

Sir Thomas Gresham and his Vision for Gresham College

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Themes

- Sir Thomas Gresham – the man
- The Will and a Vision for a College
- The College's History and location(s)
- Activities and Provision
(lectures, professors, students, online)
- Going Global
- Barnard's Inn Hall

Sir Thomas Gresham (1519-79)



Sir Thomas Gresham,
1544 (aged 26)



Sir Thomas Gresham, Antonis Van
Dashorst, 1565-70 (aged 46-50)

Career

- Father financier, Lord Mayor of London
- London apprenticeship; Mercers' Company 1543
- Attended Gonville (and Caius) College Cambridge
- Employed on Business abroad (France, Flanders)
- Royal agent for Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I
- Mainly overseas, especially Antwerp (Bourse) but also Germany, France, Spain – and in London
- Raised loans and negotiated interest for the Crown; saved Crown from bankruptcy by application of 'Gresham's Law'
- Continued under Elizabeth I (1558); association with William Cecil (Lord Burghley). Knighted in 1559
- Expanded estates in England (1560's); Built Royal Exchange (begun 1565)

Sir Thomas Gresham



Married Anne Ferneley, widow of Sir William Reade, one son (also had illegitimate daughter and son)

Son died in 1564 – so left estate for benefit of the City of London



The Gresham grasshopper symbol (grasslands or a lost foundling?)



c 1550, private collection (age 50+)

Lady Gresham (contested the will)



Gresham and Antwerp



43 Lange Nieuwstraat



Oude Beurs



Hof van Liere – used by the ‘English Nation’ (now part of the University)



The Court of Queen Elizabeth



Tablecloth used at Banquet for Queen Elizabeth at Gresham's House, Bishopsgate 23 January 1571 (Anne Boleyn's falcon)

Gresham's wealth (x 1000, modern values)

- Bishopsgate House – contents valued at £1,127 when died (1.12 million today)
- Mayfield House – spent £7,553 (over 7.5 million today)
- Rent rolls (1566f) – Estates in East Anglia, Somerset, Sussex, Yorkshire, Durham, Derbyshire and Cambridgeshire show income from land alone c £2,500 a year (£2.5m)
- Land for the Royal Exchange £3,532 (c £3.5 million in modern values, or more!)
- Trade – for example, Cornish tin to Antwerp 1546 @ £2,500 (over 2.5 million)
- Professor salaries £50 pa (weekly lectures)
- Widow left with income from Royal Exchange (£751 5s) plus income from estates (total £2,388 10s 6½ d)
- Uncorroborated stories of the £15,000 pearl dissolved in a glass of wine to drink Queen's health; 3% GDP?

The Gresham Ship



The 'T G' insignia



Gresham's tomb at St Helen's Bishopsgate



Gresham's tomb – NB grasshopper;
astronomy for navigation

THE LAST
W I L L
AND
TESTAMENT,
OF
Sir THOMAS GRESHAM.



LONDON:
PRINTED BY W. J. RUFFY, 29, BUDGE ROW, WATLING STREET.
M.DCCC.XXXIII.

The Will

Will of Sir Thomas Gresham,
20 May 1575
(as published 1833)

The Will: the Corporation

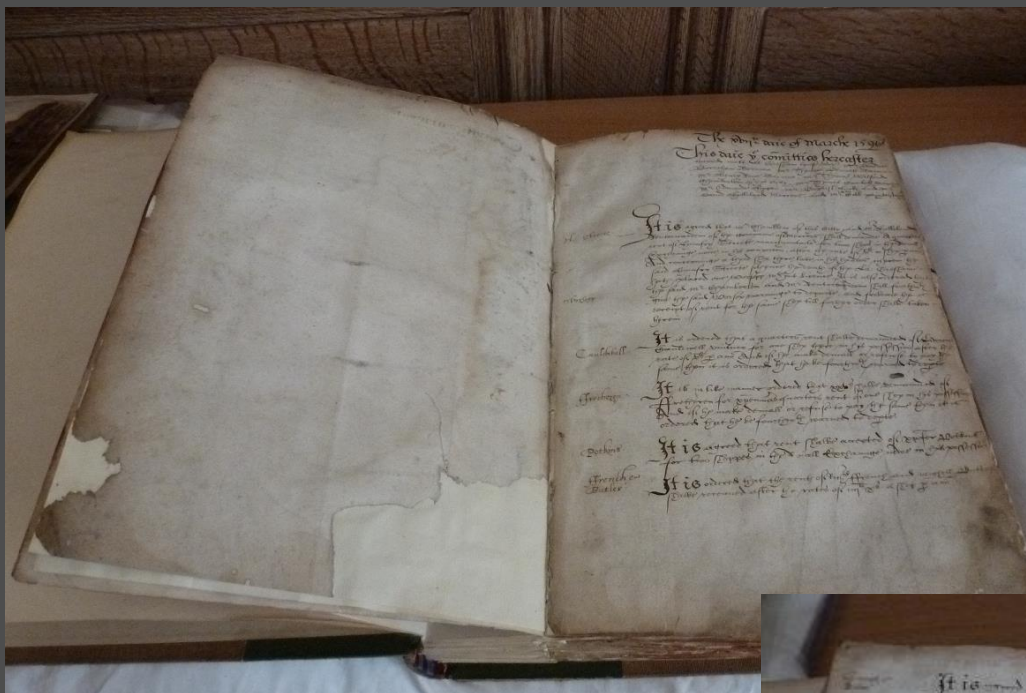
*I Will and Dispose that one Moiety.. shall be unto the
Mayor and Commonalty and Citizens of London . . . and
the other to the Mercers . . . and from thence, so long as
they and their Successors shall by any means or title have
hold or enjoy the same , they and their successors, shall give
and distribute, to and for the sustenation, maintenance and
Finding Four persons, from Tyme to Tyme to be chosen,
nominated and appointed And their successors to read
the Lectures of Divinity, Astronomy, Musick and
Geometry. . .*

The Will: The Mercers

*And as concerning the other moietie,.. Disposed to the said
Wardens and Commonastie of the Corporation of the
Mercers . . . I will and dispose from thenceforth, so long as
they or their successors shall by any Means or title have,
and hold and enjoy the same, that they and their successors
from Time to Time shall give and pay and distribute to . . .
Three Persons. . . and their successors from Time to Time,
to be chosen and appointed meete to reade the Lectures of
Law, Physick and Rhetorick, within myne now dwelling
House in Bishopsgate Street*

The Terms

- £50 each, paid at the Annunciation and Michaelmas
- *Charges of a Feast or Dynner for the whole Company ...*
- *Use of his House, Gardens, Stables and other Appurtenances*
- *None to be chosen if married ...*
- *Shall have and enjoy the said Royal Exchange, Shops, Pawns, Vaults, Houses and all other the Premisses with the Appurtenances for ever ... and to the Intent that they severally for ever shall doe, maintain and perform the Payments, Charges, and other Intents and meanings ... as they will answer the same before Almighty God .. Or ...the default shall be to Reproach and Condemnation ...afore God*
- Also provision for alms houses and – for Relief or Poor persons and Prisoners in Hospitals, Prisons ...
- And finally for his *`Faithful loving Wife Dame Anne Gresham, plus relatives, cousins ...after debts and legacies paid'*



Minutes of the Joint Grand
Gresham Committee
17 March 1596



Wootton.	N ^o 1. Three Chambers, three Chimneys, and one house of office, are appointed for m ^r Wootton reader of the Doumy Lecture.
Willis.	N ^o 2. Three Chambers, three Chimneys, and one house of office are appointed for m ^r Willis reader of the Ettrique Lecture.
Giborne.	N ^o 3. Four Chambers, three ^{four} Chimneys, and two houses of office are appointed for m ^r Doctor Gwyn reader of the Assist Lecture.
Mountloe Civill Law Lecturer.	N ^o 4. Three Chambers, two Chimneys, and one house of office are appointed for m ^r Doctor Mountloe reader of the Civill Law Lecture.
Brigges.	N ^o 5. Three Chambers, three Chimneys, and one house of office, are appointed for m ^r Brigge reader of the Geometry Lecture.
Bryerwood.	N ^o 6. Four Chambers, three Chimneys, one house of office are appointed for m ^r Bryerwood reader of the Astronomy Lecture.
Bull.	N ^o 7. A Gallie and off ^e rooms in m ^r reader's garden, are appointed for m ^r Doctor Bull reader of the Music Lecture.

Professors 1-6 – listing chambers available and housing etc

Later portraits



Statue on
Holborn viaduct



Whittington and Gresham at
Guildhall Library

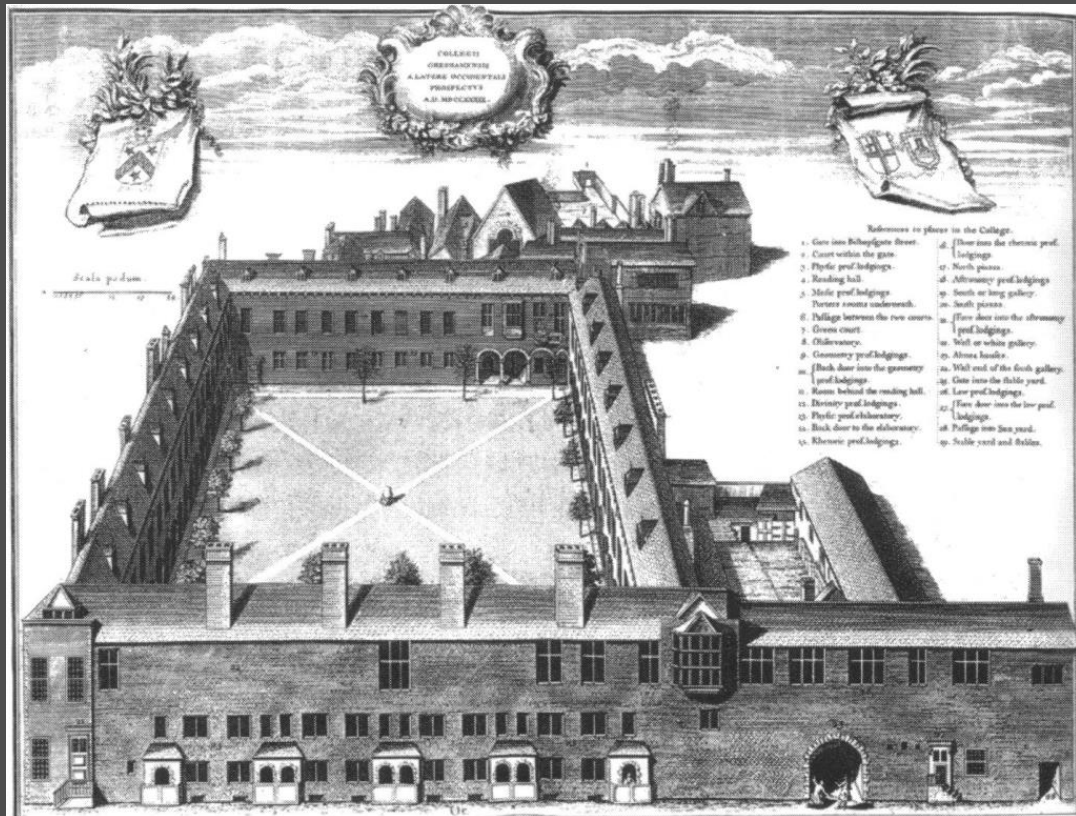
On Holborn viaduct



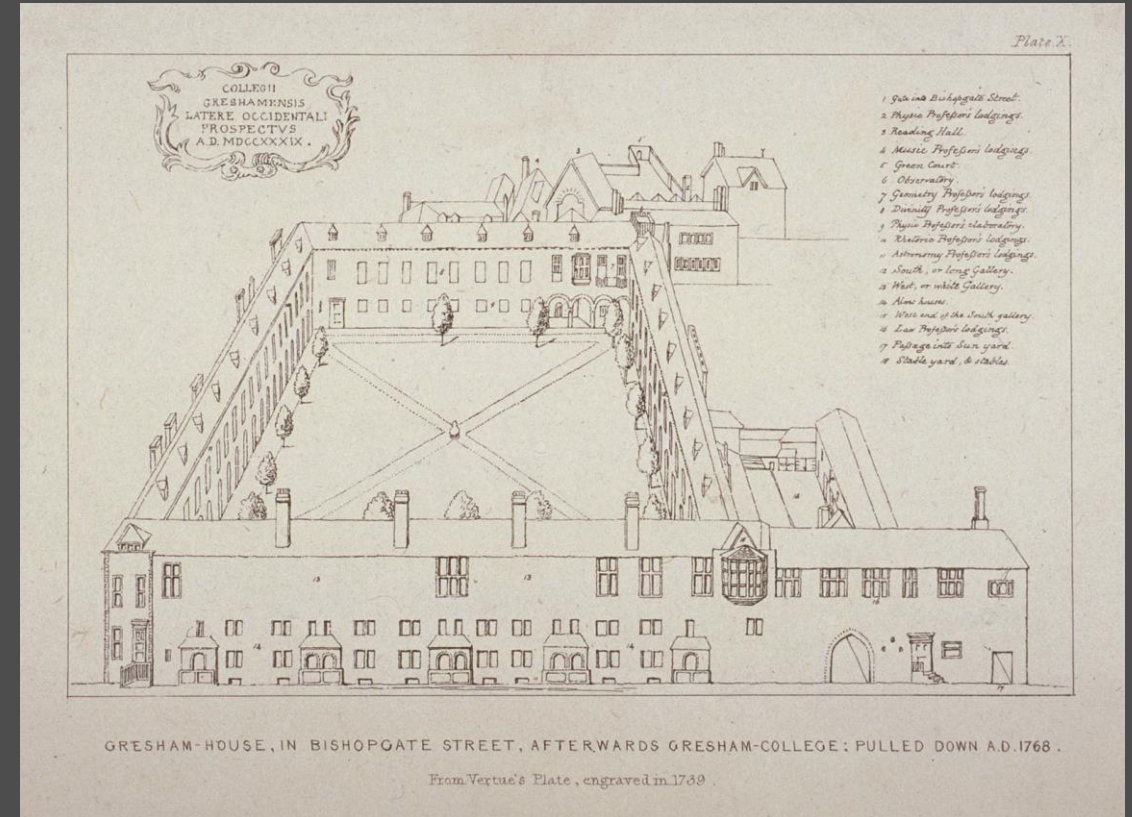
Vision and Mission

- To ensure that a succession of persons should be appointed as Professors to read Lectures in Divinity, Astronomy, Musick and Geometry, and also Law, Physick and Rhetorick, for the benefit of the Commonalty and Citizens of London, - henceforth and so long as they or their successors shall by any means or title have, and hold and enjoy the said Royal Exchange, Shops, Pawns, Vaults, Houses and all other Premises - for ever
- For our Honesties, Fames and good Report in this Transitory World, and .. to the Profit of the Common-Weale, according to the Pleasure and Will of Almighty God
- The current mission is to continue this, by providing free public lectures of the highest possible standard, focussed on the Gresham Professorships in key disciplines in accordance with the Vision of Sir Thomas Gresham as expressed in his Will in 1575 – with free and open access

History of the College



Engraving by George Vertue of Gresham College, looking east, showing the entrance in Old Broad Street, from John Ward's *Lives of the Professors of Gresham College* (1740)





As the plan of this house does not answer to the present form of Gresham college, it is not improbable it may represent the plan of the buildings and gardens which stood there, before Sir Thomas Gresham built his house, which is now the college. And if so, the ground plot of London and Westminster, from whence it was copied, must have been near as old at least as the beginning of Elizabeth's reign.

The Site of Gresham house & Gardens from a plan of London being a Wooden print in the Collection of Sir Hans Sloane Bart. dated 1618. but supposed to have ^{been} first cut about the year 1560.
copied by E.M. 1739.

House and gardens (site, 1618)



5. Gresham's Exchange, late 1560s. This detail from the huge woodcut map of London, ascribed to Ralph Agas, is probably the earliest representation of the Exchange and almost certainly ante-dates Queen Elizabeth's conferring the epithet 'Royal' upon it. Note the grasshopper atop the tower

Guildhall Library, Corporation of London

Gresham's Ghost

Pamphlet 'Sir TG: his ghost' in 1647 – describes discontent, professors not fulfilling obligations; not meeting the City's teaching expectations (although international reputation for research, as part of the 17th cent intellectual revolution).

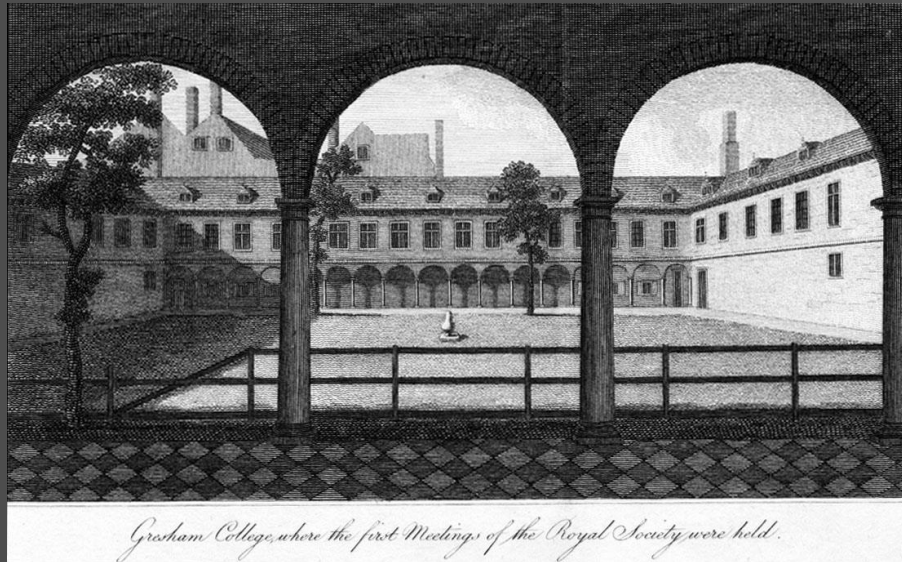


The 17th century

- Important work in first half 17th century included:
 - Henry Briggs (logarithms – where science was hardly taught at all at Oxford or Cambridge)
 - Astronomy linked to navigation (also comets, eclipses)
 - Also accounting, engineering, military matters, chemistry, magnetism
 - Helped with competition against Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese

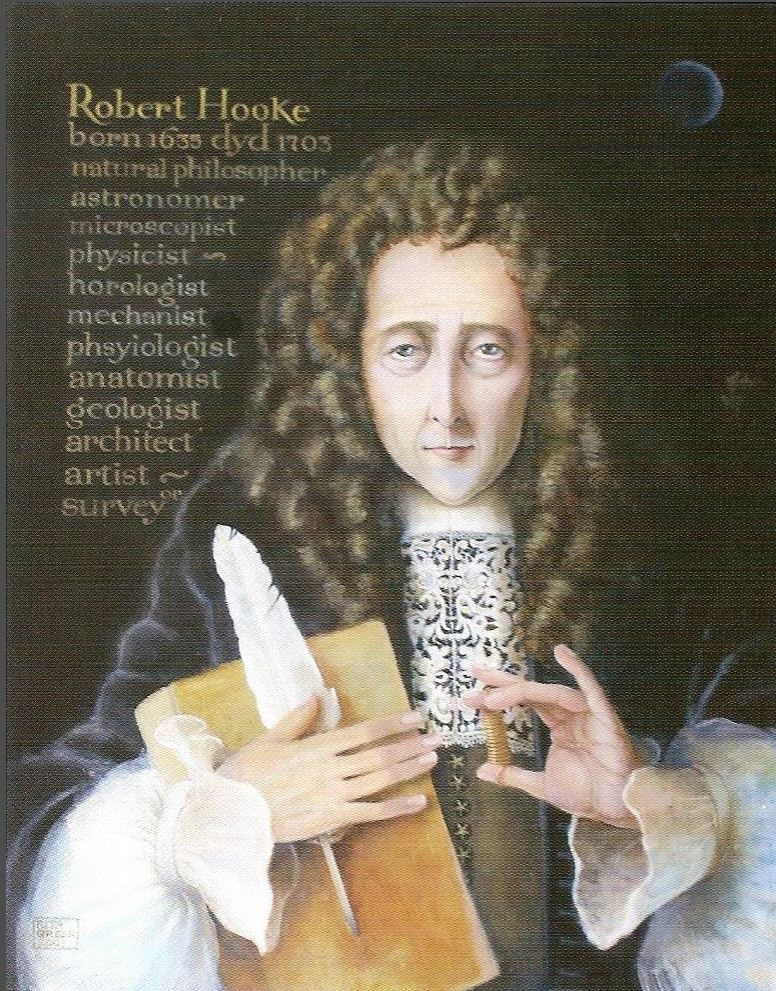
Founding of the Royal Society

12 men including Sir Christopher Wren (1660) - to assist and promote the accumulation of useful knowledge.



Royal Charter 1662, King Charles II





Robert Hooke, 1635 - 1703



Sir Christopher Wren, 1632-1723

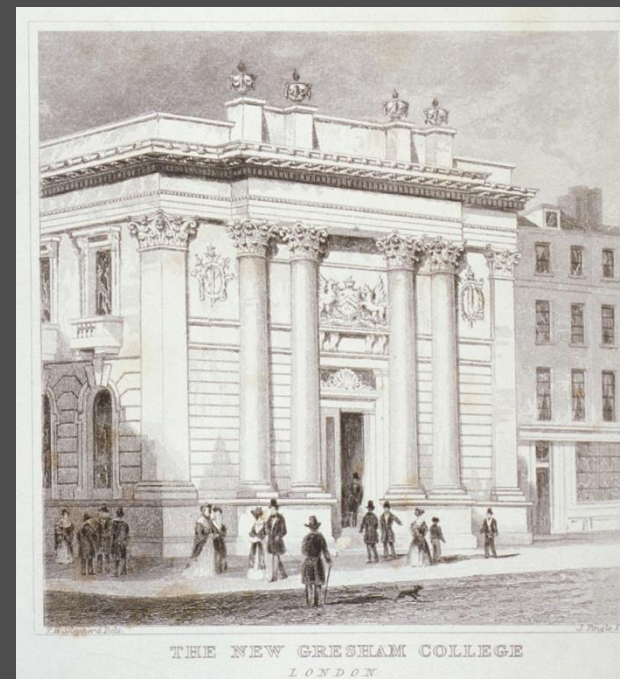
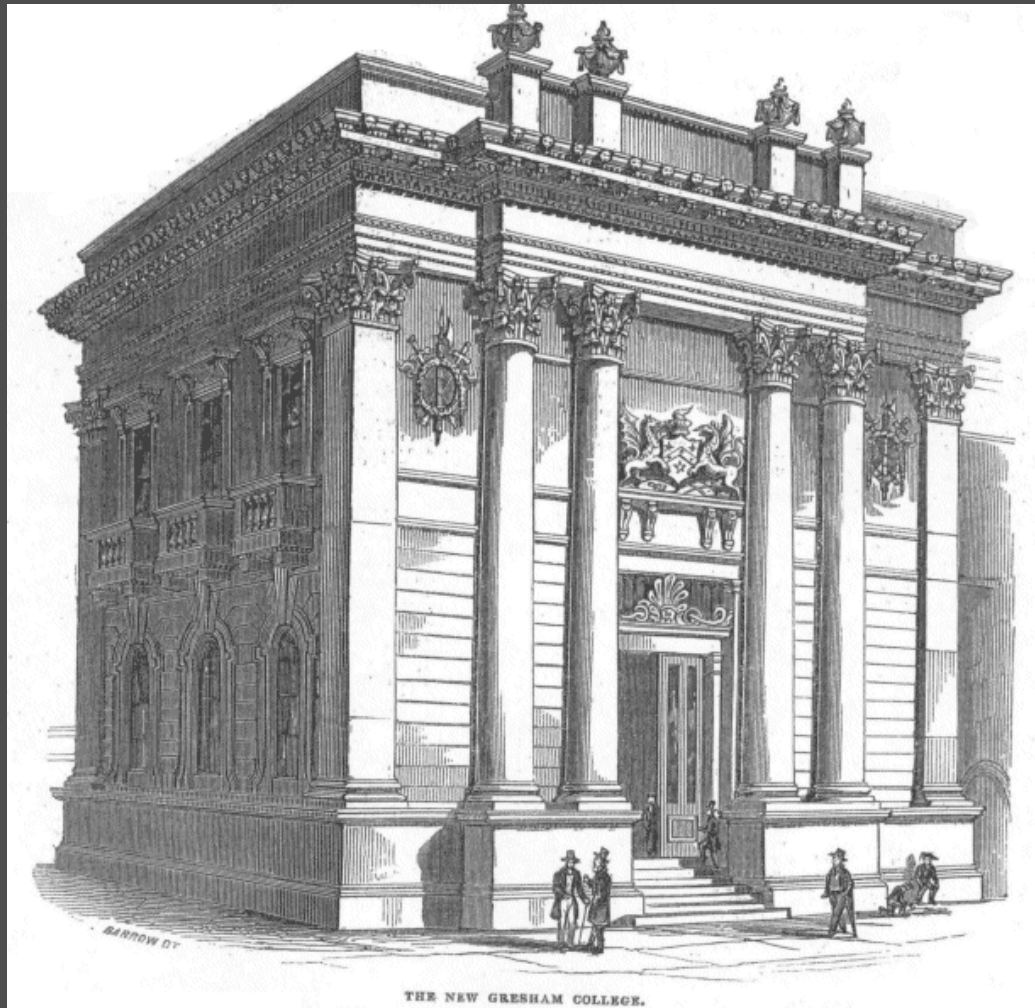
17th and 18th century, difficult times



At Tower 42

- 1740 *Lives of Gresham Professors* by John Ward (copy in British Library) ...But ...
- Gresham College Bill 1768 ended physical existence of College; uncertain future, neglect of professors, abuses in the college etc.
- Money given to Cambridge instead; petition from citizens to do as stated; some good work (eg Flamsteed, Astronomy).
- Enquiry into management and usefulness (1799); 301 attendances for 90 lectures (1811); Further enquiry and Latin abandoned (1821)
- Reform in 1830s and changing attitude to education in late 19th century led to criticism of 1768 bill

Gresham College, 1842

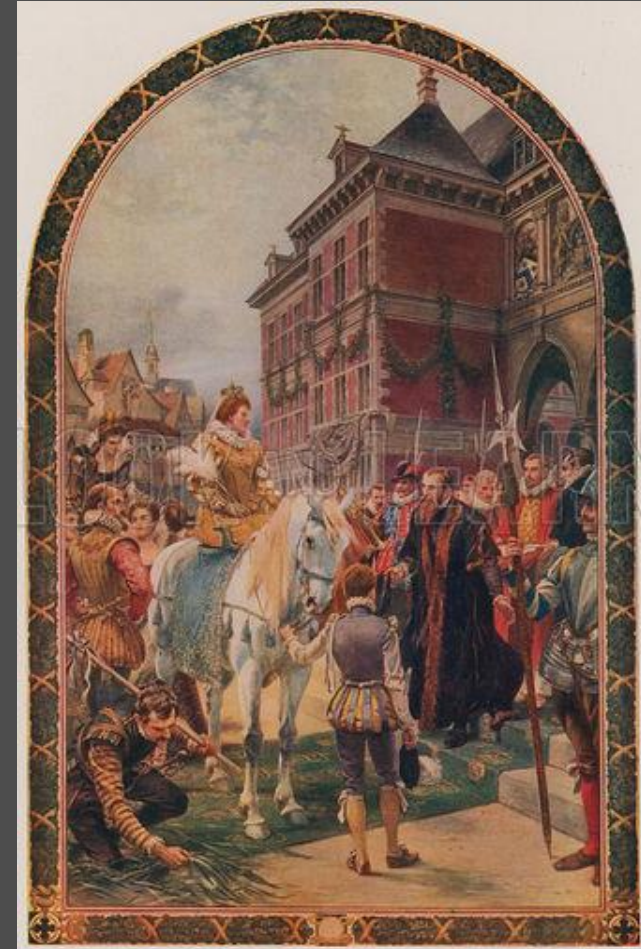


The Royal Exchange



THE FIRST ROYAL EXCHANGE
about 1600

Thomas Gresham's Bourse, or Exchange, in the heart of the City of London was completed in 1569.
In 1571 Queen Elizabeth I proclaimed it 'The Royal Exchange'





2nd Building (the first burned down in 1666, the second in 1838)



3rd Building;



The Gresham Professors

- Corporation to nominate:
 - Divinity
 - Astronomy (and physical sciences)
 - Music
 - Geometry (and mathematical sciences)
- Mercers to nominate:
 - Law
 - Physik (and biological sciences)
 - Rhetoric
 - Commerce added 1985

Overarching aim being to spread new learning

Activities and Objectives

- Provision of academic programme (free lectures, seminars, conferences and papers by Gresham Professors and others)
- Intellectual debate on subjects of topical interest and concern
- Academic consideration of contemporary problems
- Intellectual discussion and debate
- National and international excellence

Changing context

- Concept of free education - 19th century
- Development of world wide web
- Professional/educational development
- Specific to needs of City – to educate, inform, entertain, stimulate
- Location – centre of gravity for activities

Barnard's Inn

- History – 13th century
- 14th cent additions/restorations, roof and panelling.
- Saxon/early Medieval wall in cellar
- Survived Great Fire of London
- In Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*
- Role in the Gordon Riots, Holborn 1798



Barnard's Inn Hall



1252– Estate of Sir Adam de Basyng, Lord Mayor

1454 – Inn of Chancery (Gray's Inn)

1892 – 1959 – Mercers' School

14th century Hall (restored) with 16th Cent linenfold panelling, and unusual roof structure

Flint and tile wall from Early medieval period





Unusual single central beams 'large base cruck beams, with tie beams supporting crown posts and collar purlins' unique in London.

Gatehouse 1770

School until 1959



Gordon Riots, 1798

- Very serious rioting/fire, badly damaged
- Rioters attacked prisons (Newgate)
- Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*:

The crowd ... poured out of the City in two streams ... and formed a mass so dense, that at every volley the people seemed to fall in heaps.

A large detachment of soldiery fired up Holborn ... fires burning and 'all the terrors of that terrible night seemed to be concentrated in this spot'.

- Restoration grant made by the City



Charles Dickens

- Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1860-66)
- Describes Pip's 'Great Expectations' as a gentleman with lodgings in Barnard's Inn:



The dingiest collection of shabby buildings ever squeezed together in a rank corner as a club for Tom-cats . . . an introductory passage into a melancholy little square that looked to me like a flat burying ground. I thought it had the most dismal trees in it, and the most dismal sparrows, and the most dismal cats, and the most dismal houses (in number half a dozen or so), that I had ever seen.

... cracked glass, dusty decay, miserable makeshift, a frouzy mourning of soot and smoke, and a mere dust-hole

Other venues



Museum of London



The Guildhall

St Sepulchre



Going global

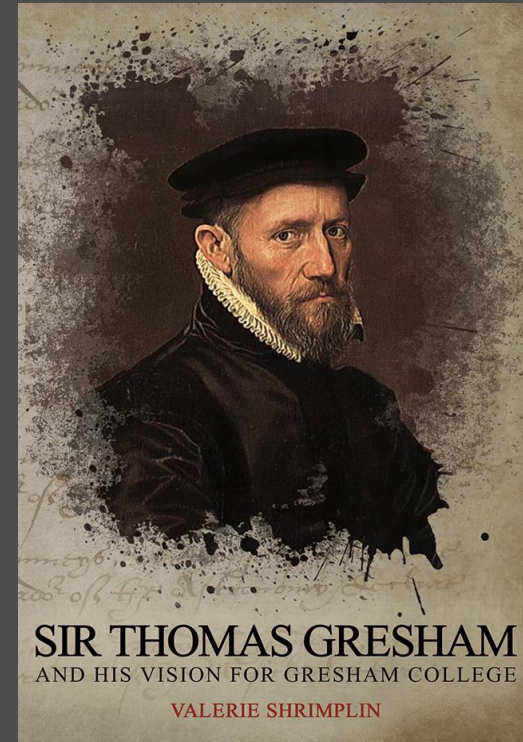
- c 17-20,000 attendances in person pa
- c 4-6 million views pa on website, Youtube,
- About half UK and USA (also India, Germany, Australia and Brazil etc)
- Archive recordings - over 2,000 lectures
- Also, Facebook, Twitter

Bibliography

- Biography of Sir Thomas Gresham by Professor John Guy to mark (in 2019) 500 years since Sir Thomas's birth in 1519

(launch 13 June 2019)

- Booklet by VS



Key dates

- 1519 Thomas Gresham born
- 1543 Left Cambridge and joined Mercers
- 1544 Marriage to Ann Read (widow b 1520)
- 1550 Royal agent in Antwerp (1567)
- 1554-57 In Spain. Knighted (1558-9)
- 1557-64 Crown's financial interests: cloth trade/duties
- 1560-67 Deals with coinage, builds Royal Exchange
- 1564 Richard Gresham (son) died
- 1575 20 May, will written
- 1579 (November) Thomas Gresham died
- 1597 First professors/lectures

- Early 17c Some evidence not very successful
- 1647 Discontent of his ghost (pamphlet) not fulfilling obligations etc.
- 1657 Christopher Wren (age 25) Prof of astronomy
- 1662 Led to formation of Royal Society
- 1666 Escaped great fire – used as Royal Exchange
- 1670s Difficult times, abuses, no audiences, better at research (Robert Hooke)
- 1711 Royal Society granted Crane Court
- 1768 Gresham College Bill ended physical existence of College
- 18th c Uncertain future, neglect of professors.
- 1799 Enquiry into management and conduct of and usefulness to public etc

- 19th C poor attendances, abandoned latin
- 1830s Reforms but just used a corner of the Royal Exchange
- 1842 Purpose built Gresham College (cnr Gresham and Basinghall St)
- Late 19c Increased appetite for learning, public education etc
- 1880s City and guilds directed from Gresham
- 1892 Royal Commission investigated idea of Gresham University in London
- 1898 University of London Act left out Gresham
- 1908 Gresham College closed by fire officer (204
- 1911 Enlarged to take c 420 in 1911

- 1920s Numbers & activity increasing
- WW2 Disruption, used by Air Raid Dept.
- 1946 Resumed
- 1958 Gresham Library transferred to Guildhall
- 1960s Discussions on future, identity
- 1980 Council and Trust set up
- 1984-6 Proposals for courses (for fees)
- 1985 Professor of Commerce added
- 1986 Operated from Mercer's Hall.
- 1991 Moved to Barnard's inn
- 1990s Lectures, conferences, seminars etc
- 1997 400th anniversary - 'not beholden to state for funds, therefore no pressure to do its bidding'

Selected References

John Guy – Book launch 13 June!

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