



Graham Powell

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At last we have a new London office, 30 Tabernacle Street, a preserved steel and brick facade over 100 years old (see photograph on p.757) and inside it a seven-floor new building. It is due east of John Street, in a developing area just north of Finsbury Square between Moorgate and Old Street tube stations. It meets our needs – fully disability compliant, level access on all floors, wheelchair lift on the one staircase that needed it, able to host our largest meeting (the Representative Council), able to accommodate smaller conferences in its lower ground floor conference centre, comfortable meeting and working conditions (air-conditioned, double-glazed), able to generate income when not being fully used by ourselves (e.g. bookings for the conference centre, room rental), able to meet the needs of a growing Society into the foreseeable future (having seven floors that we can expand into as needed, and being twice as large as John Street at 12,000 square feet).

We purchased the freehold on 13 October for £2.5 million, and we are spending £0.5 million on a refurbishment, e.g. upgrading the air conditioning and toilets to accommodate a higher level of use of an enhanced conference centre. This sounds a lot, but in fact is just another way of managing the reserves that we must hold – some reserves previously in shares are now held in bricks and mortar. This restructuring of reserves has been planned for a long time and aims to more directly support member services. We now intend to sell John Street at some point next year, and we are renting the top two floors of Tabernacle Street to the Tavistock Institute for the next five years while we prepare the first five floors. We expect the building to be ready for our use by Easter 2006.

The inside was gutted and rebuilt in about 1990, and was owned by the Tavistock Institute from about 1995. The oldest map they have on display in the Museum of London is John Strype's 'New Plan of the City of London, Westminster and Southwark' of 1720. This shows the built-up area just reaching as far as Tabernacle Street which was then called Windmill Hill (hence, presumably, the Windmill pub opposite no.30). The Bunhill Fields Burial Ground was provided for Nonconformists. It opened in 1665 and was closed in 1852 after 120,000 burials. In 1740 John Wesley established his own religious society on the east side of what was then Windmill Hill. In 1778/9 Wesley built a chapel and house on City Road, now Wesley's House and Museum, which backs on to Tabernacle Street. The site of the chapel was previously a dump used for disposing of earth during the construction of Wren's St Paul's Cathedral. On the opposite side of City Road from Tabernacle Street

stands Armoury House, the home of the Honourable Artillery Company (the oldest regiment of the British Army).

Tabernacle Street appears on Charles Booth's Descriptive Map of London Poverty, 1889. Booth was a businessman turned social reformer, and he colour-coded every block of buildings in London according to his classification of their inhabitants. The classification ran: Lowest Class (vicious, semi-criminal); Very Poor (casual, chronic want); Poor (18/- to 21/- a week for moderate family); Mixed (some comfortable, others poor); Fairly Comfortable (good ordinary earnings); Well-to-do (middle class); Wealthy (upper middle and upper classes). Tabernacle Street and John Street both came in the penultimate category.

Talking of finance, the Trustees and Representative Council have recently approved the business plan for 2006. The Society is in a sound financial position but at present depends on its reserves to balance the books at the end of the year. This needs to be corrected so that we can fully support the demands of the membership for a greater diversity and depth of services that is less dependent on voluntary effort. Therefore, all areas of expenditure are being closely examined (e.g. more cost-efficient mailings, reducing the numbers of meetings, more use of teleconferencing), there will be increased budgetary awareness and control, and there will be investment into developing new income streams. The aim is to balance the annual books without drawing upon reserves within two to three years.

Finally, an update on statutory regulation. In my July column I set out why we had rejected as it stood the proposal for regulation by the Health Professions Council. Since then, I and the negotiating team have had five meetings with the Department of Health to discuss the possibility of either a new regulatory body for psychology, which perhaps could act as an umbrella body for organisations with similar regulatory needs to ourselves, or of significant changes in HPC or the way that it operates to make it better fitted for the purpose of regulating the practice of psychology. We have also discussed the issue of titles, and the possibility of regulating more broadly than just the adjectival titles. Legal advice has been sought in relation to some of the issues. Our position is that (i) all psychologists should be regulated who need to be regulated, (ii) there must be no reduction in standards of training, practice or regulation, and (iii) the concerns and needs of academic and research psychologists have to be met.

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