

London's suburban directories: 1827-circa 1975
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INTRODUCTION

Directories occupy a very special niche in publishing history. They were perceived by their creators as functional but transitory and also by their users as disposable after a year or two. Perhaps it is this label of impermanence which has deterred historians and bibliographers. Yet for bulk and sheer effort of annual revision they are surely unrivalled. A Kelly's directory may be ideal for propping open a door but it is also one of the most underestimated and underused of historical sources. Many of our libraries, both large and small, have shelves of dusty and poorly catalogued directories which one hopes may eventually be recognized for the invaluable resources they surely are. The purpose of this article is to outline the chronological development of one branch of the directory family, the suburban directories of London, in the hope of stimulating further debate about their origins, evolution and utility.

DEFINITIONS AND USES

What is a directory? A definition is important for our commencement date and coverage. The *O.E.D.* describes 'a book containing one or more alphabetical lists of the inhabitants of any locality, with their addresses and occupations'. The locality in our case is any district outside central London which is nevertheless an integral part of the metropolitan urban system. Clearly there is scope here for a geographical discussion about functional regions but suffice it to say for present purposes that the suburbs will be taken to be beyond the area covered by Kelly's *Post Office London Directory* and within the boundaries of the former Greater London Council.

The lists of people are normally organized alphabetically, a court directory for householders or a commercial directory for business premises; arranged by streets; or classified by professions (a trade directory). This clears a substantial undergrowth of peripheral publications such as guidebooks, topographies, court books and the like.

Directories were a diverse phenomenon. They served a variety of purposes, from social guides of fashionable districts, or sources of information for commerce, to highly specialized volumes such as Bancroft's *Directory of Resident Americans in London* (1901-06). The suburban volumes were a microcosm of this extraordinarily rich world of London directories, although on the whole they tended to be generalist in contents in order to compensate for their spatially restricted extent.

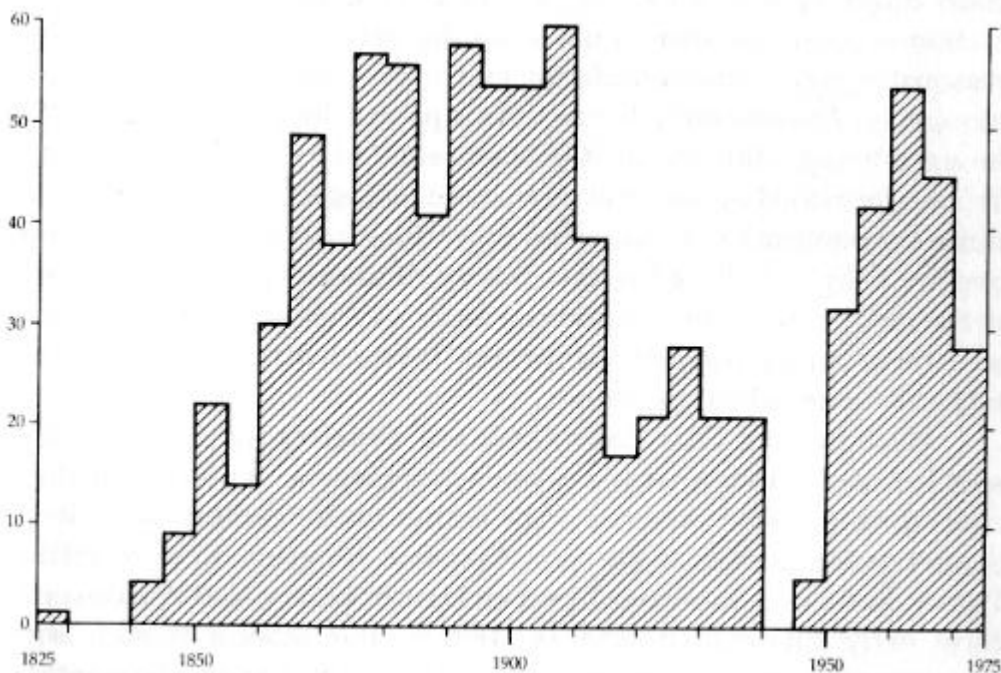
Their degree of usefulness to the contemporary public is impossible to quantify, although the large number of titles published does hint at enthusiasm on the part of consumers. The rapid outward growth of the city in the nineteenth century created a new world of uncertain structure and dimensions about which there must have been a need for basic data, but in addition this was an age of an information explosion. One can argue that publications such as directories were a necessary facilitating mechanism in the evolving complexity of society, and they were certainly an increasingly important feature of popular culture. Dry and factual they may have been but by the end of the nineteenth century directories played a part in people's lives, perhaps one ought to say in middle-class households, roughly on a par with today's telephone directories. One may give them little or no thought but they are nevertheless essential instruments of everyday life.

NINETEENTH CENTURY

The first true directory of central London was published in 1677.¹ The inclusion of sections on suburban districts was initiated in 1790 by *The Universal British Directory of Trade and Commerce*,² but separate suburban directories came much later. It is tempting to give the accolade of originality to Thomas Wilson's *An Accurate Description of Bromley in Kent* (1797),³ but in fact his is little more than a topographical description of the Bromley area with a full name list of all the book's subscribers. We have to wait until 1827 for the first true London suburban directory. This was H. N. Batten's *A Key Companion to the Plan of Clapham with its Common and Environs* which, as the title suggests, was produced as an accompaniment to a district map. Batten included a short street directory, but the main purpose was an historical and topographical introduction to the neighbourhood. After a fourteen-year lapse of time, D. Batten produced a second edition, to a similar format, with a street directory containing 450 or so names, and there were further editions in 1844, 1859, 1865, 1866 and 1879/80.

The 1840s and 1850s saw an upsurge (figure 1) in interest in this type of directory. In 1843 G.O. Lucas published his *Lucas' Paddington Directory*, which was a true street directory without a secondary purpose. It listed 3,800 names and addresses, but at five shillings (25p) was quite expensive. In the same year Caleb Turner's *The Hackney Almanack and Directory* contained about the same number of names, but his directory was an alphabetical list, giving occupations where appropriate. In addition, he incorporated over 150 pages of information about local officials, institutions, and parish accounts and statistics. Many later suburban directories were to follow this early model.

Figure 1: The number of London suburban directory titles published per quinquennium, 1825-1975



Fortified by the success of his first edition, Turner embarked upon a biennial series. The 1845 volume was extended in scope to absorb Clapton and Stoke Newington, and a street directory was included. All was not progress, however, for in 1847 the occupations previously given in

the name list disappeared, reducing its value to that of a court directory alone. The street section, however, by now covered 480 streets and nearly 6,000 addresses.

In 1847 Turner produced his first Directory of Islington, Holloway and Pentonville, covering another 260 streets and 3,700 addresses; but perhaps more interesting in this northern part of London was W. Trounce's Islington Directory. The first edition of this title, printed in 1852 by J. H. Jackson, made a loss, but such was Trounce's entrepreneurial skill that he not only turned its fortune around in 1853, but established an annual series which lasted until 1905. This longevity of publication was extremely unusual outside the large firms, such as Kelly's. The format was the key to Trounce's success, including as he did a street directory, an alphabetical court directory with 9,400 names, and a classified trade directory. A section of local information made up the 344 pages for 4s 6d (22.5p), reasonably good value considering that at this date Trounce had a local monopoly. Astonishingly, he made three price reductions, so that by 1905 he was offering a directory of 34,000 names and addresses for 2s.6d (12.5p). Trounce provided a good local service and managed to survive as a small directory publisher at a time when other titles foundered or were taken over by Kelly's. Kelly & Co., Britain's major directory publishing house in the nineteenth century, made one foray into Islington, in 1885/6, but soon retreated again in 1888, presumably in search of richer pastures with no locally entrenched opposition.

Whetstone and Co.'s Court Guide and Directory for 1848 was less sophisticated in its format and covered a larger area. It was essentially a court directory with classified trade entries for different settlements in south London, comprising Brixton, Clapham, Kingston, Kew, Mortlake, Putney, Richmond, Streatham, Upper and Lower Tooting, and Wandsworth. Most early suburban directories were in this modest mould, with miscellaneous variations on the theme, and it would therefore be pointless to describe them all in detail here. The experiments of the 1840s were repeated frequently in the 1850s, although relatively few long-standing series were established.

One series which did have a record of success to match that of Trounce in Islington was founded in Croydon by J. Gray in 1851. For 3s.6d (17.5p) he bound together street, classified trades, and mixed court and commercial directories in a book of 204 pages. This was revised every two to five years at first, under the editorship of Gray and his partner F. Warren, and then by Warren alone. In 1874 the copyright passed to Jesse W. Ward, who extended the area of coverage beyond the boundaries of the parish and then in 1884 decided to publish annually. The directory eventually passed into the hands of the Croydon Advertiser Ltd, and continued in print until 1939. This same company recently revived the title as *Ward's Croydon Directory, 1980/81*.

Jesse Ward had numerous competitors in Croydon. Four of these directories did not reach their second edition, and one lasted three editions, but only *Kelly's Croydon Directory* (1888-1928) before the Second World War was able to mount a sustained challenge. After 1945 four new series came and went: *The Croydon Directory* (Heath Press, 1949-1962/3); *Croydon Directory* (Kent Services Ltd, 1955-59); *Croydon Classified Commercial Directory* (H.W.H. Publishing Co., 1967-1974/5) and *The London Borough of Croydon Directory* (Blair Publications, 1967-72).

Croydon was particularly well served with directories for reasons which are not entirely clear. The local population did not have an insatiable appetite for such publications, and demand was therefore insufficient to sustain more than two series at any one time. Perhaps the publishers

simply got their market research wrong, or perhaps there was a degree of envy at seeing the local publisher, Jesse Ward, succeed. Whatever the explanation, some of London's suburbs, such as Croydon, Hampstead, Richmond and Uxbridge were unaccountably deluged with local directories, while others attracted little attention. The spending power of the social mix in an area must have been significant, but it does not appear to be a sufficient explanation for these notable geographical variations in publishing practice.

Jesse Ward built up a string of titles, in order to capitalize on his success in Croydon; *Ward's Norwood and Penge Directory*, 1878-89; *Ward's Beckenham and Penge Advertiser Almanack and Directory*, 1888-97; *Ward's Purley, Coulsdon and Sanderstead Directory*, 1913-15; and *Ward's Coulsdon, Purley, Sanderstead and Kenley Directory*, 1918-39. Such a stable of suburban directories was rare but not unique. In the 1860s and 1870s three names in particular stand out.

R.E.Simpson began in July 1862 with a street directory of St Pancras, and a directory of Chelsea, Pimlico, Brompton and Knightsbridge followed in March 1863. Both of these volumes were edited by Simpson but published by Tomkies & Son of Kensington. Directories of Kensington and Clapham appeared in 1863 and 1864 respectively, and the latter year saw Simpson & Co. acknowledged as publishers of a *Croydon, Forest Hill, Sydenham and Norwood Directory and Court Guide*. No obvious geographical pattern had emerged in his work so far, but in 1866 Simpson switched his attention to east London, with a *Bow, Stratford and Mile End Directory*, and a volume covering Poplar, Limehouse and Stepney. In 1867 the market in this locality was further tapped with a *Hackney Directory*, this time in association with a Mr Green. None of these publications was particularly innovative and none merited a second edition. In five of these eight areas Simpson was first on the scene with his directory, and in each case he seems to have been content to move on to a new project. All of his works were therefore little more than ephemera.

R. E. Simpson's career was emulated by R. Green (table 1), his associate in the *Hackney Directory*. Green had in fact started in his own right one year earlier, in 1866, with his *Stoke Newington and Clapham Directory*, when he gave the same office address as Simpson. He was in the habit of printing a promise that his directories were 'to be published annually', but none ever were. This happened so often that one wonders if there was an element of fraud in this undertaking, perhaps to lure unsuspecting advertisers. From 1866 to 1875 Green published one or two volumes per annum, and, having milked an area, he moved on.

Table 1: The Directories of R. Green

1866	Green's Stoke Newington and Clapham Directory, Including Tottenham, Stamford Hill and Edmonton
1867	Simpson and Green's Hackney Directory
1867	Green & Co.'s Forest Hill, Sydenham and Upper Norwood Directory and Court Guide, Including Penge, Anerley, Lower Norwood
1868	Green's Wandsworth, Vauxhall, Kennington, and South Lambeth Directory and Court Guide
1868	R. Green & Co.'s South London Blue Book and Royal Court Guide for Surrey
1869	R. Green & Co.'s South-West London Directory, and Court Guide
1869-70	R. Green & Co.'s Hackney and North-East London Directory
1872-73	The Court Guide and Commercial Directory and Gazetteer for Richmond, Twickenham, Hampton Court, Mortlake, Barnes, Sheen (East and Upper), Kew, Old and New Brentford, Isleworth, Petersham and Ham
1873-74	The Court Guide and Commercial Directory and Gazetteer for Chelsea, Kensington, Brompton, Notting Hill, Shepherd's Bush, Acton and Ealing
1874-75	Green's Court Guide and Commercial Directory and Gazetteer: Greenwich, Deptford, New Cross, Blackheath, Lewisham, Lee
1875	Green's East Surrey Court Guide, Gazetteer, and County Blue-Book

Very different from the 'smash and grab' strategy by Simpson and Green was the conscientious and sustained approach of Hutchings and Crowsley. They began in a small way in 1861 with a *St John's Wood Directory and Almanack*, published from an address in Henry Street, Portland Town. The modest first edition of only forty-seven pages, containing a street directory, plus twenty pages of advertisements, was not a very auspicious beginning, but by the next year the format was improved to accommodate a court directory and the overall size was trebled. In 1862 Hutchings and Crowsley were able to keep their retail price low at one shilling (5p) by taking over forty pages of advertisements, and they seem to have aimed at these tactics of a low price and high turnover throughout their career, judging from the number of copies of their directories which have survived.

Hutchings and Crowsley published a *St Marylebone Directory* from 1863 and one of Camden and Kentish Towns from 1867. In the 1870s and 1880s they gradually expanded their flourishing business to take in large areas of north, west, south-west and south London. By 1886 they were publishing eighteen suburban directories (table 2), listing approximately 180,000 court and 80,000 commercial addresses, and were by far the most successful company in their specialist field. All their directories were revised annually and were arranged according to a standardized format comprising street, court, commercial and classified trade directories,

along with information about local affairs. In addition, bound with their directories was a twenty or so page advertisement feature for insurance companies, and a forty-odd page visitors' guide to holidays and travel. These sections must have attracted considerable revenue from advertisers.

Table 2: Hutchings and Crowsley's 'Buff Books'

Barnet, Finchley, Hendon, Edgware (1886/7)
Bloomsbury and St Pancras (1886)
Brixton, Clapham and South Lambeth (1881-86)
Camden and Kentish Towns (1867-85/6)
Chelsea, Pimlico and Belgravia (1878-86/7)
Dulwich, Denmark and Champion Hills...including Tulse Hill and Herne Hill (1882-86)
Hampstead and Highgate (1873-86/7)
Highbury, Stoke Newington, Stamford Hill and Clapton (1884/5-86)
Hornsey, Upper Holloway and Finsbury Park (1882-86)
Kensington, Notting Hill, Brompton and Knightsbridge (1874-76)
Kilburn, including Willesden, Cricklewood and West End, Hampstead (1868-86)
Marylebone (1863-86)
Mayfair, St James's, Soho and Westminster (1886/7)
Paddington and Bayswater (1872-86)
Richmond, Kew, Twickenham, St Margaret's and Petersham (1886)
St John's Wood (1861-64), amalgamated with Marylebone (1865-86)
Sydenham and Norwood (1882-86)
Wandsworth, Putney, Wimbledon, Tooting (1883-86)
West Kensington and Hammersmith (1880-85/6)

Kelly & Co. had been publishing county directories since 1845 and their *Post Office London Suburban Directory* since 1860, but it was not until the mid-1880s that they decided to compete in the market for local suburban directories. In 1885 they brought out seven directories covering north, south, and east London (table 3), very much along the lines now well established by Hutchings and Crowsley in terms of price, size and format. Kelly's were good judges of a winning formula and in 1886 they took over Hutchings and Crowsley, making very few changes to the by now well-known 'Buff Books', other than greatly to increase the number of titles in the series (table 4).

Table 3 : Kelly's Post Office London and Suburban Local Directories, 1885/6

- Section 1: Stoke Newington, Stamford Hill, Clapton, and Homerton
Section 2: Highgate, Highbury, Holloway, and Finsbury Park
Section 3: Islington, Canonbury, and Barnsbury
Section 4: Camden Town, Kentish Town, Somers Town, and Haverstock Hill
Section 5: Camberwell, Peckham, and East Dulwich
Section 6: Kennington, South Lambeth, Clapham, and Battersea
Section 7: Stratford, West Ham, Leyton, Leytonstone, Forest Gate, Walthamstow, and Plaistow
Section 8: Brixton, Stockwell, Herne Hill, Dulwich, Balham, and Streatham
Section 9: Forest Hill, Sydenham, Catford, Norwood, Penge, and Anerley
Section 10: Wandsworth, Wimbledon, Tooting, Roehampton, Putney, Barnes, Mortlake, Kew, and Richmond
Section 11: Greenwich, Woolwich, Deptford, Lee, Lewisham, Blackheath, Charlton, and Plumstead
Section 12: Acton, Ealing, Chiswick, Brentford, and Hanwell
Section 13: Paddington, Bayswater, Kilburn, Queen's Park, and Notting Hill
Section 14: ?
Section 15: Hackney, Dalston, Old Ford, and Bow
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Table 4: Kelly's 'Buff Books'

- Acton (1928-40)
Anerley, Penge and Beckenham (1894/5-1907/8)
Balham, Tooting and Merton (1890-1928)
Barnes, Mortlake and Sheen (1929-39)
Barnet, Finchley, Hendon, Edgware and district (1887/8-1939)
Battersea and South Lambeth (1892/3-1904/5)
Beckenham, Penge and Anerley (1908/9-39)
Blackheath, Lee, Lewisham and Greenwich (1887-1937/8)
Bloomsbury and St Pancras (1887/8)
Brixton, Clapham and South Lambeth (1881-1928)
Bromley, Chislehurst and Bickley (1888/9-1962)
Camberwell, Peckham and East Dulwich (1885/6-90/91?)
Camden and Kentish Towns (1887/8-1926/27)
Chelsea, Pimlico and Belgravia (1887-1939)
Chiswick, Acton and Gunnersbury (1914-40)

Table 4: continued

Croydon and South Norwood (1888-1928)
Dalston, Kingsland, De Beauvoir Town, and Canonbury (1891-1908/9)
Dulwich, Tulse Hill, Herne Hill (1887/8-1928)
Ealing, Acton, Hanwell, Gunnersbury and Chiswick (1887/8-1940)
Edgware and neighbourhood (1929-39)
Enfield, Edmonton and Winchmore Hill (1899/1900-1939)
Epsom and Leatherhead (1899/1900-1956)
Finchley (East, North and Church End), Child's Hill, Hendon and Golders Green (1912/13-39)
Forest Hill, Lower Sydenham and part of Brockley (1899-1908)
Hackney, Dalston, Old Ford and Bow (1886-1915/16)
Hammersmith and Shepherd's Bush (1899/1900-1939/40)
Hampstead and Highgate (1886/7-1940)
Harrow, Wealdstone, Wembley and Sudbury (1909/10-37)
Hendon, Golders Green, Mill Hill, Kingsbury (1926-39)
Highbury, Stoke Newington, Stamford Hill and Clapton (1887-1914/15)
Highgate, Holloway and Tufnell Park (1888/9-1889/90)
Hornsey, Upper Holloway and Finsbury Park (1887-1939)
Ilford, Manor Park, Little Ilford and East Ham (1899/1900-1939)
Islington (St Mary's and St Peter's), Canonbury, Barnsbury and Clerkenwell (1885/6-1888)
Kennington, Battersea and South Lambeth (1888-89)
Kensington, Notting Hill, Brompton, and Knightsbridge (1887-1953)
Kilburn and Willesden (1887-1940)
Kingston, Norbiton, Surbiton, and district (1891-1971)
Lewisham, Brockley and Catford (1899-1927/8)
Leytonstone, Wanstead and Snaresbrook (1909-15)
Marylebone and St John's Wood (1887-1939)
Mayfair, St James's, Soho and Westminster (1887/8)
Paddington and Bayswater (1887-1939)
Peckham, Nunhead and Camberwell (1892/3?-1922)
Penge, Anerley and Beckenham (1888/9-93/4)
Richmond, Kew, Twickenham, St Margaret's, Petersham, Barnes, Mortlake, Sheen and Teddington (1887/8-1971)
Stamford Hill and Tottenham (1899/1900-1908/9)
Stoke Newington, Stamford Hill, Upper and Lower Clapton (1890-1914/15)
Stratford, West Ham, Leyton, Leytonstone, Forest Gate, Walthamstow and Plaistow (1887/8-1905)
Streatham and Norwood (1909-38)
Sutton, Carshalton, Beddington, South Beddington, Wallington, Cheam, Cuddington, Hackbridge, and Worcester Park (1909/10-1927/8)
Sydenham, Norwood and Streatham (1887-1939)
Tottenham, Enfield, and Winchmore Hill (1893/4-98/99, and 1909/10-23)
Uxbridge, West Drayton and Southali (1890)
Walthamstow, Leyton and Leytonstone, with Snaresbrook (1889/90-1908)

Table 4: continued

Wandsworth, Putney, Wimbledon, Tooting (1887-1936)
Watford, Bushey, Harrow and Rickmansworth (1900-1974)
West Kensington and Hammersmith (1887/8-1939/40)
Woodford, Snaresbrook and Wanstead (1900-1939)
Wood Green, Muswell Hill, Bounds Green, Fortis Green and East Finchley (1899/ 1900-1938)
Woolwich, Plumstead, Shooter's Hill and Charlton (1893-1923)

Kelly's accounts show that the 'Buff Books' were a profitable addition to their directory portfolio. In 1888 they made a profit of £2,024, rising to £3,596 in 1893,⁴ which at 1s. 6d (7.5p) per volume would have meant sales of 27,000 and 48,000 respectively. Presumably little additional canvassing effort was required beyond what was necessary for the *Post Office London Directory* and *Post Office London Suburban Directories*, although obviously the editorial input was substantial.

The geographical strategy underlying the publication history of the 'Buff Books' is at times difficult to understand. There-arrangement of the areas covered by each volume happened sufficiently frequently to baffle the reader today, as it no doubt also did the original consumer. Boundaries (figure 2) were often determined on an ad hoc basis for short-term convenience and were then overtaken by events, such as the rapid outward growth of London in the late nineteenth century. Some areas of what is now Greater London were never covered by Kelly's, while others were common to two or more concurrent titles.

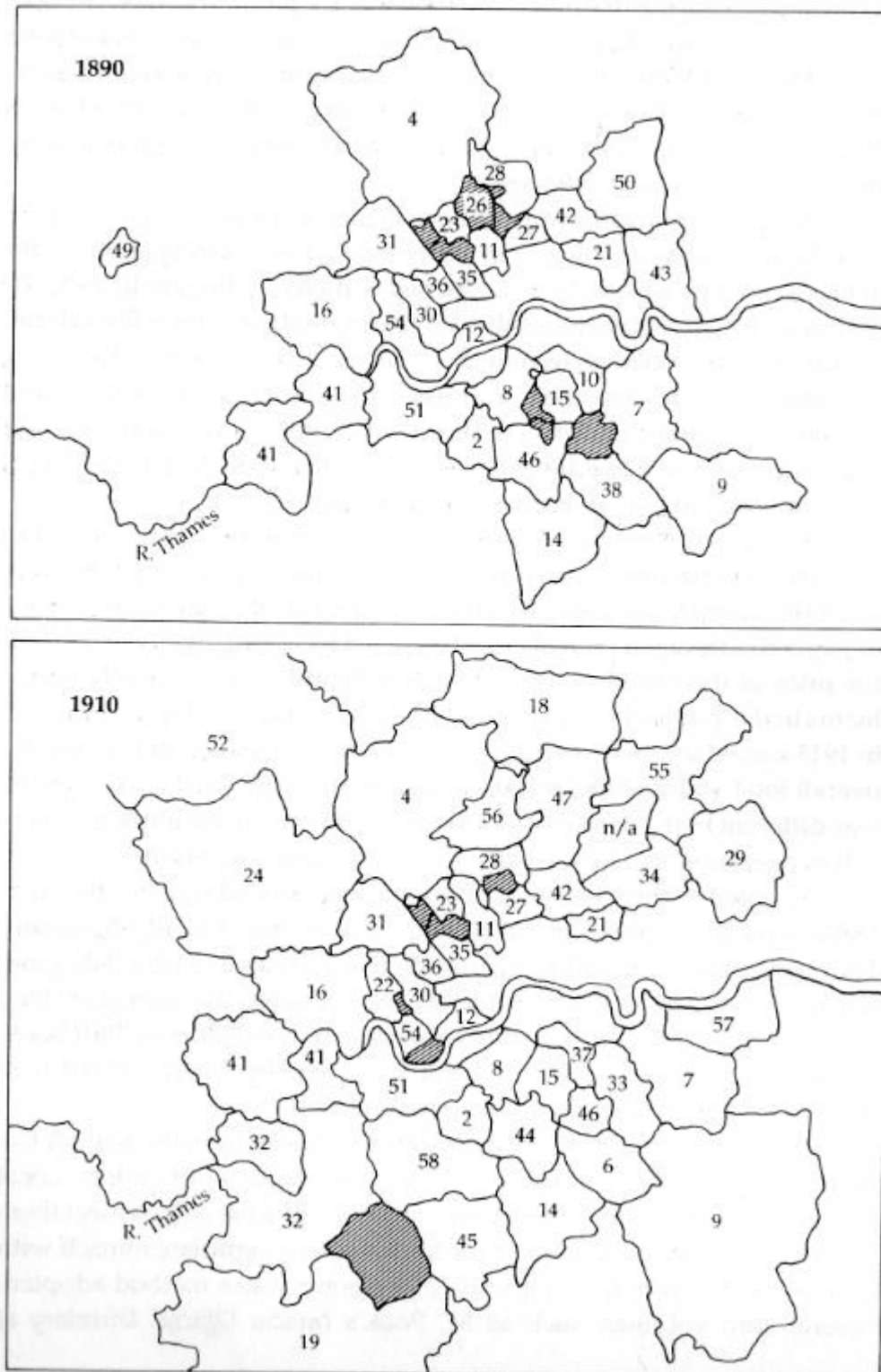
Wartime apparently acted as a savage filter of directory series. The disruption of ordinary life reduced the need for stable, ordered information, and made compilation more difficult; but, above all, the inevitable shortage of paper discouraged publishers who would have had greatly to increase the price of their publications. The First World War was really only a hiatus in the publication of the 'Buff Books'. Forty-one titles were in print in 1913 and, after the suspension of many for the duration of the war, the overall total was restored to thirty-eight in the early 1920s. The pattern was different in the Second World War: in 1938 twenty-eight series were still in operation, but by the early 1950s only seven were left.

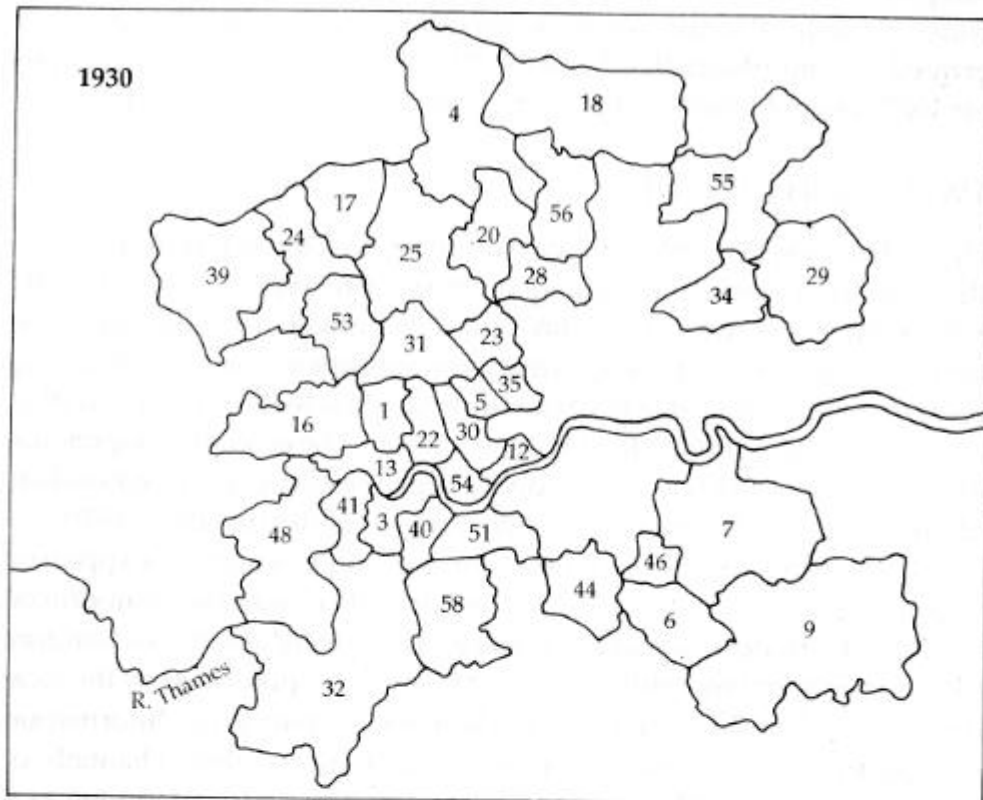
As noted earlier, Kelly's, although in the ascendant after the mid-1880s in the local suburban directory field, were never totally dominant. They were reluctantly willing to concede ground in areas such as Islington, where an independent local publisher had cornered the market, or they occasionally absorbed a local publication in to one of their own 'Buff Book' series, as happened with E. Strong & Sons' *Bromley Directory*,⁵ but they were never able totally to eliminate competition.

One reason for this was that, despite the efficiency of the Kelly & Co. machine, it was unable to fulfil local needs in all parts of London. Local publishers were aware of these requirements and were able to meet them rapidly. One such need was for the tradesman to ingratiate himself with his customers, and providing a directory gratis was a method adopted. Several slim volumes, such as M. Pook's *Invicta Official Directory of Greenwich*⁶ and Lake's *Uxbridge Appendix to the Almanacks*,⁷ came into this category. Another need was for tradesmen to advertise themselves more widely in the local forum. Thus *The Hampstead Directory and Almanack* was


printed 'for the advertisers'⁸ and the *Chingford and Sewardstone Directory* for 1907 was published by the Chingford Tradesmen's Association.

Figure 2: Boundaries of the various 'Buff Books' 1890, 1910 and 1930





1 Acton	23 Hampstead	45 Sutton
2 Balham	24 Harrow	46 Sydenham
3 Barnes	25 Hendon	47 Tottenham
4 Barnet	26 Highgate	48 Twickenham
5 Bayswater	27 Highbury	49 Uxbridge
6 Beckenham	28 Hornsey	50 Walthamstow
7 Blackheath	29 Ilford	51 Wandsworth
8 Brixton	30 Kensington	52 Watford
9 Bromley	31 Kilburn	53 Wembley
10 Camberwell	32 Kingston	54 West Kensington
11 Camden Town	33 Lewisham	55 Woodford
12 Chelsea	34 Leytonstone	56 Wood Green
13 Chiswick	35 Marylebone	57 Woolwich
14 Croydon	36 Paddington	58 Wimbledon
15 Dulwich	37 Peckham	
16 Ealing	38 Penge	
17 Edgware	39 Pinner	
18 Enfield	40 Putney	
19 Epsom	41 Richmond	
20 Finchley	42 Stoke Newington	
21 Hackney	43 Stratford	
22 Hammersmith	44 Streatham	

 Areas overlap
 0 km 10
 0 miles 10

TWENTIETH CENTURY

Figure 1 shows the number of local suburban directories published, other than the 'Buff Books', per quinquennium from 1825 to 1975. Clearly Kelly's entry into this field in 1886 had little immediate impact upon the number of titles in print. The golden age of suburban directory publishing seems to have stretched from about the mid-1860s to the First World War, with a

secondary peak in the 1950s and 1960s. The economic depression of the 1920s and 1930s had a decidedly negative effect upon the numbers of directories published, and another decline set in after about 1970.

In the 1920s and 1930s an important new type of name list appeared which cannot strictly be called a directory. This was the semi-official guide to the traders, especially retailers, in a named district of London. The form adopted was either that of a 'civic guide', published by the local council, or a handbook of the local Chamber of Commerce. Information was partly for the traders themselves, to improve their channels of communication and therefore solidarity, but it was also presented as a buyer's shopping guide to local facilities, in order to boost trade. These publications contained classified lists of traders or alphabetical commercial lists, and also extensive and detailed data concerning the district. Useful though these booklets may be, they are not comprehensive and impartial directories, because they tend to omit any trader who was not a member of the local Chamber of Commerce.

A contemporary and related development was that of the so-called 'blue books' or 'green guides' which performed a similar function of listing local traders. Because they were produced by publishers independent of local interests, one might consider them more 'directory-like' than a list of association members, but this view would be mistaken, because these pamphlets generally recorded only those traders who had a telephone. They were early examples of classified telephone directories.

After the Second World War directory publishing *in sensu stricto* was slow to recover. Kelly's resuscitated only half a dozen of their 'Buff Book' series, and all of these had disappeared by 1974 due to poor economic returns. The future of suburban directories therefore passed into the hands of a number of independent companies. Unfortunately the quality of their products was not uniformly high, and this, coupled with competition from classified telephone directories and local guides, contributed to a secular decline of suburban directory publishing in the 1970s. The advent of the alphabetical telephone directory and the classified *Yellow Pages* has of course greatly altered and reduced the constituency of directory buyers. Most householders will be able to find the address information they need for their daily lives in a telephone directory or their Thomson's Local. Recognizing this fact, directory publishers increasingly aim for the commercial and industrial market, and most of them have abandoned the local and even city scale in favour of either the regional or national scales. In the 1980s there have been relatively few suburban directory publishers in London.

CONCLUSION

The production of suburban district directories was the major departure in the publication of London directories in the second half of the nineteenth century; a trend ignored by Goss whose terminal date was 1855.⁹ An understanding of their history and of the intricacies of their compilation will assist historians and geographers searching for sources to fill their data matrices. Directories are of course flawed in many ways and their use requires caution against inbuilt area), class and occupational biases, but they are nevertheless very useful in complementing other archival sources such as rate books and the population census.

A major problem for the potential reader is knowing what titles and editions were published and where they may be found. The present author has attempted to provide a guide in his book *The Directories of London, 1677-1977*.¹⁰ This is a union list of titles and library holdings. 3,300 editions were found, covering most of London's suburbs. More were probably published but

have simply disappeared without trace, no copies being deposited with copyright libraries as they should have been by law.

The overall conclusion is that we can sketch the outline history of London's directories and investigate their various permutations, but as yet we know very little of their true worth to their original readers, and still less of their link as an innovation in information technology with other branches of public data. The investigation of these and other issues will make a rewarding task for future research.

NOTES

1. S. Lee and D. Major, *A Collection of the Names of the Merchants Living in and About the City of London*, London 1677.
2. Published by Barfoot and Wilkes in various editions.
3. See J.E. Norton, *Guide to the National and Provincial Directories of England and Wales, Excluding London, Published 1856*. London: Royal Historical Society, 1950.
4. Archives, Business Press International, Sutton.
5. Bought for £500 in 1897.
6. 1892, 1893/4. This publication was not a true directory.
7. This began in ?1824, recording local information only. By 1853 it had acquired an alphabetical list of names and a classified trades directory.
8. 1859-62.
9. C.W.F. Goss, *The London Directories 1677-1855: a Bibliography with Notes on Their Origin and Development*, London: Denis Archer, 1932.
10. Published in London by Mansell in 1990, 732pp, ISBN: 0720 120632.