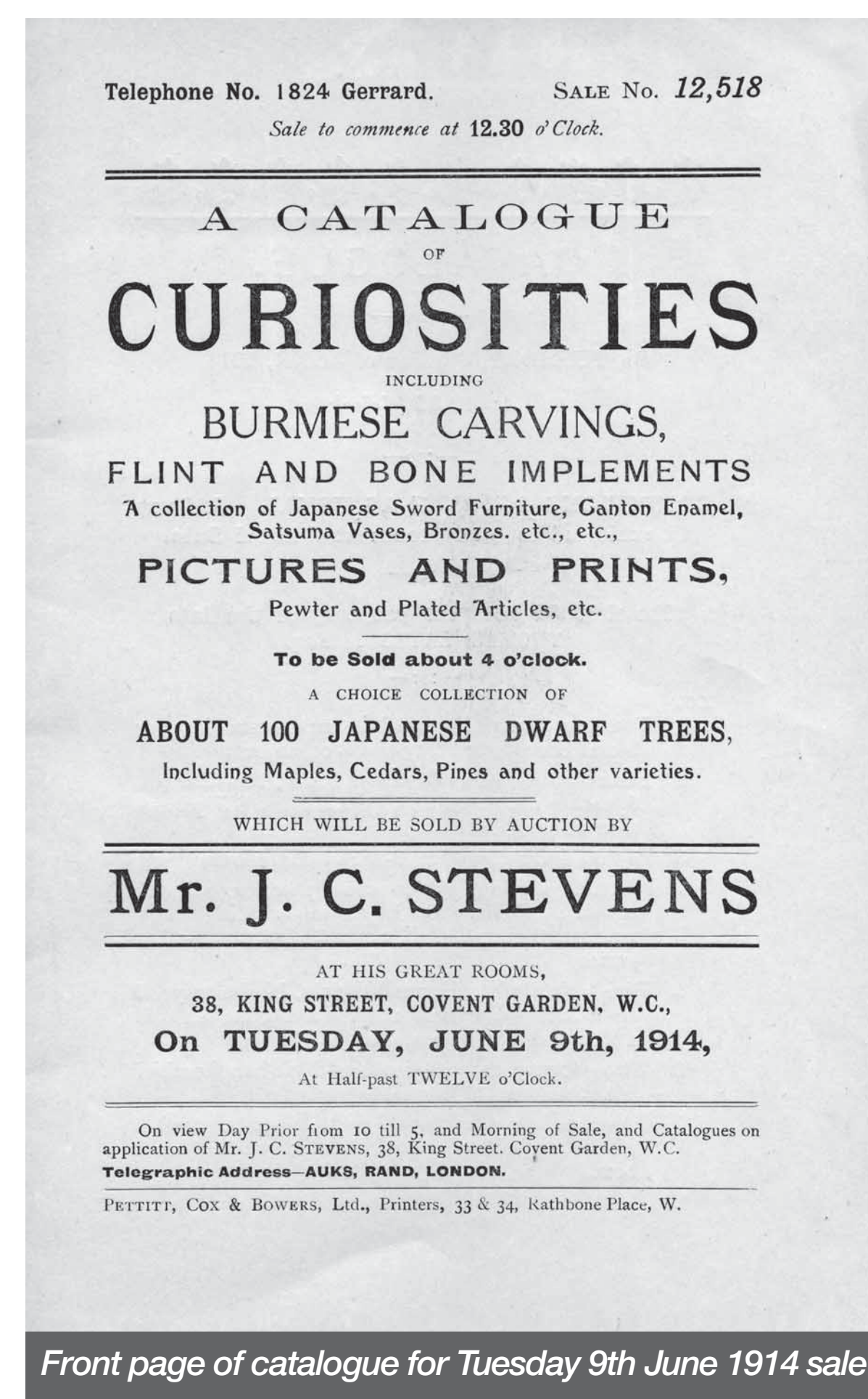


*Books in the Layton Collection*

Once Fred Turner had rescued what he considered the best items from Layton's house, the remainder were sold in a series of incredible auctions. Some took place at his home and others at auction rooms in London. The sale catalogues provide a fascinating insight into what Layton collected and owned and what unfortunately has been lost to us today. We do not know who bought these many thousands of objects hoarded by Layton. They may have been purchased by local people and still survive in Brentford today.



Cover of catalogue for Tuesday 9th June 1914 sale



Front page of catalogue for Tuesday 9th June 1914 sale

The Sales give an insight into Layton's world and what his home must have been like when he was alive. Here is a list of the kind of things that were sold. He seemed to have many items of each type. Do you collect any of these?

All kinds of furniture of all shapes and sizes, coal scuttles, oil paintings, tobacco pipes, Japanese china, fossils, book cases, pre-historic flint tools, card tables, specimen cabinets, shells, figurines, bone implements, engravings and prints, vases, books, polished minerals, hair pins, pewter plates, ink stands, carved ivory pieces, Japanese figurines and portraits, carved jade, porcelain of all types, glass ornaments, scientific instruments, snuff boxes, lacquer work, boar tusks, spoons, mirrors, fire-screens, axe-heads, cigar boxes, candlesticks, brass fittings, Roman lamps, chess pieces, tea trays, plaques, teapots, animal skins and other remains, fossil wood, polished stones, stuffed birds and mounted insects!

## THE AUCTIONS:

Layton House Sale, 22 Kew Bridge Road, conducted  
by Messrs.Allan Both & Dampney

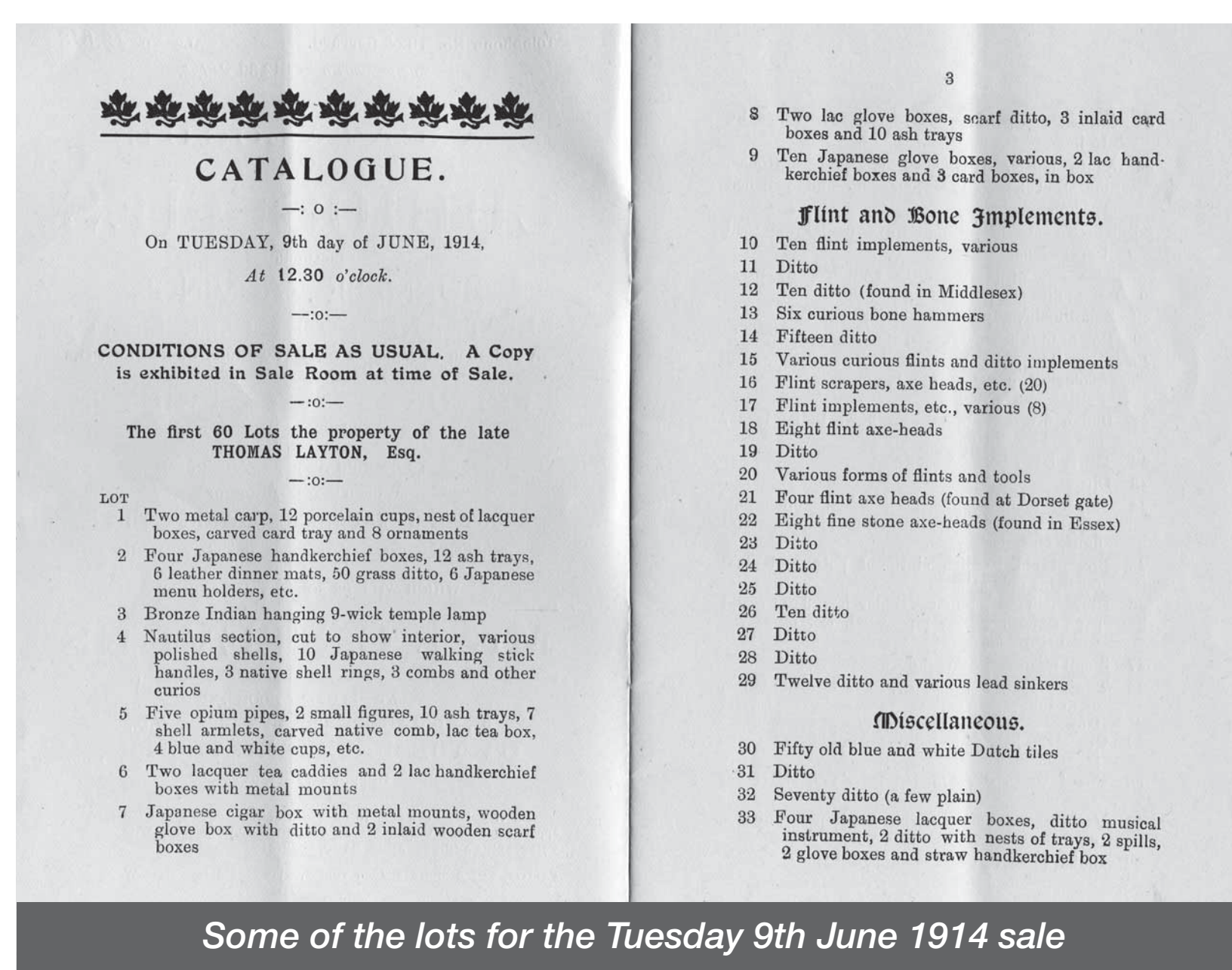
- Tuesday 26th and Wednesday 27th May 1914: some 500 lots, many thousands of objects, organised room by room

Messrs Hodgson & Co, of Chancery Lane London

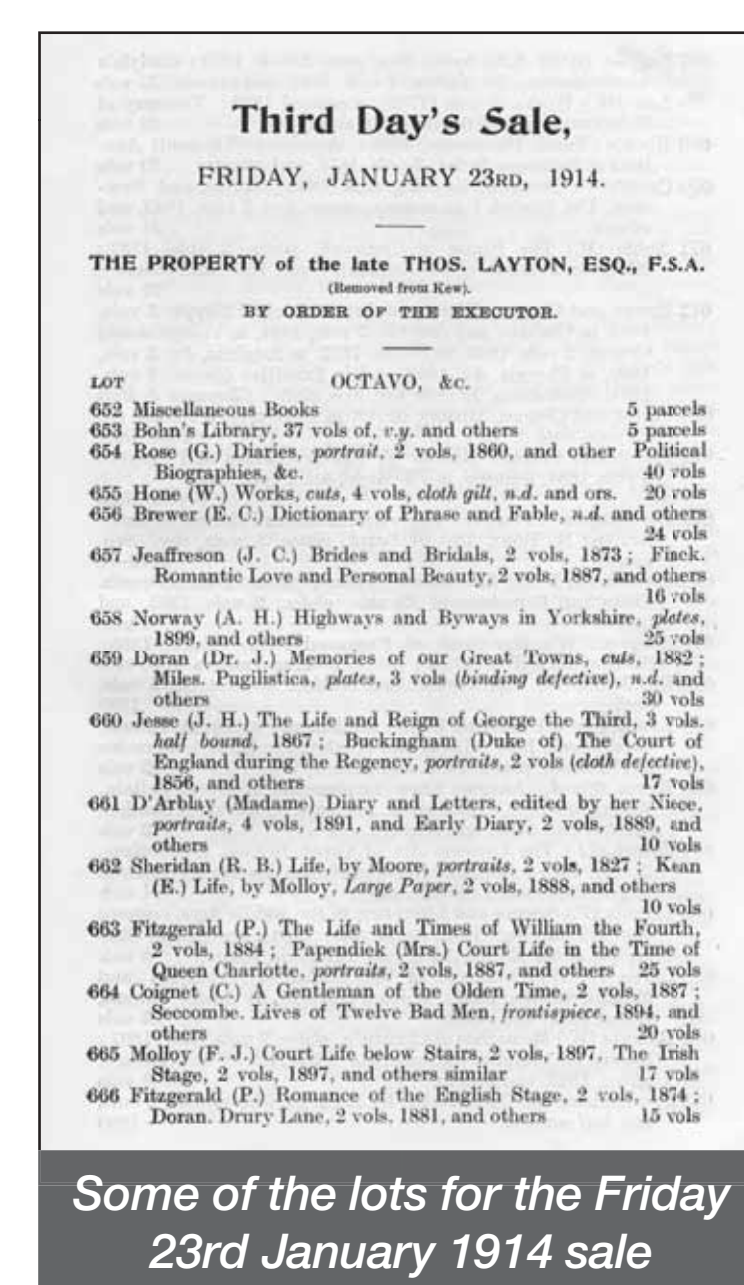
- Wednesday 21st January 1914: some 5,000 books and 2,000 prints

| C Stevens of King Street, Covent Garden

- Tuesday 5th May 1914: some 115 lots of porcelain, vases and similar items
- Tuesday 12th May 1914: 200+ lots of insects and stuffed animals
- Tuesday 19th May 1914: 76 lots of curios and engravings
- Tuesday 9th June 1914: 60 lots of porcelain, figurines, flints and bone artefacts
- Tuesday 7th July 1914: 47 lots of curios



*Some of the lots for the Tuesday 9th June 1914 sale*



*Some of the lots for the Friday  
23rd January 1914 sale*

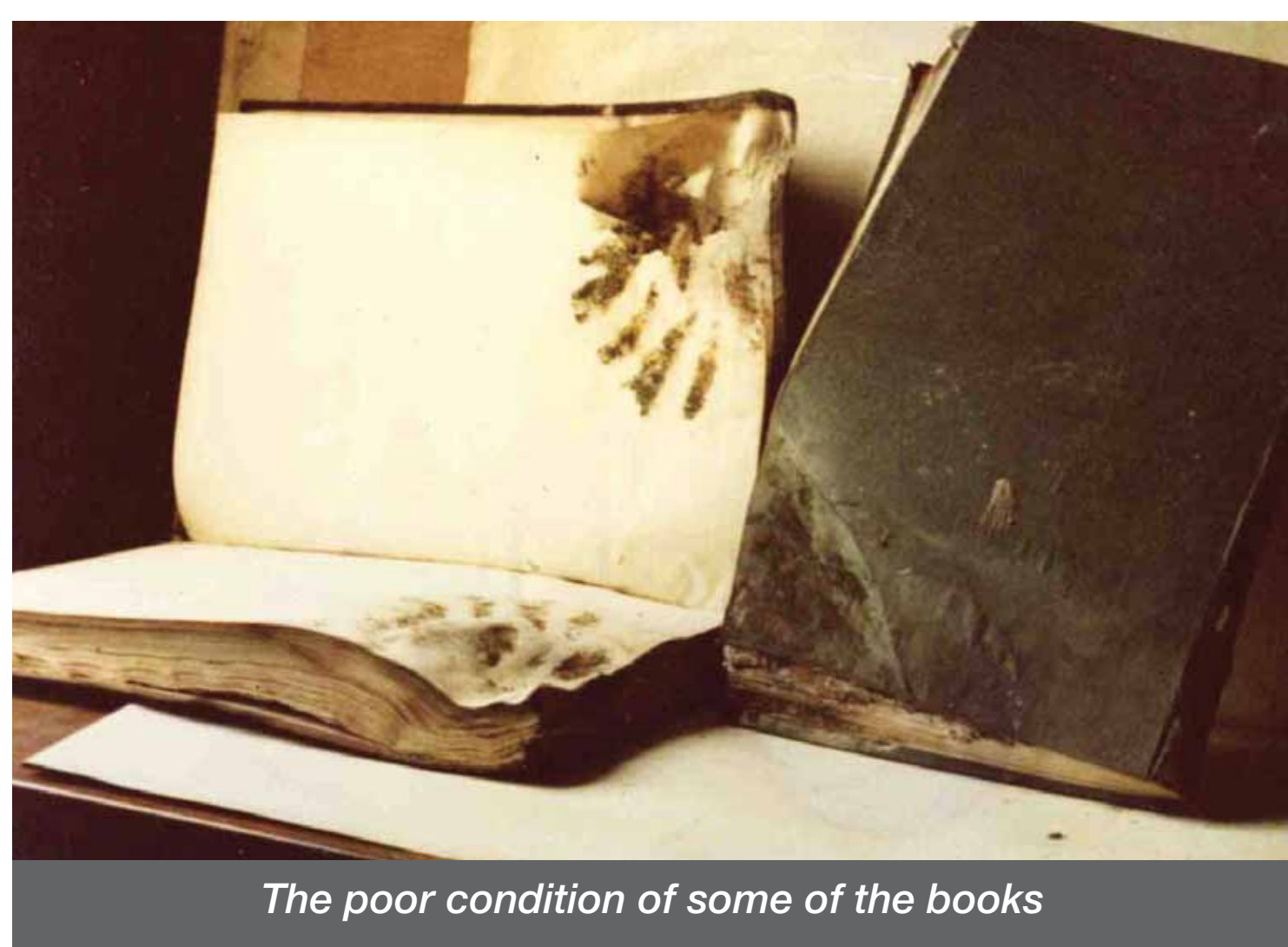


# *What happened next?*

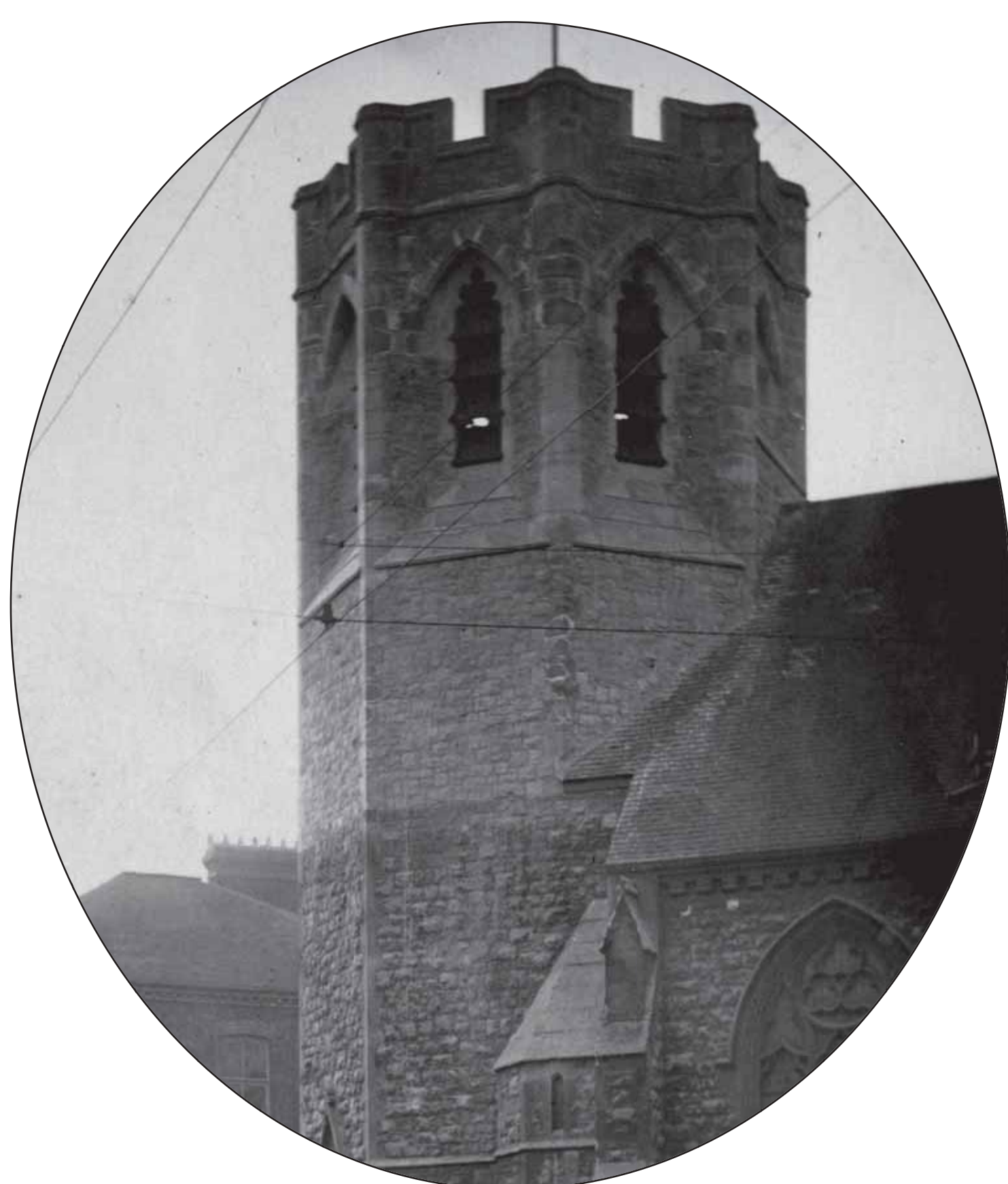
## Poor storage - 1940s to the 1970s



Books in the Layton Collection



The poor condition of some of the books



St. Georges Church in the 1920s or 1930s

St. George's Church proved not to be an ideal place for the books. It was cold and damp and subject to break-ins and vandalism.

In 1965, with the establishment of the London Borough of Hounslow, space in the former Muniment Room at the rear of Chiswick Town Hall was offered to accommodate the collection. The Trustees of the Thomas Layton Trust provided new shelving and two map chests for the prints and maps. The borough council provided the accommodation rent free, but the Trust paid the outgoings and Hounslow Library Service administered the Collection. The books, prints and maps were moved into the Muniment Room, with assistance of the library service, in 1969.

After the retirement of Fred Turner as Librarian of Brentford Library in August 1930 the collection continued to be housed there, at first occupying the upstairs lecture room, the children's and lending libraries as well as offices behind the scenes. It was not long before the collection suffered a series of moves and separations around Brentford, Chiswick and wider London.

During the Second World War, after minor bomb damage, some of the books and duplicate museum items were stored in the basement of Chiswick Library. In the early 1950s, when more space at Brentford Library was needed, the collection, together with the items in the basement at Chiswick Library were moved to a store room in the large mansion in Gunnersbury Park.

However by the end of the 1950s Gunnersbury Park Museum required the space for themselves and this part of the Collection was moved again into St. George's Church, Old Brentford, which in 1959 had been declared redundant. It was then that the archaeological collection together with other items and the coin collection were placed on long-term loan to the Museum of London. At the same time the prints and maps were returned to Brentford Library after conservation and stored in the upstairs lecture room, mounted on card and in polythene sleeves.



Condition of some of the books before they arrived at the Muniment Room, Chiswick



# *What happened next?*

## Poor storage - crisis of the 1970s and 1980s

The conditions in the Muniment Room at Chiswick Town Hall proved to be almost as bad as those in St. George's Church and crisis loomed. The central heating baked the books in the winter and cold damp summers caused the books to soak up moisture. The lighting was insufficient, broken windows allowed cats, birds and other vermin to gain entrance. There was not enough large shelving for the folio volumes and many were propped up on the floor, allowing further damage. However, in 1971 Miss Wyman, a retired Hounslow librarian, was able to catalogue the book collection, which took 15 months.

By 1977 Hounslow Council was planning to build a Social Services office on land occupied by the Muniment Room and the garages behind them. The Trustees were served six months notice to find alternative accommodation. This resulted in the oak shelving used when the collection was in Brentford Library and which was stored in garages behind the town hall, appearing for sale in one of the Chiswick High Road antique shops and the Trustees offering the books,



*Books in the Layton Collection*



*The books and prints at the Muniment Room at the rear of Chiswick Town Hall*



*Modern roller-racking at Hounslow LibraryCentre, housing some of the Layton Collection*



*The Muniment Room at the rear of the Chiswick Town Hall*



*Conditions were poor and damp*

maps and prints to “a seat of learning”, later identified as the University of East Anglia. There was a possibility that a few books on the local area would be allowed to remain.

Mr. James Wisdom of the Brentford and Chiswick Local History Society headed a campaign to raise the profile of the collection and to keep it in Brentford. This led to Hounslow Council agreeing to house the Layton collection of books, prints and maps in the planned new central library for Hounslow. In return, the Trust was to be reformed to give the Council the majority of Trustees.

The reformed Trust deed was agreed by the Charity Commissioners, Trustees and the London Borough of Hounslow in 1987 and in September 1988 the collection was moved into Hounslow LibraryCentre, its first purpose-built permanent home since Thomas Layton started collecting in the first half of the 19th century.



# What happened next?

## Conservation & Repair: sponsor a book

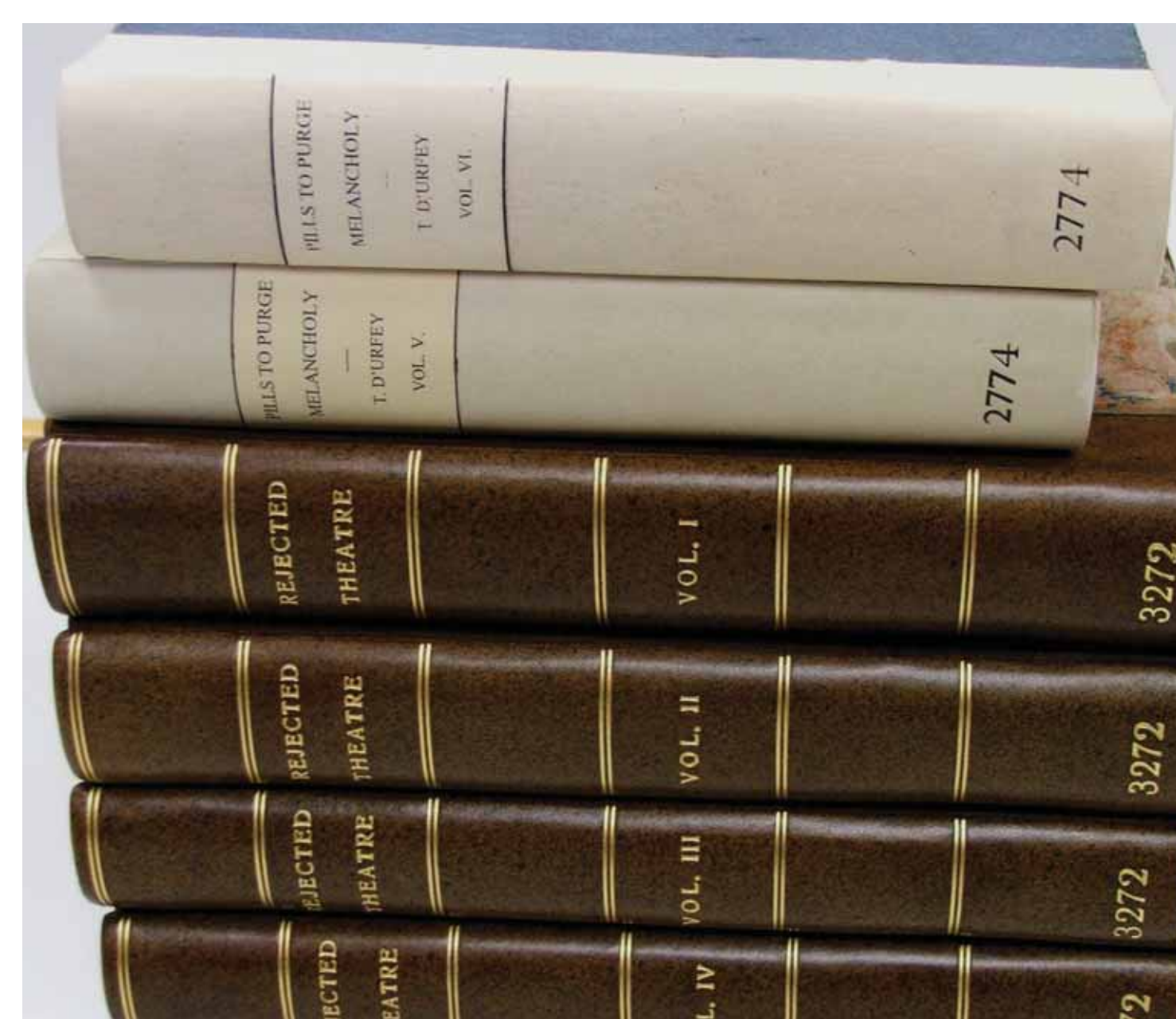
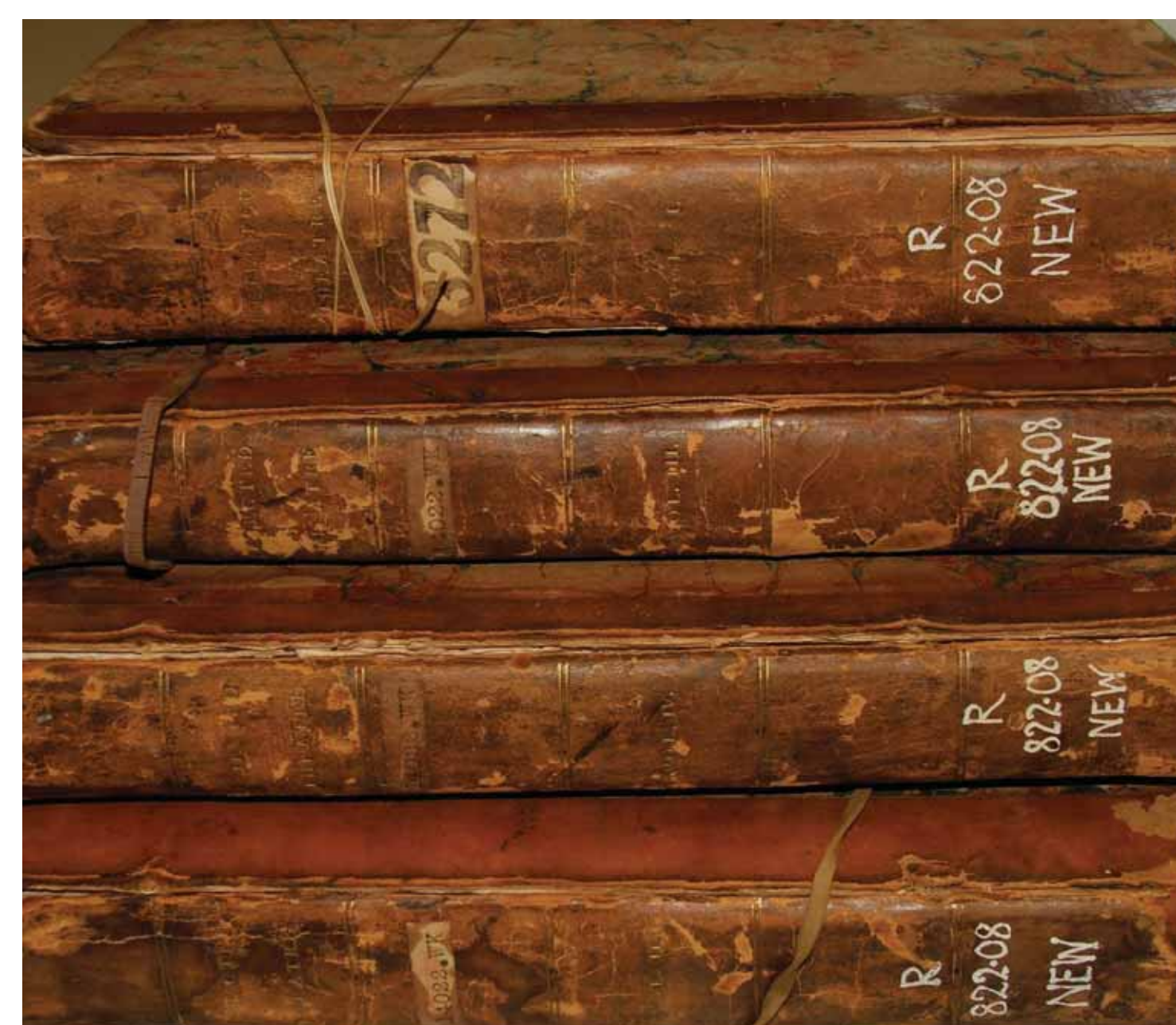
The annual interest from the capital sum left to the Thomas Layton Museum Trust is used for conservation and preservation of the books. Since 1988, after re-housing the books at Hounslow LibraryCentre, the Trust has been able to restore many volumes. You can help too by sponsoring a book.

In the early 1990s the trust was successful, through the British Library, in obtaining £5,000 from 'The Wolfson Foundation and Family Trust' which was matched from the Thomas Layton Museum Trust's own funds. This paid for ninety volumes to be restored. A further £500 was received from The Mercers' Company, which was matched with a similar sum from the Trust's funds and restored a further ten volumes.

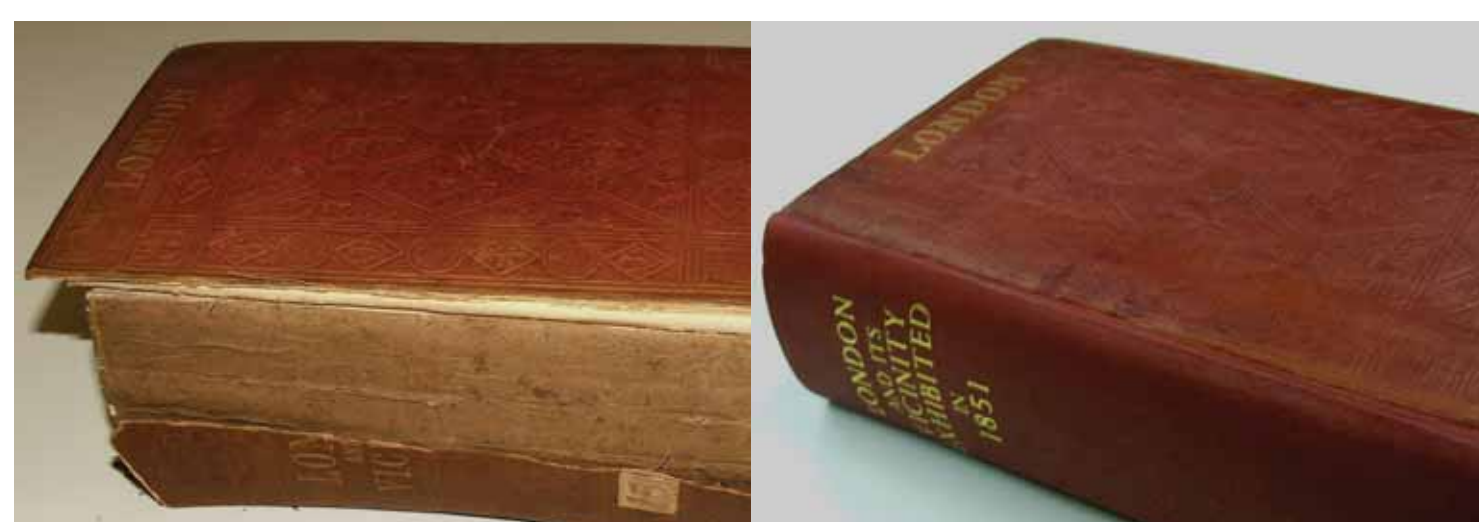
In 1993 the 'Sponsor a Book in The Thomas Layton Collection' appeal was launched. It invites individuals, organisations, societies, firms and businesses to donate a sum of money, which will pay for a book or books to be cleaned; conserved, re-bound or re-backed in buckram or leather. In return each book will contain a specially designed book-plate bearing the name of the donor and the year of restoration.



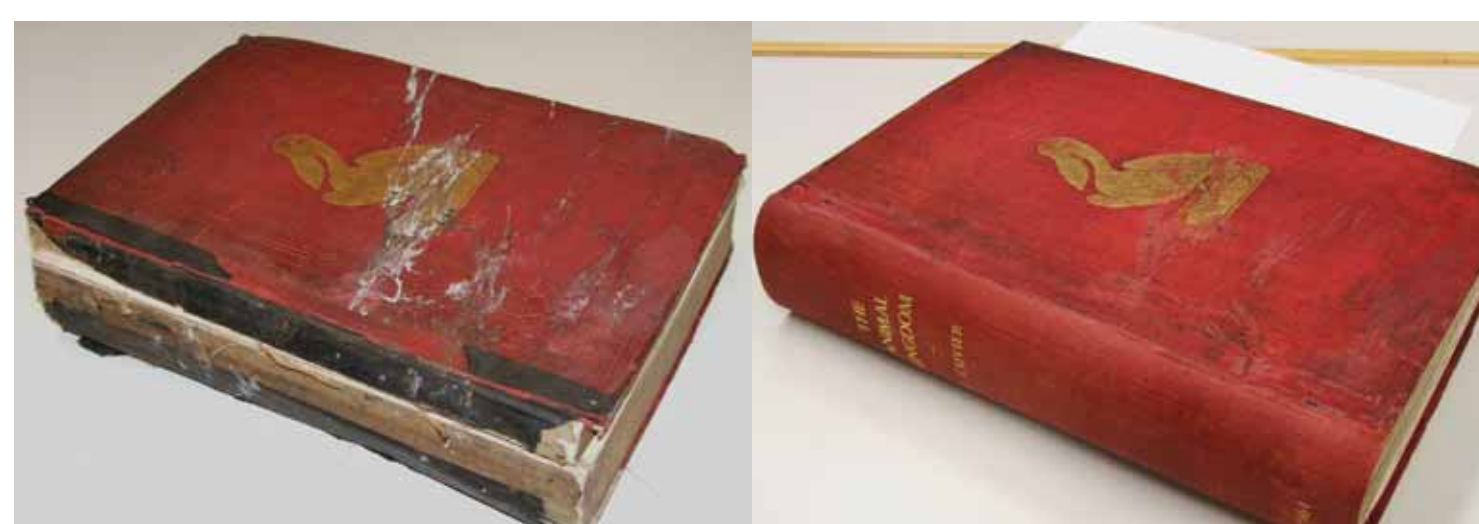
Books in the Layton Collection



The New British Theatre", (books 3272). The top two volumes of the restored picture are Pills to Purge Melancholy, vols 5 & 6 by T D'Urfey, (book 2774)



London and its Vicinity Exhibited in 1851 (Book 15186)



The Animal Kingdom, by G Cuvier (book 9561)



Cary's New Guide for Hackney Coach Fares, by J Cary (book 11250)

In 1996 a grant of £80,000 was received from the Heritage Lottery Fund which, along with match funding, restored nearly 1000 oversized volumes.

*£20 will pay for a small sized book to be re-bound in buckram cloth. £50 will enable a large folio volume to be re-backed in leather.*

*£100 and over will allow for some paper conservation work as well as re-backing in leather, with leather patching where required and re-lettering in gold leaf.*

*£1,000 and over will enable large multi-volume works to be conserved. Donors of £1000 and over will be invited to become patrons of the 'Thomas Layton Collection'.*

For each donation received there is a single book or a multi-volume set to suit the sum available and so ensure that this valuable collection of books survives for future generations of users. Pick up a leaflet or download one from the Thomas Layton web-site.



# “Every conceivable thing...”\*



Bronze chariot fitting from Brentford  
Iron Age (100BC - AD50)

## His collection

### The collection comprises:

- 8000 books from the late 16th century to the 19th century, strong in landscape, history and natural history.
- 4000 maps and prints.
- 150 framed prints, maps and paintings.
- 1200 prehistoric and Roman archaeological artefacts relevant to London and Middlesex.
- 3500 coins, tokens and medals: Roman, Greek, Indian, American and British.
- 1000 items of pottery and implements - many said to be from the Thames at or near Brentford: ancient British, Roman, Saxon and medieval, Egyptian, Greek, Etruscan and Peruvian items.
- 3000 archaeological and ethnographic items: flint axe heads, Bronze Age, Iron Age, North American Indian, Saxon, and Viking items; swords, spears, Egyptian antiquities, and Malay daggers.



Prints in secure storage at Hounslow Local Studies Library



Books in storage at Hounslow Library



Iron and copper alloy dagger and sheath  
from Mortlake, Iron Age (500BC - 300BC)



Bronze flat axehead from Mortlake,  
Early Bronze Age (1800BC - 1600BC)



Stone cushion macehead from Brentford,  
Early Bronze Age (2500BC - 2000BC)

**At his death, Thomas Layton had been collecting for 70 years; he had accumulated a huge collection of books, coins, and archaeological items known as ‘antiquities’.**

He gave everything to the people of Brentford, but only what Fred Turner rescued in 1913 remains to us today.

The vast majority of the items are believed to have been bought at auction. Some came to him from his men working on the boats; his businesses provided opportunities for finds along the Thames, for which Layton paid good money.

Some of Layton’s collection remains lost to us. Contemporary accounts hint of skulls, many fossils, elephant tusks and legs, hippo ribs and other items which might be described as Victorian ‘curios’. Much of this was sold off in 1914.

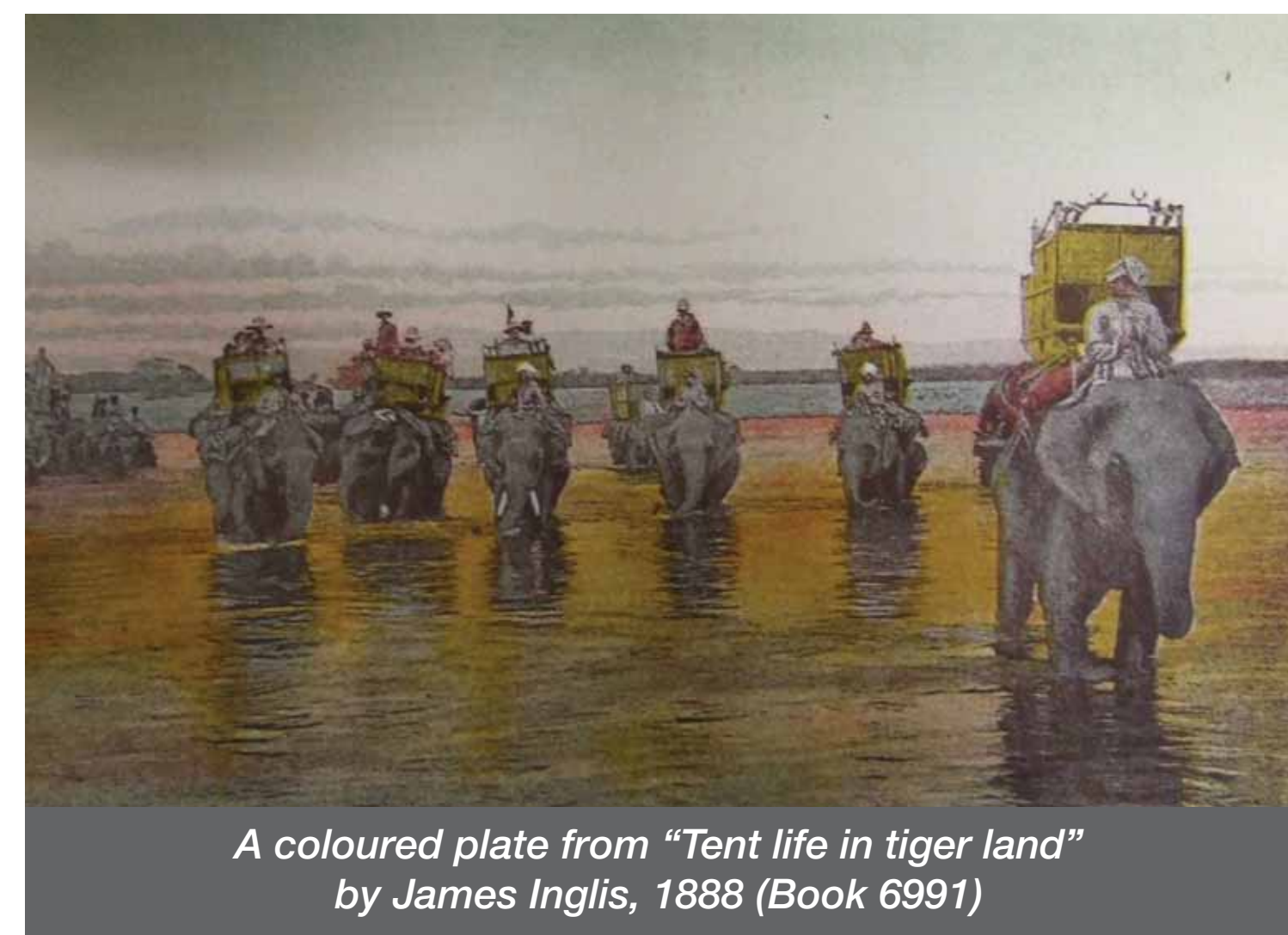
Even by the standards of the day, Layton kept very poor records of where items were found. Despite this, the collection is considered highly important particularly to archaeologists and pre-historians.



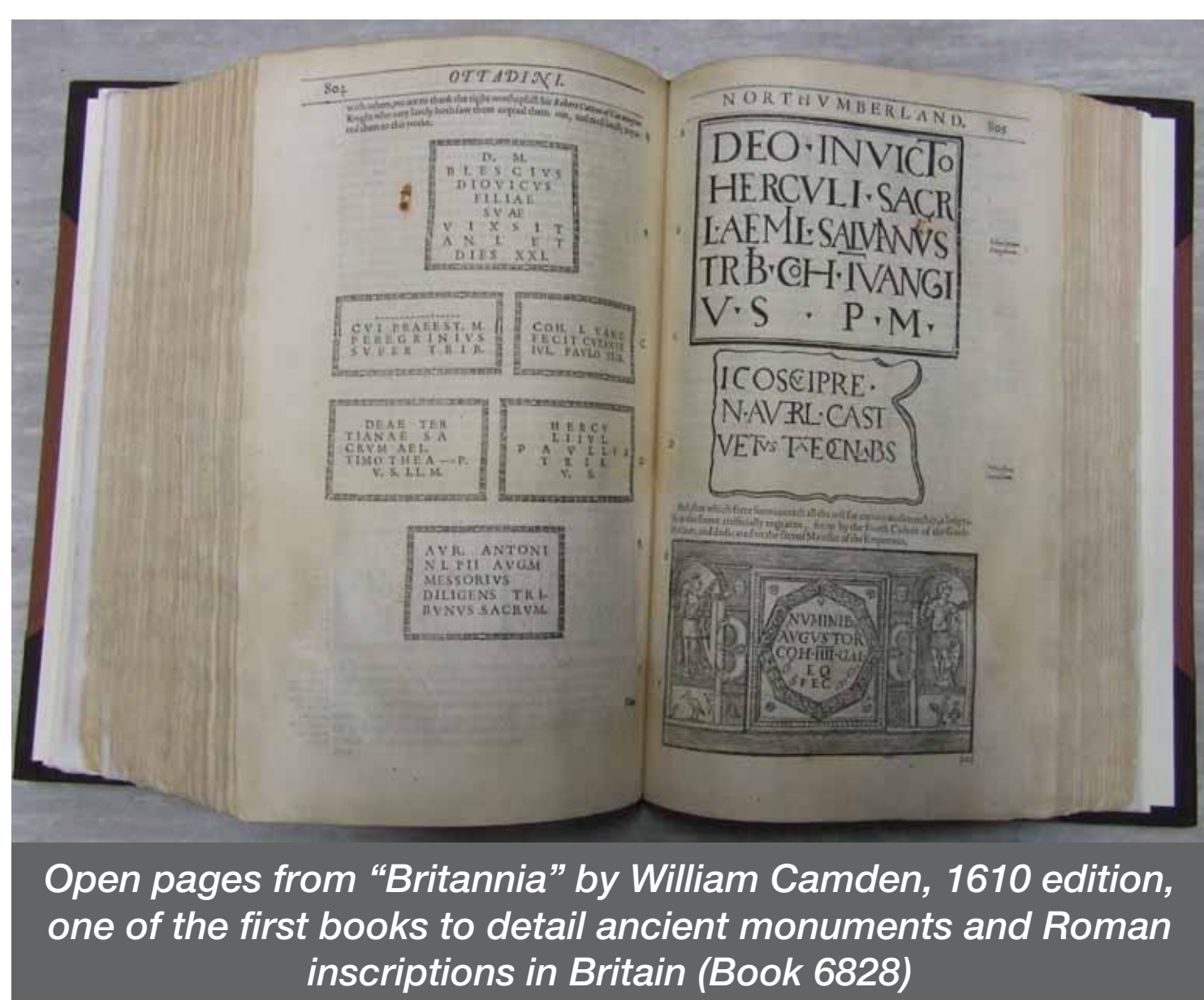
# “Every conceivable thing...”\*



Bronze chariot fitting from Brentford  
Iron Age (100BC - AD50)



A coloured plate from “Tent life in tiger land”  
by James Inglis, 1888 (Book 6991)



Open pages from “Britannia” by William Camden, 1610 edition,  
one of the first books to detail ancient monuments and Roman  
inscriptions in Britain (Book 6828)



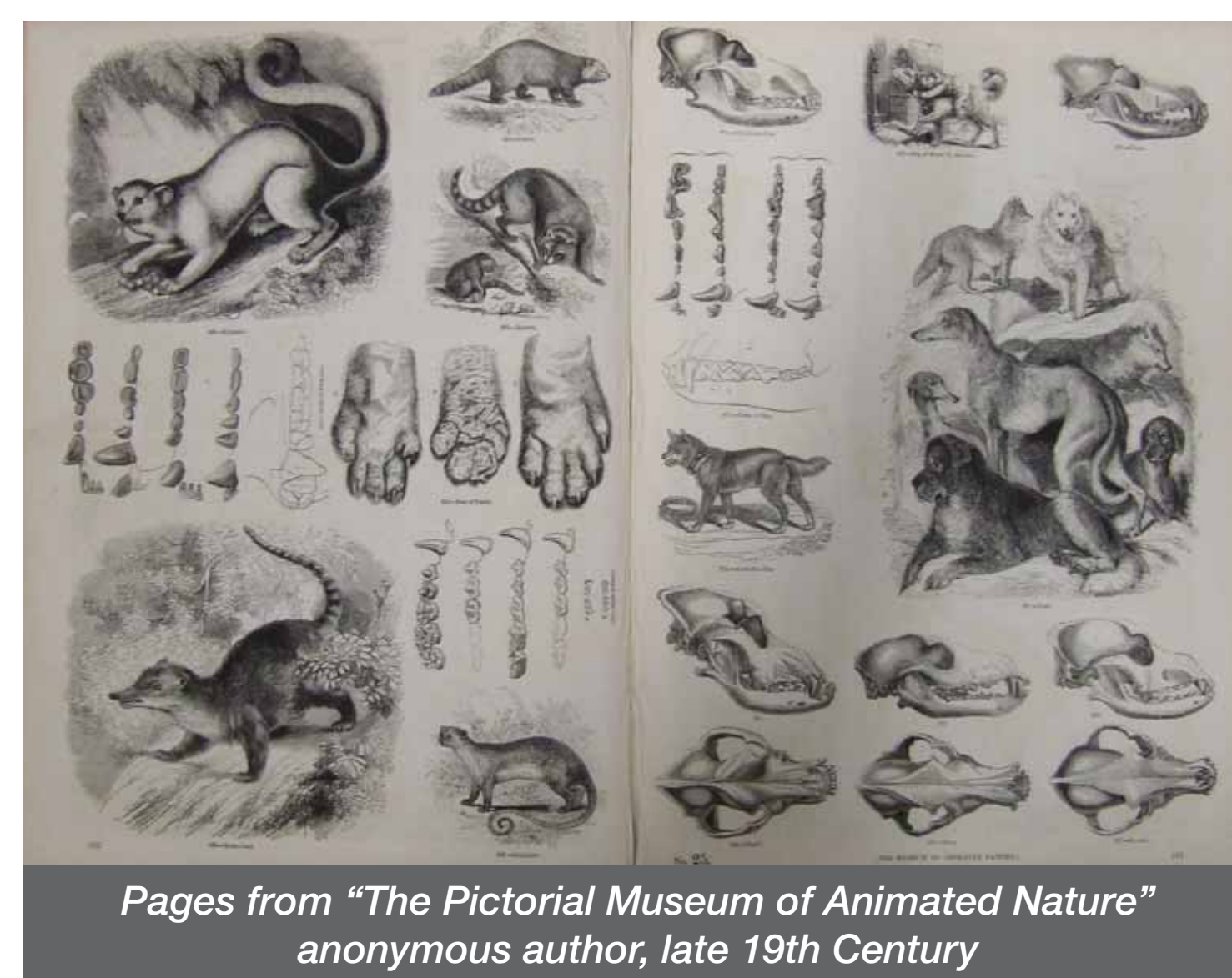
The collected volumes of “Pitt River's Excavations  
in Branborne Chase” (Book 7414)

At the time of Layton's death it was believed that there were about 22,000 books, but many were considered worthless by Fred Turner, or were duplicates. Turner indicates that he rescued about 12,000, but only about 8,000 remain today. Some of these are very rare and are kept in secure storage. The books can be seen by appointment at Hounslow LibraryCentre where they have been cared for since 1988.

In his book *The History and Antiquities of Brentford*, published 1922, Turner describes his 'rapture' as a book-lover as he began his task of examining the thousands of books and wrote of his hope that he might turn up a 'literary gem' as he sorted through them. He also mentions the 'deplorable' condition some of the books were in when found, which sometimes drove him to despair.

They date from the early 16th century to the late 19th century and there are important works on almost every subject. The collection is strong in natural history, classics, history and archaeology, the decorative arts, art and artists, music, architecture including church architecture, geography and topography, plays and poetry, philosophy, politics and satire. There are also a large number of books on English and foreign travel (concentrating on Africa, India and the Americas), explorers and exploring (such as works by Richard Francis Burton whose tomb is at Mortlake, who discovered the lakes of Central Africa in the 1850s) as well as works of literature (Dickens, Shakespeare, Pepys), science and topographical works by John Speed, William Camden, and John Stow. In addition there are works of early British Archaeology by Layton's contemporaries at the Society of Antiquaries such as John Evans, Canon Greenwell and General Pitt-Rivers.

There were no cheap paperbacks in Layton's day, but the books range from huge expensive leather-bound books with fine hand-coloured prints, to cloth-bound mass-produced popular texts of the Victorian era. Layton could not have read all of the books himself and at the end of his life was probably buying in order to create a library for the people of Brentford. In true Victorian fashion he probably had ideas about what people should read, rather than considering what they wanted to read.



Pages from “The Pictorial Museum of Animated Nature”  
anonymous author, late 19th Century



# “Every conceivable thing...”\*

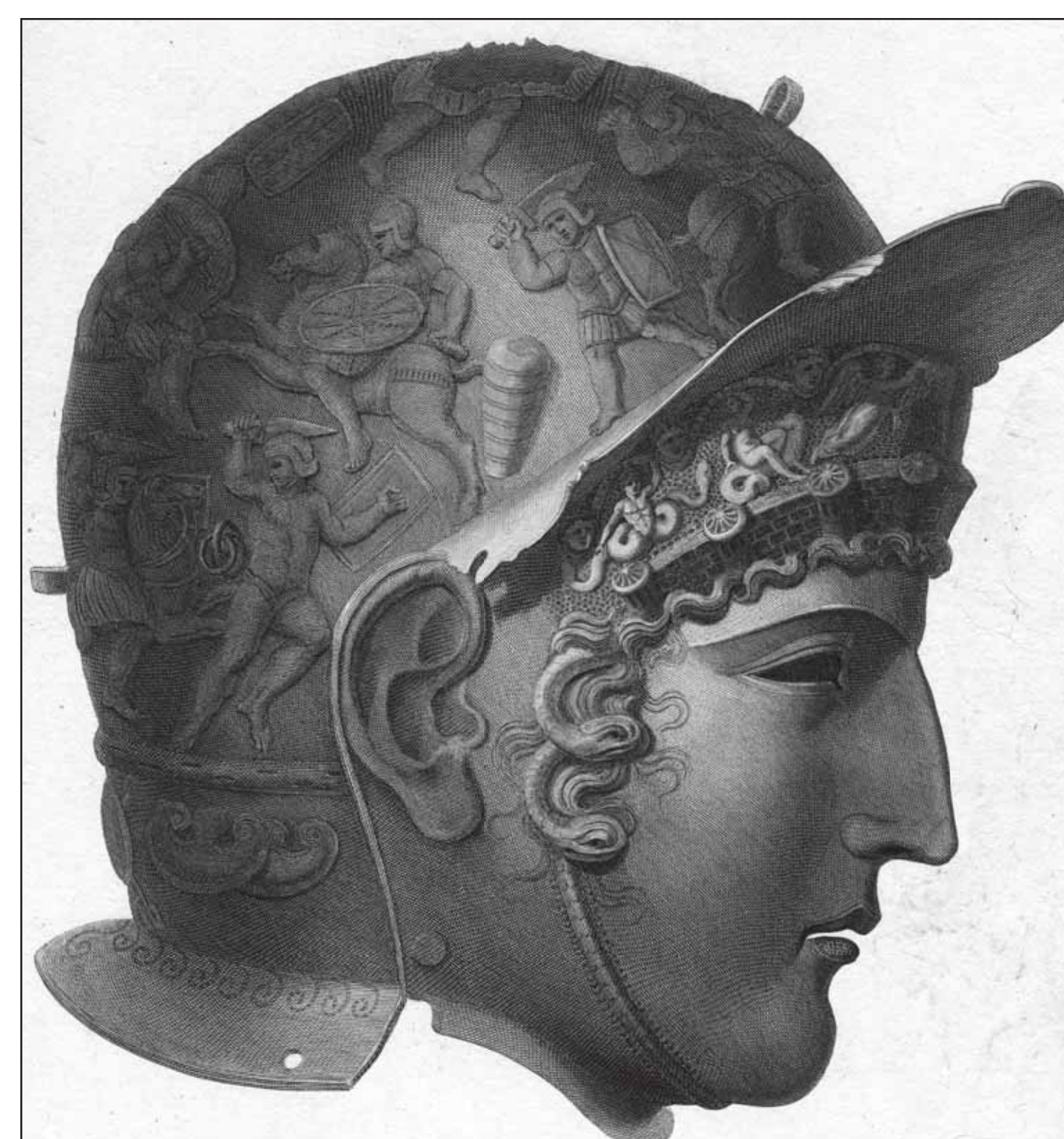


Bronze chariot fitting from Brentford  
Iron Age (100BC - AD50)

## Prints, maps & engravings

Turner discovered 3,000 loose pictures and engravings in decaying portfolios in a rat and bird infested outhouse of Layton's residence. More were discovered elsewhere and in total comprise around 4,000 examples of engravings, maps, prints, watercolours, framed pictures and other ephemera.

Turner talks of his difficulties in sorting the mass of paper and its subsequent cataloguing, preservation and storage. The Layton prints today are kept in the finest conditions possible and can be accessed by researchers at the Local Studies Section at Hounslow Library Centre. The collection is organised into maps and topographical prints; engravings and etchings; portraits of celebrated people; and manuscripts of local interest, including what remains of Layton's personal papers and correspondence.



Engraving of a Roman cavalry parade helmet  
found Ribchester 1799 (Print 3257)



The Company of Undertakers, satirical print by  
Hogarth, published 1736 (Print 4689)

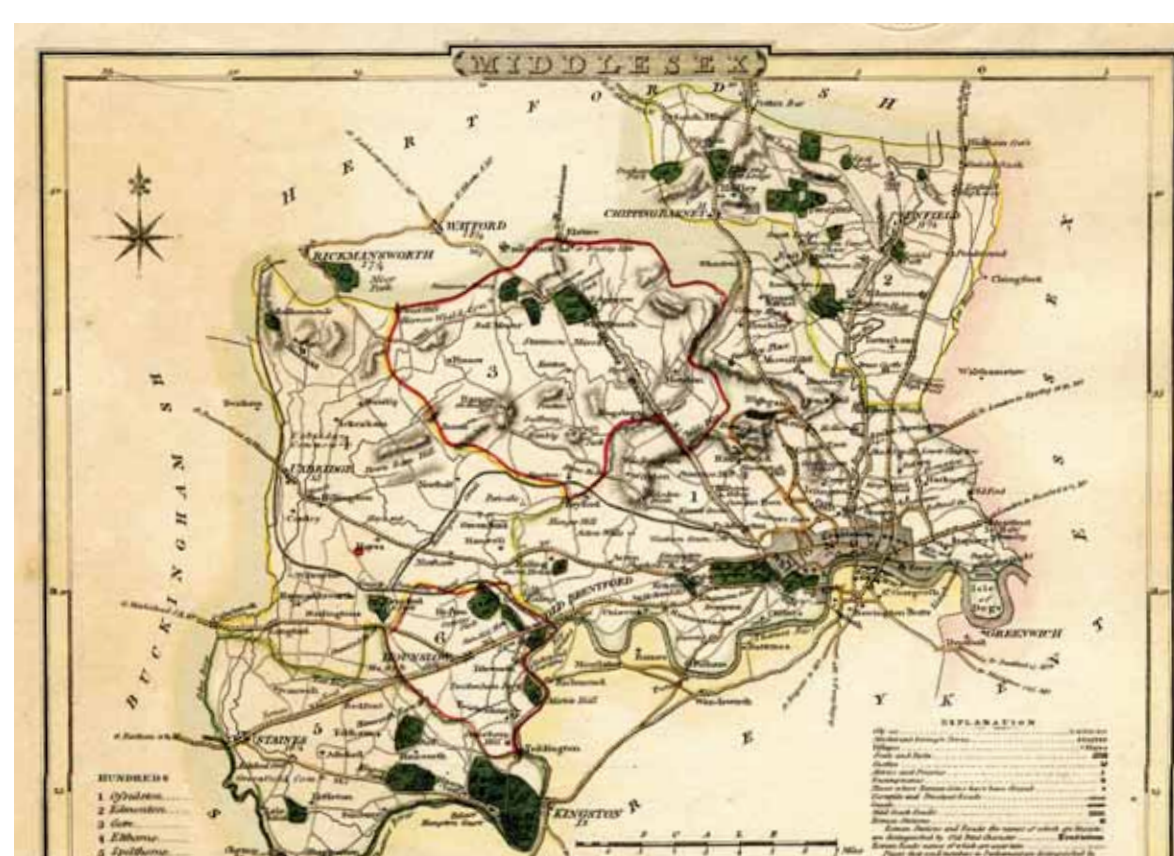
The collection has many views of London, Westminster and Southwark, some dating from the 16th century, including topographical plans, street maps and sketches of buildings. Some of these are amongst the earliest known of London. There are a large number of architectural drawings from the 17th and 18th centuries, including coloured engravings of London by Canaletto, Pugin and Ackermann. There are maps of all the counties as well as hundreds of views of Middlesex, the Thames, Kew, Richmond, Brentford, Chiswick, Syon, Gunnersbury and Boston Manor Houses.

There are 395 portraits of celebrated people, some of which were engraved by well-known engravers reproducing the paintings of Van Dyck and Gainsborough. Rarer perhaps are prints by Hogarth, which number 200. The manuscripts are varied, including documents and letters dating from the 17th century, indenture certificates, autographed letters, playbills, diaries and other documents, including Kew Bridge Toll books (from the 19th century) and the account books of the Brentford Ferry from the 18th century.

Many of the views of the river Thames have been digitised and may be examined online as part of the Thames Pilot project ([www.thamespilot.org.uk](http://www.thamespilot.org.uk)).



West entrance to the tunnel, Regent's canal,  
Islington, 1822 (Print 1378)



Map of Middlesex (Print 1695)



Fire in London, by Pugin & Rowlandson  
1808 (Print 957)



*“Every conceivable thing...”\**



Bronze chariot fitting from Brentford  
Iron Age (100BC - AD50)

## British Antiquities (Bronze Age, Iron Age, Stone & Flint)

Layton is renowned for his British Antiquities, which formed the core of his collection. There are many hundreds of Palaeolithic (2,500,000 to 10,000 BC), Mesolithic (10,000 to 6,000 BC) and Neolithic (6,000 to 2,000 BC) implements, weapons, and tools, many of which are polished stone and flint hand-axes and adzes. The people who used these implements were some of the earliest human inhabitants of the Thames valley.

Of the items from the so-called “Bronze Age” (2,100 to 700 BC for Britain) there are several “Rapier” type blades and many leaf-shaped swords, as well as bronze socketed axes, knives, tools, spearheads and personal ornaments, many of which are said to have been unearthed in the Brentford, Richmond and Kew areas. Some are extremely rare and rank among the highest concentration of such pieces in one collection in the UK. The best are on show in the London before London gallery at the Museum of London.

There are two notable examples of British pre-Roman “Iron Age” items. A tankard made from oak staves and clad in bronze which holds about 4 pints and a decorative chariot fitting made from cast bronze, which appears to be the “horn-cap” from a chariot wheel. Both of these can be seen at the Museum of London and were considered some of the finest pieces in Layton’s collection when it was first written about in 1918 by the Society of Antiquaries.

One of the finest pieces from the Roman period is a short-sword found in 1873 at Putney. This was presented by Layton to the British Museum and it is one of the few known pieces to be given away in Layton’s lifetime. The hilt of the sword is missing, but the scabbard is decorated with two bronze panels, one with leaf and floral scroll motifs, butterflies and rabbits and the other depicts Romulus and Remus with the she-wolf. The piece is recognised as the best example of its kind in Britain and can be seen in case six, Room 49 (Roman Britain) at the British Museum. Other Roman pieces include pottery such as lamps and Samian ware, as well as brooches and other metal work.



Lower Palaeolithic [500,000 – 40,000 BC] handaxe from Hanwell



Neolithic [4,000 - 2,000 BC]  
polished flint-axe from  
Brentford



Late Bronze Age [1,000 -  
700 BC] socketed axehead  
from Chiswick



Early Neolithic [4,000 - 2200 BC] leaf-shaped arrowhead



Early Bronze Age [2,000 - 1700 BC] Stone axe-hammer from Old England



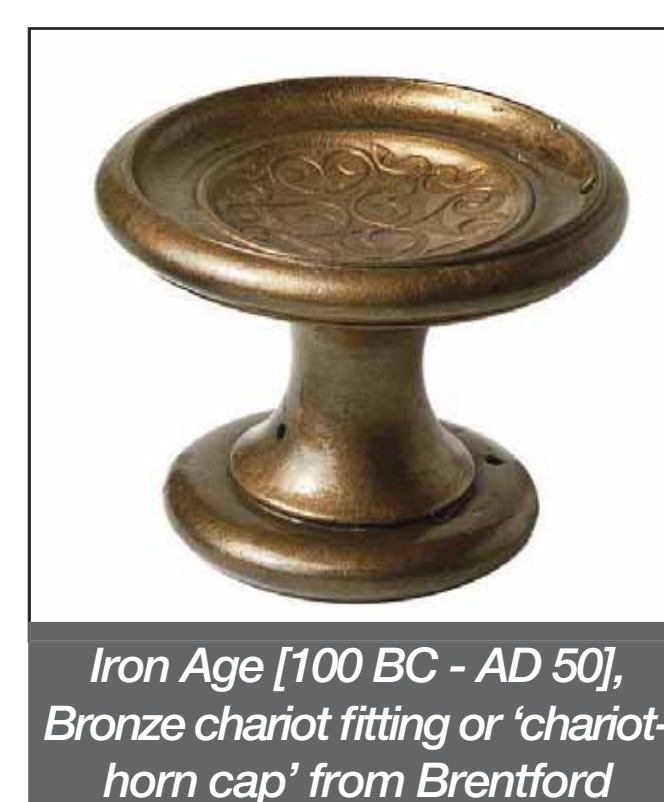
Late Bronze Age [1,000 - 700  
BC] socketed axe-head with  
reconstructed shaft



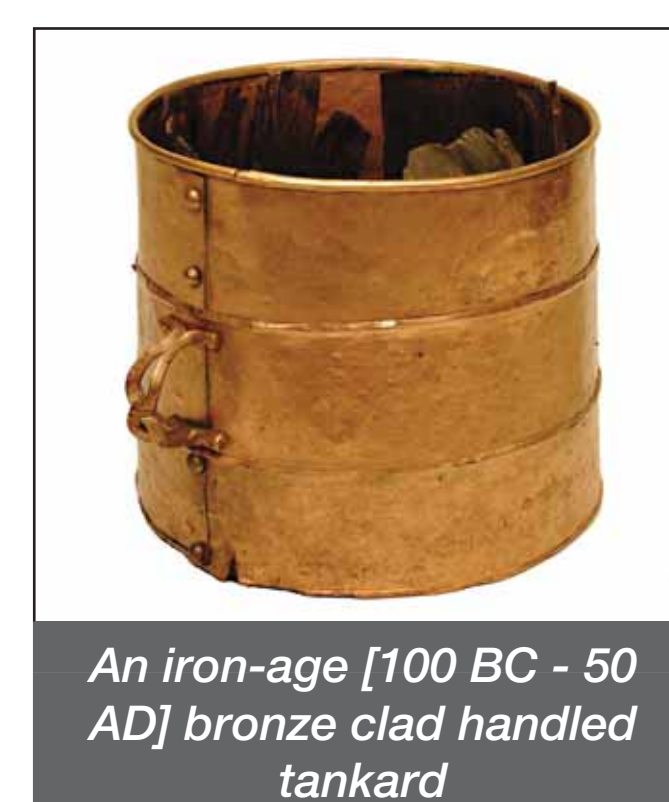
Neolithic [4,000 - 2,200 BC]  
discoidal flint knife



Middle Bronze Age [1,600 - 1,000 BC] spearhead



Iron Age [100 BC - AD 50],  
Bronze chariot fitting or ‘chariot-  
horn cap’ from Brentford



An iron-age [100 BC - 50  
AD] bronze clad handled  
tankard



*“Every conceivable thing...”\**



Bronze chariot fitting from Brentford  
Iron Age (100BC - AD50)

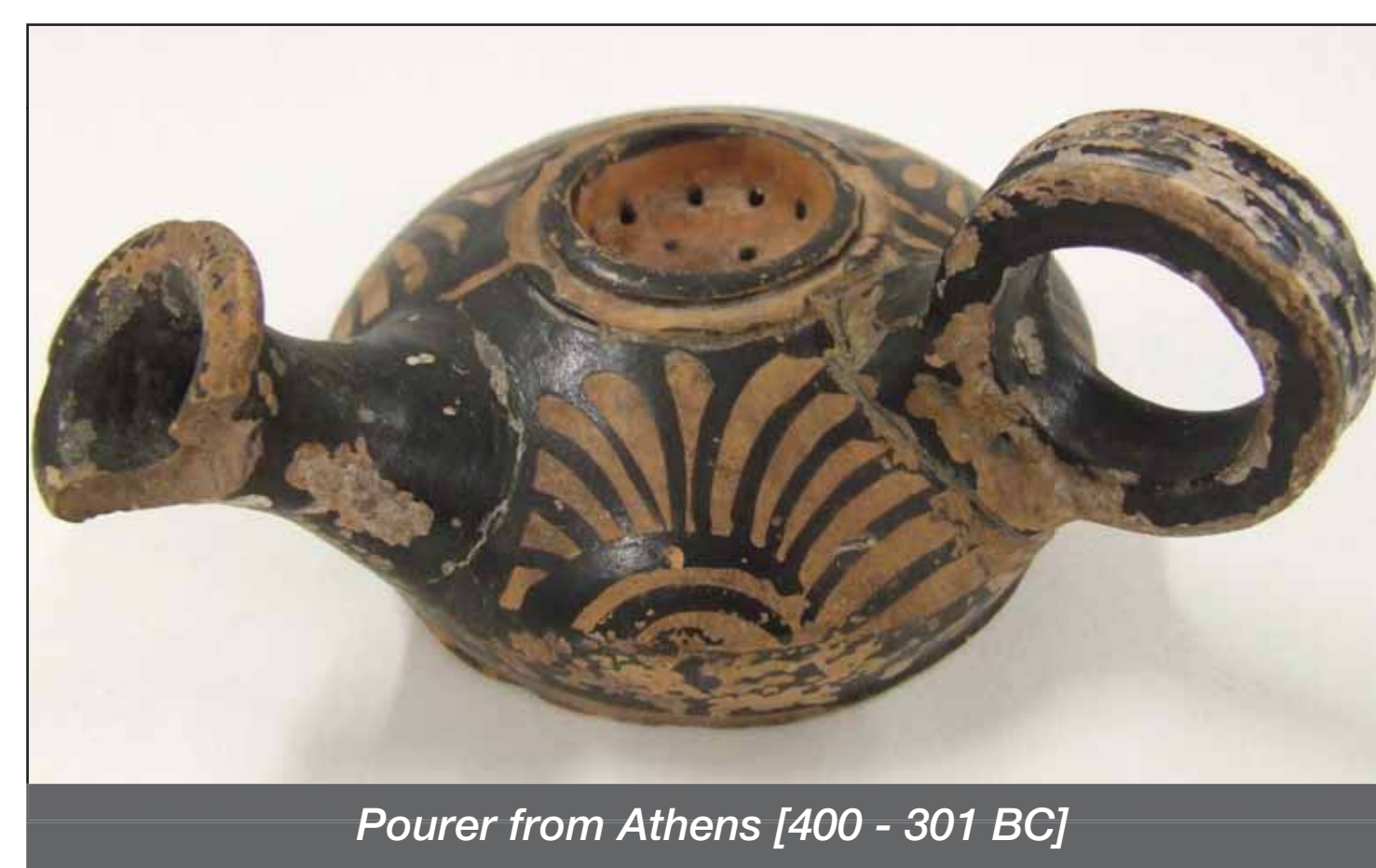
## Classical Greek & Roman, Saxon, Medieval & pottery!

There are over 500 specimens of pottery in the Layton collection, most of them complete vessels. They include everything from large vessels to hold liquid or dry goods to jugs, beakers, dishes, cups, bottles, flasks, plates and tin glazed pill jars dating from the Neolithic to Medieval to the 19th century. Not strictly pottery, there are many loom or net-weights as well as vessels made from stone, marble or alabaster.

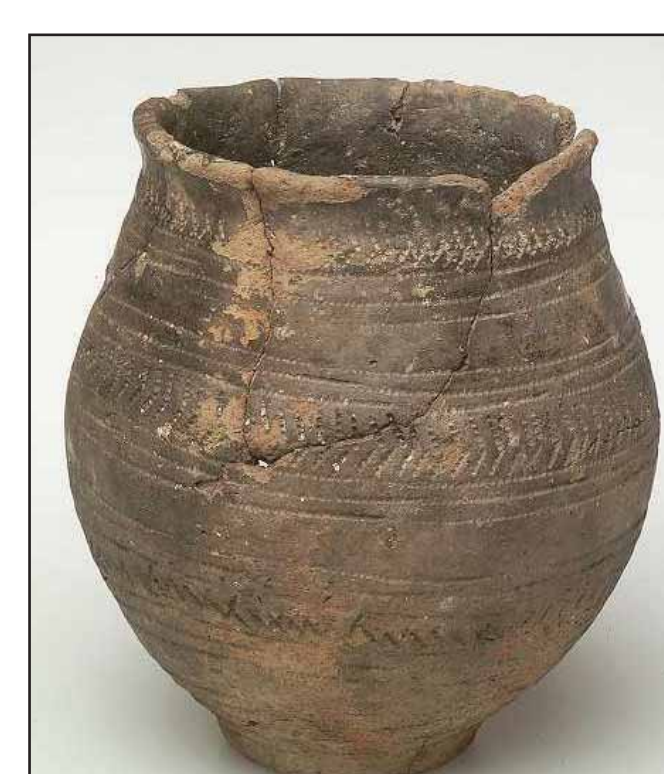
Several of the oldest specimens are those of Neolithic and bronze-age origin, including a few food vessels and drinking cups which were found in Brentford at “Old England”. Some of these are plain, others are ornamented with simple designs.

Roman and Romano-British pottery features heavily including imported finished red-ware often known as “Samian”, as well as many Roman and southern Italian Greek oil lamps bearing classical motifs, pots, amphorae and tiles. Other pieces include Saxon, Norman, Medieval and post-Medieval vessels, such as Bellarmine, floor tiles, as well as classical Greek, Etruscan, Peruvian, Inca, North African, Cyprian examples, including Egyptian stone shabti (funerary figurines, usually in the form of a mummy) and examples of Roman glass. Most of these must have been bought at auctions rather than found in the Thames.

The collection also contains examples of Roman brooches, styli and Roman tools. There are some early Italian votive offerings, in the shape of body parts, particularly feet, which probably came from healing shrines dedicated to recovering health. There are also a number of small terracotta figurines of goddesses such as Isis, Ceres and Cybele which may have formed part of portable shrines. From the Saxon period there are swords, shield-bosses, and knives and spearheads. There are a few Viking items as well as bronze Egyptian and Indian figurines.



Pourer from Athens [400 - 301 BC]



Early Bronze Age [2,500 - 1500 BC] ceramic beaker  
from Old England



Cup and saucer from Peru,  
possibly of Inca origin  
[1,300 - 1600 AD]



Stone Egyptian shabti  
[2,000 - 1,000 BC]



Figurine of Ceres from  
Sardinia [43 - 410 AD]



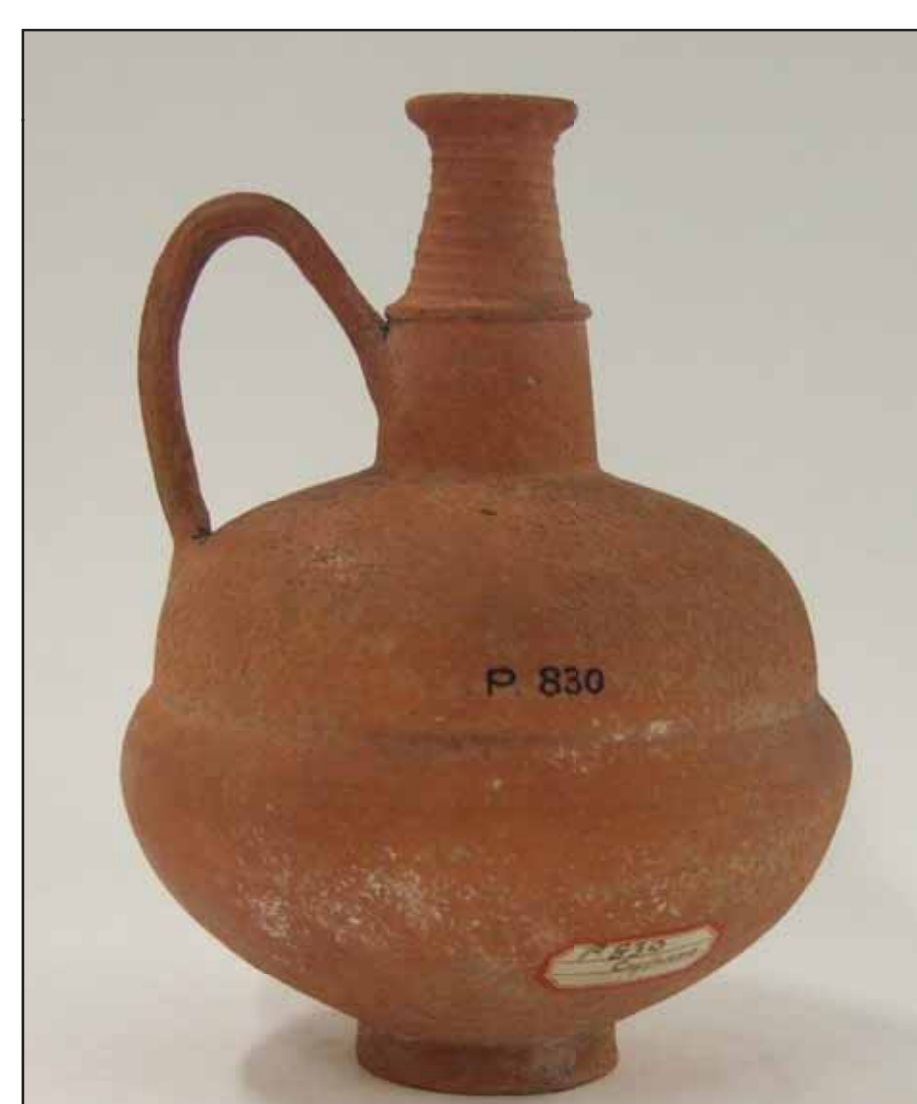
Samian dish [1st century - 2nd century AD]



Ceramic model of a foot, from a healing  
shrine in Italy [300 - 101 BC]



Trefoil mouthed jug from the South  
Italian Greek colonies [400 - 301 BC]



Red-slipped ware jug from Roman  
North Africa [mid 2nd - 3rd Century AD]



Stoneware “Bellarmine” jug from  
Germany [1601 - 1700 AD]



“Every conceivable thing...”\*



Bronze chariot fitting from Brentford  
Iron Age (100BC - AD50)

## Coins & Ethnographic material



Dock forgery, or “Shadwell Sham”  
medallion bearing date 1011  
[late 19th century]



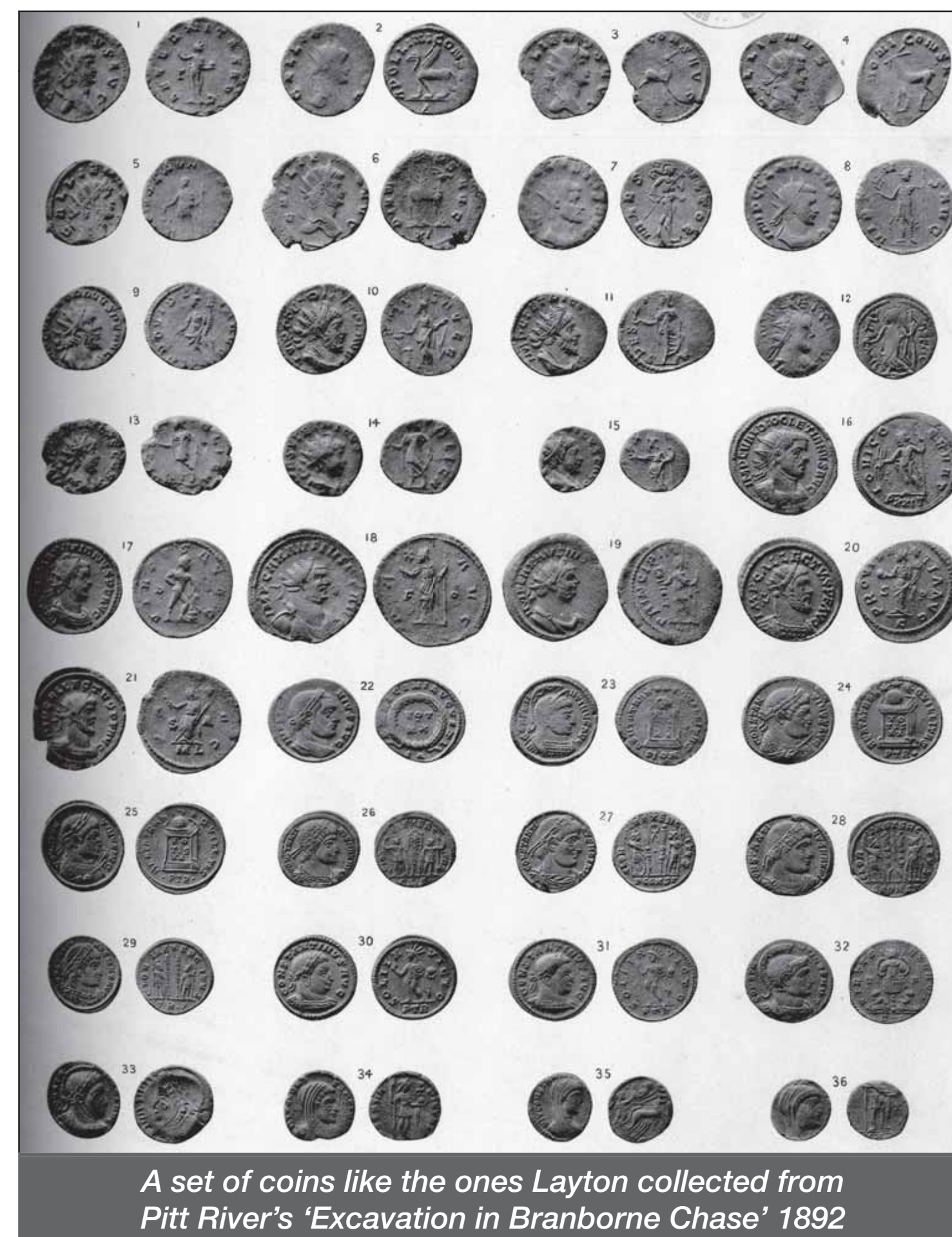
Fish hook from the South Seas. [18th or 19th centuries]

Layton kept his 3,500 coins in small sacks without any system of arrangement. The oldest coins are a gold stater of Alexander the Great 336-326 BC and several bearing the image of Ptolemy the Great of Egypt, minted 221-200 BC. Rarer are early British coins of pre-Roman origin, dated around 150 BC.

The collection is particularly rich in Roman coins found in Britain, many from Brentford at the site of ancient pilings. To the Victorians, this was evidence of Julius Caesar’s crossing into Middlesex and was commemorated on the 1909 Brentford Monument. Today’s archaeologists have more cautious views. The Roman coins bear the faces of several emperors including Claudius, Severus, Hadrian, Antonius Pius, Marcus Aurelius and Maximus the Great - the last to mint coins in Britain. The earliest Saxon coins in the collection were minted about 700 AD and the latest those minted by the last of the Mercian Kings, Burgred.

Other coins include those of the Norman kings and example from the reigns of nearly all the kings and queens of England up to Victoria. From the Civil War period there are lozenge-shaped “siege money” struck when the king was besieged in Newark Castle. Layton collected a few Commonwealth pieces that bear no portraits or faces. There are also examples of “Maundy” money and tradesmen’s tokens some of which bear the names of Brentford and Chiswick tradesmen.

Layton is not known for his ethnographic pieces but among the collection are many fascinating items, such as shields, spears, and clubs from the Pacific and the South Seas, Africa, India, Malaysia, New Zealand and Indonesia. Unlike some Victorian collectors, he never travelled to these places himself, but bought what he fancied from auction houses. Hidden within the collection are oddities such as shells, fossils, geological samples of rocks and fake weapons. At one time Layton had animal bones, insects, stuffed birds, elephant and rhino ivory and animal and human skulls from the prehistoric period, but most of this was auctioned off in the 1914 sale at his home.



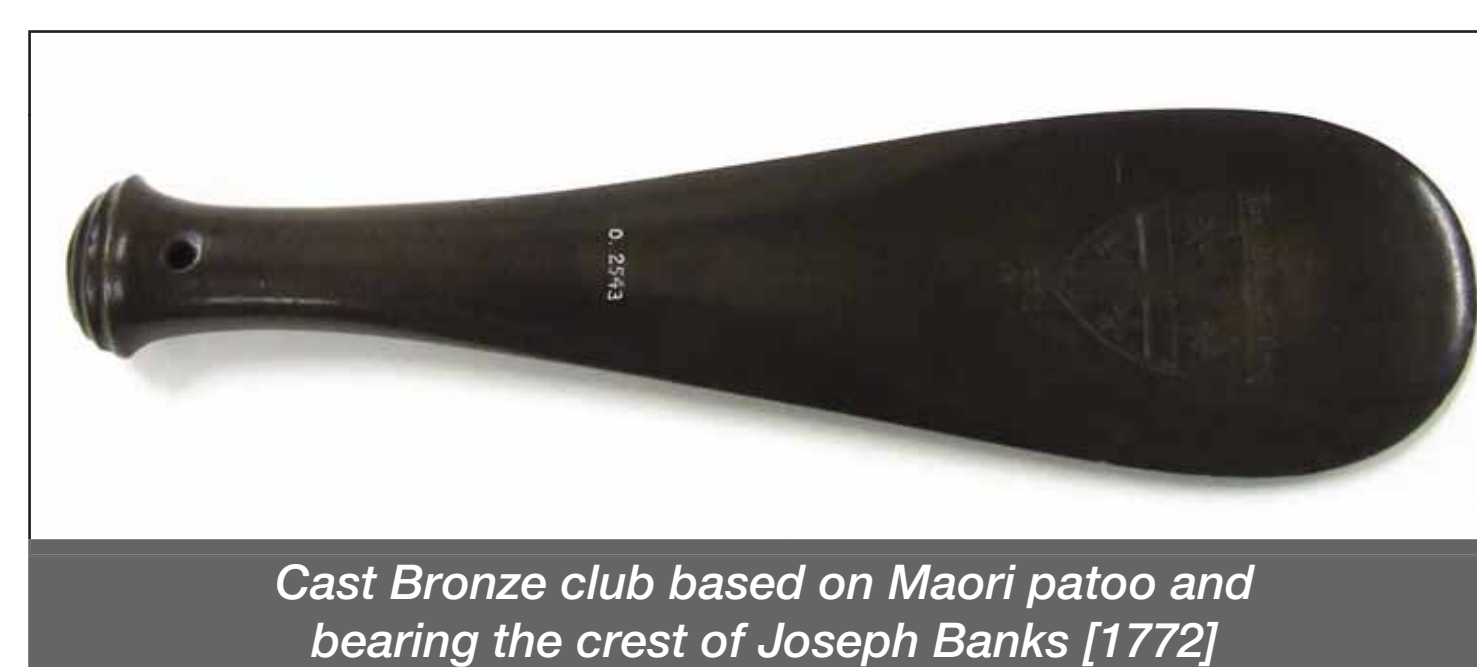
A set of coins like the ones Layton collected from  
Pitt River’s ‘Excavation in Branborne Chase’ 1892



Maori feather box from New Zealand [unknown date,  
but maybe 18th - 19th centuries]



Painted dancing shield from East Indonesia  
[18th or 19th centuries]

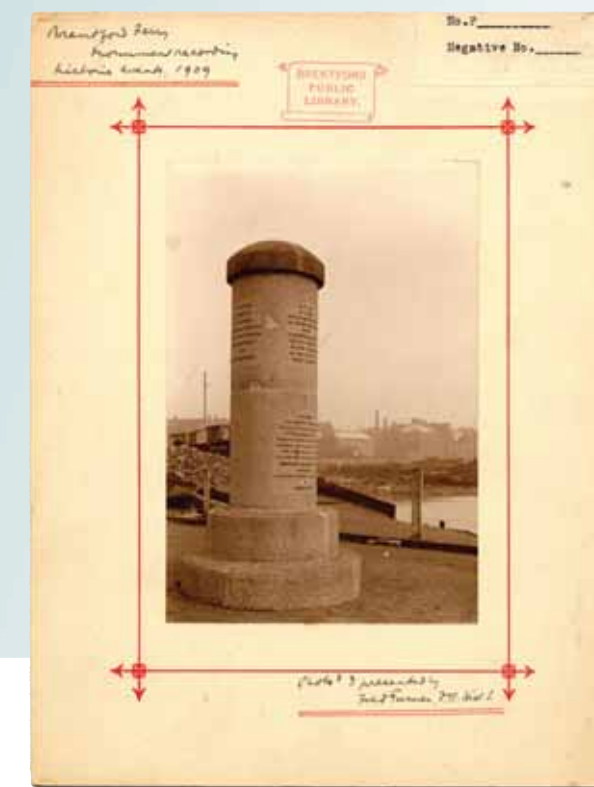


Cast Bronze club based on Maori patoo and  
bearing the crest of Joseph Banks [1772]



# Changing Brentford – under the eye of Layton

## Victorian Brentford



Brentford Monument 1909, taken by Fred Turner



Opening ceremony of the Brentford Monument 1909

Borough Council. He also held various positions at St George's Church near his home.

He was involved in many civic improvements we take for granted today, including the library, swimming baths, sewage works, fire station and Brentford Infirmary. These Victorian buildings can still be seen (if sometimes put to other uses!) and Layton often left his mark with public inscriptions. He was honoured by inclusion on the Brentford Monument in 1909 even though he was no longer a councillor.



Layton and the Urban District Council, December 1894

Thomas Layton was born only four years after the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo and outlived Queen Victoria (who died 1901). He saw enormous changes in Brentford, England and the rest of the world. He witnessed the effects of the Industrial Revolution and how it changed people's lives.

He became interested in politics from a young age, serving on many local bodies and was elected as a local Councillor for over 50 years. He was Chairman of the Local Board from 1876 and the first Chairman of the Brentford Urban District Council in 1894, the fore-runners of today's



Laying the foundation stone of Brentford Baths 1895. To the right of the stone stands: Mr. Nowell Parr, Architect; Mr Bigwood MP and Thomas Layton

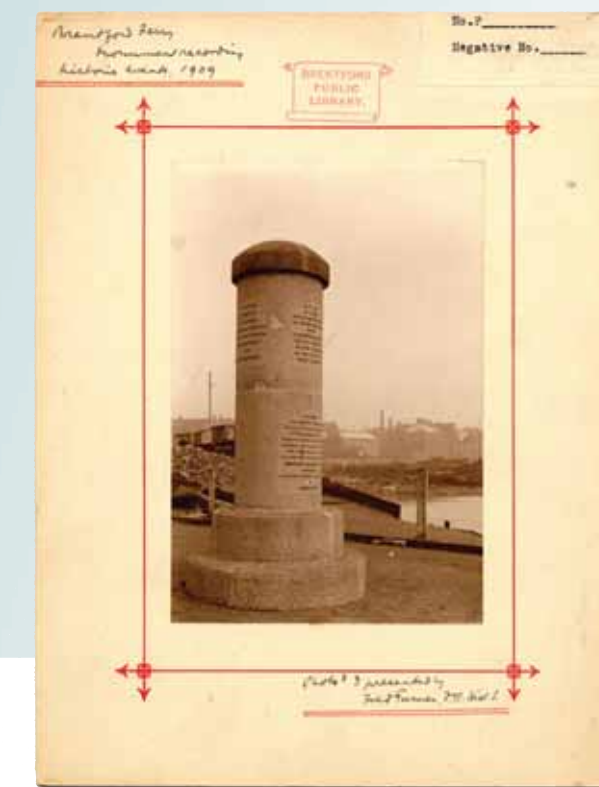
Innovations such as gas street lighting, mains water and electricity were introduced to Brentford during Layton's lifetime. New civic buildings and housing were built, although some slums remained. The canals, docks and the gas-works on both sides of the High Street, were at their peak in Layton's day and provided much of his income. He would be surprised to see how much is now gone.

The Layton Trail provides a map and details of his local projects where traces survive and those places of interest further away, as well as details of how to see parts of his incredible collection of antiquities in London. Pick up a leaflet and explore Layton's Brentford.



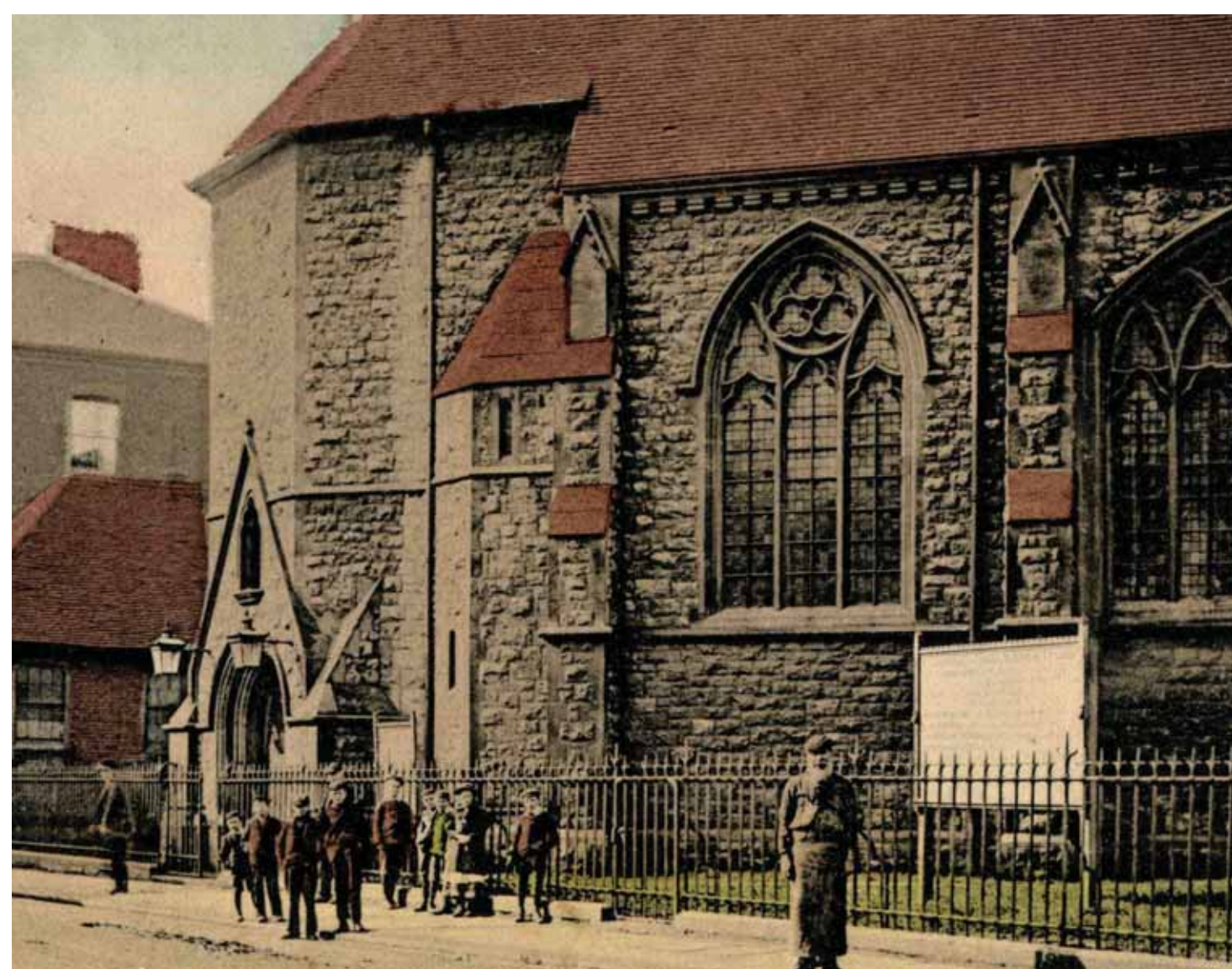
# Changing Brentford – under the eye of Layton

## St Georges's Church, the Fire Station & the Pumping Station



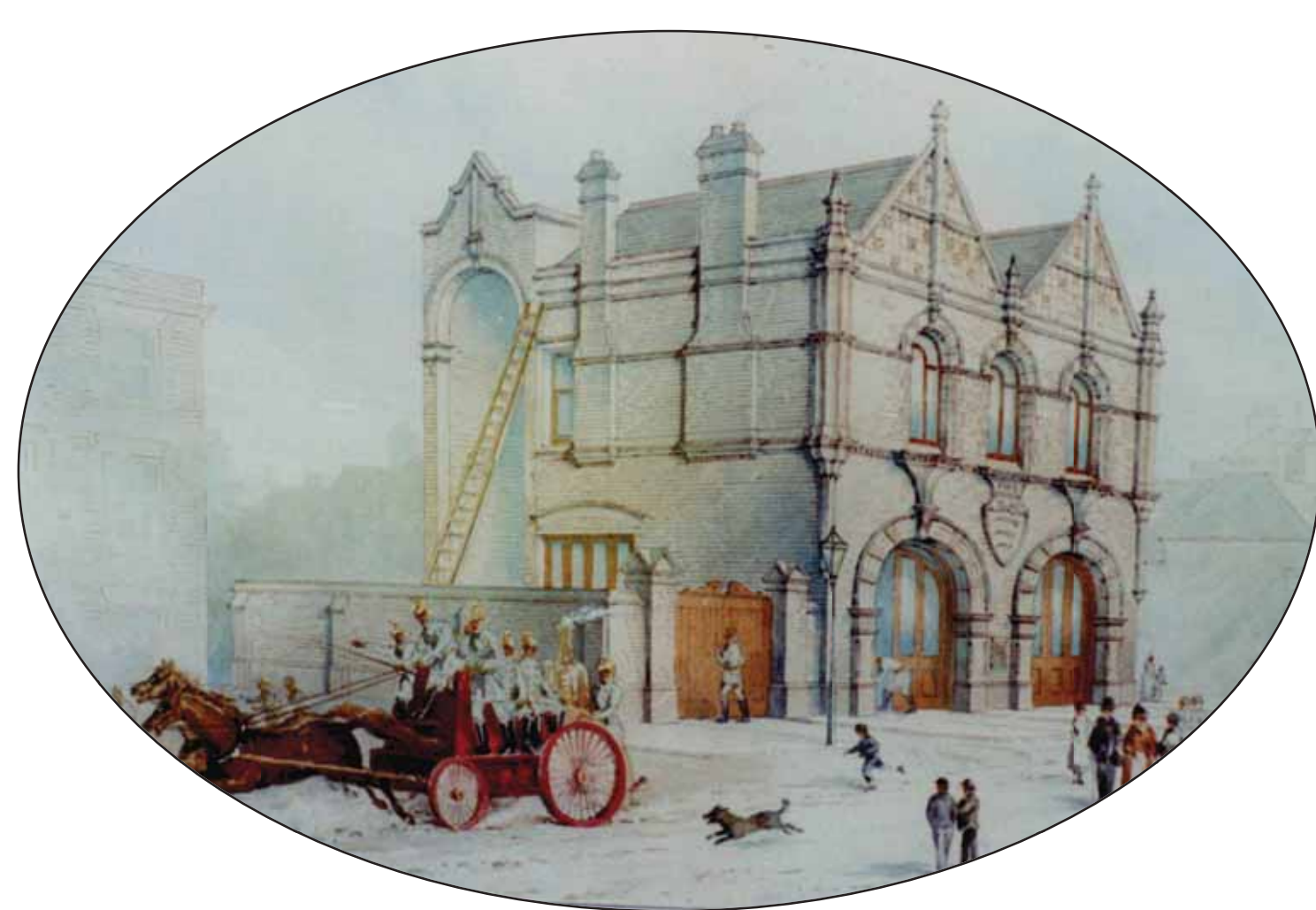
Brentford Monument 1909, taken by Fred Turner

**St George's Chapel** was founded in 1762 as an unconsecrated Chapel. The first church was built around 1766 and joined the Church of England as St George's Church in 1828. Layton was a church warden here in his youth. In 1886-7 a larger church was built on the site. In 1913 a new bell tower was constructed

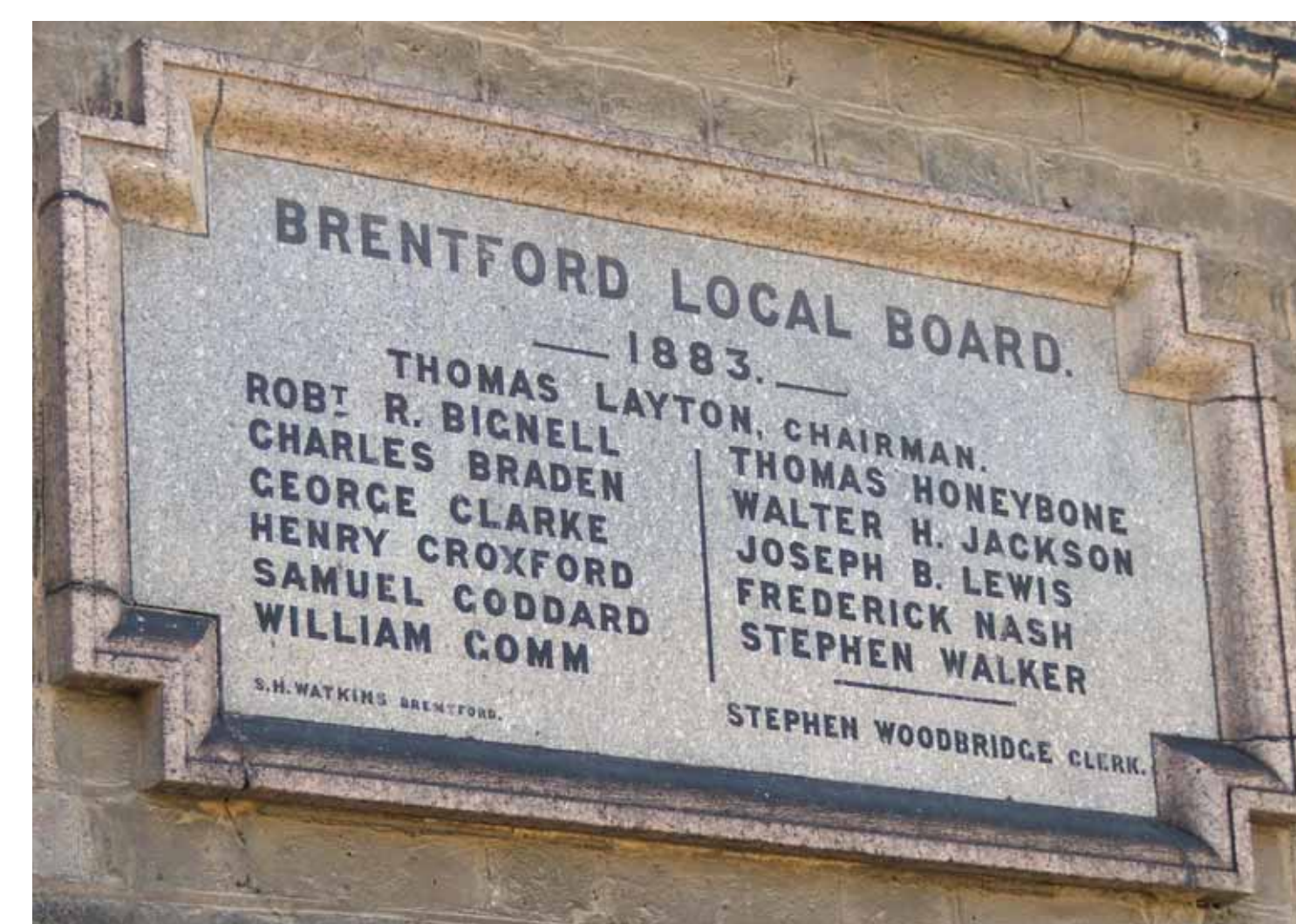


with money Layton had left in his will. The church closed its doors to worshippers in 1959 and reopened in 1963 as a museum of mechanical musical instruments. With the Musical Museum moving to purpose-built premises nearby, its future is uncertain. These photographs show the church prior to the addition of the new tower (above right) and as it appears today (above left).

The **fire station** on the High Street was begun in 1897 under Layton's leadership of the Local Board and opened on the 22nd of February 1898 with much pomp and celebration. It was designed by Thomas Nowell Parr, surveyor to Brentford Urban District Council and cost around £3,000. This 1896 watercolour by Parr shows how the station would look after completion. The horse-drawn steam pump acquired by the Urban District Council in 1890 was used in the new fire station. The hand pulled "escape" (extended ladder system) was replaced with a horse drawn system in 1906. The first motorised engine was delivered in 1924. The station was finally closed in 1965 after much alteration and change to the fire service. It was used by the ambulance service to the 1980s. In 1990 it was "listed" and became a restaurant soon after.



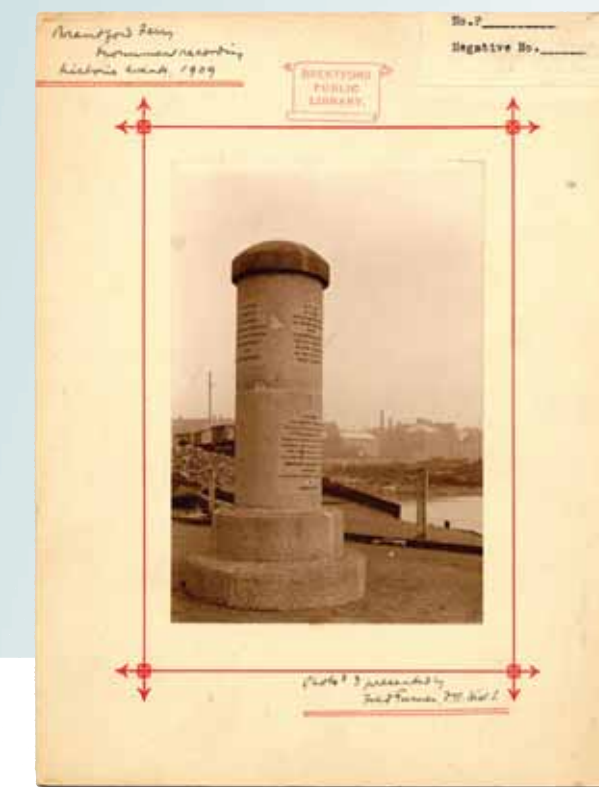
The **sewage pumping station** in pump alley was built in 1883. Although not a very glamorous or important building, such civic infrastructure would have improved the health of local people and is the kind of service we take for granted and expect today. A fine inscription still survives, recording Layton as the Chairman of the Local Board. The London Borough of Hounslow looks after the building today and while the surrounding area has been redeveloped, the station is not normally accessible.





# Changing Brentford – under the eye of Layton

## Brentford Monument, Brentford Library & the Baths



Brentford Monument 1909, taken by Fred Turner

The **Brentford monument** was erected in Ferry Lane in 1909 and was unveiled by His Grace the Duke of Northumberland of Syon House. It was conceived by Sir Montague Sharpe a friend and colleague of Layton. The monument records significant historical events that have occurred locally. Layton is recorded on the monument as ‘Councillor’ and FSA (Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries). The two granite drums were once part of the old Brentford Bridge. After 1909 the monument slowly became buried under coal at Ferry Lane, not to be “rediscovered” until 1955. In 1992 it was moved to its current position in front of the County Court in the High Street.



The first **Brentford library** opened at Clifden House 1890. In 1902 American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie gave £5,000 to construct a new library, which was designed by Parr. The foundation stone was laid in 1903 by the Countess of Jersey. A “time capsule” in the form of a sealed glass bottle containing newspapers of the time was hidden underneath. Carnegie opened the building on 9th May 1904. Layton was the Chairman of the Library Committee and though very elderly by this time, attended both events. An inscription survives to the left of the door recording Layton as Chairman of the Library Committee. This photograph shows the library as it was around 1905 (above left).



The **local Swimming Baths** were also designed by Parr. The laying of the foundation stones was attended by Thomas Layton, Mr Bigwood MP and other local dignitaries. The opening ceremony took place in April 1896 with demonstrations of acrobatic swimming displays. This 1896 photograph (bottom left) shows the baths during construction. There was a large swimming bath and ankle deep “slipper” baths in individual cubicles, for those who did not have baths at home. There was also a wash-house and laundry. In winter, the pool was floored over and used for dancing and other social events. The baths were closed in 1990 to much local protest and it is now a Grade II listed building which is being converted to houses and offices. A hard to read inscription records Layton as Chairman of the Council and Justice of the Peace (Magistrate).





# Changing Brentford – under the eye of Layton

## Gas & Coal – the lifeblood of Brentford

The Gas Works and the coal it burnt to make gas, was very important to Brentford, providing much employment. Thomas Layton's coal merchant business was called Layton & Hardy and had offices near the 1893 Brentford Market. The wharf for the coal business was very near Kew Bridge and the family home in Kew Bridge Road. The Brentford Gas Works were less than a quarter of a mile away and because of their proximity it would appear quite likely that Layton had some connection with the supply of coal to the Brentford Gas Works and perhaps also the selling of the coke that was produced there.

The Brentford Gasworks made a forbidding entrance to the town. It covered nine acres on both sides of the eastern end of the High Street with large gasometers dwarfing the adjacent St George's Church. It was the gas works in particular which gave Brentford its heavy industrial character producing soot and sulphurous smells. As late as 1940 a travel writer wrote:

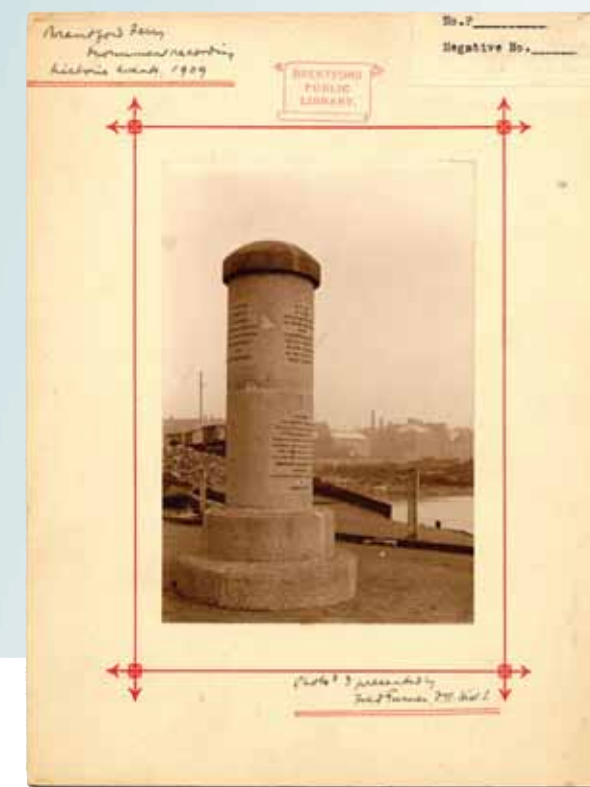
“..... the entrance to Brentford is like the gate to Hell. Already the gasworks and coal yards are there for stoking the punishing fires”



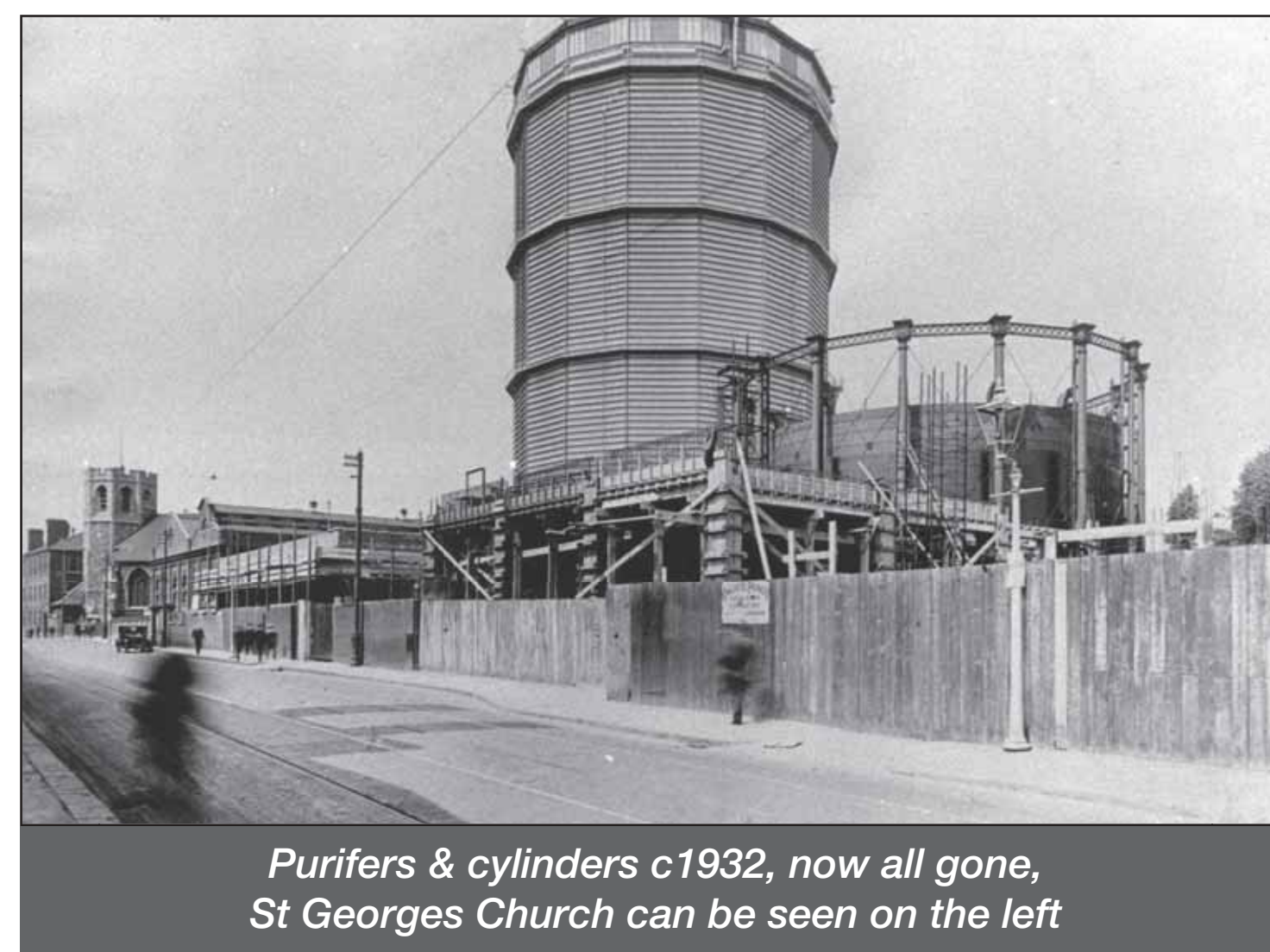
Barges outside Brentford Gasworks, c1926



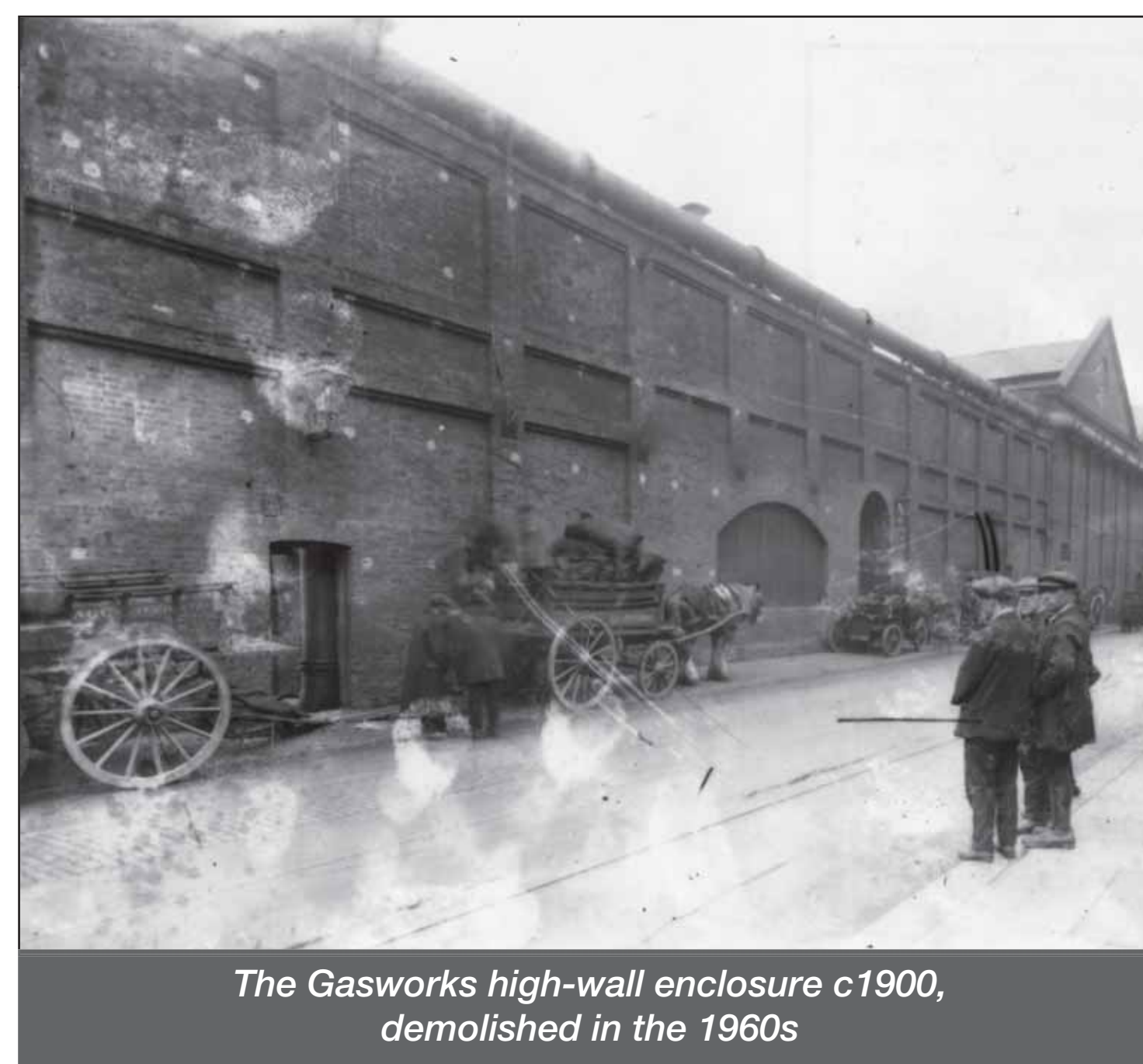
Opening of the new Market 1893, note Layton & Hardy's Office and the sign declaring 'Coal Order Office'



Brentford Monument 1909, taken by Fred Turner



Purifiers & cylinders c1932, now all gone, St Georges Church can be seen on the left



The Gasworks high-wall enclosure c1900, demolished in the 1960s

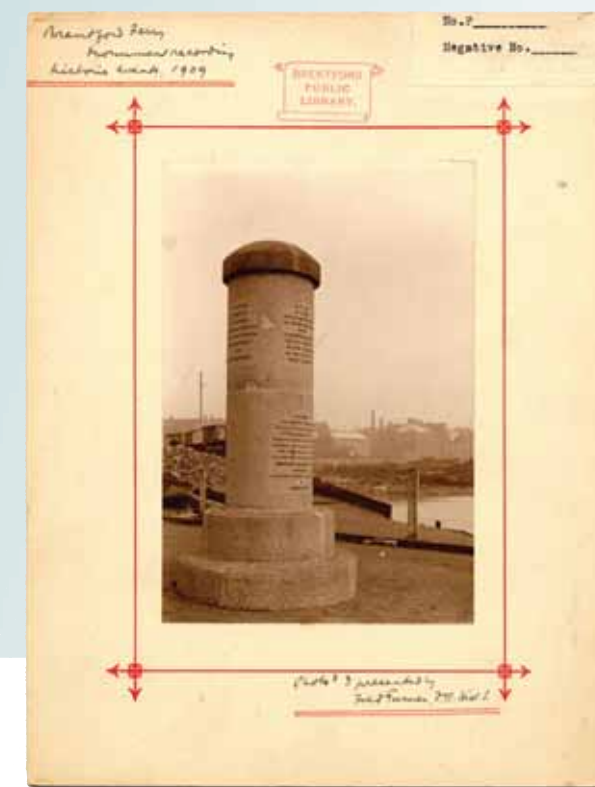
Brentford Gas Works began in 1823, becoming the Gas Light and Coke Company and eventually North Thames Gas upon nationalisation in 1949. It was a very substantial business supplying gas as far away as Edgware to the north of London and Windsor to the west. One of the consequences of having the gas supply so near was that Brentford's street lamps were not converted to electricity until 1960.

The gasworks finally closed in 1963 and the tall riverside buildings along with the barrier wall were demolished, but it was not until the early 1980s that Watermans Park and Arts Centre was built on the site. The gasometers on the north side were finally demolished in 1988 and the area is now a luxury housing development and hotel.



# Changing Brentford – under the eye of Layton

## The river, canals & docks

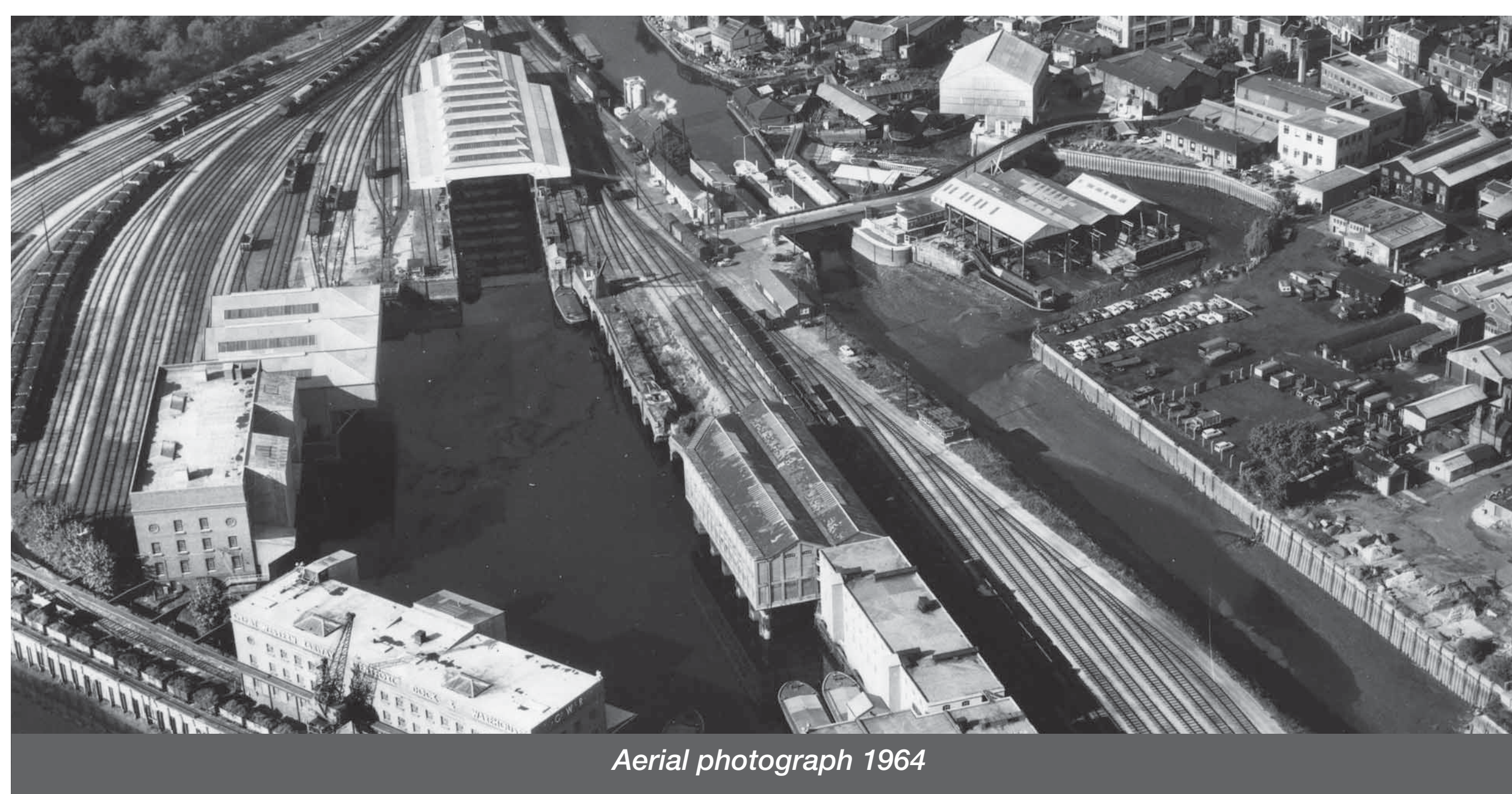


Brentford Monument 1909, taken by Fred Turner



Canal boats, c1911

In Thomas Layton's time the river would have been a true hive of activity in comparison to today's more sedate pace. Skiffs would have provided a form of water taxi service between 'plying' places such as the more important wharves and alleys leading down to the river. Boat building was concentrated around Brentford and Strand on the Green. Brick, cement and lime



Aerial photograph 1964



Grand Junction Canal, Brentford End, c1900



Bridge carried away by a barge at high-tide, c1900

Thomas Layton's family had a close association with the river at Brentford. Many generations of the family had been lightermen on the river. "Lightermen" were men who transported goods in wide bottomed barges or lighters to and from the docks and wharves lining the river at Brentford. In contrast the boats on the canal were 'narrow boats' worked by 'bargemen' while 'watermen' carried passengers in their wherries.

Brentford's industry was very reliant on the river and it was sometimes referred to as "Brentford's highway". Water based transport had further increased when the Grand Junction Canal opened at Brentford in 1794 enabling the movement of industrial and agricultural goods to and from the Midlands.

came from Kent for the house building trade with the resulting refuse, including that from stables and households, then removed on the outward journey. Foreign produce such as fruit and vegetables were brought from the Port of London for sale at Brentford Market.

Then there was produce from the river itself, osiers were cut along the banks and islands for basket making. Industries which were reliant on water congregated along the riverside - breweries, a malthouse, distillery, tannery, soap works and timber yards. The largest dock was that of the Great Western Railway, which had a branch line leading down to the river from the main line at Southall. Thomas Layton's coal merchant company had a wharf by Kew Bridge, close to Layton's home.



# Changing Brentford – under the eye of Layton

## Kew Bridge Road, The High Street & Market

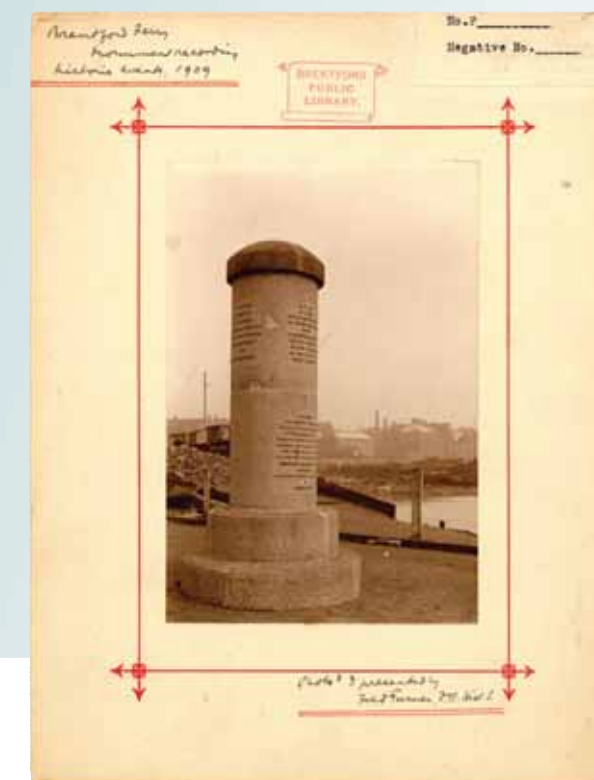
Thomas Layton lived nearly all his life at 22 Kew Bridge Road. It was the first house past Kew Bridge by the riverside entering Brentford and was demolished in the 1940s. By 2006 the site is still empty awaiting development.

Kew Bridge Road leading into Brentford High Street was part of the Great Western Road, the main route out of London to the west and had always been busy with travellers and the transport of goods. The High Street was particularly narrow - in places just 25 feet wide - and even in the days before the motorcar it was notorious for its traffic congestion, noise and pollution. The busy informal market outside Layton's house added to the congestion.

Brentford High Street must have seemed unappealing to the 19th century traveller. Starting at Layton's house and travelling towards Brentford there was the market, the waterworks, the gasworks, breweries, a distillery, potteries and kilns, leather tanners, soap works, a flour mill, jam makers and other industries associated with the river, canal and the Great Western Railway docks. Because of the pollution the national papers were describing Brentford as "stagnant, disgraceful and the filthiest place in England" in 1873.

Brentford was heavily populated with workers and their families, many of whom lived in the slums that proliferated in the narrow alleyways off the High Street. During the 19th century there were nearly fifty public houses along the road from Kew Bridge to Brentford Bridge. No wonder another commentator remarked that "no town in England had more poverty and its worst vice was drunkenness".

The arrival of the railway in Brentford in 1849 did not relieve the congestion in the High Street and when trams began to run along the road in 1901 it made matters worse. The opening of the new market in 1893 which was extended in 1905 helped a little by moving traders off Kew Bridge Road, but it was not until 1925 when the Great West Road opened that traffic noticeably declined.



Brentford Monument 1909, taken by Fred Turner



Brentford market and fountain, c1892



Laying the foundation stone to new market, c1893



Brentford High Street on the morning of Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee celebrations 1897



Brentford High Street c1910, Kew Bridge end



Brentford High Street c1910, near docks



# Would you give your collection to a museum?

## Collecting & collections



Stamps: one of the most common things to collect

Thomas Layton and his method of collecting seem obsessive to us today. He jealously guarded his collection from casual visitors. Did he always have a museum in mind when he bought things? And if so why didn't he create one while he was alive?

We know he was collecting antiques and antiquities for probably 70 years and filled his house including over 30 outhouses and sheds with his items and books, many simply



Layton objects currently on loan to the Museum of London



Will Spice Girls Dolls and Star Wars collectables be as valuable to museums of the future as Bronze and Iron Age objects are to ours today?

boxed up and hidden away. Friends talk of cobwebs and dust, and cramped and cold conditions.

Layton may not have known exactly what he had in his collection. He did not keep many records and he may not have looked at some items again after acquiring them. He had hundreds of some types of object, including some fakes. The thrill of acquiring something may have been more exciting and important than the actual object.

### Are you like Thomas Layton?

- What do you collect, are you obsessive about it?
- Do you know anyone else who collects things like this?
- Would you give your collection to a museum?
- Would your collection still be interesting to people 100 years after your death?
- Why do you think Thomas Layton gave his collection to the local people?
- According to his Will Thomas Layton was going to deny children under the age of 18 to look at his collection - what do you think of that?
- What do you think he would have made of the Internet and online auction sites?



Bronze tankard from Brentford, Iron Age (100BC - AD50)