

“A brilliant film” Prof. Paul O’Prey

“Should be required viewing
for all politicians”
Maureen Duffy



A film about the City of London, the Corporation that governs it,
and its role in the economic crisis.

(Michael Chanan and Lee Salter, UK, 2012, 72mins)

www.secretcity-thefilm.com

Over the past five years the economic crisis has focused attention on capitalism and its failings to a degree not seen for decades. After the numerous banking and financial scandals, questions abound about the origins of the crisis and the role of financial capital.

Secret City uncovers the hidden history of the institutions at the heart of the crisis. Exposing the inner workings of the City of London and its ancient government, the Corporation of London, the film reveals how it resists democratisation, how it has worked to become the predominant force in global capitalism, and the City’s relation to the metropolis in which it lies embedded.

But *Secret City* is not just a film for Londoners but for everyone exposed to the crisis. The role of the City concerns everyone everywhere.



Secret City



London and the City of London are not the same place. London is a metropolis of 8 million people. The City of London is the famous square mile in the middle, with about 7,000 residents but many more businesses. A Corporation older than Parliament, the City of London has played a key historical role in protecting and promoting the interests of finance capital.



Secret City investigates the power wielded by the Corporation of London over British economic policy, through which it sustains London's prime position at the hub of global finance capital — not least through control of the majority of the world's tax havens.



The film exposes the Corporation's anti-democratic constitution, the ancient laws which allow it function as a state within a state, and thus to promote an illusory promise of economic growth at the cost of the real economy.



Secret City questions the Corporation's role through contributions from Londoners, including scholars, an MP, a businessman, Church people and activists. Participants include Lord Glasman, John McDonnell MP, the Revs. William Taylor (Stamford Hill) and Alan Green (Bethnal Green), Natalie Bennett, Malcolm Matson, Occupy activists, and Professors Doreen Massey, Robin Blackburn, Steven Haseler and Clive Bloom.

Facts in brief

- ¶¶The City of London Corporation predates the UK Parliament.
- ¶¶The City of London is the only place in the UK where businesses can vote in local elections
- ¶¶The City of London is the world's leading Global Financial Centre according to ZYen (2012)
- ¶¶The London Bullion Market deals with £14bn of gold every day.
- ¶¶London accounts for 37% of \$4tr global foreign exchange trading, with the USA in second-place at 17.9%

Secret City

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

"Using music, film clips and face to face interviews, Secret City lifts the veil of secrecy and fake pageantry behind which the City of London, and its financial hub, hides its ugly face. I was particularly struck by the telling metaphor from Doreen Massey of an enormous dead tree, under whose stifling branches nothing will grow, as an image of how the city has destroyed the once flourishing small business and manufacturing life of the rest of London. It should be required viewing for all politicians"

Maureen Duffy

"entertaining and informative film about one the most powerful and unaccountable institutions in the UK".

David Hencke, Journalist

"A brilliant film, with potentially far-reaching impact in catalysing a new movement for City reform. Activists will see this film and be inspired. My thanks and congratulations".

Stephen Reid, New Economics Foundation

"Excellent film - very educational about the Corporation of London".

David Ayrton, National Union of Journalists

"The film was a superb exposition of the history and role of the City Corporation which was a revelation to many our audience tonight".

John McDonnell, MP

PRESS COVERAGE

'Uncovering the Secret City – shining light in dark corners'

Tribune Magazine 16 Nov 2012

'Time to abolish the UK's last "rotten borough" - the City of London Corporation'

New Statesman 15 October, 2012

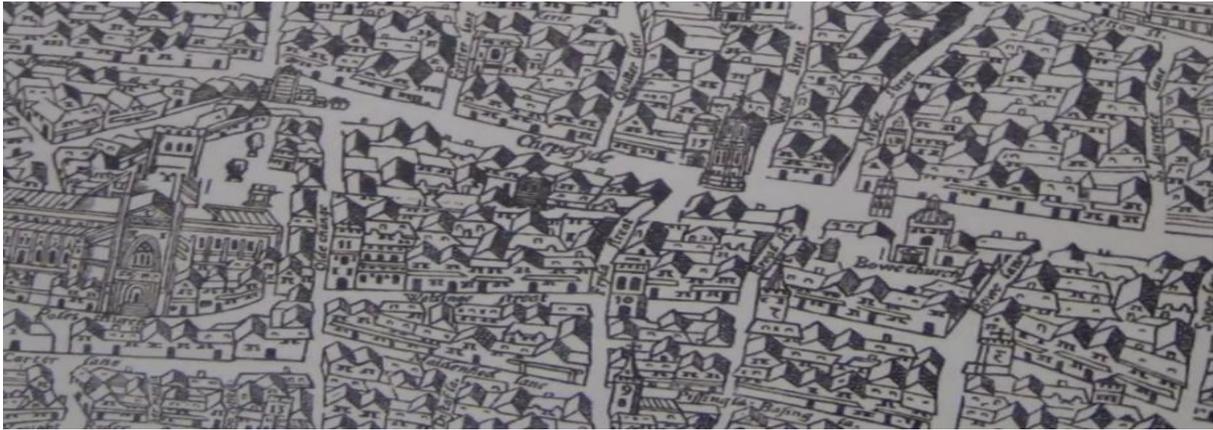
'Secret London in the Film Secret City'

Profile Russia 14th Nov 2012

'Square Mile: a city of secrets'

Voice of Russia 25 Oct 2012

Secret City



THE FILMMAKERS

Lee Salter (salter.lee@gmail.com) is Senior Lecturer in Journalism at the University of the West of England. His interest in the Corporation of London began in 2002 when the Corporation introduced an electoral reform bill into the House of Lords. He worked as a legal and political researcher with Lord Glasman, Rev William Taylor and John McDonnell MP to petition the bill. He has maintained a research interest in the City Corporation, its history and constitution ever since, most recently working with the Reclaim the City movement, which aims to consider reform of the Corporation.

Michael Chanan (michael@mchanan.net) is a seasoned documentarist (BBC2, C4 and numerous independent productions) and Professor of Film and Video at the University of Roehampton. In 2011 he became the New Statesman's first video blogger. His full-length documentary, *Chronicle of Protest*, compiled from these blogs, was described by Sight & Sound as 'Intelligent and highly watchable', while the film critic Ryan Gilbey wrote that 'Through some nifty editing and lucid rhetoric, the connections between the actions of the coalition and the hardships imposed on communities become transparent.'

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Trailer: <http://vimeo.com/47579053>

Synopsis

The year 2012 has seen a rising tide of attention in the media to the capital city of the United Kingdom, which reached its inevitable climax with the Olympics. Not all of it was pap. The BBC produced a splendid series of documentaries about London's history and people; the political weekly the New Statesman brought out a thoughtful special London edition. Strangely missing, however, from most of this coverage was consideration of the famous square mile in the centre, the City of London, where banks, brokers, insurers and other money-makers enjoy their unimpeded ascendancy -- at least, until a new banking crisis broke out in June, and a sprinkling of columnists and bloggers brought up questions about the role of the City's governing body, the Corporation of London.

They were the same questions that arose in October 2011, when Occupy LSX, intending to set up camp in front of the Stock Exchange in Paternoster Square, were ejected from the square and parked themselves instead in front of St Paul's Cathedral. The result was one of the starting points for this film: a highly public debate about capitalism and the responsibilities of the Church, or what a Vicar in the neighbouring borough of Bethnal Green, Rev. Alan Green, calls 'a holy mess', with the Corporation playing its role in the shadows.

The history of London since its foundation by the Romans is recounted by Maurice Glasman, with contributions from London historians Clive Bloom, Lindsay German and John Rees. Robin Blackburn explains key aspects of the City's economic history. We are taken on a tour of key City locations by an Occupy activist, Liam Taylor. David Joel of Kings Court Galleries presents the growth of London through historic maps. Doreen Massey considers the relationship of the City to the metropolis.

The Corporation nowadays hides behind a suitably swish website where you can read on the 'City Vote 2013' page, that 'Unlike elsewhere in the UK, businesses, as well as residents, can register to vote in local elections'. The film examines this peculiar distortion of democracy through which the Corporation governs the City, by which it sustains its ancient autonomy and privileges dating back before William the Conqueror, in other words before there was a Parliament in Westminster.

Clement Attlee called the City 'another power than that which has its seat at Westminster', where 'those who control money can pursue a policy at home and abroad contrary to that which has been decided by the people'. John McDonnell, MP, reminds us that it was Labour Party policy to abolish the Corporation as an anachronistic anomaly until Tony Blair took charge and changed it to reform. The reform, passed in 2002, gave voting rights to businesses based in the square mile in proportion to the size of their workforce, even though, like Goldman Sachs and the People's Bank of China, they might be foreign owned. Crucial personal testimony is provided by a businessman, Malcolm Matson, elected as an Alderman on a reform platform and then blackballed, and a local vicar, Rev. William Taylor, who stood as a Common Councillor to stop the redevelopment of the City's only primary school, and was then reprimanded for asking awkward questions.

The image of the City is prismatic. One face shows off its tourist appeal, another displays the colours of the ancient pageantry paraded annually at the Lord Mayor's Show, designed to assert the fixity of the 'natural' order of society. A third face is the City's skyline--the towers of the new corporate architecture of neoliberal deregulation which have risen since the 1980s, and together with the satellite settlement at Canary Wharf, dwarf the rest of London, thus unambiguously declaring who's boss around here. The film engages with the different 'narratives' that attach to the City through a range of London imagery, including rarely seen archive footage, and extracts from two films about London by independent filmmakers: Anthony Simmons' 'Bow Bells' (1954) and William Raban's 'About Now MMX' (2010).

The music is taken from the popular nursery rhyme, 'Oranges and Lemons', heard in numerous different versions, including an original score by Simon Zagorski-Thomas.

Secret City

Credits

Secret City

Produced by Michael Chanan and Lee Salter
Directed by Michael Chanan
Written and Presented by Lee Salter
Filmed and edited by Michael Chanan
Second camera: Anthony Killick
Additional Camerawork: Enrica Colusso, Holly Giesman, Lee Salter
Production Assistant: Agnes Freimane
Music & sound design: Simon Zagorski-Thomas
Additional Music Glyn Perrin

With support from the University of Roehampton, London

Interviews (order of appearance)

Robin Blackburn · Maurice Glasman · Rev. William Taylor · Jamie Kelsey-Fry
Doreen Massey · Liam Taylor · John Rees · David Joel · Clive Bloom
Lindsay German · Rev. Alan Green · John McDonnell MP · Malcolm Matson
Stephen Haseler · Natalie Bennett

Film Archives

BFI · British Pathé · Museum of London · Anthony Simmons · William Raban

Online Video:

BBC TV News - 'City of London Volunteering' - 'J18: Protest Against capital'
(David Wheeler) - 'London Riots Unseen Footage Too Much for TV'
- 'Morning City' (Terry Nunn) - 'Occupy London, a street level view'
(Guardian Video) - 'Stock Market Crash of 2008' - 'The rich white man always wins'
(Jonathan Cheetham)

Music

'Oranges & Lemons' arr. Cheryl Shantz
'Oranges & Lemons' Uncle Mac (Derek McCulloch)
'Oranges & Lemons' New Glenn Miller Orchestra dir. by Ray McKinley
'Oranges & Lemons' arr. Vaults Quartet

Acknowledgements

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Kings Court Galleries

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Paul Sutton · Silvia, Sofia and Alvise

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