This symposium will bring together new research on towers of every type, their promoters and uses, the symbolism and associations of high-rise architecture, its cumulative presence in the metropolitan landscape, and the issues posed by new tall building for historic skylines and landmarks. As London’s skyline soars to ever new heights this is a matter of great contemporary interest and importance. At the same time, as a number of speakers will demonstrate, there is nothing new about tall buildings in the capital and since early in its history London has seen the creation of landmark architecture by ambitious builders of all types. The day offers papers from scholars from a range of disciplines – including architectural history, history, geography and planning – and it is intended that this will create a number of contexts in which we can explore illuminating new perspectives on the topic. From medieval tower houses to Edwardian ‘babylonian’ blocks of flats and from the perennial issue of St Paul’s to current plans for the Thames Gateway this symposium will offer a broad-ranging view of tall building past, present and future.

The day’s proceedings will form the basis of a special issue of The London Journal, now published by Maney, which has a unique reputation for scholarly coverage of London past and present. The conference convenors are town planner Michael Hebbert (University of Manchester) and architectural historian Elizabeth McKellar (Open University), both members of the London Journal editorial board, and the Centre for Metropolitan History (CMH), Institute of Historical Research. The meeting forms part of the 2007 programme of the CMH and will be held in the Wolfson/Pollard Rooms at the Institute of Historical Research. Papers will be presubmitted and presentations limited strictly to 15 minutes to allow good time for discussion.

www.history.ac.uk/cmh/tallbuildings.html

Programme
Tall Buildings
in the London Landscape

Friday 12 October 2007
Institute of Historical Research,
Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU

9:30 Registration and Coffee
10:00 Welcome and Introduction

Morning Session: Building Tall before the Twentieth Century
(Chair: Elizabeth McKellar)
10:15 Derek Keene, Centre for Metropolitan History: Building tall in London, 1066–1666
10:35 Christine Stevenson, Courtauld Institute: Vantage-points in the seventeenth-century City
10:55 Discussion

11:15 Coffee

11:30 Senaka Weeraman and Ken Kiss: Reviving Brunel’s lost water tower
11:50 Richard Dennis, University College London: ‘Babylonian Flats’ in Victorian and Edwardian London
12:10 Discussion

12:30 Lunch

Afternoon Session: Building Tall in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries
(Chair: Michael Hebbert)
13:20 Jane Boyd, Leverhulme Research Fellow: Senate House Tower – the Capital’s First Skyscraper
13:40 Leslie Budd, Open University: Between the Earth and the Sky? The discourses of architects and engineers in 1970s
14:00 Discussion

14:20 Lucy Markham: The threat to views of St Paul’s Cathedral and the transformation of the London skyline
14:40 Michael Short, University of the West of England: Tall building management in London: success or failure in enhancing the character of London?
15:00 Discussion

15:20 Tea

15:40 Andrew Harris, University College London: Livingstone versus Serota: the high-rise battle of Bankside
16:00 Maria Kaika, Oxford University: Reinventing the icon: the political economy of reimagining the City
16:20 Discussion

16:40 Concluding remarks