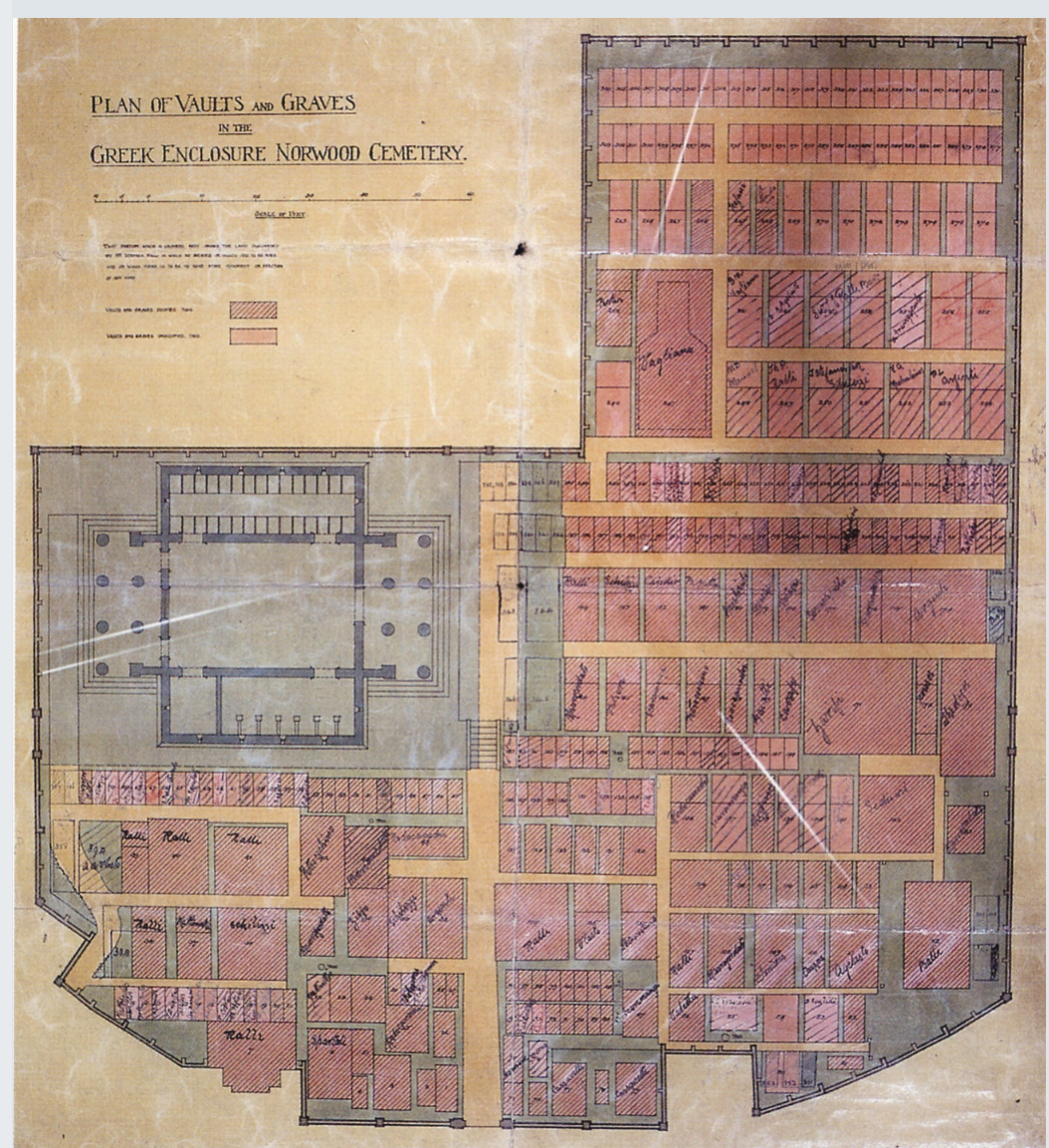


## West Norwood Cemetery

# The Hellenic Enclosure



In 1453, the Ottoman Empire conquered the old Byzantine city of Constantinople and its Greek population retreated with their Patriarch to the city's Phanar quarter where they were to become known as Phanariots. More than 400 years later these families still called their capital city Constantinople, renamed Istanbul by the Turks in 1930. Wherever they were born, church records describe them as 'of Constantinople', just as the grandchildren of the Chiot refugees, born in London, still claim to be 'of Chios'. Few ever spoke of the horror and loss caused by the massacres, leaving their memorials to speak for them. This panel uses the name Constantinople in order to reflect the sentiments of people buried here.

This Enclosure was founded by a handful of survivors of one of Europe's most appalling massacres which destroyed an island, its population and a way of life.

In 1822, refugees from the devastated Aegean island of Chios, fled to safety on islands such as Syros, to cities all around the Mediterranean and to the Danubian provinces – places where many already had trading and shipping connections.

Many, however, chose London as their refuge because, after the defeat of Napoleon in France, Britain had recently emerged as the centre of world commerce. So it was here that Greek Orthodox and Greek-speaking merchants and bankers came to dominate a large part of the world's maritime trade.

London had long provided a welcoming environment for enterprising and self-sufficient refugees (for example, the Huguenots) and it was Victorian Britain which provided the growing Hellenic community – at first overwhelmingly from Chios – with the opportunity to expand and prosper as they settled their families into houses around Holland Park, Bayswater, Westbourne Grove and Hyde Park.

Before the Chiot arrived, however, **Constantine Ionides** from Constantinople had already established himself and his family in Finsbury Circus, in the City of London and so it was here that most new arrivals established their businesses and later their own Greek Orthodox chapel, followed by a church at London Wall.

Soon after, the new community needed a burial ground and they turned to their community leaders to find one. Chiot were accustomed to conducting their affairs through a council of *demogeronts* (elders) – the heads of the principal and most influential families – a 600 year-old tradition derived from their Byzantine and Genoan forebears. In English this was known as a *brotherhood*.

So it was that, on 24 December 1842, this Enclosure was acquired from the South Metropolitan Cemetery Company by a 'brotherhood' comprised of:

Eustratius Ralli (1800-1884) ~ Antonio Ralli (1805-1881)  
Alexander Ionides (1810-1890) ~ John Schilizzi (1805-1892)

Further leases were negotiated in 1860, 1872 and 1889, signed by:

John Schilizzi ~ Demetrius Scaramanga ~ Pandia and Alexander Petrocchino ~ Michael Spartali  
Octavius Valieri ~ Antonio, John and Lucas Ralli ~ Peter and Emmanuel Rodocanachi  
John and Stephen Agelasto ~ Constantine Galati ~ Michael Mavrogordato

From the 1890s onwards, several memorials were listed by English Heritage:

P. A. Argenti ~ X. E. Balli ~ D. Cassavetti ~ M. Z. Michalinos ~ N. A. Mavrogordato ~ A. Ralli  
A. P. Ralli ~ E. Ralli ~ J. P. Ralli ~ M. E. Rodocanachi ~ P. P. Rodocanachi ~ J. Schilizzi  
J. S. Schilizzi ~ T. E. Schilizzi ~ D. Cassavetti ~ D. Spartali ~ M. Vagliano ~ A. A. Vlasto

The Enclosure contains over 1,000 burials, some in unmarked, multiple occupancy graves. Others are in private plots, often with elaborate memorials. About 500 of them were inter-related through common ancestry on Chios and in Constantinople.

On 19<sup>th</sup> October 2019, the Cathedral Church of St Sophia ceded responsibility for the Enclosure to Lambeth Council which then launched an extensive restoration programme, largely financed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

## St Stephen's Chapel & the Ralli Family

The monumental **St Stephen's Chapel**, which dominates the Hellenic Enclosure, was commissioned by **Stephen Ralli** and his wife **Marietta** (*nee Ralli*) in memory of their son, **Augustus Ralli**, who had died at school at Eton, at the age of fifteen. It was built in 1872-73.

However, this heart-broken family may already have intended to build a mortuary chapel here with a large 'cella' – the central hall – for general use by the Anglo-Hellenic community, flanked on two sides by aisles containing a mortuary and Stephen Ralli's private family vaults.

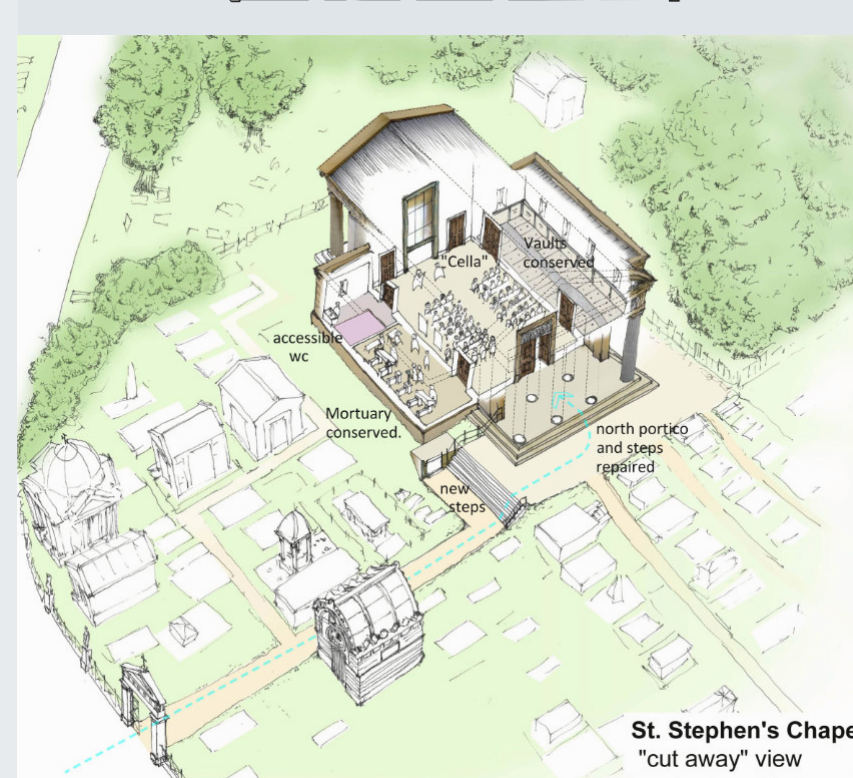
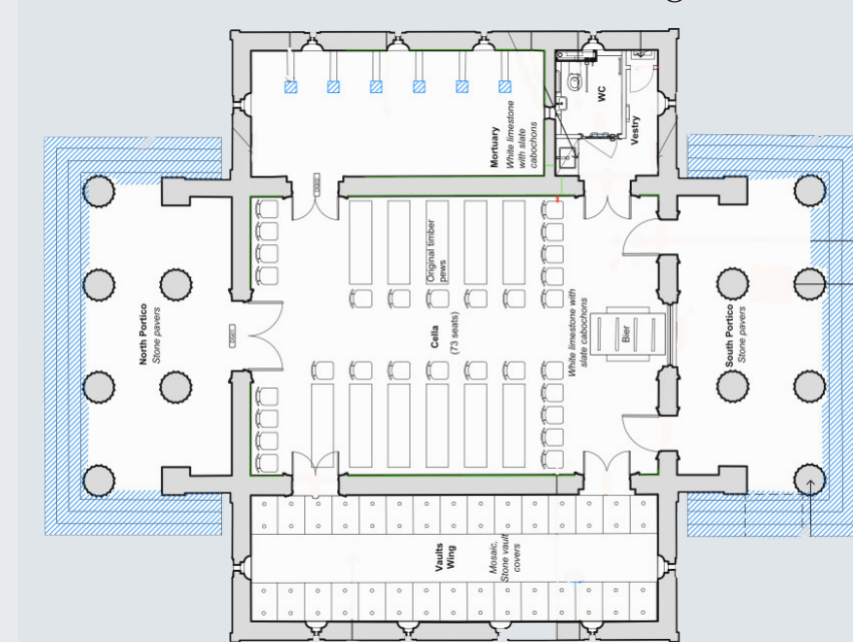
The building was designed in Doric style by **James Thomas Knowles** and built at a cost of £20,000 by Dayman's of Vauxhall Bridge Road, London. Its large stained glass window was made by Clayton & Bell for £1,000.

Stephen Ralli, one of London's richest men – and one of its first millionaires – was well-placed to fund such a building and his wealth had derived from a curious mix of circumstances.

The Ralli family of Chios and Constantinople, by a strange irony, owed much of its success to the tragic Chios massacres. The **Rodocanachi** and **Schilizzi** families had generally been considered among the island's richest but, a couple of years before the massacres, **Stephanos Ralli** (1755-1827) had sent his five sons, **John**, **Augustus**, **Pandia**, **Thomas** and **Eustratius**, to open trading branches in Odessa, Marseilles, Constantinople and London. Following the defeat of Napoleonic France at Waterloo in 1815, the centre of gravity of world trade had moved from the Mediterranean, the Aegean and the Black Sea, to London, Liverpool and Manchester.

After the Chios massacres of 1822, the new firm of **Ralli Brothers** was now ideally placed to offer support to the surviving refugees – nearly all of them successful merchant traders in their own right and kinsmen of the five brothers. Ralli Brothers thus acquired skilled partners and was able to merge a range of trading activities and acumen to exploit new opportunities.

The company grew exponentially as a sort of cooperative, the brothers cleverly harnessing the abilities of numerous inter-related partners, all of whom had experienced loss and tragedy in 1822 and all of whom shared an urgent need to rebuild their businesses, lives and fortunes.



A good example of this was the Vlasto family. Probably the richest land-owners on Chios before the massacres, they lost almost all their source of income when they fled the island in 1822. However, **Anthony Vlasto** married **Calliope Ralli** in Trieste in 1830, and they produced three generations of Vlastos (sixteen individuals) who guided the company's affairs as partners, managing directors or chairmen of Ralli Brothers.

Some of these diaspora merchants created or retained their own trading houses and banks while simultaneously collaborating with Ralli Brothers.

Above right: Stephen and Marietta Ralli  
Left and centre right: St Stephen's Chapel

Below right: The five Ralli brothers – John, Augustus, Pandia, Thomas and Eustratius, founders of a dynasty.

A large proportion of the Chiot and Phanariot diaspora worked with Ralli Brothers at branches in Liverpool, Manchester, Marseilles, Trieste, Livorno, Odessa, Pera, Alexandria, Calcutta and throughout British Empire trade networks.

Among these are members of the following families, many of whom were buried in this Hellenic Enclosure:

Agelasto, Alexandroff, Argenti, Calvoresesi, Casdagli, Cornelios, Cozzika, Damala, Demetriadi, Eumorphopoulos, Fachiri, Frangopoulos, Galati, Ionides, Mavrogordato, Mavroyanni, Pallas, Paspali, Ralli, Rodocanachi, Samiulis, Scaramanga, Schilizzi, Sechiari, Sevastopoulos, Spartali, Sugduri, Syriotis, Tambazi, Tricoupi, Vassiliadi and Vlasto.



## The Chios Massacres



In 1821, Greeks rebelled against the Ottoman empire which had ruled them, often harshly, since 1453. The Greek War of Independence had started.

Within a year, in 1822, about 100,000 of the population of Chios were killed, starved, enslaved or expelled with untold numbers dying of exposure, disease, exhaustion or suicide.

About 5,000 of the inhabitants were abroad at the time and about 15,000 escaped – mostly the rich who could 'buy their way to safety by boat. The island was devastated, along with its people and has never fully recovered.



'Flight from the Kampos' and 'The Massacres of Chios', above, and the three scenes of Chios are from the collection of Konstantinos Kavadas.

This genocide shocked Europe. There was a universal protest from statesmen, artists and writers (see *Delacroix's painting below left*).

Chios had been among the richest trading centres in the Ottoman Empire. For centuries its merchants had dominated trade throughout the Black Sea, the Aegean and the Mediterranean. Chian trade and a monopoly in the valuable mastic plant, unique to Chios, were greatly valued by Turkey. In return, Chios received unique privileges, tax relief and semi-autonomy. Chiot were also highly respected and prominent in Constantinople where most of their business was based. But favoured status and the island's fabled wealth contributed to the looming *katastrophe*. Paranoia about any potential Chian betrayal turned admiration to bitter hatred and a thirst for revenge.

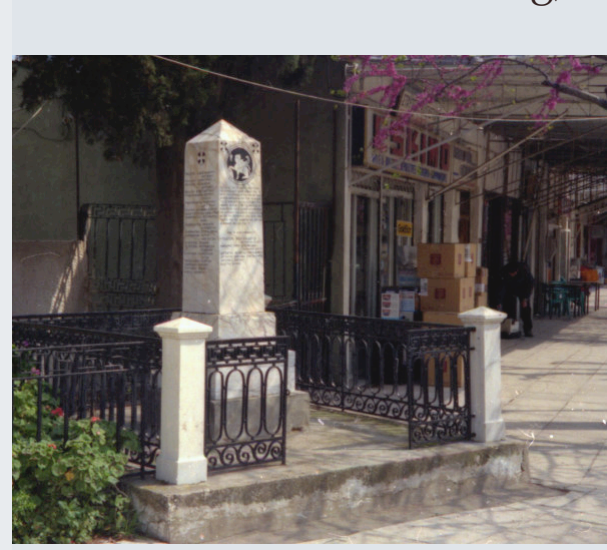
The Chios catastrophe occurred in two distinct phases. The first began with the arrival of the Greek admiral, **Isakos Tombazis**, with a fleet of 25 ships off the coast of Chios on 27 April 1821. His aim was to incite the Chiot to rebellion.

**Michael Vlasto** (*left*), chief of the Chian *demogeronts*, told Tombazis the island consisted of unarmed merchants, seamen and scholars – not militant revolutionaries. In any case, a rebellion just a couple of miles off the Turkish coast would be suicidal. And many Chiot wondered whether, as semi-Ottoman Greeks in Turkey, they would be any better off as semi-Greek Ottomans in Greece – a nation state that did not yet exist.

But, fatally, the Sultan over-reacted to the perceived 'threat' posed by the Greek fleet, ordering the arrest and killing of Chiot in Constantinople, including the Greek patriarch on Easter Sunday. Three more bishops and a dozen Greek aristocrats were hanged while other Chiot were imprisoned in the Bostangi Bashi gaol.

Worse still, 1,000 Asian troops, ex-convicts and mercenaries were unleashed on Chios where they looted and vandalised properties, raping and robbing as they went. Forty men from the island's most prominent families were held hostage in the *Kastro* and ruinous taxation imposed on families without incomes since their ships were confined to port. Terror and destruction were widespread.

The second phase of the tragedy occurred when two hot-headed Greek revolutionaries, **Logothetis** and **Bournias**, landed on Chios with 5,000 men from the island of Samos. Having out-numbered the Turks they divided the island between them, their troops turning to ever more frenzied looting, robbery, killing, burning and destruction.



Families from Chios town and the Kampos had fled to the hills, women and children sheltering in caves or within Nea Moni monastery (where 2,000 were burnt alive). Others, with babies, threw themselves from cliffs to avoid rape by Turks or Greeks.

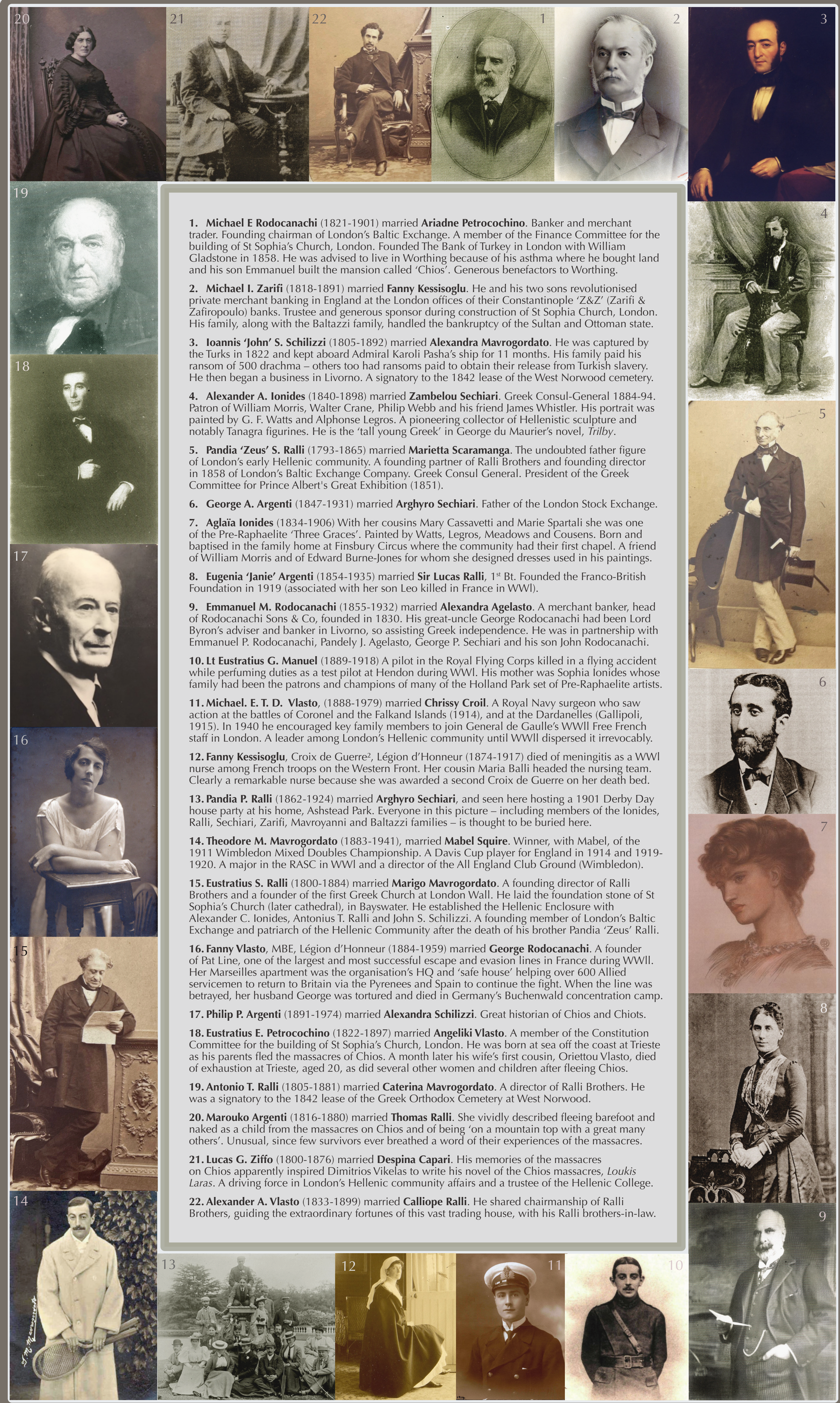
In Constantinople the Sultan executed **Pandley Rodocanachi**, **Michael Schilizzi** and **Theodore Ralli** and declared a *jihad*. The main Ottoman fleet then arrived under admiral **Kara Ali**, accompanied by 7,000 mainland troops. He hanged 70 Chian men from the yard-arm of his flag-ship.

On 23 April 1822, 47 of the 74 heads of family now held hostage in the *Kastro*, were led out and hanged in Vounaki Square (see *memorial left*).

Around 45,000 women and children were taken to Turkish slave markets where most vanished into Asia Minor.

Some of the survivors and their descendants appear on this panel but for 150 years few ever spoke a word of what occurred on Chios in 1822.

## Faces from the Enclosure



## Some Chios Families

Listed around the edge of this panel are the names of the principal families from Chios and Constantinople, many of whose descendants are buried in this Enclosure.

A few, like the **Maximo** family, almost vanished from the record following the massacres and some, like the **Balli**, **Demetriadi**, **Spartali** and **Kessisoğlu**, came from Smyrna (today's Izmir), a few miles from Chios on the Turkish coast. The **Vagliano** and **Metaxa** families were from the Ionian islands.

### MARRIAGE BONDS

Coming from a small 'noble' elite on a small island, these families all knew each other, having shared ancestry, often collaborating in business and usually marrying exclusively among themselves.

Dynastic 'arranged' marriages ensured financial security for young couples, cemented business relationships and protected family fortunes. It seems that in some cases couples were even paired off as children for eventual marriage and would have known each for most of their young lives.

Women from these fortunate backgrounds appear to have been unusually emancipated, self-assured and influential. Assured of 'good' marriages, financial security, the life-long status of mistresses of one or more households, they had freedoms that would have been unknown to the vast majority of the island's poorer population.

One consequence of these close inter-family relationships is that their descendants today remain genetically linked, usually being cousins many times over and sharing a common genealogical heritage that can often be traced to the C15th.

### TRADING BONDS

At a young age, sons were sent to cousins or business partners in foreign port cities to learn about merchant trading and to acquire useful languages and contacts.

The famous 'Chian Method' was vital to their trading activities: it involved partners with proven liquidity making simultaneous and mutual cross-investments in each other's commercial ventures, either as principals or underwriters, and all on a handshake. This sharing of risk protected individuals from disaster.

The resulting trade networks spread around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and following the Chios Massacres of 1822, they were to prove vital to the survival of refugees settling abroad.

In the end these refugees were to find security in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Marseilles, Livorno, Trieste, Alexandria, Pera, Odessa, Trebizond, Tabriz, Resht and Taganrog. Later, some spent their working lives in Bombay, Calcutta, Karachi or New Orleans.

### CHURCHES

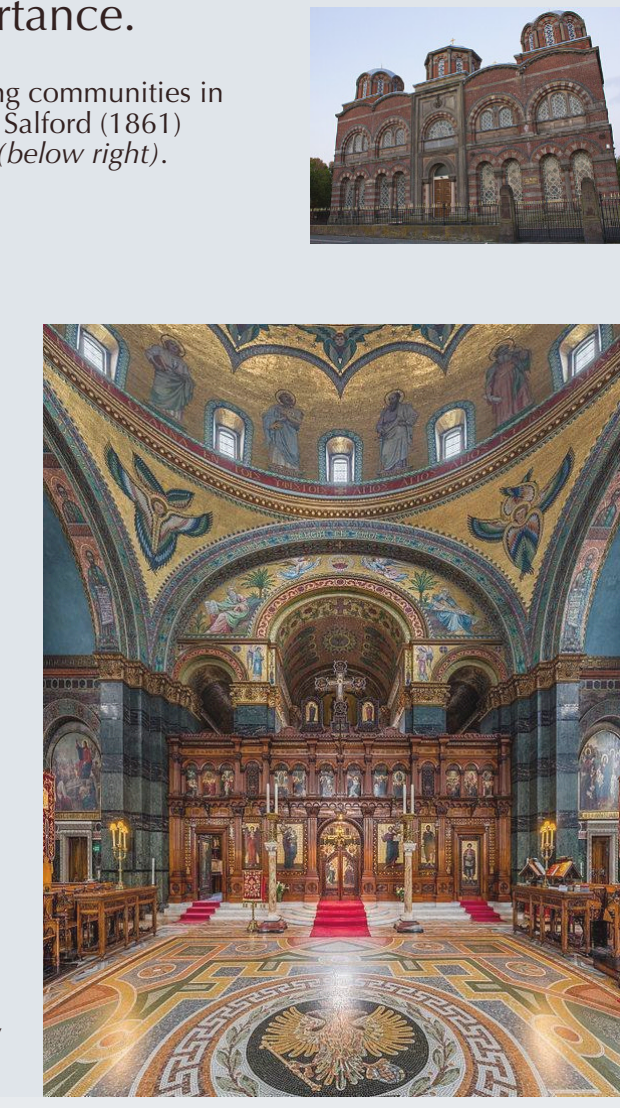
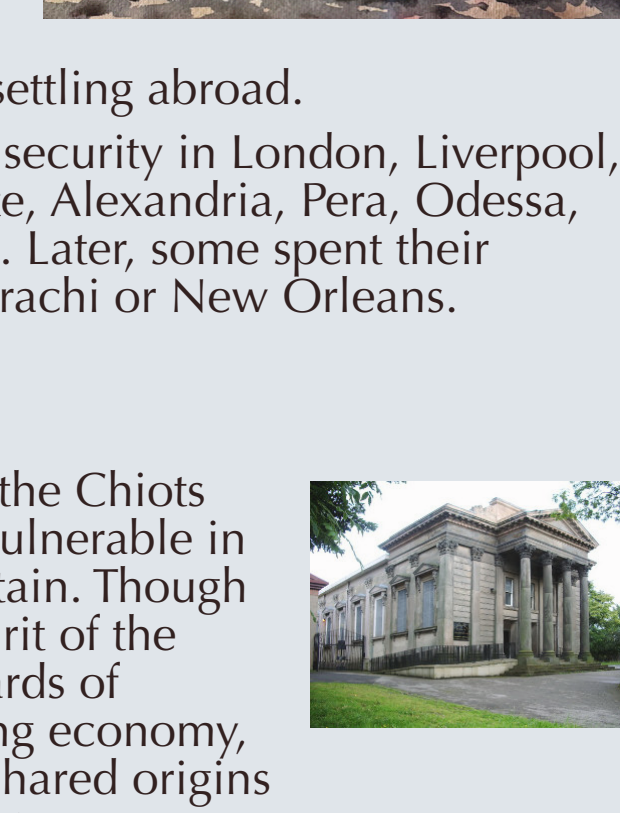
Like most migrant communities, both the Chiot and Phanariots must at first have felt vulnerable in unfamiliar Georgian and Victorian Britain. Though they enthusiastically embraced the spirit of the industrial revolution, reaping the rewards of enterprise and self-reliance in a thriving economy, they appear to have considered their shared origins and cultural identity as of prime importance.

Two grand Greek Orthodox churches were built for the growing communities in Manchester and Liverpool: the Church of The Annunciation in Salford (1861) (above right) and the Church of St Nicholas in Toxteth (1870) (below right).

Their Greek Orthodox faith provided support and cohesion in their lives. At first they gathered in a Russian Orthodox chapel and then in a rented hall until, by 1836, they used the **Chapel of Our Saviour** at the No. 9 Finsbury Circus offices of Alexander Ionides.

On Chios, richer families usually had their own small chapels in which to commune alone with their God, but the London community now needed something large enough for them all.

In 1849, they built the **Church of Our Saviour** at London Wall, followed in 1882 by the exquisite church (now the cathedral) of **St Sophia** in Moscow Road, Bayswater (see right).



In small writing within the black border around the extreme edge of this panel are the names of some of those executed, killed or lost in the Massacres of Chios in 1822. They are just a few of the circa 100,000 victims whose lives were extinguished and who left no known trace behind them.