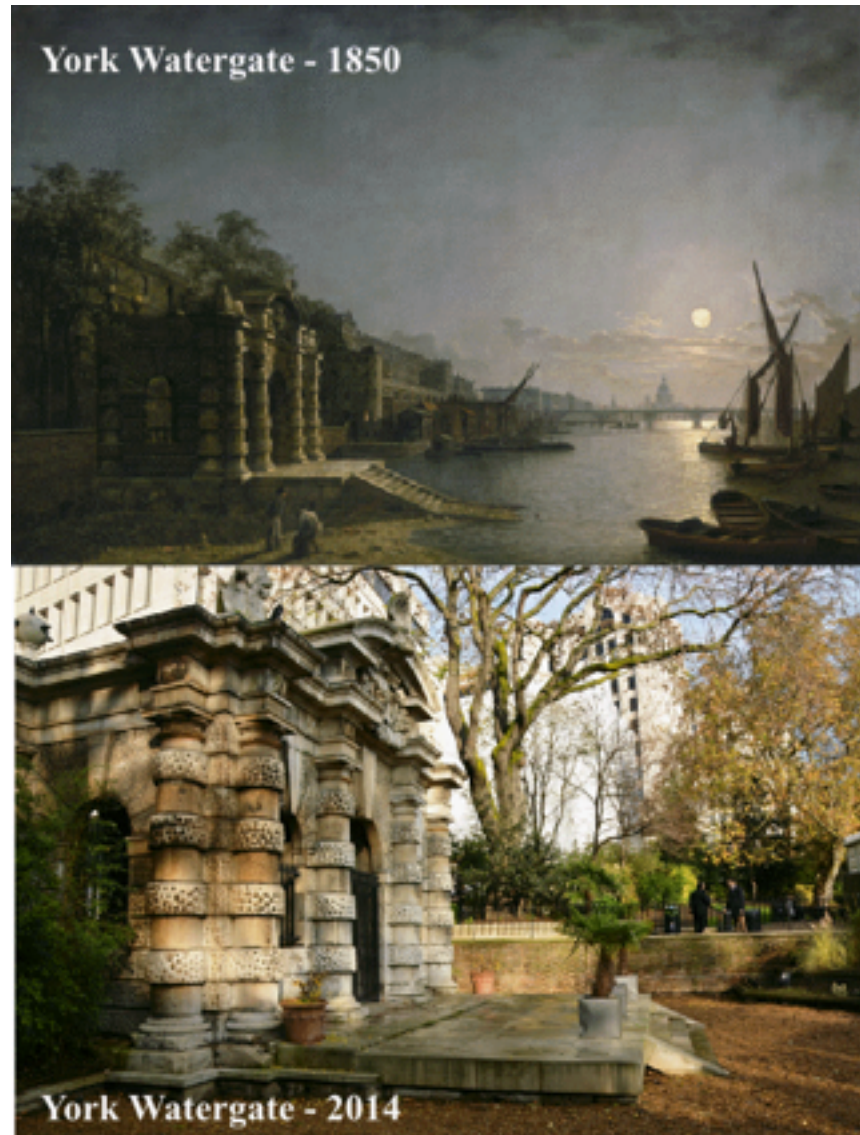


## Then and Now 9 - York Watergate



*Top Picture - York Watergate - 1850  
© Museum of London*

*The painting is York Water Gate and the Adelphi from the River by Moonlight by Henry Pether (1828-1865). It was painted in about 1850. Pether often painted river scenes in moonlight. You can see the dome of St Paul's and London Bridge in the distance.*

Look at both pictures and find these comparative details:

## York Water Gate - 1850

1: This painting shows the gate to the River Thames from a famous house called York Place. In 1556 it became the London home of the Archbishop of York with the front entrance in the Strand and rear entrance on the bank of the river. In 1558 the Archbishop of York gave the house to King Henry VIII to gain favour, tale told in "Wolf Hall." The King did not use it himself but liked the area and had a new palace (Whitehall) built almost next door. The owner by 1626, was George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham. Although the grand houses on the Strand stood on the route between the City of London and Whitehall (the biggest Palace in Europe at that time) the roads were not very good. In the winter they got very muddy and difficult for carriages. Instead the preferred mode of transport to both Whitehall and the City of London was by water taxi on the River Thames.

2: As the river was so important the Duke of Buckingham wanted a grand entrance there as well. It was built in the Italianate style that had become popular amongst the aristocracy (see Marble Hill House in Then and Now 4) using Italian marble. The Watergate was built in 1626 and served as a water entrance to York House for 250 years.

## York Water Gate - 2014

3: You can still see the York Watergate, in the place it was built, almost 400 years ago. Not many structures in London have survived that long. It stands in the Victoria Embankment Gardens very close to the buildings between Villiers Street and Buckingham Street that have replaced York House. It is right next to Charing Cross Station. However, when you look at the gate, either in person or by looking at the photo, there is one rather obvious question. Where is the river? The River Thames is now 136m to the South East, leaving the Watergate marooned on dry land.

4: In 1858 "The Great Stink" forced Parliament to face up to the smell and pollution (see Environment 1) of the River Thames that mixed drinking water and raw sewage. Joseph Bazalgette, Chief Engineer of the Metropolitan Board of Works, designed a new set of sewers that took sewage through six big tunnels eastwards towards the Thames estuary and away from London. The Victoria Embankment was built on the edge of the river to take both the new sewage pipes but also the tunnel for the District Line and Circle Line underground trains. The river became narrower but it did also give



room for a road over the top and a public garden, Victoria Embankment gardens. The line of the buildings in Villiers Street and Buckingham Street, as well as the Aldephi Hotel give the clue to where the river bank used to be over 150 years ago.