

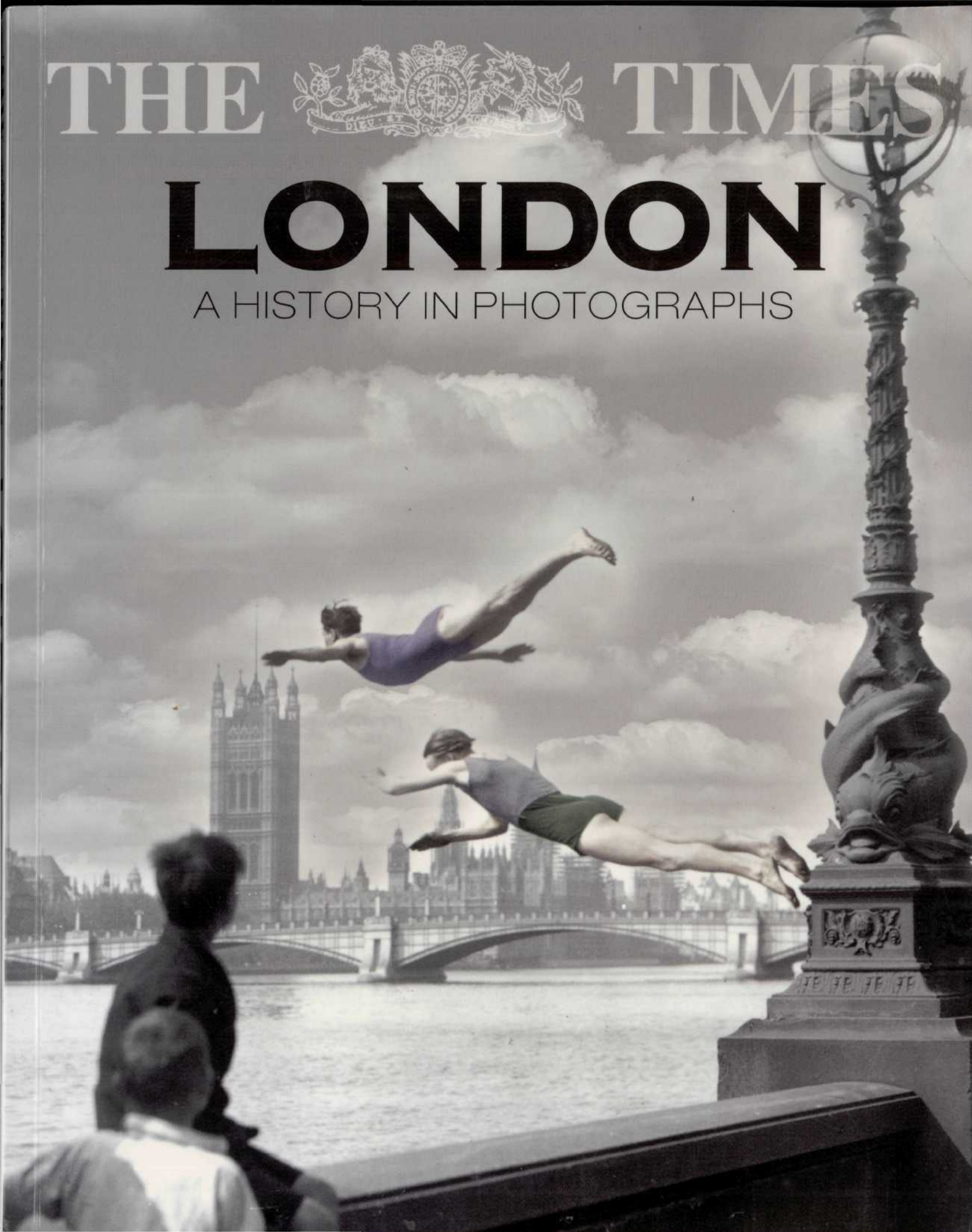
THE



TIMES

LONDON

A HISTORY IN PHOTOGRAPHS



The Times Picture Collection: London is a collection of images – the majority from the photographic archives of *The Times* – taken over a 90-year period by an enormous team of photographers. The photographs are the work of many artists who took them not to illustrate the city at its most beautiful or its most historic – but as press photographs, and together they provide a kaleidoscope of gritty images of London, more lively and more down-to-earth than previous collections.

These images display an unusual portrait of the nation's capital – familiar sights in an unfamiliar light: most people would recognise Trafalgar Square, but very few have seen it from Nelson's point of view; many visitors have seen the chimneys of Battersea Power Station on the skyline but not its cavernous interior, and certainly not when occupied by a string quartet in hard hats serenading Margaret Thatcher. Also in these pages you will find football-playing nuns, a family living in a pepper pot and the lion that said 'hello' each morning to Emile Zola.

London is a city that has inspired poets, painters, film-makers and writers but it is the day-to-day lives of its inhabitants that make the city what it is, lives recorded and photographed by newspapers such as *The Times*. Accompanied by Ian Harrison's informative and witty text, *The Times Picture Collection: London* provides a fascinating, multi-faceted portrait of a fascinating, multi-faceted city.

THE  TIMES
PICTURE COLLECTION
LONDON



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LONDON

Ian Harrison

TIMES BOOKS



Foreword

THIS BOOK IS NOT A HISTORY of London, nor a glossy compilation of familiar 'sights'. The world hardly needs another one of those. Rather, it reveals a great city through the eyes of a great newspaper.

Despite the impression we may sometimes give, journalists are not entirely devoid of reflective or visionary thoughts. But the meat and drink of any daily newspaper is the 'here and now', and *The Times* has been reporting the 'here and now' of London for more than two hundred years. This book dips into its incomparable archives to present photographs of London that stretch back to the early years of the 20th century.

All capture 'here and now' moments: unique, unrepeatable. Snapped by photographers racing to meet that night's deadline, they would have been published within 24 hours, and wrapping fish and chips within 48. This is the transient essence of the inky trade called journalism.

But it is also the essence of London. Though it has been around for 2,000 years, the city has never lost its restless, bustling, impermanent air. London life is not a single stream, but the confluence of a million events. And the 'spirit of London' is not only found in its grand buildings or tranquil parks, but in the multitudinous activities of its teeming populace; not only in its pomp but also in its circumstance; not only in its timeless routines but also in its limitless capacity to shock, amuse, delight, inspire and – occasionally – horrify.

Some images here, particularly the extraordinarily powerful photographs of the Blitz and riot-torn Brixton, recall eras of immense civic trauma. Others, such as the spectacle of a homeless man searching a litter bin for food on Christmas Day in the supposedly 'affluent' 1990s, attest to a civic shame that seems to leave a blacker stain on each passing decade.

Other images capture moments when the sublime gave way to the delightfully surreal. Most Londoners have gazed up in awe at the Whispering Gallery of St Paul's; few have witnessed a parachutist jump from it – and, miraculously, live to tell the tale. Many have seen Tower Bridge open; few have seen it open for a floating three-bedroomed house. Many have seen Old Masters in the National Gallery; few have seen them casually carried up the escalators at Piccadilly Circus.

Nobody 'knows' London. Not the whole of it. Even its finest chroniclers – Dickens, Pepys, Eliot – offer but a glimpse of one epoch, one story. London has a million stories running at once. Dark secrets lurk behind elegant façades; the bizarre lies just beyond the bland; and we chart our own passing years by the bewildering speed at which the city changes. Are you old enough to remember Dockland when it had docks? The Floral Hall when it had flowers? Fleet Street when it had newspapers?

Like the Thames, the mighty city never stands still. It can only be captured in snapshots. But on these pages it has been captured by some of the best snappers in the business.

Richard Morrison
The Times



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