

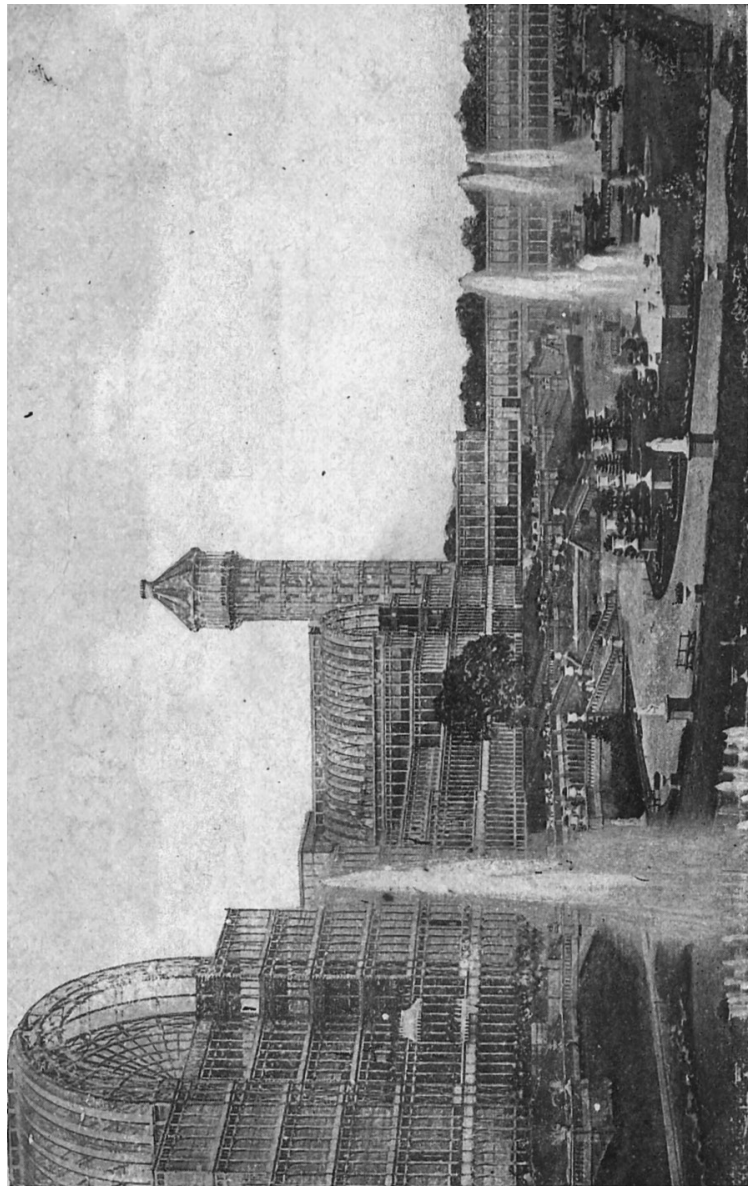
I

‘What is to become of the Crystal Palace?’ The Crystal Palace after 1851

Kate Nichols and Sarah Victoria Turner

‘The 10th of June, 1854, promises to be a day scarcely less memorable in the social history of the present age than was the 1st of May, 1851’, boasted the *Chronicle*, comparing the opening of the Crystal Palace, newly installed on the crown of Sydenham Hill in South London, to that of the Great Exhibition (figure 1.1).¹ Many contemporary commentators deemed the Sydenham Palace’s contents superior, the building more spectacular and its educative potential much greater than its predecessor.² Yet their predictions proved to be a little wide of the mark, and for a long time, studies of the six-month long Great Exhibition of 1851 have marginalised the eighty-two-year presence of the Sydenham Palace.³ This volume looks beyond the chronological confines of 1851 to address the significance of the Sydenham Crystal Palace as a cultural site, image and structure well into the twentieth century, even after it was destroyed by fire in 1936.

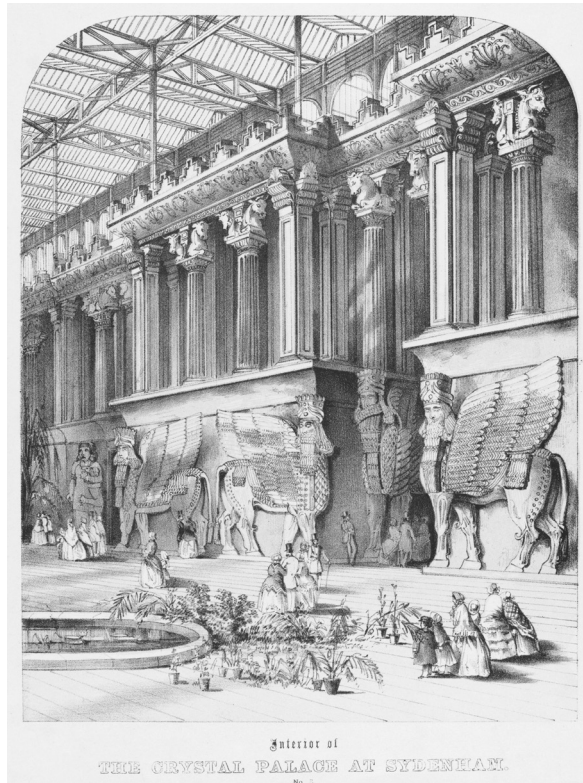
The Crystal Palace at Sydenham, both as complete structure (1854–1936) and as ruin, does not belong exclusively to any one period. It was an icon of mid-Victorian Britain, but at the same time embodied from its inception architectural innovation and modernity – what Henry James described in 1893 as its ‘hard modern twinkle’.⁴ The chapters in this book provide close case studies of the courts, building, gardens, visitors and workers at the Sydenham site, spanning 1851 to the early twenty-first century. Examining a wealth of largely unpublished primary material, this collection brings together research on objects, materials and subjects as diverse as those represented under the glass roof of the Sydenham Palace itself; from the *Venus de Milo* to souvenir ‘peep eggs’, war memorials to children’s story books, portrait busts to imperial pageants, tropical plants to cartoons made by artists on the spot, copies of paintings from



1.1 Postcard of the Crystal Palace, early twentieth century. Author's collection.

ancient caves in India to 1950s film. The chapters do not simply catalogue and collect this eclectic congregation, but provide new ways for assessing the significance of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham for both nineteenth- and twentieth-century studies, questioning the caricature of a twentieth-century cultural revolt against the ‘Victorian’.

The Sydenham site offers cultural and social historians a vast and largely unexplored archive showing the intersections of leisure, pleasure and education, articulated through the dazzling display of imperial, industrial and artistic material culture. The visitors were as diverse as the exhibits.⁵ Part of the Palace’s allure, especially for middle-class commentators, was the frisson of this social mix, which encompassed the British working, middle and upper classes, international tourists and diplomats, exhibited peoples from across the Empire, through to members of the Royal Family who were regular and avid attendees (figure 1.2). Chapters in this volume



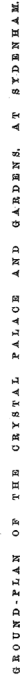
1.2 A mixed group of women, men and children in front of the Nineveh Court at Sydenham. Anonymous, ‘Interior of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, number 8’, lithograph, 1854. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

argue for the importance of the Palace in understanding early formations of mass culture in Britain. Echoing the question posed by Joseph Paxton, architect of the 1851 structure, at the close of the Great Exhibition, ‘What is to become of the Crystal Palace?’ this book argues that there is considerable potential in studying this unique architectural and art-historical document after 1851.⁶

Through a series of display rooms, clearly delineated on the ground plan, and described in the guidebook and much subsequent literature as ‘courts’, the directors of the Palace sought to present an ‘illustrated encyclopaedia of this great and varied universe’ (figure 1.3).⁷ In his widely reported opening speech, Palace company director Samuel Laing set out the mission of visual instruction combining what he claimed was ‘every art and every science’.⁸ The organisers hoped that visitors would not simply wander aimlessly (although many presumably did), but would participate and learn through a systematic encounter with a carefully selected display of objects in a curated and highly managed environment – what Jason Edwards describes in his chapter as ‘an eclectic, cosmopolitan world system’. This combination of a serious educative purpose with mass entertainment, designed with pleasure and crowd pleasing in mind, was something of a hallmark of the Sydenham Palace. As Matthew Digby Wyatt, one of the architects of the Fine Arts Courts, put it, the displays at Sydenham were designed to educate ‘by eye’, as well as to be a source of ‘stimulating *pleasure*’.⁹

The Crystal Palaces

The memory of what art historian Lady Elizabeth Eastlake described as that ‘old friend’ the Great Exhibition lived on in visitors’ recollections, contributing towards the horizon of expectations that many brought to a visit to Sydenham.¹⁰ The Palace of 1854 certainly had an umbilical connection to 1851. The design-reforming zeal of the Great Exhibition continued at Sydenham with a crossover of personnel. Matthew Digby Wyatt and his fellow Fine Arts Court architect Owen Jones, had also decorated the interior of the 1851 building, and theorised the connections between objects of art and industry that both palaces contained.¹¹ Scholarship has frequently conflated (and sometimes mistaken) the Sydenham Palace with the Great Exhibition, despite the fact that the Sydenham Palace displayed entirely different material on different organising principles, was larger, and had additional architectural features such as the highly visible water towers. The chapters in this collection attest that the Crystal Palace post-1854 needs to be understood as an enterprise quite distinct, with very



1.3 Ground plan of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham in 1854, *Illustrated London News* (17 June 1854), p. 581. Author's collection.

different aims, and different adaptations during its long lifespan across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Sydenham Palace was built in an 1850s design-reforming moment, but it formed as much a part of the later Victorian and Edwardian cultures of museum visiting, archaeological reconstruction, sports participation and spectatorship, amusement parks, shopping centres and pet shows.

The ever-developing and extensive nature of the Sydenham Palace poses problems of how to study, describe and assess the contents within the interior courts, as well its vast grounds. As Verity Hunt explores in Chapter 2 of this book, since its inception in the nineteenth century, authors have frequently commented on the challenges of describing the Palace, due to a combination of its physical size, its architectural novelty and the diversity of its displays and exhibits. The record and recollections of the Palace's high turnover of participants, viewers and performers is now scattered across collections of ephemera, in personal archives, published letters and diaries, in the local history libraries of South London and in a handful of official documents in the London Metropolitan Archives and at the Guildhall.¹² Even its very building fabric, glass, as Isobel Armstrong has explored, is contradictory and many-faceted, claiming transparency and industrial modernity, but riddled with the 'scratches, fingerprints ... impurities and bubbles of air' that testify to its production by human breath.¹³ Jan Piggott's *The Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854–1936* (2004) was the first publication to offer a comprehensive history of the multifaceted life of the Palace, inside and out, to accompany an exhibition at the Dulwich Picture Gallery, and is an essential point of departure for all chapters here. This collection aims to evoke the eclecticism of the Palace on Sydenham Hill in bringing together the research of scholars from the disciplines of art history, English literature, classics, digital humanities, film studies and the history of science.¹⁴ The chapters in this volume consider parts of the Palace less well explored; not just specific courts but the relationships among permanent Fine Arts Courts and shifting displays, representations and responses to the Palace, both inside and outside.

Visiting fairyland

'What it will be when the sound of the workman's hammer has ceased, and the decorative artist has put his last touches to its ornaments, and it is filled with "gems rich and rare" from the four quarters of the world, one can only imagine: we must wait to see', wrote a commentator in the *Art Journal*.¹⁵ Anticipation ran high in the lead-up to the Palace's opening,

and the press presented it as a site worthy of pilgrimage. Alighting at the newly completed Low Level railway station, the Crystal Palace experience began before entering the building. Eager visitors peering through the train windows for a glimpse of the Palace might have caught sight of one of the ‘monsters’ that formed part of the display of geology on the lower lake even before the train pulled into the station. Railway enthusiast and imperial electrical engineer, Alfred Rosling Bennett, recounting in 1924 his first visit to the Palace at the age of eight, noted the mounting excitement he felt on disembarking the train in 1858:

The platforms were at a considerable distance from the Palace proper, but, being joined to it by long glass corridors embellished with flowers and climbing plants and affording views of the beautiful grounds, the hiatus was not much felt; indeed, it served to heighten expectation by avoiding a too rapid transition between the prosaic puffer and fairyland.¹⁶

Bennett suggests that the glass corridor linking the station and the Palace prepared the visitor for the otherworldly environment of the Sydenham site. Climbing the 700 stairs of the corridor, visitors would pop up, no doubt short of breath, into the Natural History Department in the south nave, with its tableaux of brightly painted plaster casts of non-European peoples. These had been arranged by Vice-President of the Ethnological Society, Robert Gordon Latham and were displayed alongside stuffed exotic animals and specimens of botany. Curated by naturalist Edward Forbes, the tableaux were arranged geographically to show that ‘Animals and plants are not scattered indifferently over the earth’s surface’.¹⁷ The Natural History Department was, somewhat incongruously, interrupted by a screen designed by Matthew Digby Wyatt containing plaster models for statues of the Kings and Queens of England made by John Thomas in the 1840s for the new Houses of Parliament.¹⁸ Taxonomic groupings were not limited to the Natural History Department. The Fine Arts Courts in the north nave – described as Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Alhambra, Nineveh, Byzantine, Medieval, Renaissance and Italian – also used a similar system of organisation for arranging plaster casts of architectural features and sculpture by culture, chronology and geographical region. Where to go next was open to myriad possibilities; within easy striking distance in the south nave were the reconstructed Pompeian House or the Sheffield Court next to it, the Musical Instruments Court or the Stationery Court. Guidebooks and plans, both official and unofficial, offered a range of potential routes around the courts and the grounds. Samuel Phillips’s officially sanctioned guide led the visitor through the courts in chronological sequence, but maintained that ‘as a reference

to the plans will show, there are many other roads open, which may be explored in future visits'.¹⁹

The Palace was celebrated as a destination for all seasons. Even on rainy bank holidays, it could comfortably house a large number of people who sought shelter in the almost tropical climate under its glass roof and walls. Lush foliage, fountains and the squawking parrots which populated the Tropical Department, sadly destroyed by the fire of 1866, created a hothouse environment for botanical instruction and enjoyment which shared many similarities with the 'Winter Gardens' opened across London at Kew Gardens in 1863 (figure 1.4). In clement weather, visitors promenaded along the terraces and gardens landscaped by Joseph Paxton. These contained impressive water features, planted beds showing the history of gardening, sporting facilities and an extensive programme of sculpture, some specially commissioned and others copies of Egyptian, Greek,



1.4 Photograph of tropical plants in the south nave of the Palace. Philip Henry Delamotte, albumen print c.1852–60. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Roman and more modern reputed works. The ‘antediluvian monsters’, concrete and brick visualisations of what would now be called dinosaurs, populated the geological islands in the furthest corner of the Palace park, as discussed in detail by Melanie Keene (see figure 8.1). By the end of a day out at Sydenham, a visitor who took in all the sights must have left exhausted.

Leisure and learning

Entertainment and education were combined from the inception of the Palace; nevertheless a tension between it as *both* a place of leisure and learning runs throughout its history. Detractors tirelessly lamented the loss of its lofty educative mission and descent into the pursuit of crass popularism, while supporters into the twentieth century praised its dual ambition to continue to combine education and entertainment. Christopher Hobhouse’s assessment of the Sydenham site, written shortly after the Palace’s demise, has too often been taken at face value: ‘Nothing was too large or too silly for the [Sydenham] Crystal Palace; everything was swept together in hotchpotch to astonish and amuse the masses.’²⁰ The carefully planned exhibits were anything but random, and Hobhouse’s assessment arguably has more to do with prevailing attitudes towards the Victorians in the 1930s, and snobbery towards mass entertainment, than with the social significance that mid-Victorians attributed to leisure as rational recreation.

Cultural historians are increasingly interested in the fairground and sporting entertainments, which formed part of emergent cultures of mass entertainment and consumption in the late-nineteenth/ early-twentieth century.²¹ This volume aims to situate the Palace as a significant location for such cross-class leisure activities. Kate Nichols’s chapter examines the role of Sydenham in shaping Victorian and Edwardian body cultures. Ann Roberts examines how the Palace Company’s management employed leisure as a strategy to bolster their flagging fortunes in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, recreating the Palace as a fashionable destination for the middle-class consumer. As her case studies demonstrate, watching art being produced on the spot was part of this new commercialised cultural milieu at the Palace. Verity Hunt’s chapter brings together the themes of leisure and pleasure through her discussion of small souvenirs of the Palace, the peep egg and the Stanhope viewer. Made for the domestic and often female market, these handheld objects distilled the overwhelming scale of the Crystal Palace edifice through a lens, and into something compact, manageable and most importantly, portable.

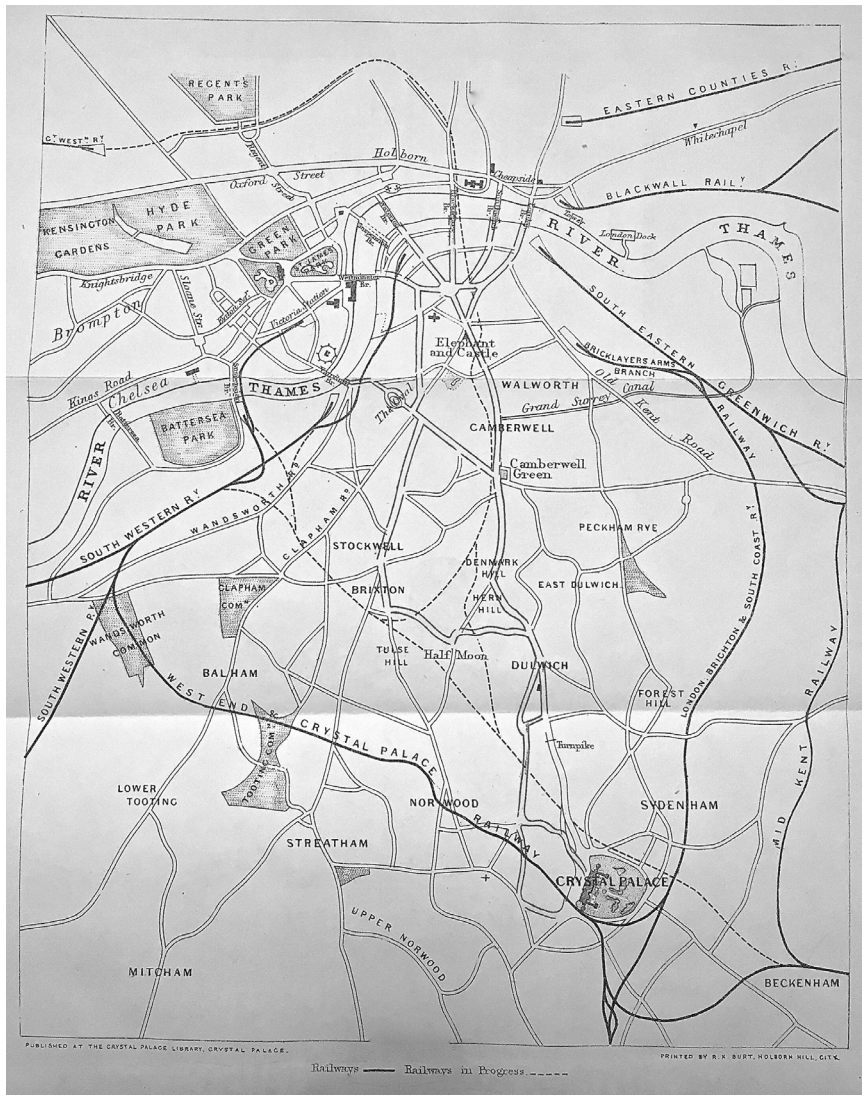
Empire in suburbia

Situated on the interstices between the suburban spread of the ever-growing capital city and the rolling, fertile countryside of the county of Kent, the Palace at Sydenham was envisioned as a key site in the symbolic geography of imperial London right from its inauguration, where it was described as a ‘fitting ornament to the greatest metropolis of the civilised world; an unrivalled school of art and instrument of education and a monument worthy of the British empire’.²² This status was conferred on it not only because of its contents and the kinds of exhibitions and displays organised there, but also by the fact of its location. Perched atop Sydenham Hill, the Palace offered a physical vantage point from which to survey and take in a panoramic sweep of London – and the quintessentially ‘English’ countryside. Guidebook author Samuel Phillips directed people, after taking in the Indian Court, to ascend two flights of stairs to reach a gallery 108 feet above the ground. There the visitor was instructed to take in the vertiginous bird’s-eye view down into the nave. Then, peeping between the louvre boards at the north-west corner of the Great Transept, the presumably breathless and slightly dizzy spectator could, Phillips observed:

behold from the commanding height, London spread out before him like a map, the towers of Westminster Abbey marking the west end, and the dome of St. Paul’s, half shrouded in smoke, indicating the heart of the city, whilst the hazy veil, extending far beyond either extremity, serves to measure the vast area of this ‘Province covered with houses’.²³

Phillips’s guide took considerable satisfaction in the elevated position of the Palace on the hill from which the city centre could be viewed and surveyed. Suburban sites (and sights) were certainly not marginal to the centres of financial, political and religious power in the city, as geographer David Gilbert has persuasively argued in his work on suburban modernity and the imperial geographies of Edwardian London. He identifies the creation of an ‘Edwardian edge city’ which hosted major exhibitions such as the Franco-British Exhibition at the White City in Shepherd’s Bush (1908), and the Festival of Empire at the Crystal Palace in 1911, an event discussed in further detail in Sarah Turner’s chapter.²⁴

The map included in the 1858 revised edition of the *Official Guide* to the Palace used bodily allusion to suggest the connectivity of the Crystal Palace in its new location (figure 1.5). It represents the Palace as the ‘heart’ of the imperial metropolis, linked by thick arterial routes to central London, delineated in red. Road and railway lines, both existing and in



1.5 Plan of the Crystal Palace and railway connections, from S. Philips, *Guide to the Crystal Palace and its Parks and Gardens* (London: Crystal Palace Company, rev. edn, 1858). Author's collection.

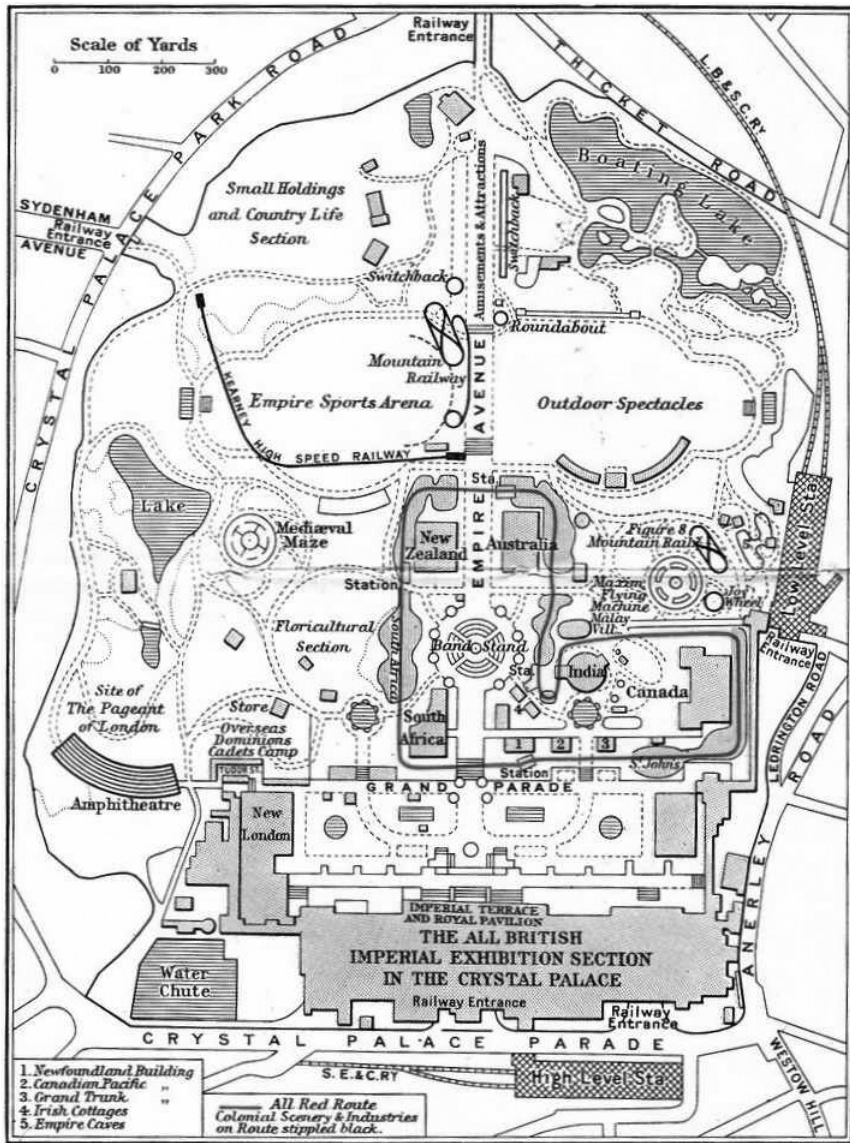
progress, are represented on the map as a complex network of veins and capillaries flowing in and out of the Palace. The fact that the owners of the Crystal Palace Company were a syndicate made up of a number of railway owners and bosses under the chairmanship of Samuel Laing of the Brighton and South Coast Railway explains this 'networked' approach,

and the integral role played by transport and travel in the conception and management of the Palace from the inception of the plan to move it from Hyde Park to Sydenham.²⁵

The Stationery Court inside the Palace also highlighted such links, advertising itself as 'being in Telegraphic communication and Railway connection with all parts of the United Kingdom' where goods could be 'packed and forwarded to any part of the world'.²⁶ Connected not just to London and the provinces, but to the world – this was the message that the directors wanted to convey through their 'monument to empire' atop Sydenham Hill. For the 1911 Festival of Empire, a mile-and-a-half journey by the 'All Red Route' electric railway (a reference to the areas of the British Empire coloured red on maps) was constructed in the Palace park at the cost of £40,000 (figure 1.6). On the journey the train passed three-quarter replicas of parliament buildings in the colonies and dominions, tableaux of colonial life populated by 'natives' and live animals, and scenes of imperial landscapes and industries, such as an Indian tea plantation. In November 1910, the *Illustrated London News* had featured an article on the construction of what it described as 'A "World" in a Suburb: The All-Red Empire in Miniature'.²⁷ To create a 'world in a suburb' had arguably been the aim of the Palace since it had opened its doors.

Networked into this sophisticated grid of international communication and transport, the Sydenham site played host to a number of other events designed to promote and celebrate the British Empire, including the African Exhibition of 1895, the Victoria Cross Gallery which opened in the same year, the Naval and Military Exhibition of 1901 and the Colonial Exhibition of 1905. These were not just static displays, but were often accompanied by pageants, musical performances, lectures, talks and practical demonstrations.²⁸ As Jan Piggott has noted, every part of the Palace was used for such events – even its lofty aerial spaces were put to use, perhaps most famously by the acrobat and trapeze artist, Blondin, who had notoriously crossed Niagara Falls via a tightrope.²⁹ Dressed in a costume with beadwork made by indigenous tribes from the Niagara area, and with ostrich feathers in his cap, Blondin made his first appearance at Sydenham on 1 June 1861 before a large audience which included the art critic John Ruskin, as eager as anyone else to see the 'Hero of Niagara' make the crossing of 320 feet across the Central Transept. The 'Mohawk Minstrels' accompanied his other performances, and Blondin was eager to play on these colonial ties to add to the spectacular nature of his performance. Spectators and performers – like Blondin and the minstrels – came from far and wide to participate in Sydenham's imperial spectacles.

Sydenham's role as an imperial space in which the nation's history



1.6 Plan of the Festival of Empire and Imperial Exhibition, 1911.

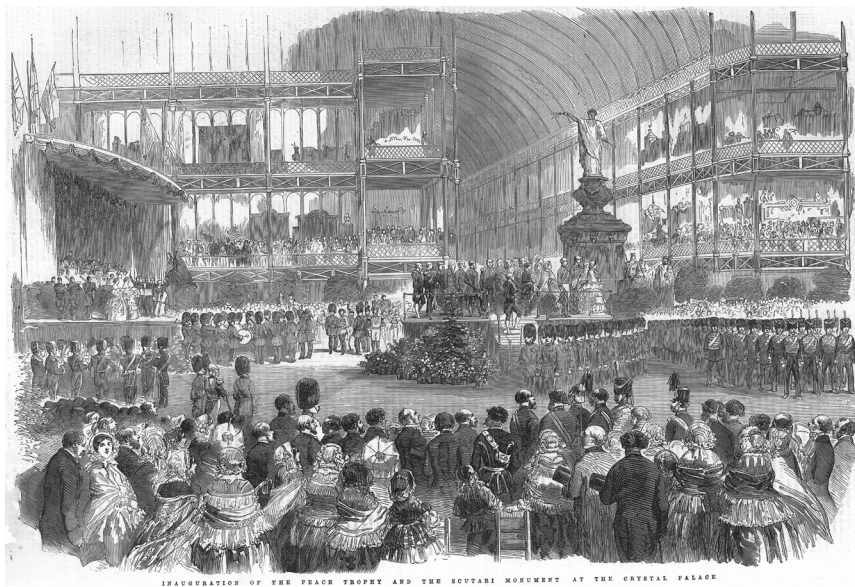
Author's collection.

could be curated was made particularly apparent at certain moments of political wrangling and international calamity. The Crimean War formed a tumultuous backdrop to the planning and opening celebrations at Sydenham. On 21 June 1854, eleven days after the Palace opened its

doors, an Anglo-French taskforce fought Russian forces at the Battle of Bomarsund. In December 1854 a gun and mortar from Bomarsund were put on display at Sydenham, bringing the Crimea right into the Palace. Joseph Paxton, a Liberal Member of Parliament from 1855, mustered the Army Work Corps, known informally as the ‘Crystal Palace navvies’, and 1000 workmen left construction work at the Palace to support the British Army in August 1855.

By September 1855, the Stationery Court had become the Crimean Court. One visitor, Emily Hall of West Wickham, described in her diary visiting the ‘Crimean relics’ gathered together, which depicted ‘the very height and depth of all the miseries of that terrible campaign’.³⁰ This reminds us that the exhibition halls of the Palace were not only a place in which to feature and narrativise national history, but also to memorialise, and even question or criticise it as well. A replica in imitation granite of Baron Marochetti’s Scutari Monument (the original was outside the Scutari Hospital in Constantinople), and a ‘Peace Trophy to the Crimea’ by G. Stacy, were unveiled in front of the Queen and Prince Albert in 1856 (figure 1.7). Marochetti’s sculpture met with much public derision and grumbling in the press who were unhappy that a British sculptor had not been chosen over the Italian Marochetti, a favourite of Prince Albert.

The Palace’s spaces were frequently militarised, but this operated



1.7 ‘Inauguration of the Peace Trophy and the Scutari Monument at the Crystal Palace’, *Illustrated London News* (17 May 1856), p. 524. Author’s collection.

alongside the image of the building as a symbol of peace, an idea that had originated at the 1851 Great Exhibition. Lord Roberts saw no contradiction in opening the Naval and Military exhibition in 1901 by declaring that

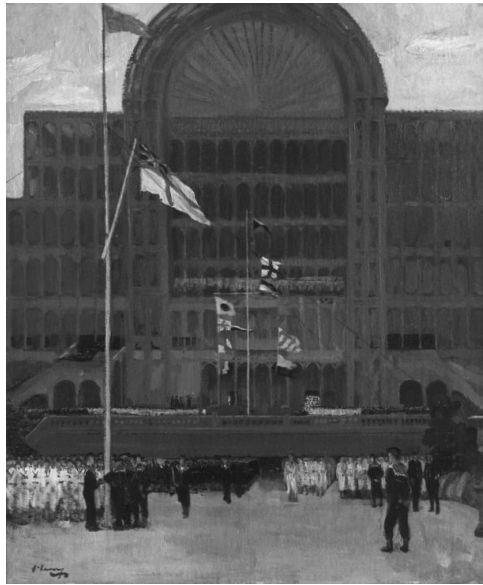
the directors of the Crystal Palace Company could not have chosen a more proper way of celebrating the jubilee of the 1851 Exhibition than by organizing that magnificent collection of exhibits and the imposing naval and military displays which corresponded so well with the sentiment of the people of this Empire at the present moment.³¹

As well as replica models of all the ships in the British navy, the north reservoir was used for a reconstruction of the Battle of Trafalgar. As Kate Nichols discusses in her chapter, these pacific ideals were tested even further in the twentieth century when the Palace was requisitioned by the Royal Naval division and closed to the public during the First World War. Artist John Lavery’s official wartime oil paintings of the Palace, now used for drilling naval recruits, show the terraces transformed into ‘quarter decks’, the dark grey Palace looming like a battleship (figure 1.8). After the Armistice, the Palace housed the first incarnation of the Imperial War Museum from 1920 to 1924.

Well into the 1930s, the Sydenham Palace was envisioned as a ‘monument to empire’. In 1935 William A. Bayst produced a twopenny pamphlet, *Empire Bridge and World Approach in lieu of War* proposing that the Sydenham site become a permanent shrine to the British Empire.³² Bayst suggested that an arterial road should run from what he called the ‘Empire Bridge’ across the Thames, forging a direct imperial processional thoroughfare from The Strand to Sydenham. This proposal by Bayst, known only as a ‘resident of South Woodford’, gained little traction and his notion of the ‘crystal domes’ of Sydenham acting as a ‘lighthouse’, of imperial ideas was shattered when the Palace burnt down on the night of 30 November 1936. However, the vision – or ghost – of Sydenham as a monument or ‘shrine’ to empire was one that lingered on well into mid-century.³³ The organisers of the Festival of Britain on London’s bomb-damaged South Bank were keenly aware of the relationship between nation and empire evoked by the Palace building and its grounds, as James Boaden discusses in his chapter.

The Crystal Palace and the Artistic Imagination

Camille Pissarro’s *Crystal Palace* (1871) is perhaps the definitive image of the Palace as ‘modern’, in both form and subject matter (figure 1.9). Its impressionist depiction of the goings-on of modern life outside the Palace building have arguably perpetuated the idea of the Crystal Palace as a



1.8 John Lavery, 'RNVR Crystal Palace, 1917', 1917, oil on canvas, 76.2 × 63.5 cm. Published under Imperial War Museum's non-commercial licence © IWM (Art.IWM ART 1275) www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/16255.



1.9 Camille Pissarro, 'The Crystal Palace, 1871', 1871, oil on canvas, 47.2 × 73.5 cm, Art Institute of Chicago © The Art Institute of Chicago. www.artic.edu/aic.

symbol of modernity. It is, however, the least characteristic nineteenth-century image of the Palace, its formal qualities distinguishing it from the precise, hard-edged Palace and individuated audiences that populate engravings and sketches in the nineteenth-century illustrated press (see figures 1.2, 1.7 and 5.2).

The Palace interior – especially the architectural reconstructions and unprecedented collection of plaster casts in its Fine Arts Courts – appears, often unacknowledged, in a far wider range of nineteenth-century canvases. William Holman Hunt’s *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple* (1854–60), for example, presents itself as an orientalist, anthropological and religious image, with claims to scriptural and geographical specificity grounded in biblical antiquity. Yet the setting for this supposedly painted-on-location in Jerusalem image, was in fact the Alhambra Court at Sydenham.³⁴ The fascination with archaeological exactitude in later nineteenth-century painting made the Fine Arts Courts – especially those of Egypt and Pompeii – essential reference points for painters such as Edward Poynter and Lawrence Alma-Tadema.

It was not just Royal Academicians that made use of the Palace, however. It became an important training and exhibitionary space for a selection of artists who were, in nineteenth-century terms, much less conventional. The Crystal Palace School of Literature, Science and Art opened in 1860, and invited female as well as male pupils, and by the 1890s had an intake of 500 young women per year. Commentators attributed the success of the schools to the use of the Palace’s collections for teaching.³⁵ Local artists including Henrietta Rae studied and sketched the cast collections. Women were often excluded from the academic life class, so the Palace played an important role in providing female art students with access to the unclothed (albeit lifeless) form. The Palace also became a site for the live production and performance of contemporary art. Here, Ann Roberts’s chapter explores the Palace as a space of commercial art entertainment through case studies of disabled artist Bartram Hiles, and ‘lightning cartoonist’ Herbert Beecroft.

The Palace’s role in the visual imagination did not suddenly stop when it burnt to the ground, as chapters by Melanie Keene, James Boaden, and Shelley Hales and Nic Earle examine here in their discussions, dealing with the various afterlives of the Palace in children’s literature, film and digital reconstructions respectively. Dramatic photographs and films of the Palace in the process of burning, and its smoking embers, had a large circulation and are still widely available as part of the Crystal Palace’s extensive visual archive (figure 1.10).³⁶



1.10 Commemorative postcard depicting the still-smouldering Crystal Palace, 1936. Author's collection.

The Crystal Palace and exhibitionary culture

The Crystal Palace's 1851 incarnation occupies a special position within the history and theory of museums.³⁷ The 1851 Palace's viewing balconies were the origin point of Tony Bennett's enormously influential (if now often contested) conceptualisation of the 'exhibitionary complex': 'a set of cultural technologies concerned to organise a voluntarily self-regulating citizenry'.³⁸ How might a focus on the Palace's new life at Sydenham provide alternative perspectives on the formation of modern exhibitionary culture? The interdisciplinary scope of this volume, and several chapters' engagements with visitor responses to the exhibits offer some suggestions. Jason Edwards's chapter critically examines how 1850s guidebooks created an ideal public engaged with high culture to survey its idealistic exhibits, while Ann Roberts's discussion of 1890s Palace ephemera uncovers a less scholarly visitor-consumer at the turn of the century.

In 1855, Lady Elizabeth Eastlake's account of her first visit suggests that its wonders would only be comprehended over time, on reflection, after a visit, and through the anticipation of subsequent visits: 'Hour after hour finds us in wandering mazes lost – the sport of impressions gone as soon as formed, all rapid, vivid, but fleeting – glancing at what we are to see, tasting what we are to feed upon – all hope fixed upon some future which is to sort the present tangle of the brain.'³⁹ Here Shelley Hales and Nic Earle

experiment with digital humanities to attempt to fathom the Palace across time, but as they acknowledge, their attempts to reconstruct the Pompeian House suggest anew the difficulties in untangling the sights and sounds at Sydenham. Spanning and combining both the twenty-first-century virtual reality environment of Second Life, and the textual responses of Victorian Palace-goers, the diverse visitor responses foregrounded by Hales and Earle challenge any monolithic notion that people behave in ways prescribed by museum or exhibition organisers. The Sydenham Palace is crucial to understanding the complex development of exhibitionary cultures across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Conclusion

There is further work to be done in situating the Sydenham Palace among its nineteenth- and twentieth-century relatives, beyond its parent building from 1851. These might include Kew Gardens, the also highly flammable Alexandra Palace (opened in 1873), the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) and Imperial Institute, the People's Palace in Glasgow, as well as prefabricated and portable exhibition and display architecture which appeared across the world creating a global genealogy of glass and iron, as, for example, the glass house of Lal Bagh in Bangalore. Its legacy can also be detected in contemporary 'edu-tainment' structures, such as Millennium Dome, and the 'Olympicopolis' currently under construction in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, East London, which is slated to house a design school, a centre for culture and heritage, science, technology and business 'hubs', as well as an outpost of the V&A.⁴⁰ Combining commerce and culture, entertainment and education, social and moral messages, these new plans reincarnate many aspects of the founding principles of the Sydenham Palace, suggesting that it is not so much of a Victorian white elephant as it might initially appear.

Despite its chequered fortunes, even the built environment of the Palace has not entirely vanished. Its footprint is stamped on the terraces of the popular public park in the borough of Bromley, where it is still possible to trace the outline of the Palace's structure, and various parts of its walls, steps, fountains, arcades and other landscaping are incorporated into the current site. Sporting facilities in its park continue its athletic legacy, as Kate Nichols discusses in Chapter 5. The long extinct 'antediluvian monsters' on the geological islands of the Palace lake are today the sole surviving exhibit; they were listed as Grade I monuments in 2007, deemed to be 'of exceptional historical interest in a national and probably international context'.⁴¹ Paxton's question 'What is to become of the Crystal Palace?'

continues to occupy the local community, as well as politicians, planners and, most recently, property developers. The latest plans to rebuild the Palace, which hit the headlines in July 2013, are indicative of the long-standing pull of the site for commercial and cultural activities, although as of February 2015 these latest plans have been quashed.⁴² Newspaper articles discussing this potential re-re-built Palace were dominated by the Great Exhibition of 1851, tending to ignore the much longer history of its life at Sydenham.⁴³ This volume makes the case for a more serious consideration of the Palace on Sydenham Hill, drawing on the important archive and research collected together by local historians, the Palace museum and local studies libraries.⁴⁴ We hope it will be a launchpad for future research into the material and visual cultures of the Crystal Palace after 1851. To give the final word to Samuel Phillips's 1854 guidebook 'there are many other roads open, which may be explored in future visits'.⁴⁵

Notes

- 1 'The Opening of the Crystal Palace, Sydenham', *Chronicle* (10 June 1854), p. 109.
- 2 See, for example, C. E. Smith (ed.), *Journals and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake. Vol. 1* (London: John Murray, 1895), p. 325; C. Knight, *Knight's The Pictorial Gallery of Arts, comprising nearly four thousand illustrations on wood, and a series of beautiful steel engravings. Vol.1: Useful arts* (London and New York: The London Printing & Publishing Company, 1858–60), p. xv; A. C. Wigan, *The Great Wonders of the World. From the Pyramids to the Crystal Palace* (London, 1856), p. 135; 'Opening of the Crystal Palace, June 19th, 1854', *Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 6:126 (1854), 99.
- 3 Historians did not seriously start to re-evaluate the reputation and historiography of the Great Exhibition until the 1990s. These, and more recent studies, emphasise the plurality of meanings which the Exhibition offered to its visitors. They focus on the controversy that the preparations generated, rather than solely the glorifying reports of its organisers. Although these accounts emphasise that the Great Exhibition no longer has a definitive meaning, they tend to view the Sydenham Palace as a unified whole – with the exceptions of articles by Peter Gurney in L. Purbrick (ed.), *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) and J. Buzard, J. W. Childers and E. Gillooly (eds), *Victorian Prism. Refractions of the Crystal Palace* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2007). If discussed at all, the Sydenham Palace appears as a debased version of 1851. Ironically, many of the concerns identified in these new studies – including the role of working-class visitors, commodity fetishism or the display of Empire – were far more prominent at Sydenham than they had

- been at the Great Exhibition. See J. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851. A Nation on Display* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1999); M. Billinge, ‘Trading History, Reclaiming the Past: The Crystal Palace as Icon’, in G. Kearns and C. Philo (eds), *Selling Places. The City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1993), pp. 103–31; Buzard, Childers and Gillooly (eds) *Victorian Prism*; J. R. Davis, *The Great Exhibition* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999); S. Johansen, ‘The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Precipice in Time?’, *Victorian Review*, 22:1 (1996), 59–64; Purbrick (ed.), *The Great Exhibition of 1851*.
- 4 H. James, *Essays in London* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893), p. 20.
 - 5 When the Palace opened, entry was 1s from Monday to Thursday, 2s 6d. on Fridays, while Saturday entry was 5s. By December 1857, admission on any day cost 1s. See ‘The Crystal Palace – the Shilling Days’, *Observer* (6 September 1857), p. 5.
 - 6 J. Paxton, *What is to Become of the Crystal Palace?* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1851).
 - 7 S. Laing, quoted in ‘Crystal Palace’, *The Times* (12 June 1854), p. 9.
 - 8 *Ibid.*
 - 9 M. D. Wyatt, *Views of the Crystal Palace and Park, Sydenham* (London: Day & Son, 1854), p. 7.
 - 10 E. Eastlake, ‘The Crystal Palace’, *Quarterly Review*, 96:92 (1855), 304.
 - 11 S. Moser, *Designing Antiquity: Owen Jones, Ancient Egypt and the Crystal Palace* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2012).
 - 12 For the most extensive list of archives with relevant Crystal Palace material, see J. R. Piggott, *Palace of the People. The Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854–1936* (London: Hurst & Co., 2004), p. 223.
 - 13 I. Armstrong, *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination 1830–1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 14.
 - 14 *The Crystal Palace Sydenham: The Home of Science, Art, Literature and Music and the Scene of the Festival of Empire. To be sold by auction on Tuesday 28th day of November, 1911 at the Estate Room, 20, Hanover Square, London, W. at two o’clock precisely by Howard Frank* (London: Hudson & Kearns, 1911), p. 7.
 - 15 ‘The Crystal Palace’, *Art Journal*, 6:64 (April 1854), 117.
 - 16 A. R. Bennett, *London and Londoners in the Eighteen-Fifties and Sixties* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1924), p. 183.
 - 17 R. G. Latham and E. Forbes, *Handbook to the Courts of Natural History* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1854), p. 80.
 - 18 B. Read, *Victorian Sculpture* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press), pp. 37–9.
 - 19 S. Phillips, *Guide to the Crystal Palace and Park* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1854), p. 163.
 - 20 C. Hobhouse, *1851 and the Crystal Palace* (London, 1937), pp. 159–60. P. Beaver, *The Crystal Palace 1851–1936. A Portrait of Victorian Enterprise* (London, 1970) also portrays the Sydenham Palace as an amusing Victorian curiosity.
 - 21 Sport is explored in further detail in Chapter 5. On amusement parks see

- J. Kane, *The Architecture of Pleasure: British Amusement Parks 1900–1939* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).
- 22 S. Laing, quoted in ‘Crystal Palace’, *The Times* (12 June 1854), p. 9.
 - 23 Phillips, *Guide to the Crystal Palace and Park*, pp. 167–8.
 - 24 D. Gilbert, ‘The Edwardian Olympics: Suburban Modernity and the White City Games’, in M. O’Neill and M. Hatt (eds), *The Edwardian Sense: Art, Design, and Performance in Britain, 1901–1910* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 73.
 - 25 The role played by railway owners is highlighted by Anne Helmreich in her excellent essay on the opening of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham. See A. Helmreich, ‘On the Opening of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, 1854’, *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*, www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=anne-helmreich-on-the-opening-of-the-crystal-palace-at-sydenham-1854 (accessed 20 August 2014).
 - 26 Advertisement for the ‘Stationery Court’, in S. Phillips, *Official General Guide to the Crystal Palace and Park*, rev. edn, F. K. J. Shenton (London: Crystal Palace Library, 1860).
 - 27 ‘A “World” in a Suburb: The All-Red Empire in Miniature’, *Illustrated London News* (12 November 1910), p. 744.
 - 28 The musical life and culture of performance and sound at Sydenham, although a topic not covered extensively by any of the essays in this collection, is certainly ripe for further attention. The one major study covering music and the Crystal Palace is M. Musgrave’s *The Musical Life of the Crystal Palace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Deborah Sugg Ryan’s path-breaking work on pageants, performance and empire has been important for our discussion and approach. See D. S. Ryan, ‘Staging the Imperial City: the Pageant of London, 1911’, in F. Driver and D. Gilbert (eds), *Imperial Cities. Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 117–35.
 - 29 Piggott, *Palace of the People*, p. 188.
 - 30 Emily Hall, ‘Crystal Palace – The First Five Years’ (1854–59), Bromley Public Libraries, 855/U923.
 - 31 Lord Roberts, quoted in *The Times* (24 May 1901), p. 5.
 - 32 W. Bayst, *Empire Bridge and World Approach: in Lieu of War* (London: Forsaith, 1935).
 - 33 *Ibid.*, pp. 2–12.
 - 34 See J. Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt. A Catalogue Raisonné*, I (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 173–7.
 - 35 A. Montefiore, ‘The Educational Institutions of the Crystal Palace’, *Educational Review*, 1:3 (1892), 151–61.
 - 36 A short Pathé film of the Crystal Palace fire of 1936 is available at www.britishpathe.com/video/crystal-palace-fire (accessed 18 March 2015).
 - 37 See e.g. D. Preziosi, *Brain of the Earth’s Body: Art, Museums, and the Phantasms of Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 92–114.

- 38 T. Bennett, *Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 62.
- 39 Eastlake, ‘Crystal Palace’, 306.
- 40 www.london.gov.uk/media/mayor-press-releases/2014/07/mayor-announces-major-new-plans-for-queen-elizabeth-olympic-park (accessed 18 March 2015).
- 41 ‘Dinosaurs Given Protected Status’, *BBC News* (7 August 2007), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/6934908.stm> (accessed 18 March 2015).
- 42 Tim Donovan, ‘Bromley Council pulls out of Crystal Palace rebuild talks’, *BBC News* (26 February 2015), www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-31639207 (accessed 18 March 2015).
- 43 For example, O. Hatherley, ‘Plans to Recreate the Crystal Palace are as Jingoistic as a Gove History Lesson’, *Guardian* (29 July 2013), www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jul/29/crystal-palace-replica-jingoistic-gove-london (accessed 19 March 2015); ‘Plans for Crystal Palace Replica’, *BBC News* (27 July 2013), www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-23475994 (accessed 19 March 2015).
- 44 See in particular the excellent and community-run Sydenham Town Forum: <https://sydenham.org.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=10&t=1500> (accessed 18 March 2015).
- 45 Phillips, *Guide* (1854), p. 163.