

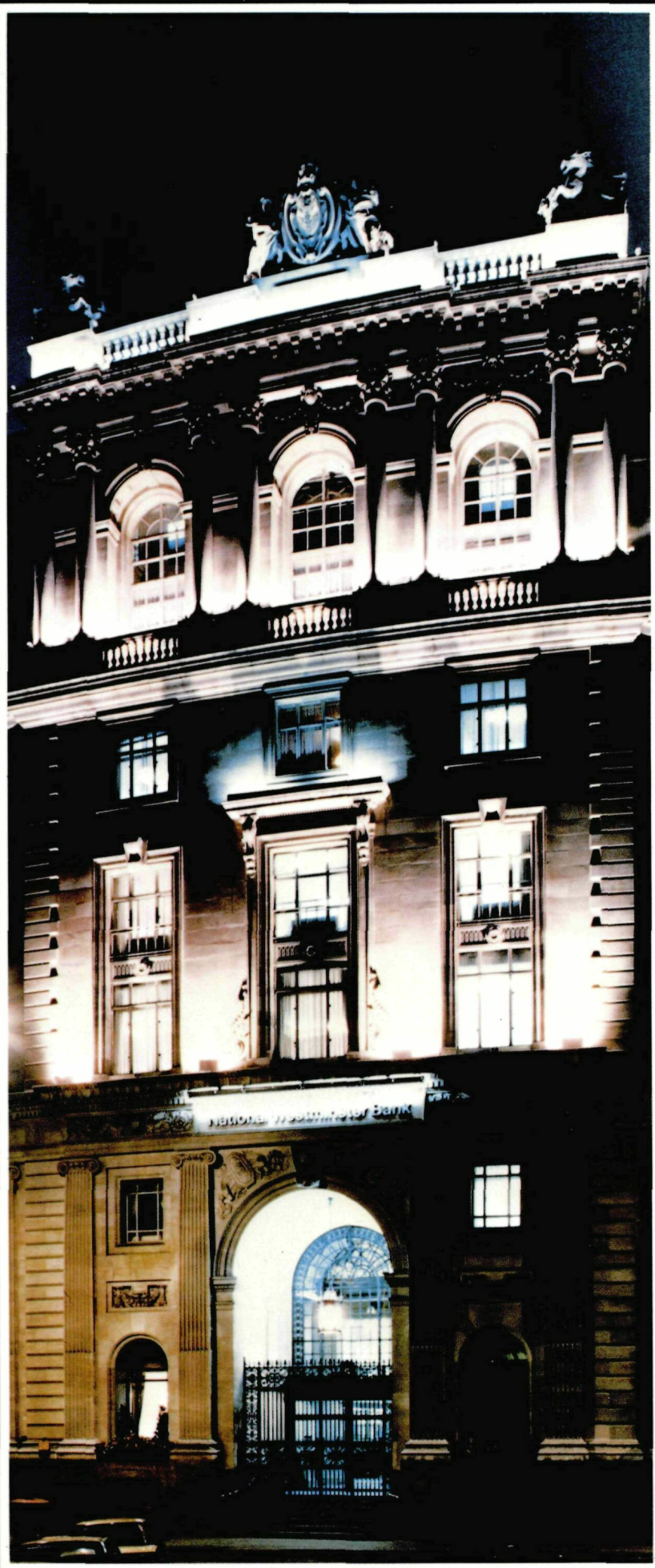
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41 Lothbury

1834 - 1984

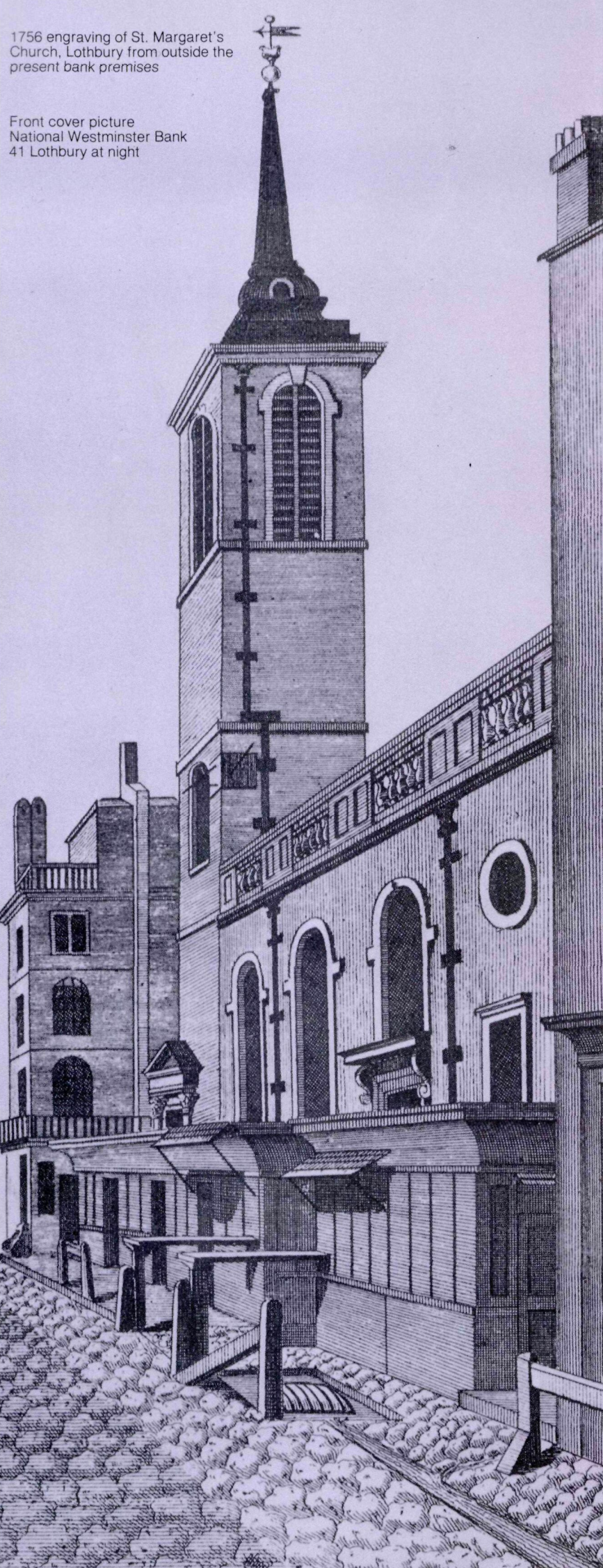
41 Lothbury

1834-1984



1756 engraving of St. Margaret's Church, Lothbury from outside the present bank premises

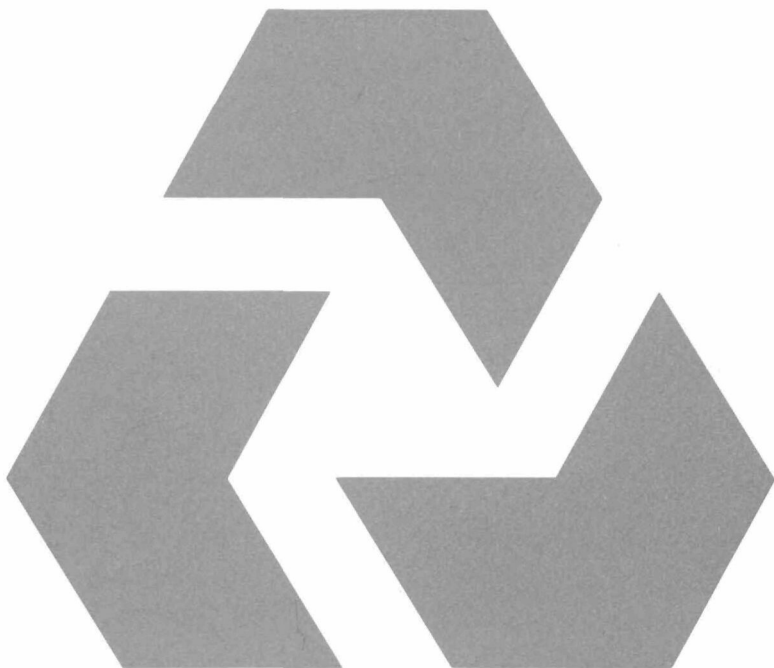
Front cover picture National Westminster Bank 41 Lothbury at night



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The 150th anniversary in 1984 of the opening of National Westminster Bank's Lothbury Office marks not only the founding of one of its major constituents – the former Westminster Bank – but a unique event in the history of City of London banking.

The place-name Lothbury was attributed by John Stow the 16th century antiquary to the 'loathsome' noise made by founders and others working in the street at that time. This picturesque theory is now discounted; the derivation is believed to be much earlier from 'lode' or watercourse of the Wallbrook flowing to the Thames from Islington or, more probably according to Fairfield's 'Streets of London' 1983, from the 'burgh' or enclosed area belonging to Lotha's or Hlothere's people. Hlothere as a personal name was known in the 7th century. Certainly the Romans were in Lothbury, for remains were found at a depth of ten feet during rebuilding on the Bank site.



However, the story of our office in Lothbury begins in 1833 when William Robert Keith Douglas gathered a group of business associates to consider founding a joint stock bank in London. Joint stock banking had been allowed to develop in England and Wales only since 1826 and legislation to allow it in London was still being contested in Parliament when Douglas and his friends issued the Prospectus of the London & Westminster Bank.

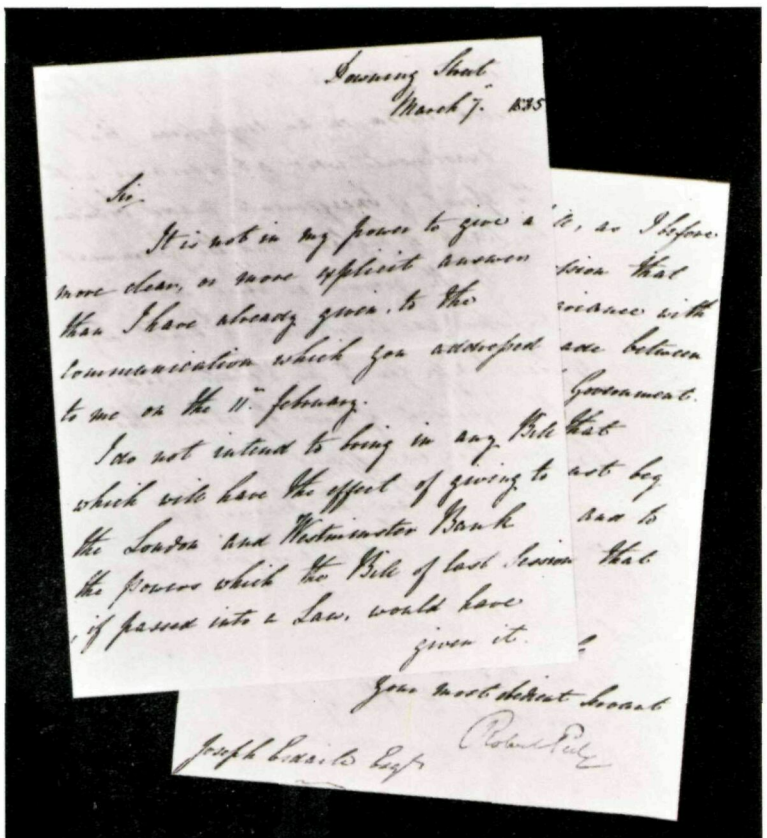
The Prospectus stated that 'the establishment shall be forthwith formed in the City; and for the accommodation of the Public a Branch Bank will be simultaneously established in the West End of the town'. On 10 March 1834 the London & Westminster opened its doors to the public as the first joint stock bank in London, with its City Office at 38 Throgmorton Street (part of the present 41 Lothbury site) and the Westminster Branch at 9 Waterloo Place.



James Gilbart

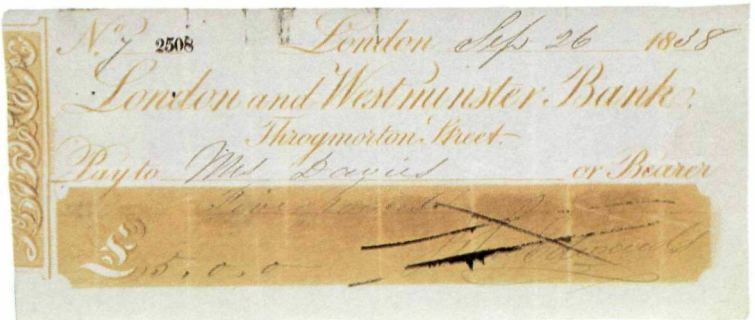
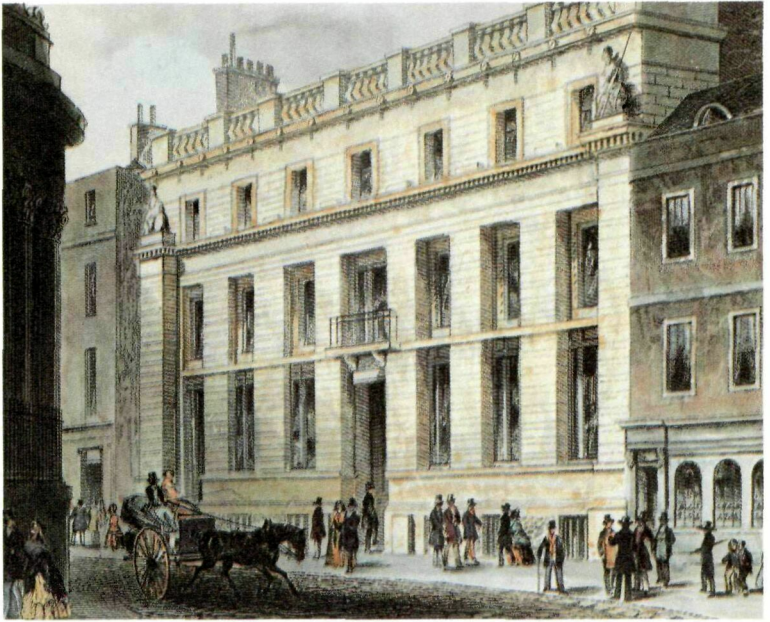
Sir David Salomons

Letter from Sir Robert Peel declining to assist the Bank which was then seeking powers to sue in its own name



Thus the London & Westminster led the way for all the joint stock banks which were to open in the City. Its success in attracting customers was immediate but it had to contend with continuing hostility from the Bank of England and the private banks until 1854 when the joint stock banks were finally admitted to the Clearing House.

On the Bank's formation the Directors had appointed James William Gilbart as its General Manager. Gilbart was already experienced through service in other banks and he became a prolific writer on banking and other topics and a Fellow of the Royal Society. His name remains familiar to the young banking student today through the annual Gilbart lectures at King's College, London, provided for by Gilbart himself before his death in 1863. His principal ally on the Board during the first 30 years of the Bank's existence was David Salomons, who later became the first Jewish Lord Mayor of London.



Top: 41 Lothbury – Cockerell's new façade in 1838

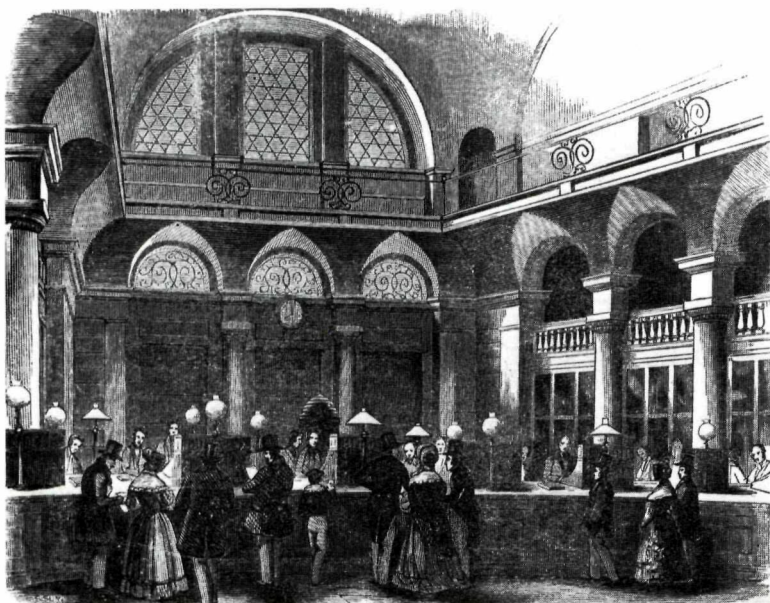
One of London & Westminster Bank's earliest cheques

London and Westminster's City Office at 38 Throgmorton Street lay at the head of a narrow passage reached through an archway from the street, its site now occupied by the southern part of the new banking hall in Lothbury. Both the City and Westminster offices made good progress and in 1836 branches were opened at Bloomsbury, Borough, Marylebone, and Whitechapel. The City Office was soon inadequate for the growing bank and 1837 saw the purchase of 41 Lothbury from Pearce & Son, army clothiers. With further acquisitions in Whalebone Court at the rear it became possible to build a new Head Office.

The two competitors for the work – Charles Cockerell, architect of the Dividend Warrant Office of the Bank of England, and William Tite, later designer of the Royal Exchange – eventually suggested that they should collaborate. Cockerell designed the façade in Portland Stone three floors high with a central doorway facing the Bank of England. The banking hall, 'square, domed and galleried with an immense beehive stove', was the work of Tite.

1839 Deposit Receipt showing Cockerell and Tite's 1838 building

Bottom: The Bank's pay-office c 1845 William Tite's original interior



In 1847 the London & Westminster acquired Young & Son's Borough Bank, Charles Young having decided to concentrate on his brewing interest. Lothbury thereby also gained the account of Young's Wandsworth brewery, an association that continues today. Further need for space was met in 1853 by considerable modification of Tite's interior. Growth continued with the takeover between 1861 and 1864 of three more banks: the Commercial Bank of London, the London & Middlesex Bank and Jones Loyd & Son.

Jones Loyd were Lothbury's next-door-neighbours at number 43 and had originated in 1771 or earlier as John Jones & Co, bankers and tea-dealers in Manchester. The firm divided into Manchester and London banking houses and in 1848 severed their connection. The absorption of Jones Loyd was described at the time as 'the most serious blow that private banking in London has yet felt'.

Henry John Norman, one of Jones Loyd's partners, was taken on to the Board of the London & Westminster Bank. Montagu Norman, the famous Governor of the Bank of England in the 20th century, was a grandson of his uncle. Two direct descendants of Henry John Norman are linked with Lothbury today as Directors of a company on the Bank's books.

Jones Loyd's premises at 43 Lothbury in 1815. Guildhall Library





As the Bank was already planning an extension of its premises on the Throgmorton Street side, number 43 was let. In 1866/7 the banking hall was further altered and the façade re-modelled and extended eastward. The main doorway was moved close to the position of the present one, facing up Bartholomew Lane.

In its new form Lothbury remained substantially unchanged for 60 years. The Bank assumed limited liability in 1880 and was foremost in support of the Bank of England in the Baring crisis of 1890. By 1909 Lothbury stood at the centre of a network of 36 London branches and in that year arranged a merger with the London & County Bank, founded at Southwark in 1836 and now having branches in London and throughout the south-eastern counties. Its headquarters was at 21 Lombard Street, but it was decided that Lothbury should be the Head Office of the new London County & Westminster Bank.

Anchor and crown street sign at 21 Lombard Street – the emblem of London & County Bank

Emblem of Parr's Bank, from a Bartholomew Lane cheque



Lothbury in 1851



The 1914-18 War saw many men from Lothbury serving in the forces and 44 died in action. The old building itself suffered damage one Saturday morning in July 1917 when in a surprise daylight raid the Swiss Bank occupying Jones Loyd's former premises was bombed and the glass roof of 41 Lothbury showered down into the banking hall. Parr's Bank, opposite in Bartholomew Lane, invited the Lothbury cashiers to finish their work behind the Parr's counter. This co-operation turned out to be symbolic, for in 1918 the two great banks arranged to amalgamate. Parr's had begun as a private partnership in Warrington in 1788, but by 1918 had branches in London, the Midlands, Wales and the West Country as well as the North-West. The London County Westminster & Parr's Bank became one of Britain's 'Big Five' and Lothbury again emerged as Head Office of the new bank.

Weston & Young's Borough Bank cheque 1833

Bottom: 41 Lothbury c 1914 – the old building in its final form



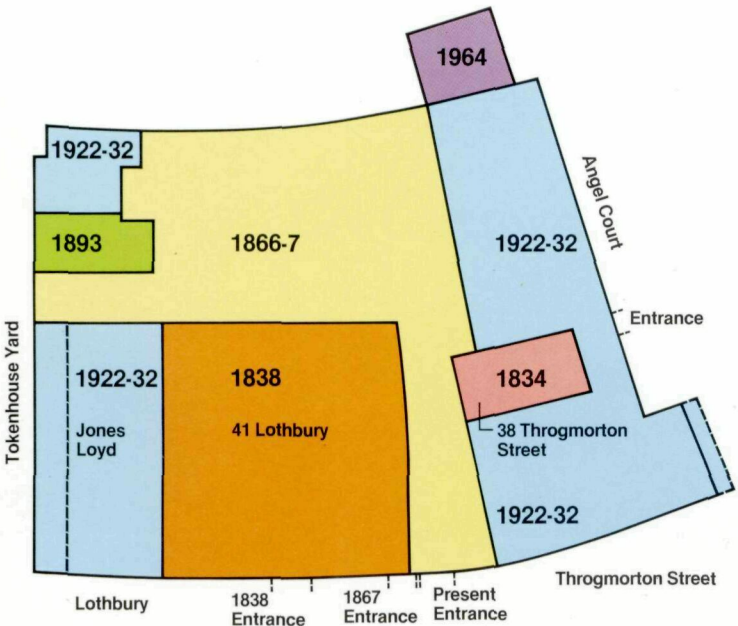
In 1923 the long title was shortened to Westminster Bank and in 1928 the Bank received a Grant of Arms embodying the familiar Westminster portcullis which, with the City of London Shield, had been the emblem of the Bank since 1834. The amalgamations of 1909 and 1918 had again overwhelmed the administrative space available in Lothbury and many Head Office departments were situated in the other City offices. It was therefore decided that Lothbury should be completely rebuilt to house all the Head Office staff under one roof.

The architects appointed were Mewès and Davis, whose other commission for Westminster Bank, 52 Threadneedle Street, may be interestingly compared with Lothbury. With 43 Lothbury now vacant and with the purchase of other properties it became possible to build on a site stretching 240 feet from Tokenhouse Yard to Angel Court and 150 feet to the rear. Demolition and rebuilding were phased to allow transfer of offices into the new premises in stages and the new Lothbury was finally completed in February 1932.



Bill wallet of Jones Loyd & Co with cheque on Hankey & Co, National Westminster's oldest London constituent

Sketch showing progressive changes in the Bank's occupation of the Lothbury site 1834-1984

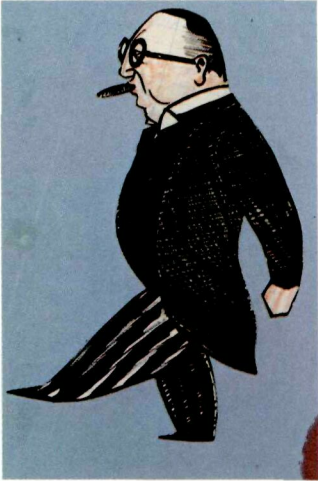


As may be seen today, the new building, faced with Portland stone, rose six floors from the street and followed the gentle curve of Lothbury. Its main door was enclosed by a lofty pavilion surmounted by a stone shield bearing the Westminster Bank Coat of Arms supported by the two figures representing the Cities of London and Westminster which first appeared on Cockerell's 1838 building. The doorway was not centrally placed so that it opened on to Bartholomew Lane, with the result that the public space within was set to one side of the main hall with its Ionic columns. Originally a very long horseshoe-shaped counter enclosed the office space beneath the glass roof. Interlocking steel piles successfully protected the deep basement excavations from seepage from the Wallbrook.

41 Lothbury from Bartholomew Lane



So many famous bankers – Directors and officers – have passed through Lothbury in its long history that it is impossible to make a selection for mention in these few pages. But the name of Charles (later Sir Charles) Lidbury cannot be omitted. He was Chief General Manager from 1930 to 1947 and was a dominant figure not just in the Westminster but in banking internationally. His chairmanship of the Clearing Banks' Chief Executives' Committee during the Second World War was a decisive influence in shaping Britain's whole financial strategy. It was during these years that he was so particularly associated with Lothbury. When his home was bombed in 1941 he took up residence in Lothbury for the remainder of the War. Staff on fire-watching duties then recall being dragooned by their Chief General Manager into making up a four at bridge.



Left: Cartoon of Sir Charles Lidbury by L N Wilkinson

Above right: The new counter area in 1984 viewed from the site of the 38 Throgmorton Street office where the Bank first opened

Below right: War Memorial, 41 Lothbury

Main hall of 41 Lothbury, 1984



Lothbury's men and women again played their part in the 1939-45 War, 36 losing their lives. As staff were demobilised they were welcomed back at Lothbury before returning to branches and departments. Expansion of business was resumed and in the post-war years, as each day's work was listed and posted, the banking hall of Lothbury was filled with the roar of accounting machines. But the computer age was dawning and in 1962 the Chancellor of the Exchequer opened the Lothbury Computer Centre, the Bank's first and the most advanced in Europe.

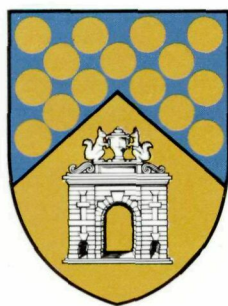
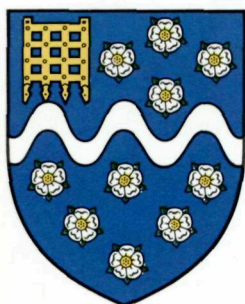
On 26 January 1968 came the surprise announcement that two of Britain's 'Big Five' banks, the National Provincial and the Westminster, had decided to merge their interests. The National Provincial had, as the National Provincial Bank of England, been a contemporary of the London & Westminster, opening its first branch at Gloucester on 1 January 1834, ten weeks before the opening of the original Lothbury Office. The National Provincial was the first English bank to plan and establish a truly nationwide branch system but in order to retain the valued right to issue its own notes it did not open in London until 1866.



In 1962 the National Provincial had acquired the share capital of the District Bank, founded as the Manchester & Liverpool District Banking Company in Manchester in 1829, earlier than both the National Provincial and Westminster. Like them it had over the years absorbed much older private banks including Loyd Entwisle & Co, the Manchester counterparts of Jones Loyd of Lothbury. So the merger of 1968 reunited two banks which had separated 120 years before. The District had retained its separate identity and Board in Manchester but it was decided that all three banks should be merged in the new National Westminster Bank from 1 January 1970.

The merger led to extensive changes in the Bank's City offices including the removal of 15 Bishopsgate to new premises which allowed for the subsequent restoration of Gibson's 1866 banking hall in the old Bishopsgate Office as a conference centre. Completion of National Westminster Tower in 1981 enabled it to house the Bank's International Banking Division, whose worldwide responsibilities had grown dramatically since 1970. Once more Lothbury was chosen to be the Head Office and its traditional adaptability to change was again called upon as alterations were made to accommodate the Board, General Management and supporting staff in a new organisational structure. More recently the banking office has been extended and as a result the public space on the ground floor enlarged.

Lothbury has always been one of the least obtrusive banking edifices in London, largely hidden behind the massive walls of the Bank of England. Yet the sudden view of its clean white front from Threadneedle Street, seen down Bartholomew Lane rather like a mountain at the head of a valley, is one of the most pleasurable architectural surprises of the City. Nor has it ever been simply an impersonal Head Office. At its heart has lain the banking office itself, a bustling place where the Bank and its customers have always met. An historic place too, for the customer using the automatic cash dispensing machines in the new banking hall today is standing where some customer in 1834 cashed the first cheque drawn on a joint stock bank in the City of London.

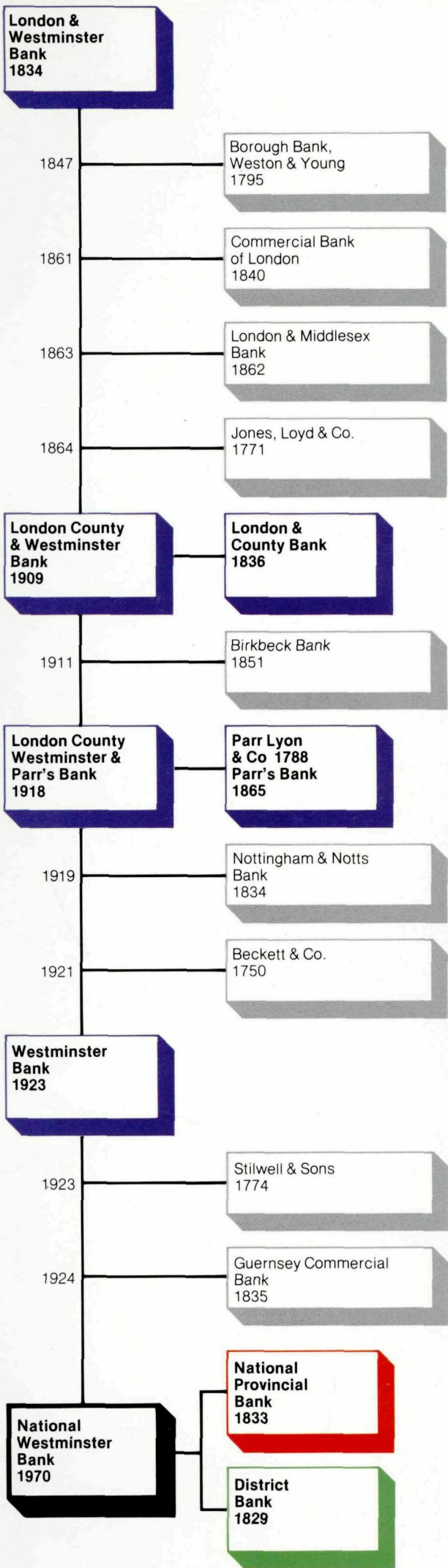


Coats of Arms of Westminster,  
District, and National Provincial Banks

Right: Genealogical Line from  
London & Westminster Bank  
to National Westminster Bank.  
The numerous other constituents of the  
National Provincial, District, and earlier  
major banks are not shown in this chart

Back cover picture  
41 Lothbury at night in the  
Westminster Bank era

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# National Westminster Bank

National Westminster Bank PLC 41 Lothbury, London EC2P 2BP

