

## Architecture

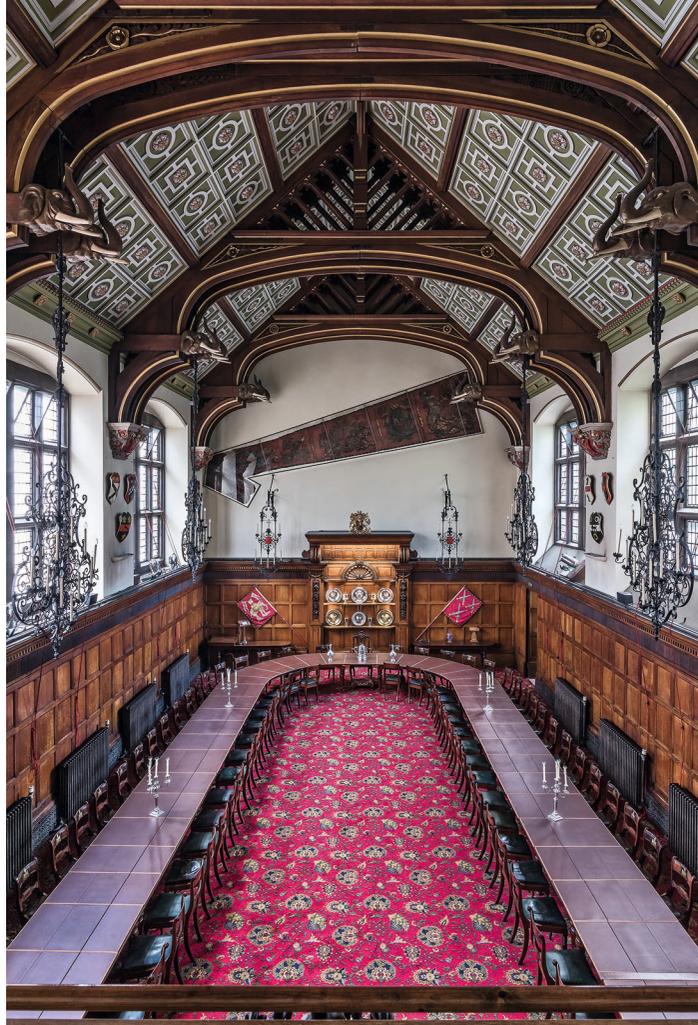
### The Livery Halls of the City of London

Anya Lucas and Henry Russell  
(Merrell, £45)

LONDON'S LIVERY halls are one of the capital's mysteries. A few open their heavy doors to the public on Open House weekend. The rest are the private domain of their membership—and of those lucky enough to be invited to attend a dinner. This handsome book, which has been published in association with the Worshipful Company of Chartered Architects, takes us inside, on a sumptuous and rather intriguing survey.

Livery companies began in the 13th century as guilds, controlling certain trades and developing bonds of fellowship between their members. Company officials, called renter wardens and beadles, still wear fur-lined gowns modelled on Tudor apparel and elaborate rituals surround drinking from a 'loving cup'. They flourish because they remain relevant as charitable bodies and their halls are some of the finest secular spaces in London.

The 110 companies range from the Mercers, number one in the



Cutlers' Hall, with its hammer-beamed roof, supported by elephants

proudly guarded pecking order, to the newest, the Worshipful Company of Arts Scholars. Forty of the halls are covered here: 39 in the City or environs and one—a former 1934 Royal Navy

sloop housing the Master Mariners—moored on the Thames Embankment.

The Great Fire of 1666 and the Blitz of the Second World War did for many of the buildings.

Anya Lucas sets out eloquently how they evolved and rightly places emphasis on the post-Fire rebuilding, when the livery hall emerged as a distinct building type. Some of the finest, such as the Apothecaries', Vintners' and the Skinners', retain much of their Stuart fabric.

Often, it's the portraits and possessions that provide the most interest—particularly so with the post-Blitz reconstructions, some of which are bland echoes of former grandeur. Other modern halls are rather good, such as Basil Spence's Salters' Hall (1976).

The impact of some halls can be daunting. Fishmongers' Hall is richly neo-Classical. Philip Hardwick's Goldsmiths' Hall of 1835 was 'marked by an air of palatial grandeur not exceeded by that of any other piece of interior architecture in London'. The Drapers congregate in an equally huge Victorian *palazzo* and the Cutlers opted for a rich Jacobean style with blaring elephant supporting the hammer-beamed hall roof.

With so much changed in the City, these halls, like Wren's churches, provide precious links to a disappearing past.

Roger Bowdler

Andreas von Einsiedel

## Anthology

### Beneath My Feet: Writers on Walking

Introduced and edited by Duncan Minshull  
(Notting Hill Editions, £14.99)

HERE IS A BOOK as certain to lift the spirits as the activity to which it is dedicated: going for a walk. *Beneath My Feet* is a collection of non-fiction writings on pedestrianism, shrewdly selected by Duncan Minshull, who, as the author of two previous books on the subject, is emerging as the laureate of walking. His authors range from Petrarch to Will Self, via Charles Dickens, Fanny Kemble, Kamila Shamsie, Christopher Hope and 30 others.

There are routes so familiar that they seem to contain the milestones of one's life. Lucy Hughes-Hallett regularly walks

her dog in a local cemetery: 'Beneath this crooked pine tree I sheltered from the rain with my daughters, when they were small enough to walk into the cave it makes without bending their heads.'

**‘This elegant little book would be an excellent Christmas present for the indolent,**

William Hazlitt prefers improvised rural rambles, but cautions against walking in the country with a companion, because then you have to swap nature notes. 'If you remark on the scent of

a bean-field crossing the road, perhaps your fellow-traveller has no smell,' he writes in 1822.

Among the city walkers is Will Self, who, heading back to his hotel after dinner in Glasgow, neatly identifies the feeling any (decent) man gets when walking in the dark behind a single woman: 'reverse paranoia'.

This elegant little book would make an excellent Christmas present for the indolent, such is the enthusiasm for walking expressed in its pages. Kierkegaard writes: 'I have walked myself into my best thoughts.' Trekking through snow, Henry David Thoreau detects an 'increased glow of thought and feeling'.

Especially pertinent to the season is a piece by Franz Kafka in praise of escaping the claustrophobia of a too-domesticated evening. Once the walker is outdoors, the left-behind family



Striding out purposefully in an illustration by Ben Hollands

'drifts into vaporousness, whereas we ourselves, as indisputable and sharp and black as a silhouette, smacking the backs of our thighs, come into our true nature'.

Andrew Martin