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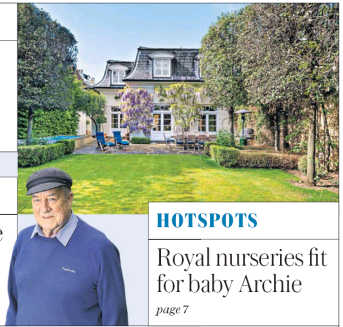


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LONDON

Rediscovering the lost rivers that shape the capital

The many waterways that once flowed through the city are being retraced and reimagined in architecture, reports Liz Rowlinson

As you meander past the eye-catching boutiques of fashionable Marylebone Lane – a serpentine little thoroughfare that winds its way through the grid-like grandeur of neighbouring streets – you may be blindly unaware that one of the capital's "lost" rivers is flowing beneath your feet.

The Tyburn is one of the 20-odd "hidden" rivers that have become buried under streets and houses, shaping the landscape and the lives of Londoners. They flowed through the city before they were covered over ("culverted") or incorporated into engineer Joseph Bazalgette's integrated sewer system in 1859.

Yet some of them do still shape today's city, a theme that is explored by the *Secret Rivers* exhibition that opens this month at the Museum of London Docklands. They are guiding developers and architects alike in the design of buildings, their landscaping and as part of their "place-making".

Take the Tyburn, one of London's three largest "lost" rivers, which is named after a medieval manor of Marylebone. Here you will still find a few clues. Starting in Hampstead, it flows via Regent's Park under Marylebone Lane and then across Oxford Street.



WET ROOMS
Chelsea Barracks, from £5.2m, above, on the Westbourne; Ram Quarter on the Wandie, from £526,000, top

Place names in Mayfair – Brook, Pont and Conduit Streets – hint at its subterranean route, which is believed to continue under Green Park and Buckingham Palace before, like many of the other lost rivers, it flows into the Thames.

Covered over since the Marylebone Lane was urbanised in the 1700s, the path of the Tyburn has inspired the architects of a new development at Marylebone Lane, The Mansion. The block of 23 homes is being developed by Clivedale London, with prices from £4.95million. "We looked into the history of the site and decided the curving contours of the building should follow that of the Tyburn," explains Deborah Saunt of architects DSDHA. "The river informs the design of the bay windows



and balustrades, with the terracotta and bronze finishing adding to the sensual feel of the building.

"The 'sacred' water source used to be blessed in medieval annual celebrations, and the feeling of walking along an ancient route has been accentuated by the recent repaving of the streets." While parts of Marylebone Lane have been paved in greenish blue-hued slate, Saunt says that following DSDHA's work on a striking development further along the Tyburn, South Molton Street was repaved with rippling terracotta slabs as a nod to the hidden river's path.

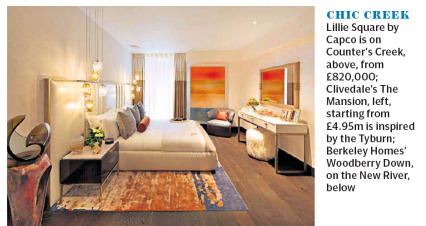
The river is also informing the interior decoration of Clivedale's commercial projects: at 73 Brook Street, there's an undulating lighting installation in the lobby of the building that emulates a flowing river (by Haberdashery), and at 75-77, there are bronze balustrades with river motifs.

You can spot glimpses of the river along its path: Grays Antiques Centre shop on Davies Street in Mayfair claims to have a section of the Tyburn running through its basement. There are somewhat fanciful ambitions suggested by the Tyburn Angling Society to restore parts of the river flowing underneath homes in nearby Berkeley Square and Pont Street. Here, properties are worth several millions apiece.

"It proposes that the owners of property knocked down (to open up the river) might be compensated by a levy that would be paid by the owners of the properties that benefit from becoming newly riverside," explains art historian Thomas Ardill, a curator at the Museum of London.

"The notion of daylighting – bringing back rivers – is one of the themes we explore in the exhibition. There's also a proposal to unbury the river Effra, which flows from Norwood in south London via Dulwich and Brixton out into the Thames at Vauxhall.

Ardill points to the fact that daylighting has actually been happening with parts of the river Lea in the east and with the Wandie in south-west London. There, the Ram Quarter development in Wandsworth features a section of river formerly buried under Young's Brewery that has been rewilded to attract new bird species to the area. It will become a waterside hub of cafes and walkways; prices start from £526,000.



CHIC CREEK
Little Square by Capco is on Counter's Creek, above, from £820,000. Clivedale's The Mansion, left, starting from £4.95m is inspired by the Tyburn; Berkeley Homes' Woodberry Down, on the New River, below

Bringing the memory of the river back to the surface was a real thrill. The park is for everyone'

ornamental lake that formed part of the public pleasure gardens next to the river Westbourne in west London, where a nine-year-old Mozart performed in 1765.

These were found at Chelsea Barracks, the 12.8-acre development by Qatari Diar, where apartments and townhouses are set around seven garden squares, with prices starting from £5.2million.

Paying homage to the river Westbourne, which flowed from Hampstead via Hyde Park's Serpentine lake and into the Thames – a 440yd stream has been incorporated into the design at Chelsea Barracks by masterplanners Kim Wilkie and Squire & Partners. Running the entire length of the site boundary on Chelsea Bridge Road, this shallow channel of running water will create a buffer between the road and the development.

"Bringing the memory of the river back to the surface was a real thrill," explains Wilkie. "Re-routed a few times during history, the Westbourne is now a deep sewer that issues out just downstream of Chelsea Bridge, but we have traced its passage to the Thames with a new waterway and public park that can be enjoyed by everyone."

Now, 18th-century ornamental lakes sit beneath the Royal Hospital Chelsea and Ranelagh Gardens, and a second new water feature in Chelsea Barracks' Whistler Square section is designed to reflect the lost river. Architects and landscapers are recognising that these waterways are a shared resource that should be enjoyed by everyone. Some



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