

# A walk from Holborn to the Old Bailey

**Updated:** 11 July 2019

**Length:** About 3 miles

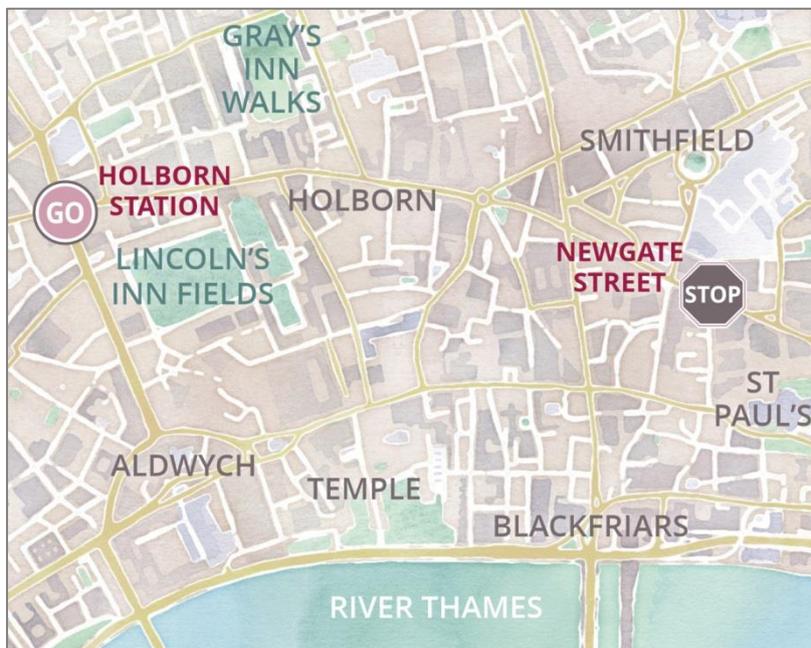
**Duration:** Around 3 hours

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Please note that this walk should ideally be done on a weekday as a number of places of interest aren't open to the public at weekends.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WALK

Lincoln's Inn Fields, Sir John Soane's Museum, Royal College of Surgeons, Lincoln's Inn, the Old Curiosity Shop, London Silver Vaults, Cittie of York Inn, Gray's Inn, the Prudential Building, Staple Inn, Hatton Garden, Ye Olde Mitre Inn, St Etheldreda's Church, Bleeding Heart Yard, St Andrew's Holborn Parish Church, Holborn Viaduct, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the site of Newgate Prison, and the Old Bailey law courts.



## BACKGROUND

The name Holborn comes from the Anglo Saxon for 'stream in a hollow', so it was originally 'Holbourne'. The 'stream' was actually the River Fleet, which has two tributaries – one flowing from

Hampstead and the other Highgate – and they merge in the vicinity of King’s Cross and run down through Clerkenwell and Holborn and flow into the Thames under Blackfriars Bridge. However, as usual, there isn’t full agreement on this, and some historians say it might have come from the ‘old bourne’, meaning old brook, referring to a stream that at one time came from springs close to Holborn Bars and which then flowed for several hundred yards into the Fleet river itself.

## WHERE TO START THE WALK

**The walk starts at Holborn Station – which is on both the Central and Piccadilly Lines.**

If you are not arriving by underground, then head for the junction of High Holborn and Kingsway – the tube station exit is on the east side, at the start of High Holborn. Then follow the directions as below.

Leave the station by the right-hand exit- marked ‘**High Holborn**’ – turn right and walk past the row of shops and where the pavement widens, there's a Pret food outlet on the corner – turn right here and walk down on the right-hand side of the ‘Little Waitrose’ into **Little Turnstile** and then into **Gate Street**.



Route map 1

You pass the **Ship Tavern** ...

There has been a pub on this site since 1549 and it has had a fascinating history, being used as both a place of worship and a hiding place for Catholic priests after Catholicism had been made illegal. It is worth a look inside, even if it's too early for a drink –the restaurant upstairs is particularly delightful with lovely old beams, about as traditionally ‘Olde English’ as you can get. I have written a little more about it in the **appendix**.

(The restaurant on the opposite corner to the Ship was once a public house; called The Sun, it was also a Freemason’s Lodge.)

Walk through into the square – it's called **Lincoln's Inn Fields** and is the largest public square in London. It was designed and laid out in the 1630s by the famous architect Inigo Jones, who also designed Covent Garden and the Banqueting House in Whitehall.

As you enter the square, **turn to the left** and walk past a row of magnificent terraced houses. Many were badly damaged and some completely destroyed in the Second World War, but later rebuilt almost exactly as they were.

**Number 11** is the home of Sir John Soane, the famous neo-classical architect, who amongst much else, designed the Bank of England. His house has been turned into **Sir John Soane's Museum**, which is open to the public from Tuesdays to Saturdays.

Soanes was an avid collector – sculptures, Greek and Roman artefacts, paintings (including works by Canaletto, Turner and, most famous of all, Hogarth's Rakes Progress). Due to it being fairly cramped inside (it's literally 'stuffed full' of his eclectic collections) there is often a queue outside, particularly in the summer. There is no admission charge, but donations are very welcome.

After leaving the house, continue on for another fifty yards or so to take a look at the magnificent houses at number 17 and 18 and also 20 – 23; as you can see each was built in a different style. A plaque on the front of the latter explains it was used as the headquarters of the Royal Canadian Air Force Overseas Division from 1942–46.

**Turn back** and walk for just a few yards then turn left through the gate into the park and head for the 'pagoda' in the centre. It is built on what was a popular site for executions – indeed, set in the middle of its floor is a small plaque saying, "Near this spot was beheaded William Lord Russell, a lover of constitutional liberty – 21st July 1683".

Apparently, it was a rather botched job, with the executioner taking four attempts to completely sever his head. After the first attempt, William shouted to the executioner, "You scoundrel, I paid you six guineas to do this humanely!" (And in case you haven't heard of Mr Russell – and I hadn't until I came across this inscription – he was convicted of treason on account of having been involved with the plot to kill both Charles II and James, the Duke of York, in order to try and prevent a Catholic coming to the throne. A little too late, but some years later he was pardoned!

It's hardly surprising that the garden is said to be haunted. By day it's rather pleasant, particularly in the summer when it's a popular spot for local office workers to take their lunch breaks. But I have been there at night and I must say that when all the lawyers and office workers have gone home, it can be a rather quiet, lonely and eerie place.

To the right of the pagoda is a café/restaurant called 'The Fields' that serve coffees and teas as well as a range of meals, including excellent pizzas cooked on a wood fired oven.

Leave the garden on the opposite side from where you entered and more or less in front of you is the rather magnificent **Royal College of Surgeons** – the building with five portico columns outside. (The sign on the slightly more modern building on its left says it's the "Nuffield College of Surgical Science" – it was, but not anymore – now it's an extension of College of Surgeons).

**Please note** – unfortunately the building, including the museum, is closed for renovations until 2021. However, I have still included information about it in case you come back when it has reopened.

Inside is **The Hunterian**, one of London's most fascinating museums. It's named after John Hunter, who in the 18th century became one of London's most famous surgeons, renowned for both his teaching and research.

It's open from Tuesday through to Saturday and whilst I'm sure much of it would be of particular interest to student doctors, I find it fascinating and is definitely well worth a visit. It's free to go in – just pick up a visitor's badge from the reception and take the staircase up to the first floor. The museum is on two floors and packed with thousands of specimens of every part of the anatomy from every species of life – including of course plenty of human bits! So, provided you aren't squeamish and want to see thousands of jars full of livers, kidneys, brains ... then this is the place for you! There's even a little gift shop, useful if you are interested in buying a 'skeleton t-shirt', luminous rubber eyeballs and goodness knows what else!

I have put a little more about the Royal College of Surgeons and the museum in the **appendix**.

When you leave the Royal College of Surgeons you have a choice:

**For a ten-minute detour to see 'The Old Curiosity Shop'** – turn to your right (if you are facing the building) and walk to the end of the terrace, then turn left down **Portsmouth Street**. Just 50 yards down on the left is the 'tumbledown house' known as the Old Curiosity Shop.

Built in 1568 and said to have been built from old ship's timbers, it's also said to be England's oldest shop, more accurately a dairy where milk was sold.

More recently it has sold antiques and when I last visited, it was selling shoes! Peer into the dusty windows and you'll see them piled on racks and on the floor – and despite that, and the shop's appearance, they seem to be rather expensive! You probably won't be too tempted, as the shop appears to only be open by appointment!

There is some doubt as to whether this actually was the inspiration for Charles Dickens' book of the same name, as in it he states that the building of which he wrote was 'long ago pulled down'. A letter appeared in a newspaper in 1883 and in it the writer confessed that his brother, who had sold antiques and bric-a-brac from the shop, had added the words 'The Old Curiosity Shop', to promote his business. However, a few years later, an American journalist wrote an article saying that this was definitely the original 'Old Curiosity Shop'! And so the myth continues! But whatever the truth, it certainly looks as though it could have been the 'Old Curiosity Shop'!

(And if you wonder why there are so many young foreign people about – weekdays in term time anyway – it's because most of the buildings in the street are part of the LSE – the London School of Economics. They also own a number of the rather lovely buildings in Lincolns Inn Square, including the next one we see.)

Turn around now and walk back, past the Royal College of Surgeons – **(if you didn't detour to the Old Curiosity Shop then simply carry on as below)**.



Route map 2

On the right at the end of the street is a rather grand building and the sign over the main entrance informs us it was once the **Land Registry**. It opened in 1862 as a result of a Royal Commission that proposed the setting up of a form of registration for land in Britain. However, it is now another of the many 'annexes' of the London School of Economics.

On the opposite corner there's a well-preserved water fountain that was erected in 1880 in memory of Philip Twells, a barrister of Lincolns Inn and Member of Parliament for the City of London. *(And if you need a loo stop there's is a **public toilet** 100 yards up on the left.)*

You can't fail to notice the two large 'church like' buildings across the road. They aren't churches – instead they're part of the Lincolns Inn complex of very historic buildings – over eleven acres in total – more of which in just a moment.

### **But first another choice for you ...**

Our walk can continue through the Gateway in front of you.... but if can manage another extra ten minutes or so – and **provided you're doing the walk on a weekday as part of this next route isn't open at weekends** – then I suggest you make a slight detour by turning right and walking down Searle Street.

Facing you at the bottom is the rear of the **Royal Courts of Justice**. Often known simply as 'The Law Courts', it houses both the High Court and the Appeal Courts. The main entrance and imposing frontage are in the Strand. (I won't give any more background to the buildings as they are included in another walk.)

At the bottom of Searle Street, turn left into **Carey Street** and a few yards along you will see the very old **Seven Stars Inn**. There's been an inn on this site since 1602 and it was originally called the Leg and Seven Stars.

In the early 17th century the inn was patronised by Dutch sailors who lived in this area. The word 'Leg' was said to have been an abbreviation for 'League', which was what the seven provinces of

Holland were called. However, as you might guess from the displays of legal wigs in the window, it's also been particularly popular with lawyers.

Continue on for another 100 yards and you'll see another very old establishment, a shop known as the **Silver Mousetrap**, which has been a jeweller's since 1694.

And if you wonder why a jeweller's shop has such an unusual name ... in the 17th century there was a fashion for ladies to wear their hair piled as high as possible, something they achieved by winding it around wire frames that were delicately positioned on their head. Sometimes they even put a small stuffed 'woollen pillow' in the middle of it. These elaborate concoctions relied on a mixture of wax that was made from beef marrow and then coated with flour. When they slept (which often entailed sitting up because of the size of their hair), the various 'products' their hair was coated with attracted mice that would try and nest inside it! So, to try to control this rodent problem, the well-to-do ladies would have mousetraps made of silver that were then placed around their bed .... hence the name of the shop! Yuk is all I can say!

**Don't walk on any further....** Turn back to the Seven Stars and immediately to the left of it (the street number is 51/52) is a doorway leading into a 'corridor'. It may not look like it's for public access, but on weekdays it is. Walk through and turn to the right, which takes you into a large square. You are now in **Lincoln's Inn** and this is the **New Square**.

Walk past the many barristers' chambers to the top of the square, where on your left, is the 'archway' entrance from Lincoln's Inn Fields that we saw earlier.

**And if you didn't do the detour, then pick up the walk here, having walked through the entrance gateway.**

At the top of the square and slightly to the left there is a flight of stone steps leading up to the rather magnificent 'church like' buildings we saw earlier, though unfortunately, they aren't open to the public. The building on the left is the **Great Hall**, opened by Queen Victoria in 1845 as a replacement for the much smaller Old Hall that was built around 1490 and which we see shortly.

**But first some information about Lincoln's Inn** – It is the largest of London's four Inns of Court, which are where a qualified law student will go to continue their legal training if they decide to become a barrister as opposed to a solicitor. Their training at this point becomes quite different; for example a barrister is the person who would attend court on behalf of a solicitor.

Records show that Lincoln's Inn was already in use by 1422 and was the first of what were at one time, nine Inns of Court in London, though as I say, there are now only four. I find the background of the Inns of Court to be quite fascinating, so I have written a little more information in the **appendix**.

The Great Hall is where the larger events of an Inn take place. These include the quarterly formal ceremonies when students who have qualified are 'Called to the Bar'. In front of invited family, friends and other members, the Inn's Treasurer says to each student in turn "Mr ..., by the authority and on behalf of the Masters of the Bench, I publish you a barrister of this Honourable Society". And with those words the student becomes a barrister.

You'll see a sign saying, 'Members Dining Room' and I've have had a quick look inside- it's a beautiful 'crypt like' room where, as the name implies, Members of the Inn can take their lunch. According to the Inn's information, "the social and professional fellowship that this affords is an important facet of life at the Bar". Next to it is the Treasury Building (the Treasurer is the Head of

the Inn) and adjoining that, accessed via the external stone staircase, is the Library which not surprisingly contains a huge number of legal books, some of which are exceedingly rare.

Leave the terrace by the wide flight of steps that lead down into a quadrant then turn right, passing the small wooden hut ... this must be the smallest Grade I listed structure in London. For many years a stable hand would sit in here and wait for the arrival of horse-drawn carriages and then take the horses to the stables.

Walk back towards the New Square then turn left, passing the memorial to those from Lincoln's Inn who lost their lives in the two World Wars. The Latin inscription engraved above it reads 'Hospitium sociis sanguinem pro patria largitic filiis parentes', which roughly translates as 'Offer your solidarity in honour of the allied sons who generously gave their blood for their country.' A brass plaque adds, 'In memory of our comrades of the Inns of Court Regiment who gave their lives in the 1939-1945 war', and their names are listed on other plaques.

Continue past the memorial and on your right, you'll see the Old Hall, said to be one of the finest medieval buildings in London. It was built in 1490 and I find it fascinating that the Inn's historical records say how barristers and students were 'eating, drinking, debating and holding their revels in the Old Hall', over 600 years ago! Although it has had several refurbishments, what you see today is virtually how it looked when first built.

There are many mentions in literature of the Old Hall, one being in Charles Dickens' Bleak House ... "London. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather ...Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits\* and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great and dirty city .... and hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery ..."

*(\* 'aits' is an old English word for little islands in rivers)*

Head towards the archway that's just slightly to your left which will take you into Lincoln's Inn Chapel. There's a sign on the pillar in front of it that explains the Chapel was reopened after being enlarged in 1883, the original having been built in 1428 and then rebuilt by Inigo Jones in 1620. I've read that in the 18th and 19th century, unmarried mothers would sometimes leave their newly born babies here, and when this happened the Inn would 'adopt' the baby and care for it until it grew up, the child then often being given the name 'Lincoln'.

The ground floor of the chapel, known as the undercroft, was once a burial ground and there are seventy-nine graves, some going back several centuries. Whilst the names and dates of those buried here are marked on the flagstones, some are hard to read, so a plaque showing those details has been placed on the other side of the pillar.

The right-hand staircase leads up into the actual chapel. Services are held here on Sunday mornings during Law sittings, though it is usually open to the public throughout the week. The roof is quite magnificent and there are some beautiful stained-glass windows, the one behind the altar showing the crests of the two hundred and twenty-eight past Treasurers of the Inn, dating from 1680 to 1908.

The original Chapel bell that was erected in 1615 is still rung at the start of services in the chapel and each evening at 9pm, once the time of curfew, but it is also rung when a 'Bencher'\* of the Inn dies. A notice is then put up to announce their death, and if you didn't know who it is who has died you would have sent your clerk across to read the notice.

*(\*Benchers are senior elected members and they keep their position for life.)*

This is said to be the inspiration for the line in John Donne's 'No Man is an Island': "And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." Donne was a preacher here around 1620 and laid the foundation stone, later becoming the Dean of St Pauls.

And finally, if you walk around the outside wall of the chapel's left-hand side you may notice that it is rather pockmarked – the result of shrapnel from a Zeppelin bomb that fell remarkably close in the First World War.

Many of the biggest holes were repaired in the 1970s to avoid weather damage to the stonework.

When you've finished exploring, leave the Chapel's Crypt at the rear and walk diagonally to the right and out through the original **Gate House** – until 1845 this was the main entrance to the Inn. It was erected in 1521, and the young writer Ben Jonson was said to have been one of the bricklayers. Even the large oak doors that are still in place date back to 1564!

If you are interested in seeing more of Lincoln's Inn, there are formal tours of the Chapel and other Lincoln's Inn buildings on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of the month at 2pm (though not in August.) Meet in the Undercroft of the chapel. The charge is £5, and no pre-booking is normally needed, though you may want to check on their website first to make sure that hasn't changed.

**Having left Lincoln's Inn, you are now in Chancery Lane.**

This historic road marks the present-day boundary between the City of London and the City of Westminster. The street was created in the 12th century by the Knights Templar for access between their original Temple in Holborn to their newly built Temple south of Fleet Street.

**Cross over Chancery Lane** and carry on walking up to the left until you reach Southampton Buildings where you will see a sign for the **London Silver Vaults**, just a few yards along on the left.

This is a really fascinating place that's well worth a visit. It's free to enter and open Monday to Friday until 5pm and Saturdays until 1pm. The security person at the ground floor reception desk will ask to take a look inside your bag, and then take the steps (or lift) down to the 'basement'. As you pass through several enormous steel doors and enter the labyrinth of small vaults, you will soon see how very secure it is.

Each of these little 'vaults' contains a shop – and notice the steel doors at the entrance to each individual shop. No wonder there's never been a robbery!

These secure vaults were built 1876, but in 1953 they were turned into a number of specialist shops selling silver, both new and antique. There are around 30 of them, each like a little 'Aladdin's Cave' – some of the silver on display is just amazing, with everything from huge soup tureens to enormous silver animals. I've seen objects priced up to half a million pounds – though there are some more affordable items – I was particularly taken with a silver-lidded Marmite jar, which when I asked, was told it was only £50 – and that was just for the lid – the jar itself was free!

Other than the staff, I have rarely seen any more than three or four people looking around – and those appear to have been selling and not buying – several times I have discreetly watched people undo bags and take out silver objects, presumably to be valued and hopefully sold. On

one occasion, I watched an elderly lady undo an old, tattered wheeled suit case – possibly ‘flogging off the family heirlooms’!

After leaving the **Silver Vaults** turn left and continue along Southampton Buildings – the rather lovely building at number 25 that you pass on the right used to be the London Patent Office and it opened here in 1855. Now called Central Court, it’s used as serviced offices.

(On your left is a rather nice coffee shop with an outdoor terrace called the Taylor Street Barista.)

Walk straight ahead to the end (not round to the left), go through the gate and you find yourself in the garden of **Staple Inn**. Walk down the flight of steps, follow the path around the lovely garden with its roses, figs and even a locust bean tree, pass through the archway and you find yourself in a large courtyard square.

Leave the square via the archway opposite – but as you do notice the water pump on the right of it – it’s connected to a well beneath the courtyard and surprisingly the date on it is 1937, much more recent than you’d imagine. Indeed, the water that came from an underground spring, was said to have been particularly pure and have ‘medicinal qualities’.

Records show that Staple Inn has been in existence since at least 1292 – and possibly much longer. There is some confusion over the origin of the name ‘Staple Inn’, but the most likely explanation is that it’s original name was ‘Le Stapled Halle’ ... the word ‘staple’ then meaning the duty on wool that had been levied by Edward I in 1275, whilst ‘Halle’ was the French word for a covered market, particularly one that traded in wool, and it began to be used in England to describe the warehouses built to store and sell wool. Another of the early meanings of the word ‘Staple’ was ‘a centre of trade’ – particularly in a specified commodity – hence the number of villages and towns that have Staple as part of their name.

Sacks of wool would arrive here from across the country before being sold to be exported to the Flemish weavers in what is now Belgium and northern France. There it was processed and woven into cloth that was then sent back to England.

However, it was believed (and was likely) that the ‘black plague’ was being brought to England in the shipments of the woven wool, so the export/import trade in wool was greatly reduced, so wool began to be woven in this country. As the wool trade began to decline in the early 14th century, the legal profession began to take over the buildings and the Society of Staple Inn was established. For a time, Staple Inn was the largest of the Inns of Chancery, a place where lawyers were trained, and was described in John Stow’s 1630s ‘Chronical of England’, as the ‘Fairest Inn of Chancery’. The Grand Company and Fellows of Staple Inn soon expanded and then purchased the nearby Barnard’s Inn.

It continued being an Inn of Chancery until the 1880s, by which time the number of new students had decreased to such a stage that it was becoming known as just a social club for the lawyers who had their Chambers (offices) around the square. As a result, the Society of Staple Inn sold the southern parts of the Inn’s buildings to the government for the construction of the Patent Office, which we passed just now. The remainder was purchased by the Prudential Insurance Company, whose headquarters just across the road had been built in 1879, which we see shortly. They spent a considerable amount of money renovating the Staple Inn buildings, following which part of it became the home of the Institute of Actuaries, which it still is. (I make a brief mention of the Institute in the appendix.)

The building, including the Grand Hall, was reconstructed in 1937, and the black and white Tudor frontage was reinforced with steel. This was extremely fortunate, as it protected the frontage

when it was hit by a bomb in the Second World War. Sadly, this wasn't the case with the Great Hall that lay behind it which was virtually destroyed. The hall was rebuilt in the same style in 1954 with another renovation taking place 1996. Today the Hall continues to be used by the Institute of Actuaries for their special functions.

I rather like this description of Staple Inn, which was written by Nathaniel Hawthorne, an American novelist, sometime in the middle of the 19th century, after he 'went astray in Holborn'. He wrote –

"The windows were open; it was a lovely summer afternoon and I had a sense that bees were humming in the Court, though this may have been suggested by my fancy, because the sound would have been so well suited to the scene. There was not a quieter spot in England than this, and it was very strange to have drifted into it so suddenly out of the bustle and rumble of Holborn; and to lose all this repose as suddenly on passing through the arch of the outer court. In all the hundreds of years since London was built, it has not been able to sweep its roaring tide over that little island of quiet."

There's also an interesting description of it in Charles Dicken's unfinished novel 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood', that was published in 1870, that reads –

"Behind the most ancient part of Holborn, where certain gabled houses some centuries of age still stand looking on the public way...is a little nook...called Staple Inn. It is one of those nooks, the turning into which, out of the clashing street, imparts to the relieved pedestrian the sensation of having put cotton in his ears and velvet soles on his boots ..."

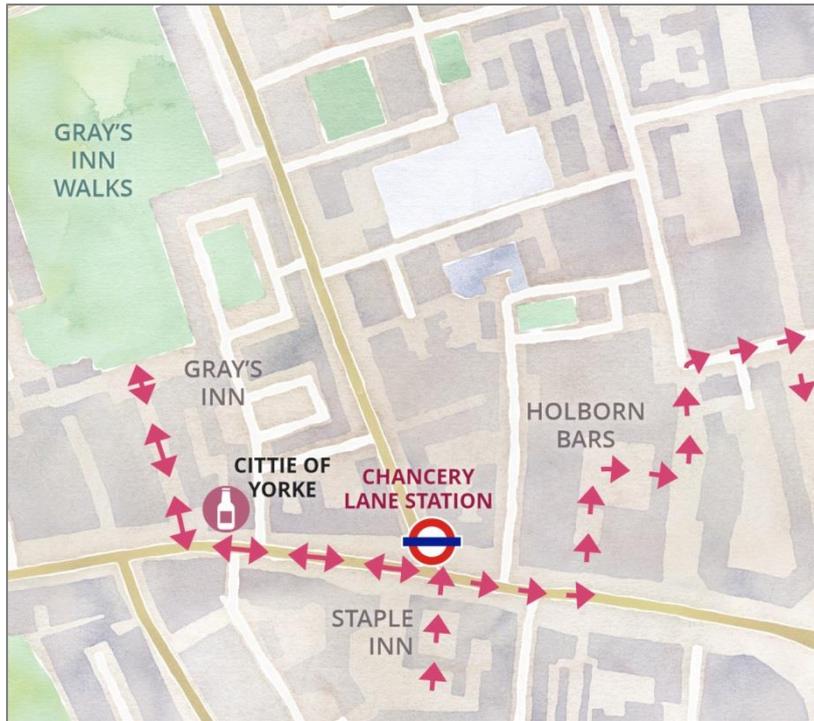
And whilst mentioning famous writers, Staple Inn was the home for a while of the novelist, poet, playwright, literary critic – and creator of the first English Dictionary – Dr Samuel Johnson. In 1759, he wrote 'The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia', which he completed in just one week. Apparently, he was in a hurry as it was to pay for his mother's funeral!

And as an aside, I've read that it was because the wooden benches inside the 'courts' in those days were so uncomfortable that 'lawyers' started to sit on sacks of wool. That then became the custom and the name has continued to this day.

**Middle Row** was a row of tall terraced houses that had been built immediately in front of Staple Inn, so close to it that that there was only a narrow footpath between the two buildings. This restricted both light and fresh air to the Inn; it also acted as a bottleneck for traffic and was demolished in the 1860s, making the Holborn into the wide street it is today.

And an odd fact ... it was as the result of the King paying a visit here and noticing that the lawyers sat on sacks of wool, using them as cushions, saying the wooden seats were too hard on their bums. He apparently thought it was a great idea, and so the custom was introduced that lawyers would sit on the 'wool sack' whilst performing legal duties!

**The Institute of Actuaries** – In the 18th century, actuaries (the word coming from the ancient Roman 'actuarius', meaning an administrative official), were the first people to calculate the probability and risks associated with future events, very relevant for businesses such as pensions, insurance and of course banking. Actuaries formed their institute in 1848, and in 1887 chose Staple Inn as their headquarters and a meeting place and library for the members.



Route map 3

**After Staple Inn we're going to turn left into Holborn**, a street that's also the name of the district we're in. But pause for a moment ... there's so much here to take in, so to hopefully make it easier, I have listed several of the things to look out for ...

**1. Barnard's Inn** – A few yards down to the right is the entrance into a small alley marked 'Barnard's Inn'. Barnard's was another of the early Inns of Chancery – places of study for solicitors, similar to the Inns of Court we saw earlier for barristers. The educational role of the Inns of Chancery had ended by the 19th century and the building was taken over by the Guild of Mercers for their school. They left here at the end of the 1950s, and some forty years later, the Gresham College moved in.

Gresham College is itself another fascinating institution. It was founded as long ago as 1597 by Thomas Gresham, the founder of the Royal Exchange and one-time Mayor of London. He built up a considerable fortune which he endowed for charitable works, one being the setting up of the Gresham College which for over 400 years has provided educational facilities. To this day it still offers over 100 free public lectures each year in various locations. And for those with a literary interest, this was where in 'Great Expectations' Charles Dickens had Pip living with Herbert Pocket

However, unless you're particularly interested, it may not be worth going down to look, as there's little left of the original 15th century building.

**2. Prudential Building – Holborn Bars** – If you look across the road and slightly to the right, you'll see the enormous terracotta stone building that's called 'Holborn Bars', which was built as the head office of the Prudential Insurance Company. We walk through it later, when I give more information about it.

**3. We turn left** – and as you do notice the **stone pillars** – there's one on either side of the road with cast iron dragons on top. These mark the boundary of the old City of London. Entrance

gates and stone pillars were originally erected in 1130 to mark the point where tolls and dues were collected from traders entering the City of London, as well as to prevent 'vagabonds, rogues and lepers' from entering the City".

The dragons themselves are more recent; the idea for them coming from two seven-foot dragons that in 1849 had been placed outside the Coal Exchange in Thames Street. When the building was demolished, the dragons were re-erected in Temple Gardens, but then somebody had the idea of using 'dragon emblems' on all the boundary markers around the City, rather than the previous griffins.

**Back to the walk** ... continue to the left, and you can't miss the famous and rather beautiful Tudor frontage of Staple Inn, whose grounds we have just walked through.

Dating from 1585, 'half-timbered with strip windows, gables and overhangs', it is said to be the London's only remaining 'sixteenth century domestic architecture' and is certainly among the best-preserved example of such Tudor buildings in England. Look up at the right-hand corner where you see the name '**Staple Inn Buildings**' inscribed.

And those old enough to remember tins of tobacco might recall the picture on the front of Old Holborn Tobacco – an olde worlde, half-timbered shop – and this was it. The original shop – called 'Shervingtons, Ye Olde Tobacco Shop' – has long gone and I'm not even sure which one of the shops it might have been. (And I do think it's rather in keeping with the age of the building that the offices of the headquarters of the Institute of Actuaries are situated above the shops. I like to think of them sitting up there at upright wooden desks, writing with quills and ink in leather bound ledgers!)

**Cross over Holborn at this point** – (you get a better view of the Staple Inn from the other side anyway) – and then carry on walking to the left for 100 yards or so until you get to the **Cittie of Yorke Inn**. (Actually the name of the road here is now called High Holborn – I'm not sure whether this is the reason for it being called 'High', but it is in fact the highest point in the City of London – all of 72 feet above sea level!)

**Take a look inside the Cittie of Yorke** – even if you don't want to stop for a drink it is well worth popping in for a look. There has been a pub on this site since 1430 and although it's been rebuilt since, many remarkable features seem to have been preserved. These include the famous 'long bar', known as Henekeys, (the pub was called Henekey's Wine Bar from 1685 to 1980). Notice the enormous 1,000-gallon wine vats above the bar, and then further along in the middle of the room is a rather unique triangular fireplace with grates on three sides. (Note the absence of a chimney – the smoke is apparently carried away by a tunnel under the floor – but I wonder how effective that might have been?)

I particularly like the elaborately carved cubicles alongside the right-hand wall, designed so that lawyers could take lunch with their clients and avoid being overheard. Under the floor there are large cellars that were used to shelter Catholics during the Gordon Riots. (Those Catholics seemed to enjoy hiding in pubs!) All in all, I think that it looks more like a miniature 'baronial hall' than a pub.

There's such atmosphere here – even just walking in through the 'entrance passageway' gives you an evocative musty wine and beer smell.

**After you leave the Cittie of Yorke pub, turn right and carry on for another 50 yards or so, then turn right into a lane marked 'Fulwood Place' and continue to the end.**

It leads into **Field Court**, part of the **Gray's Inn** complex. Ahead of you are the Gray's Inn gardens – we turn right and walk through the archway that leads into the large Gray's Inn Square. At the far end on the south side of the square – directly across from where you are standing – is the **Chapel of Gray's Inn**. The original chapel was destroyed at the same time as the Holker Library that you see shortly and unfortunately the new chapel is to my mind not particularly interesting. However, if you wanted to look inside, then it is normally open to the public. A plaque just inside the entrance lists the vicars through the ages – the first being William Clarke in 1581 and the most recent Michael Doe in 2011; a total of 36 names during this long period.

Now turn right and walk through the arch that's at right angles to the one you've just come through – this leads you into **South Square**. On your left is the **Treasury**, whilst on your far-left side is the famous ivy-covered **Holker Library**. There has been a library here since the 15th century and in 1929 a magnificent new building was erected with a spectacular barrel-vaulted ceiling, as well as Corinthian pillars and crystal chandeliers – all made possible by a donation from the trust fund of Master Sir John Holker, the Treasurer in 1875. Sadly, this building and many of those surrounding it were destroyed in the Second World War. Most of the library's collection of books was lost, though a small number of exceptionally valuable editions had been previously removed. The building you see today reopened in 1958.

On my last visit I went inside and got as far as the receptionist's desk at the top of the staircase. Unfortunately the lady on duty said she couldn't let me into the library as it is only for Members of the Inn, but she did let me have a quick look and I have to say it looked rather bland and not particularly interesting. And that's not sour grapes!

In the small garden in front, is a statue of Francis Bacon, Member of Parliament for Middlesex in 1593, before becoming the country's Solicitor General in 1607. Following that, he was appointed Attorney General, then Lord Keeper whilst finally in 1618 he was made Lord Chancellor. He died in 1626 after what was clearly a busy and successful legal life! He is particularly remembered at the Inn as in 1588, he paid for two more storeys to be built on to the library.

There has been considerable building work going on that has meant that the normal exit back into High Holborn which is in front of you at the bottom right-hand corner of South Square has been closed – if it has reopened when you visit then it's the quickest way out – it leads you out to the immediate left of the entrance into the Cittie of Yorke pub – and to continue the walk you turn left and retrace your footsteps back down High Holborn.

However, if it is still closed then unfortunately you need to retrace your footsteps – walk back through the archway into Gray's Inn Square, turn left through the next arch and left again into Fulwood Place, which was the way you came in. Then turn left back down High Holborn until you reach Chancery Lane, which we cross over and continue on down on Holborn.

I have written a little more about Gray's Inn in the **appendix**.

**Back on High Holborn turn left** – although its name changes here back to just Holborn. Originally known as Holeburnstreete, old documents dating back to 1249 record it as being 'a main highway route for the transporting of wool, hides, corn and geese into the City'. It was also the regular route for the 'processions' of condemned men being taken to the gallows at either Newgate, or slightly further afield to Tyburn, close to where Marble Arch stands today. (In the **appendix** I've reprinted a rather fascinating poem about a man being taken to his hanging that was written in 1727 by Johnathan Swift and entitled, "Clever Tom Clinch going to be hanged")

Holborn was one of the earliest streets in London to be paved in 1417, apparently because King Henry V said it was so “miry and deep that many perils were occasioned, as well to the king’s carriages passing that way, as to those of his subjects.”

Continue back down Holborn until you reach **Chancery Lane**, which we cross over. Notice the impressive memorial statue of a soldier and rifle that stands in the middle of the road – it’s dedicated to the “22,000 Royal Fusiliers who fell in the Great War 1914-1918 and for those who fell in the Second World War.”

You will now be standing outside of the magnificent red-bricked **Prudential Assurance building** – the site is actually called ‘Holborn Bars’, due to there once being an actual barrier that marked the end of the ‘liberties’ and was where carts and carriages of ‘non-Freemen’ entering the City had to pay a penny or two-penny toll. (This was one of six such ‘Bars’.)

The Prudential was built on the site of an Elizabethan Manor House that later became the site of Furnival’s Inn, the residential chambers where Charles Dickens lodged from 1832 to 1837 whilst writing ‘Pickwick Papers’. It was demolished around 1898 and the growing Prudential extended their building to cover the site.

The Prudential had started business in 1848 in nearby Ludgate Hill but grew so rapidly that in 1876, they appointed Alfred Waterhouse, one of the country’s most popular and successful Victorian architects, (amongst much else he designed the iconic Natural History Museum in Kensington) to design a new purpose-built building. What you see today is Waterhouse’s ‘trademark’ Victorian Gothic’ style. It quickly became a landmark for Londoners, even more so because of the ‘tower’ he built on the top. It contained a consecrated chapel and a ‘social club’ for the company’s clerks! He also placed the company’s symbol – a statue of Prudence – on the very top of the tower.

I love the building – it really is beautiful – and I have written a little more about it in the appendix.

Walk into the ‘entrance passage’ at the front of the ‘Prudential’ building and immediately on your left, a door leads into the part now used by De Vere for meetings and conferences. Although you can’t wander around the building itself, you can at least pop in to take a look at the wonderfully restored lobby area.

On one occasion when I was researching this walk, I chatted to the duty receptionist, saying I had read that there were huge underground vaults where the Prudential once stored hundreds of thousands of their customer’s policy documents and asked if she knew whether the vaults were still there. She said they were, though weren’t now used, and added that she would never go down to that lower level on her own as it would give her ‘cold shivers’ whenever she did as she was convinced they were haunted. Hardly surprisingly I said I would love to see them and to my surprise she offered to take me down. It is a little eerie – the original massive old Chubb safe doors are still there, and all wonderfully preserved. But most disappointingly, I saw no ghost!

**Head back out and turn left**, continuing on down the access passage and into the courtyard. From here you can certainly admire the sheer size, design and impressive construction of this great building.

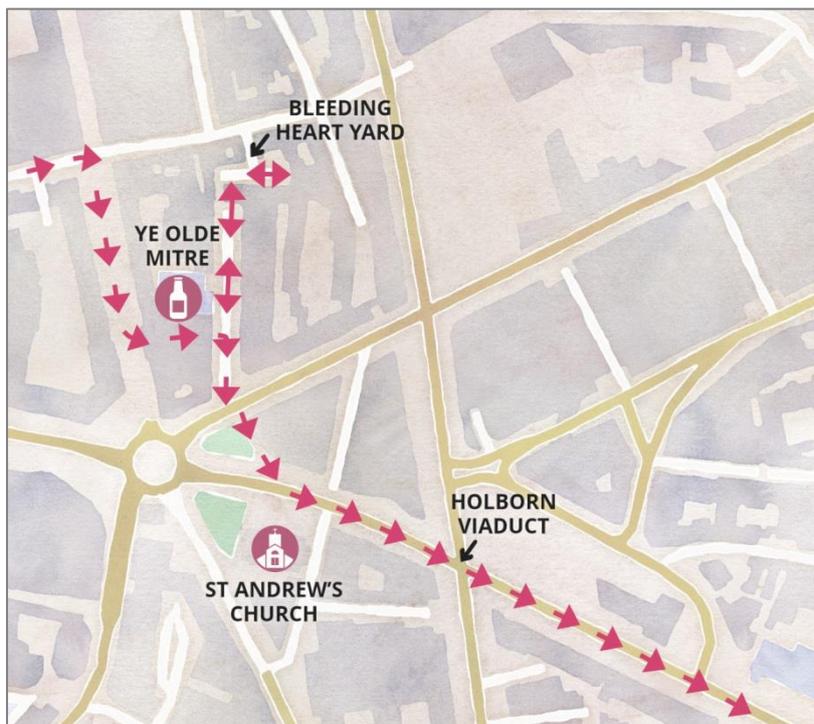
Across the courtyard and slightly to the left, you will see a bust of Charles Dickens, whilst to your right you can’t fail to notice the glass dome in the centre of the courtyard. This provided light into the staff restaurant below, which interestingly was only for female staff; the company believed that men should leave the building and go out for lunch, but that would have been ‘improper’ for

the women employees to do! Behind the dome is a memorial to the 786 employees of the company who lost their lives in the First World War.

**Leave the courtyard through a doorway on the other side of the memorial**, which takes us into **Leather Lane** – where we turn left. (From here you can look back to again appreciate the sheer size and magnificent design of the Prudential Building.)

And I will just mention here that next to the ‘Pru Building’, between Leather Lane and Hatton Garden, was where the enormous Gamage’s department store, sometimes known as the poor man’s Harrods, once stood. I’m sure that anybody over the age of 60 or so will remember them, particularly their full-page advertisements in the national newspapers. Sadly, it was demolished in the 1970s and the current office buildings with shops on the ground floor, were erected in its place.

**Leather Lane** is home to one of London’s oldest markets and at one time the most disreputable, though these days it is simply known for its weekday lunchtime food stalls for office workers. Although we won’t walk that far, Number 36 was where Felton’s Coachworks used to be based, and it was here in 1802 that Richard Trevithick built Britain’s first steam coach; it travelled ten miles to Paddington and back.



Route map 4

**Turn first right into Greville Street** – and walk down to the crossroads where you enter one of the world’s most famous districts for jewellery merchants – **Hatton Garden**.

Hatton Garden is the name of the street that runs from left to right in front of you – we’re going to cross over then walk to the right, but before you do ... on the corner at the bottom of Greville Street look left and just two doors along – at numbers 88 and 90 Hatton Garden – you will see a sign saying ‘Hatton Garden Safe Deposit Co.’ If you think that rings a bell, then you are right: it was where in April 2015, the famous ‘Pensioners’ Raid’ took place, when four elderly villains, three of them pensioners, broke in and stole £200 million worth of jewellery. The raid, I believe

the biggest ever, resulted in all four being arrested, along with nine accomplices, though at the time of writing this, the ringleader has evaded capture.

Hatton Garden has been famous for its jewellery, especially diamonds, for many years but, as I explain in the **appendix**, it was only after 1940 when it really began to develop. This was as a result of diamond cutters and traders from the centuries old jewellery centre in Antwerp, Belgium, managing to escape the country before the Nazis invaded and they headed here. Many brought their stocks of diamonds with them, often sewing them into their clothes in case they were stopped and searched. This enabled them to quickly set up business again. Few could afford to open a shop, so they did their buying and selling whilst standing in the street, but as they became more successful, they did begin to buy their own premises, and now virtually every shop in the street – and many in the surrounding area – are jewellers. All this may soon change, for as I explain in the **appendix**, the rapidly rising rents are driving them out. This would be sad as it is another unique part of London's fascinating history.

Turn right down Hatton Garden – walking past the scores of jewellers on both sides of the road. It amazes me that to my knowledge, no one has yet attempted to rob one of these shops. There are no visible signs of security other than the occasional heavily built, black suited guys with ear pieces that you might see outside a shop or walking around.

Walk almost to the very end and next to the shop at No. 10 Hatton Garden – (Smith & Green and 'Solitaire' Jewellers) is a small alleyway called Ely Court.

Turn to the left down it and you will come across the most wonderful old pub – **Ye Olde Mitre**.

Ye Olde Mitre was built in 1547 by the Bishop of Ely for his servants and acolytes, (more of him shortly). As the inn was built on the private land of the Bishop and therefore classed as being in his home county of Cambridgeshire, the Inn's licensees had to go to Cambridge each year to get their licence renewed! Ye Old Mitre has been so well preserved – it is certainly worthwhile going in to the rear bar (reached down the side of the pub) to take a look. I love the log fire, the old chairs and the pictures on the wall. No wonder the Daily Telegraph voted it the 'best historical pub in the UK'. Among its many claims to fame is that Queen Elizabeth I is said to have danced around a cherry tree that was growing alongside with Sir Christopher Hatton – he was actually her 'dancing instructor'. As we will read shortly, thanks to her help he built a palace and large gardens on adjacent land he had 'acquired' from the Bishop. Part of the cherry tree has been preserved and is now in the pub.

And the inn's name? – a mitre was and still is the headgear worn by bishops. **(As with much of this walk, the pub is closed at weekends.)**

Leave the pub and continue to the bottom of Ely Court and you are in Ely Place, another very historic and interesting part of London.

**Ely Place** is actually a private road that's owned by the Crown, although technically it's still under the jurisdiction of the County of Cambridgeshire as it was once within the grounds of the Palace of the Bishop of Ely in Cambridgeshire. The street has its own Commissioners and Beadles, (equivalent to a private constable) who have complete authority here – even the police cannot enter the street without their permission. When we leave the street, you will notice the gatehouse (today called the Porters Lodge) with the wrought iron gates. In the past, the Beadles would patrol the street after dark, calling out the hour and announcing the weather. Even today these gates are locked at night. (And on a literary note ... in Charles Dickens 'David Copperfield' he set Mr Waterbrook's house in Ely Place.)

**But first turn left and just 50 yards along is St Etheldreda's Church**, the oldest Catholic Church in England.

Originally the whole of this area was owned by the Bishop of Ely. From the 13th to the 16th century, bishops would have what was termed as their London 'palaces' (even today the homes of Bishops are known as palaces).

The palace has long since vanished, much of it was taken over by Sir Christopher Hatton as I explain in the **appendix** ... and all that remains today is the Bishops' private medieval chapel, the Chapel of St Etheldreda that we visit next. Whilst it survived both the Reformation and the Great Fire of London, it was badly damaged by bombing in the Second World War. (It survived the Reformation by becoming a Protestant place of worship). Over the years it has had a variety of uses; during the Civil War it was used as a prison for loyalists and later became a hospital for sailors and soldiers. It was also a school, a Welsh Chapel and in 1874, it was bought by the Rosminians who turned it back into a Catholic church again. And the name 'Etheldreda' – it was given in honour of the seventh century abbess of Ely.

From the street you can only see the eastern end of the building, particularly the magnificent stained-glass window that commemorates the persecution and subsequent hanging of the Catholic martyrs at Tyburn in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The window is the largest of its type in London, and you need to see it from the inside to appreciate it. The church is open daily and it's worth popping in to take a look. If you do, then walk along the corridor and take the steps down into the 12th century crypt. So much history has taken place here – it was the setting for the wedding celebrations of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon in 1531, which apparently lasted for five full days and nights! Quite some party! However, these days everyone can 'party like a King', as the crypt is available to hire for private functions, 'seating up to 150 in medieval splendour'. I find the atmosphere in the crypt rather special – sit quietly and try and imagine some of the events that have taken place here over the past 800 years. Especially as when Sir Christopher Hatton built his new mansion close by, he used the crypt as a tavern and the drunken choruses and noise from the brawls would often interrupt the services in the church upstairs!

After visiting the crypt, walk up the stairs to the right and, once you have struggled to open the heavy oak door, you find yourself in the actual church.

I find the history of the Palace fascinating, and I've written a little more about it in the **appendix**.

**Continue on down Ely Place** and ahead of you there's a high brick wall. (When I first did this walk and entered the street from the far end, I assumed the brick wall carried something like a railway viaduct, but it clearly didn't!). Set into the wall is a doorway, which hopefully will be unlocked. Try turning the handle if the door is closed – if it opens you can step into the rather fascinating **Bleeding Heart Yard**.

If the door is locked then access can be obtained from Greville Street, but I suggest you attempt that on another occasion as it takes you too far away from this walk.

The yard's unusual name is said to be the result of the murder of a 17th century woman who was said to be exceptionally beautiful – Lady Elizabeth Hatton, who was the widowed daughter-in-law of Sir Christopher Hatton (I write more about him in the **appendix**.) She was rich, young

and lively and amongst her many 'conquests' she numbered both the Bishop of Ely as well as Señor Gondomar, the Spanish Ambassador. It was said that on the 26th of January 1626, she had invited the 'leading lights' of London's society to a ball in Hatton's house. Halfway through the evening, the Ambassador saw her dancing with another man. After they had finished dancing, he took Lady Hatton by the hand, danced with her once round the ballroom whereby they both disappeared into the night. The other partygoers assumed the couple had kissed and made up, but this was not the case. At daybreak her body was found in the courtyard behind the stables "torn from limb to limb" with her heart still pumping blood onto the cobblestones" ... and from that day forth the yard has been known as Bleeding Heart Yard.

There have been other 'legends' – one was that she was actually the wife of Sir Christopher Hatton and she makes a pact with the devil to secure wealth, position and a mansion in Holborn. But on the night that she died the devil had danced with her, and then torn out her heart ...

I do like the old poem ....  
Of poor Lady Hatton, it's needless to say,  
No traces have ever been found to this day,  
Or of the terrible dancer who'd whisked her away;  
But out in the courtyard – and just in that part  
Where the pump still stands – lay bleeding a large human heart!

Bleeding Heart Yard also features in Charles Dickens novel *Little Dorrit* as the home of the Plornish family. He wrote ...

"It was a place much changed in feature and in fortune, yet with some relish of ancient greatness about it. Two or three might stacks of chimneys and a few large dark rooms which had escaped being walled and subdivided out of the recognition of their old proportions, gave the Yard a character. It was inhabited by poor people, who set up their rest among its faded glories, as Arabs of the desert pitch their tents among the fallen stones of the Pyramids; but there was a family sentimental feeling prevalent in the Yard that had a character."

Today there are two restaurants within the Yard – the first, The Bleeding Heart Restaurant is a lovely, formal and quite pricey French restaurant. Then at the lower end of the Yard is the Bleeding Heart Bistro, with tables and chairs outside in the summer. Finally, on the corner there is the Bleeding Heart Tavern, a pub that opened here in 1746.

**We now retrace our footsteps and walk back up** to the end of **Ely Place**, where we cross over **Charterhouse Street**. The building with a 'fortress appearance' down to the left was until recently the head office of **De Beers**, the world's largest diamond company and at one time, it was the centre of the diamond trade. Founded by Cecil Rhodes's in 1888, it later amalgamated with Anglo American and then had a 90% share of the world's diamond market. Interestingly, because of the high value of the diamonds, they used to be flown in by helicopter, which would land on the roof of the building. When I first saw one land there, I hadn't appreciated what it was doing, thinking it was strange for it to be landing on the roof of an office building in the centre of London!

Cross over **Charterhouse Street** and walk up the three or four steps in front of you into a miniscule 'green space'. Almost directly across is the 15th century **St Andrew's Holborn Parish Church**, whilst to the right of it, the enormous glass building is the head office of Sainsbury's. Walk across to the church. Miraculously it just managed to avoid being burnt down in the Great Fire of London that destroyed nearly ninety other churches in the area.

Holborn Parish Church – despite the fire crossing the River Fleet which used to be just a few hundred yards to the east (now underground as I explain shortly), the wind suddenly dropped. However, although the church was not damaged, Christopher Wren still decided to rebuild much of the outside, cladding it in striking Portland stone. Whilst it may have escaped the Great Fire, it wasn't so lucky in the Blitz and the damage was such that only the outside walls remained. Being of architectural importance and a listed building, these original walls were retained when the interior was rebuilt in the 1960s.

The front of the church is actually on the right-hand side, and above the entrance you will still see the figures of two children. They were taken from the nearby St Andrew's Parochial School that opened here in 1721 – the children wore the traditional bluecoat uniform of charity school children. (Blue was chosen, as it was the cheapest dye available, whilst their socks were dyed in saffron as that was believed to discourage rats from nibbling the children's ankles!)

In the vestibule is the 'tomb chest' of seaman Thomas Coram, most famous for establishing the nearby Foundling Hospital.

Unusually, there are no services at weekends as the church now serves only the local working population, as opposed to residents.

**Continue walking to the left (eastwards towards the City)** and the next building you come to is the grubby looking **Nonconformist City Temple**. Puritans are said to have worshipped here since the late 1500s, although the first records of the church weren't until 1874. This was yet another church badly damaged by bombing and it was rebuilt in 1958, with most of the cost being paid for by John D Rockefeller Junior, the American billionaire and philanthropist.

The church is rather 'evangelical' in its preaching and caters for a very varied international congregation, also undertaking considerable outreach work. It is normally open during the day so take a look – its interior is modern and bland, but it certainly attracts a large congregation on Sundays.

**Continue walking ahead** – the road is called 'Holborn Viaduct' as opposed to just 'Holborn' where you were before – and in just 100 yards or so you come to the actual **Holborn Viaduct**.

Holborn Viaduct is far longer than it appears, stretching for almost 1,400 feet from Holborn Circus through to the Old Bailey, though all that is visible now is the actual iron bridge structure. It was built in 1869, and as the construction meant having to use part of the churchyard of St Andrew's, over 11,000 bodies had to be removed and taken for reburial in Ilford, Essex. Not only that, but hundreds of slums – possibly even a thousand or more – were demolished, with of course, no rehousing offered to those affected.

The cost at the time was quite phenomenal, more even than was spent on the rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament that had been virtually destroyed by fire some thirty years before, and it became the biggest engineering project in London at that time.

The viaduct was built to help eliminate the problems of the steep slope (known as Holborn Hill) which ran down to Farringdon Road. Farringdon Road had been built on top of the River Fleet that had been put underground just a few years before.

Having negotiated the downhill slope, horse drawn carriages and carts then had to climb back up the steep slope on the other side, which resulted in numerous accidents, particularly on snowy or icy winter days.

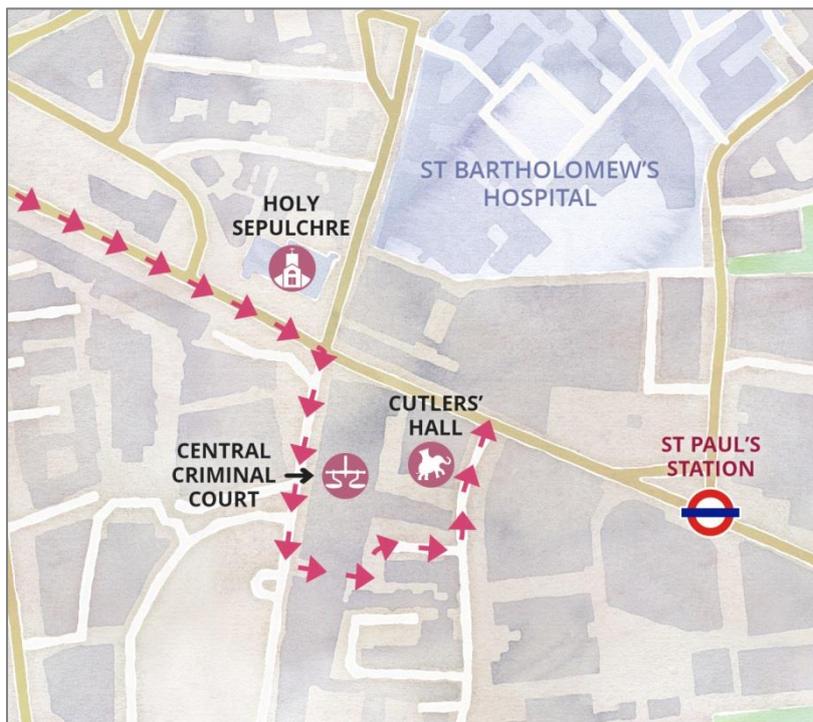
On both the east and west corners of the bridge, there are rather nice 'Italianate gothic-style' buildings. Originally there were four, one on each corner, but still standing today are –

On the west side is Fitz-Ailwin House, (he was the first Lord Mayor of London in 1189 and there's a small 'statuette' of him on the front).

On the house on the other side is a statue of Sir William Walworth, Lord Mayor in 1374 and best known as the Mayor who stabbed Wat Tyler, leader of the Peasants Revolt. There are similar little 'niche' statues of Sir Thomas Gresham (1519 – 1579) who had a most amazing career – using his own money he founded the Royal Exchange and Gresham College (as we learnt just now). There's also one of Sir Hugh Myddleton; he pioneered the building of the 'New River' from Hertfordshire to London in order to supply fresh water to the city, something revolutionary at that time.

The small bronze castings on the bridge itself were erected in 1868 – on the north side they commemorate Commerce and Agriculture, whilst on the south, they commemorate Science and Fine Arts.

At one time there were steps at all four corners of the bridge that led down to Farringdon Street, but now there is only one set; however, there is also a lift, but it only operates on Mondays to Fridays and between 10am and 4pm, something that seems odd to me, as that is outside of the rush hour.



Route map 5

**Continue walking ahead**, remaining on the right-hand side of the road, passing a very large modern building on the left and then after a few hundred yards on the right is another modern office development; this one is built on top of the new (in 1990 anyway!) Thameslink Station that links Luton and its airport with Gatwick and other southern counties destinations.

**We cross over now** to the other side of the road where you will see the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**. This has a fascinating history and interesting connections with the Old Bailey.

The church's correct name is St Sepulchre-without-Newgate – meaning that it lay outside the city walls, close to Newgate. I find this one of the most fascinating and historic churches in London – and in this city that is certainly saying something! It was founded in 1137 on the site of a Saxon church that was dedicated to St Edmund, so it became known as St Edmund and the Holy Sepulchre. The reason for adding 'Holy Sepulchre' was because during the 13th century the church was the departure point for the Knights of the Crusades heading for the Holy Land, so it was then named after the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem, the Crusaders destination. During that period, the church was looked after by those Knights. However, gradually it became known as just St Sepulchre.

It was rebuilt and enlarged in 1450, badly damaged in the Great Fire of London in 1666 and restored in 1670. Among the prominent people who have been associated with the church is the first Protestant martyr, John Rogers, who was one of its vicars, and Captain John Smith, the first Governor of the Colony of Virginia, who was buried here. The grave of Sir Henry Wood, founder of the famous Promenade concerts, is also here – this was where he learnt to play the organ, so his body was placed in the Church's Musicians Chapel. The Regimental Chapel of the Royal Fusiliers is also here.

And a piece of history that I really like is that this is the church referred to in the old nursery rhyme 'Oranges and Lemons' ... which has the line "and the bells of Old Bailey". The Old Bailey didn't have bells, so the rhyme actually refers to the bells of St Sepulchre that besides being rung to tell the time, were also rung to announce that an execution was about to take place at the Newgate Prison, situated just across the road.

The association with Newgate Prison doesn't end there – an underground passage was built from the church to the prison to allow the priest and his staff access without having to walk across the street, where often hundreds and even several thousand people would gather to watch an execution. You can still see where the tunnel entrance was – on the right-hand side of the Nave, about halfway along, you'll see a small bricked up semi-circular 'arch'.

The spiritual welfare of the condemned man had been provided for in the will of Robert Dow, a generous citizen who had bequeathed an annuity to the churchwardens of St. Sepulchre's on condition that at midnight preceding an execution, they would arrange for the 'bellman' to toil the big bell and for the sexton to pay a visit. He would pass through the tunnel into the prison whereby he would stand outside the window of the 'Condemned Hold' where those waiting to be executed were held. The sexton would then wake the prisoners by ringing a large handbell with "twelve solemn 'towles' with double strokes" and recite the following simple verse intone that was so say intended for their comfort and consolation. However, I doubt it did anything of the sort!

All ye that in the condemned cell do lie,  
Prepare you, for tomorrow you shall die;  
Watch all and pray, the hour's drawing near  
That you before the Almighty must appear'  
Examine well yourselves, in time repent,  
That you may not to eternal flames be sent.  
And when St Sepulchre's bell tomorrow tolls,  
The Lord above have mercy on your souls,  
Past twelve o'clock.

And against a pillar in the church there is a glass case that still contains that original 'Execution Hand Bell'.

**Leave the church and continue on down** to the junction with **Giltspur Street**.

Facing you across the junction is the Grade II listed **Viaduct Tavern** – a fine example of a Victorian gin palace. Years ago, there were many hundreds of such gin palaces in London, but many have either been demolished or simply turned into more modern pubs. The story of gin and the gin palaces in London is fascinating, so once again I have written a little more in the **appendix**.

You can't fail to notice the enormous, and to me slightly formidable, older building opposite you on the other side – **The Old Bailey**, Britain's most famous criminal court. The building's most conspicuous feature – it certainly catches the light and stands out from quite a distance away – is the 67-foot high copper dome on which sits a 22-ton, 12-foot high gilded bronze and gold leaf statue of the 'Lady of Justice', with the sword of retribution in one hand and a set of scales (representing justice) in the other. The dome is said to be a 'miniature' of the one atop St Paul's Cathedral. The figure has to be cleaned twice a year and at 212 feet above the ground it can be a challenge for the cleaners, who of course aren't able to use scaffolding.

Cross over now to take a closer look.

The Old Bailey's correct name is the Central Criminal Court. However, it has simply adopted the name of the street it is in. The unusual name 'Old Bailey' comes from the word 'bailey' – meaning 'fortified wall', as the road follows the site of the old London wall.

The original building, which wraps around the corner, is rather grand, but the new extension is anything but! As you can see, the original and imposing entrance is still there, though it's now only used for ceremonial purposes – when either the Lord Mayor of London or royalty visit the court.

Access is now through the small and unassuming door in the new building that's a little further down the street. This entrance is only for staff, barristers and the press – the public entrance into the viewing galleries is in a little side passage a few yards further down.

The Old Bailey was built in 1674 as the court to the adjacent Newgate Prison, and has been rebuilt several times since. The building that you see today opened in 1907; however, as with many in this area, it was badly damaged in the Second World War and eventually rebuilt in 1972 when the extension was added that you see today.

Newgate Prison had a long and infamous history, notorious for its poor conditions and cruel treatment. Commissioned by King Henry I in the 12th century, it was originally in a building containing one of the gateway entrances into the City of London through the old Roman wall, and simply called the 'New Gate'. The second Newgate Prison was located on the corner of Newgate Street and the Old Bailey. It was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666 and rebuilt by Christopher Wren in 1672 and eventually demolished in 1904. Notable people once imprisoned at Newgate include Daniel Defoe (for pamphleteering and political activities), Ben Johnson (for killing a man in a duel), William Kidd (better known as the pirate Captain Kidd), Sir Thomas Malory, and William Penn (held in contempt of court for not removing his hat).

Ben Johnson recalled ... 'Tis impossible to describe the terror of my mind, when I was first brought in, and when I looked around upon all the horrors of that dismal place... : the hellish

noise, the roaring, swearing, and clamour, the stench and nastiness... joined together to make the place seem an emblem of hell itself, and a kind of entrance to it.'

It was enlarged and rebuilt in the 15th century but continued to have a terrible reputation; it was said to have been the most notorious prison in London and one of the worst in the country, a reputation it maintained for over 600 years.

After its final rebuild in 1782 the prison was divided into two sections; a common area for the general public as well as a State area for those who could afford more comfortable accommodation. At the same time as the prison rebuild, the site for London's public gallows moved from Tyburn, close to Marble Arch in the West End to Newgate Prison. This meant that the public executions were now held in the heart of the City of London, drawing large audiences all the way up until the public executions were abandoned in 1868.

To understand the scale of capital punishment at Newgate Prison, it is said that between 1790 and 1902 over one thousand people were put to death there alone. During the period of public executions, these were carried out outside of Newgate Prison on the Old Bailey Road.

I have written more about Newgate in the **appendix**.

As you walk down past the building, notice the glass case notice board set in the wall, just below official entrance, that shows all the day's cases and which number court they are in. There are currently eighteen courts in regular use – some are still in the older building, the entrance to which is around the corner in Newgate Street. Over 3,000 cases are heard a year in the Old Bailey. And you can always tell when there is an important trial taking place, as the pavement outside will be thronged with reporters and photographers – and if it's a really big case then TV film crews as well.

Finally, a piece of literary history – Charles Dickens was once a young court reporter here at the Old Bailey and some of the cases he heard became the inspiration for some of his books.

**And just to help you get your bearings .... I'll just add here that at the bottom of the Old Bailey (street) is Ludgate Circus – from there a two minutes' walk up Ludgate Hill takes you to St Paul's Cathedral.**

**The walk now continues down past the new Old Bailey building ... at the end of it you'll see the narrow Warwick Court** – This is the rather hidden away and very non-descript entrance into the public galleries. (I've put more information in the **appendix** about how to get in.)

Carry on to the end of Warwick Court ... go up the steps into **Warwick Square** then turn left into **Warwick Lane**. (If you were to turn right down Warwick Lane and left into **Amen Court**, you can see the original wall of Newgate Prison – but there's nothing much to see.)

As soon as you turn left into **Warwick Lane**, you will see on your left an enormous pair of doors with a sign explaining this was the 'Site of the Royal College of Physicians' from 1674 – 1825. Next to it is **Cutlers' Hall**, the lovely headquarters of the Worshipful Company of Cutlers, one of the oldest of London's Livery Companies. (It dates back to the late 13th century – and Cutlers were the craftsmen who produced and traded items with a 'cutting edge' – such as swords and knives.)

When you reach the top of Warwick Lane you are back on **Newgate Street** – where the walk ends.

However, if you want to now visit St Paul's, then carry to the right and continue to the end of Newgate Street. I don't give any information about St Paul's here ... I think that's fairly well covered elsewhere.

Equally, if you need tubes or buses, then I suggest you also turn to the right and walk down Newgate Street. St Paul's Underground Station is on the Central Line – and in addition there are numerous bus routes from here to many parts of London.

## **APPENDIX TO THE HOLBORN WALK**

### **THE SHIP TAVERN**

Originally the Ship catered for the local labourers and farm workers (there really were fields here then!) but over the years it has had an interesting history. During the reign of Henry VIII, when the Reformation was well underway, and Catholicism was illegal, Catholics would come to the inn to attend mass. The outlawed priests would conduct the service from behind the bar and 'Lookouts' would be posted in the streets outside who would give a signal to warn if the King's officials were spotted. The warnings usually gave the priest time to escape into one of the several 'hidey-holes', some of which still exist, and allow the 'congregation' enough time to fill their tankards and become just another group of drinkers in the pub! Not all priests managed to escape, and several were discovered hiding in a tunnel in the cellar and executed on the spot. They say you can still sometimes hear their screams ...

The tavern was consecrated as a Masonic Lodge in 1736 by the Grand Master, the Earl of Antrim, and meetings would be held here every Monday. It is worth a look inside even if it's too early for a drink – and the restaurant upstairs is particularly delightful – lovely old beams and about as traditional 'olde English' as you can get.

### **ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS**

In 1540, the Worshipful Company of Barbers, which had been established in London around 1493, agreed to admit London's 'Fellowship of Surgeons' into membership, forming the new 'Company of Barber-Surgeons'. This new Company then became responsible for licensing surgeons who wished to practice in London and, after 1692, for examining ship's surgeons.

In the 18th and 19th centuries surgeons, unlike physicians, did not study for a university degree, instead their training was done by apprenticeship. They learnt their 'trade' by attending demonstrations of 'anatomical dissections' of corpses (which had usually been recently buried and dug up again), or those of executed criminals. These were conducted at the Barber-Surgeons Hall and as well as being a form of medical education, they were exhibited to the public and skeletons of notorious felons were displayed in niches around the walls of the Hall.

In 1745, the barbers and surgeons went their separate ways and a new Company of Surgeons was founded.

Occasionally, members of the company were permitted to conduct private anatomies. However, students had little opportunity to take part themselves and for the most part were only able to watch while dissections were carried out. Most private teachers relied on models or anatomical preparations for their classes and by the start of the 18th century, surgical apprentices in London had started to supplement their training by attending private anatomy lectures.

A desire for greater freedom for the teaching of anatomy was just one of the reasons for the eventual dissolution of the Barber-Surgeons' Company. A growing number of charitable hospitals were beginning to provide posts which, although unpaid, gave surgeons greater social status and allowed them to build their private practices amongst wealthy patrons.

The demand for naval and army surgeons also increased, providing more opportunities for paid employment. By the 1740s a number of London surgeons had started to campaign for a separate organisation that reflected their professional ambitions. A campaign led by John Ranby

and William Cheselden resulted in the split with the Barbers and the formation of the Company of Surgeons in 1745.

The new Company of Surgeons retained the right to stage dissections and began work on a new theatre at the Old Bailey where these would take place. However, delays to its completion forced the Company to relinquish its restrictions on its members carrying out their own anatomical dissections and surgeons began to openly advertise classes in 'practical anatomy', adding dissection to the wide range of medical lectures already on offer in London.

Today the Royal College of Surgeons is the professional and independent body, responsible for the training and the setting of examinations for surgeons as well as issuing the licenses, without which they cannot practice. This has always been one of the main duties of the college, the test for membership having evolved from the oral examinations of the Company of Surgeons in the 18th century.

If successful in the College examinations trainee surgeons would receive a diploma, rather than a degree, and kept the title 'Mr' rather than 'Dr'. Indeed, it still wasn't until the late 19th century that surgeons began to need to have a medical degree, rather than just practical experience. Still today many surgeons do not use the prefix 'Doctor' but are simply called 'Mr', like the rest of us. Fortunately, though for us patients, it is now compulsory for them to have both degrees and formal medical training! (And I will just mention here that it wasn't until 1908 that women were permitted to qualify as surgeons.)

## **THE HUNTERIAN MUSEUM**

John Hunter (1728–93) had no formal medical education when he began working for his brother William, though he quickly became proficient in dissection and William encouraged him to train as a surgeon and use his new found skills for research as well as teaching.

After serving as an army surgeon in France and Portugal, John Hunter returned to London, and worked with several eminent physicians and naturalists. They encouraged his experimental researches, for which he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1767. Their patronage also helped him to build a flourishing private practice.

The following year he was appointed surgeon to St George's Hospital and several years later began to advertise lectures on the 'Principles and Practice of Surgery'. These reflected his wide-ranging interests and were illustrated with preparations from his extensive museum collection.

At the time of writing the Hunterian museum is closed while the Royal College of Surgeons building is being refurbished. It is expected to reopen in 2021.

## **THE INNS OF COURT**

First, what is an 'Inn of Court'? Wikipedia says it's 'a professional association for barristers in England' and that they must all belong to one of them before they can qualify to practice. These Inns – there are four in London, of which Lincoln's Inn is the largest – offer post-student studies, libraries, dining facilities and accommodation. In addition, they also have supervisory and disciplinary functions over its members. Each Inn has a church or chapel and a self-contained precinct where barristers traditionally train and practice, which are called Chambers.

The Inns of Court have played a fundamental role in preparing students for a 'Call to the Bar' for many centuries. And before I go on, I should explain why it's called 'The Bar'. It is simply the railing across a courtroom that separates the public from the judges, counsel and the jury. The Inns of Court have a similar 'Bar' which cannot be crossed until a prospective barrister has completed his or her training and 'qualified' – they are then 'Called to the Bar'.

The Inns are run by a governing body made up of 'Bencher's', more correctly known as 'Masters of the Bencher's' and the most senior Bencher is known as the Treasurer.

After studying for a degree in law at university, a student who wishes to become a barrister will apply to one of the Inns. I love the formality of it all .... the Lincoln's Inn Students Handbook says there are four 'dining terms' of the year, each being twenty-three days long. 'Dining events' are an important part of life at the Inn, and during these the rules say, 'Respectable, casual, clothes may be worn, but those who do, must sit on the 'casual table'. No mobile phones can be used, either for calls or texts and anyone seen doing so 'will have their name taken'.

At Dining Events, all students and Barristers must stand as the Bencher's enter or leave the Great Hall – and no one is permitted to leave the hall whilst the Bencher's are still there, without summoning a Butler. He will then convey the request to the Treasurer (the head honcho). All Bencher's must bow to those assembled in the hall when they enter, and everyone is expected to bow in return.

Students, barristers and bencher's sit on separate tables and Diners are grouped in 'Mess'es of fours' and each will have a Captain, who serves himself first and then passes the food anti-clockwise. The last to eat is the Junior who sits on the left. There is also a 'Memorial Mess' which is a group of four places at the head of the Bar table set aside in memory of those who died in the World Wars. Nobody can sit here or is allowed to remove the cutlery or crockery. However, for the special Domus Dinners (domus meaning 'home' in case you were wondering), a set table plan is produced with the three grades mixed together.

On Dining Nights, there will be either a pre-dinner talk or a debate afterwards and if you Dine, then attendance at the pre or post event is compulsory, so there's no slinking off to the pub!

And I like rather like another unusual custom that was granted by Charles I, exclusively to Lincoln's Inn and regarded as a privilege given, which is when the Loyal Toast to the King or Queen is made, then everyone is allowed to remain seated.

Students have to complete twelve 'qualifying sessions' before they can be 'Called to the Bar', after which they can become a Barrister. Qualifying sessions include dining in the Great Hall, lectures, advocacy workshops and residential weekends.

The legal year (and that of the Inn) is made up of four terms – Michaelmas, Hilary, Easter and Trinity and during each the Inn will hold a 'dining term'. These can vary from six to twenty days. Although there are four 'Dining Terms' in each Legal Term, only a limited number of Dining Sessions count towards qualifying, so you can't just cram in as many meals as possible simply to become a barrister.

Once a student has completed their twelve qualifying sessions, then they can apply to be 'Called to the Bar'. This involves attending a 'Call Night', which is a special champagne reception and ceremony to which family and friends can be invited. During the event, the Inn's Treasurer will say to each student in turn, "Mr [or Miss/Mrs] .....", by the authority and on behalf of the Masters

of the Bench, I publish you a barrister of this Honourable Society". And with those words the student becomes a barrister.

## **LINCOLN'S INN**

Two reasons are given for the name 'Lincolns'; one was because in the late 13th and early 14th century the Earl of Lincoln had a house nearby; others say it comes from a Thomas de Lincoln who was one of the early senior practitioners of law in the 14th century at the Inn. So basically, nobody really knows for sure!

There is also some uncertainty when Lincoln's Inn first started. Records show it was already in use by 1422 and the first of what were eventually nine Inns of Court in London. There is also a slight misconception about the meaning of the word Inn, as besides referring to a place of lodgings for travellers, it was also used to describe a large house where important people – such as Bishops, lawyers, statesmen whose business brought them into the City – would stay.

In the 12th and early 13th century, law was taught in the City of London by clergy, though this changed in 1234 when Henry III decreed that no institutes of legal education could exist in the City of London, which is why Lincoln's Inn and the other Inns of Court were then established outside of the City's boundaries.

In the early days, students of the law received no formal instruction and would simply learn their 'trade' by sitting in on cases being heard in the courts. It was a twelve year or even longer progression – students would either study here or after they had been to Oxford or Cambridge University. They would live together in one of these Inns of Court, where they received board and lodging. Over time, a more structured educational aspect was introduced, leading to the more formal Inns of Court as we know them today. (The official description is 'Inns of the Men of Court').

The word 'barrister' originally meant someone who had been a graduate of the Inn and had managed to learn the elaborate legal exercises that were required before appearing before the 'bar' in a court. This requirement for a lawyer to have been a barrister before presenting cases to a legal court was enshrined in 1590, but just 50 years later, following the English Civil War in 1642, this requirement disappeared and for the next two hundred years there was no requirement for barristers to have any real legal training!

The 'Bar exams' were finally reintroduced in 1872, but for a long time afterwards they were of such a low standard that anyone with reasonable intelligence could pass – so very different from the intensive and many years of training and study required today.

## **GRAY'S INN**

Gray's is another of the four Inns of Court in London. It is known that the Society of Gray's Inn goes back to the 14th century, but there are no records earlier than 1569. The name came from Baron Grey of Wilton, as it was originally his family home. The Inn rose to prominence in the reign of Elizabeth I, as at one time she was its patron.

It became well known for the festivals and banquets it laid on, which even Elizabeth herself attended. Shakespeare was known to have performed here and one of his first performances of *The Comedy of Errors* took place here. Most legal education ceased during and after the Civil War and this affected Gray's more than the others as it was slow to recover – seemingly the Inn had accepted too many 'common students'; high taxation had meant that only the most wealthy

and influential could afford to send their sons for legal training and they increasingly chose Lincolns or Temple Inn.

### **CLEVER TOM CLINCH**

In the walk I mention that Jonathan Swift gives us a picture of an execution procession along Holborn in his poem called "Clever Tom Clinch, going to be hanged". It was written in 1727.

As clever Tom Clinch, while the rabble was bawling,  
Rode stately through Holborn to die in his calling,  
He stopp'd at the George for a bottle of sack,  
And promised to pay for it when he came back.  
His waistcoat, and stockings, and breeches were white,  
His cap had a new cherry ribbon to tie't.  
The maids to the doors and the balconies ran,  
And said, "Lack-a-day! he's a proper young man!"  
But, as from the windows the ladies he spied,  
Like a beau in the box he bow'd low on each side!  
And when his last speech the loud hawkers did cry,  
He swore from his cart, 'It was all a damn'd lie!'  
The hangman for pardon fell down on his knee,  
Tom gave him a kick in the guts for his fee:  
Then said, I must speak to the people a little;  
But I'll see you all damn'd before I will whittle.  
My honest friend Wild (may he long hold his place!)  
He lengthen'd my life with a whole year of grace.  
Take courage, dear comrades, and be not afraid,  
Nor slip this occasion to follow your trade;  
My conscience is clear, and my spirits are calm,  
And thus I go off, without prayer-book or psalm;  
Then follow the practice of clever Tom Clinch,  
Who hung like a hero and never would flinch.

I'll just add here that there is a fascinating account of Newgate and the numerous escapes from there in the 18th century by one of the most (in)famous prisoners, Jack Sheppard, in a book called *The Road to Tyburn*, by Christopher Hibbert.

Jack had escaped numerous times, despite on the last occasion being held under the tightest security imaginable! However, his recklessness and daring, which even included returning to drink in a tavern that was seemingly rather too close to the prison after he'd escaped, hardly surprisingly led to him being spotted, arrested and finally hung on the gallows at Tyburn. He had become a sort of anti-hero, the 'talk of the town', with the popular press of the day falling over themselves to print ever more exaggerated stories of his exploits which resulted in his execution attracting crowds of many thousands to watch. The *Beggar's Opera* was inspired by him, as were several plays, and at least three films have been made about him – *The Hairbreadth Escape of Jack Sheppard*, *Where's Jack?* and *Jack Sheppard*. There's also an excellent article about him on Wikipedia.

## **THE PRUDENTIAL ASSURANCE COMPANY**

The Prudential had started business in 1848 in nearby Ludgate Hill and grew so rapidly, that they needed new offices. In 1876, they appointed Alfred Waterhouse, one of the country's most popular and successful Victorian architects, to design a new 'purpose-built' building, as opposed to trying to adapt something already existing. He designed it in his 'trademark' Victorian Gothic' style, which he also used for the design his iconic Natural History Museum in Kensington.

By 1905, the business had become so successful – by then they were insuring a third of the population of Britain – that it wasn't surprising the building had already become too small. As a result, they undertook a major building and expansion project which was carried out by Alfred's son, who was also an architect. Many innovations and improvements were made – even having a theatre for the Pru's own theatrical group and a fully consecrated chapel and a social club for their staff, which was built in a tower on the roof! On top of the tower they placed a statue of Prudence, which was the company's symbol.

However, the company still grew, so by the 1930s an even greater and more radical renovation took place, which entailed much of it being rebuilt, though the same terracotta gothic style was retained. The biggest changes included a more modern, art deco interior, much of which you can still see today. It was fitted out with the latest modern conveniences including hot running water, electric lighting and even a pneumatic 'tube' system to enable people to send documents to each other within the building. To avoid them having to have too much to do with men (or more likely vice versa!), women had their own entrance, staircases, dining room, library and even a section of the roof terrace – and they even finished work fifteen minutes before the men.

Being an insurance company, the deeds of hundreds of thousands of homes across the country needed to be securely kept, together with many other valuable documents. (No computers in those days!). The answer had been the creation of a very secure basement vault that was fitted with the enormous Chubb safes.

Despite all the works they had carried out, the building wasn't suitable for the technological revolution of the 1980-90s so further changes were made to make room for the computer age, and the revamped building was reopened by the Queen in 1993.

Sadly, it is no longer the head office for the Prudential; they moved out in 1999, but still own the building, which is now leased to a number of other companies.

## **HATTON GARDEN'S DIAMOND DISTRICT**

Although dealing in diamonds and other precious stones has taken place in Hatton Garden for hundreds of years, it was only after 1940 when it saw rapid expansion. This was as a result of diamond traders in Belgium fleeing from Antwerp, then the major centre for the gems in the world, ahead of the advancing German Army. Many of them arrived in London having sewn their diamonds into the clothes they were wearing!

Having arrived in London, they couldn't afford to set up shops or offices, so instead did their buying and selling whilst standing in the street. That was until Mrs Cohen, an enterprising woman who ran a café on the corner of Greville Street and Hatton Garden, invited them in to do their business in her premises. So, it was in a simple café that the actual 'Diamond Bourse' was founded. As the diamond business grew, it had to move to larger premises on several occasions and the present building at number 100 Hatton Garden runs a full-time trading floor, along with many workshops and offices, not forgetting of course the highly secure safes in the basement. Some things haven't changed though – deals are still conducted only on a handshake and the

trader's word of honour. And interestingly, you sometimes still see the traders (many still Jewish) carrying their diamonds from one establishment to another.

Sadly, it is worth noting that Hatton Garden may soon see a dramatic change. As a result of the area's rapidly rising rents (something that's now happening all over London) many of the diamond traders may be forced to move out. In particular, the lease on the London Diamond Bourse at 100 Hatton Garden and which has been the centre of the jewellery trade for many years, expires in 2019 and has recently been sold to a Singapore investment company. By then, the diamond traders will have had to move out. They are already seeking new premise, but, with the problem of high rents now affecting all of central London, it is rumoured they will move out to Brent Cross in north London, close to the huge shopping centre. When they do, unfortunately around eighty or more diamond and jewellery traders would move, taking their workshop with them. Already there is talk of Brent Cross becoming known as the New Hatton Garden.

I was interested to read that in 1919 the Russian trade commissar to Britain and Lev Kamenev, (Trotsky's brother in law and a member of the Soviet Politburo), smuggled thousands of pounds (millions at current rates) worth of platinum, diamonds and other jewels into Britain and sold them in Hatton Garden. The money was to bankroll the Daily Herald, then the principle Labour party supporting newspaper. However, when the details were leaked to other newspapers, the Herald said they knew nothing of it and were forced to return the money to Russia!

## **ST ETHELDREDA'S CHURCH**

The Church of St Etheldreda was the London chapel of the Bishops of Ely from around 1250 to 1570 and I have explained more about this under the next section 'Ely Palace'.

St Etheldreda is the oldest Catholic church in England and was also the first church in Britain to be converted back to Catholicism after the 'Toleration Act', when as the name implies, Catholics were once again to be 'tolerated'. It is also one of only two buildings in England still standing that date back to the reign of Edward I.

The church has had such a long and fascinating history that it's impossible to try and condense it here, so if you'd like to know more, I suggest you take a look at their website – <http://www.stetheldreda.com> and click on the page marked 'history'. You will then see what I mean!

And as a rather odd aside, this was the first Church in Britain to have revived a Catholic rite known as the 'Blessing of the Throats'. This centuries-old custom involves the priest performing an individual blessing on the congregation's throats – people kneel at the altar and say, "May the Lord deliver you from the evil of the throat and from every other evil". It takes place on the feast day of St Blaise who was killed by an implement that resembled sheep shears – and from that day on, he has been the Patron Saint of those whose work is connected with all aspects of sheep and their wool. And the connection with the throat? St Blaise apparently saved the life of a little boy who was choking to death on a fishbone – he placed his hands on his throat and the bone was coughed up. He was also said to have cured others who had diseases of the throat. Interestingly, I have read that Saint Etheldreda also had the reputation of being able to cure illnesses of the throat as well as St Blaise.

## **ELY PALACE AND ELY PLACE**

For many years, the Church of England's bishops played a significant role in the political establishment and were regularly called upon to act in civil matters and assist in the running of the country. As a result, they had 'seats' in the House of Lords, which is something they still have. As a result, many had 'episcopal' houses in London, many of which were originally in the Temple (the Inns of Court between Fleet Street and the Thames), but a dispute with the Knights Templar, saw them being evicted. They began building their own properties in various locations close to the City. For example, the Bishop of Bangor had his in Shoe Lane whilst the Bishop of Lincoln's was in Chancery Lane. The size of their influence and therefore their houses, depended upon the wealth of the individual Bishop, and this invariably depended upon the prosperity of the region they represented. The city of Ely's was particularly wealthy, being in heart of the sheep-rearing region that contributed so much wealth to England. Sheep was a staple of the English economy – we had the rainfall and right soil that resulted in quality grass which meant our sheep were regarded the finest in Europe and so had great value. Ely had also become wealthy because of eel fishing (hence the name) – eels were once a great delicacy and fetched a high price (as they still do these day).

As a result, the Bishop of Ely's property in London was one of the largest and most elegant. And why was it called a palace? Simply because the home of a Bishop was then – and still is today – known as a Palace, as with Lambeth Palace, being the home of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Besides the magnificent house, there were also extensive and quite beautiful gardens, which Shakespeare was probably familiar with, as in 'Richard III', he had the Duke of Gloucester say to the Bishop of Ely –

My Lord of Ely, when I was last in Holborn,  
I saw good strawberries in your garden there;  
I do beseech you, send for some of them.

There are many references to Ely House in history. In 1332, the 14-year old Philippa of Hainault spent Christmas here before her marriage to Edward III and a few years later, John of Gaunt moved here after his house at Savoy Palace, on the banks of the Thames close to what is now the Strand, had been attacked and badly damaged during the Peasants Revolt. Much later the house was used as a prison for loyalists during the Civil War and then later as a hospital for sailors and soldiers.

But back to Bishop's houses in London. Something I find quite fascinating is that they were officially legally regarded as being on land owned and under the jurisdiction of whichever county their home diocese was in. So, the Bishop of Ely's palace and all its grounds were regarded as being in Cambridgeshire. Not only that, but they were usually known as 'Liberty's' – something that goes back to the Middle Ages. A Liberty was an area of land that the King would give to somebody very important – for example a Lord, Baron or Bishop – and the value of it was that they were exempt from civil jurisdiction. Probably, most importantly, was that they didn't have to pay taxes! And more than this, there were some, as Ely Place was, that were also 'Sanctuary's', and this meant persons being wanted by the law couldn't be arrested there by the authorities.

Anyway, the beginning of the end for the Bishop of Ely's Palace began in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. She had become close friends with Christopher Hatton, who was her "dancing master" (there were lots of rumours as to precisely how close and it was said they were having an affair) and as I explain in the little note about him in the next section, he rapidly 'rose through the ranks of nobility'. Having become rather famous and wealthy, he wanted to acquire some of the Bishop of Ely's land to build his own mansion, but the Bishop refused to consider it. Hatton turned to the Queen for help, whereby she wrote the following rather forthright letter to the Bishop, which read,

“Proud Prelate, I understand that you are backward in complying, but I would have you understand that I who made you what you are can unmake you. And if you do not faithfully fill your engagement, by God, I will immediately unfrock you”

Hardly surprisingly, the Bishop decided to change his mind, and granted Hatton a lease for the price of £10, a few loads of hay and one red rose a year! Hatton borrowed money from the Queen to undertake extensive renovations, which became very grand, but he got totally carried away and they cost far more than budgeted. Gradually the house was used for other purposes – for a time I believe it became the Spanish Embassy, but eventually it fell into disrepair and bits were gradually sold off as building plots, Hatton Garden for example was in the Palace’s gardens. And in 1772 when Christopher Hatton’s heirs were struggling with debts, the Crown brought the Ely Estate from them, which was when Ely Place was built, and this is on the site of the Palace’s orchard.

There are several mentions of Ely Place in literature. In Charles Dickens’ book “David Copperfield” he set Mr Waterbrook’s house in Ely Place.

As you will see today, it is still a private road. There are gates at the end, and ‘Beadles’ are employed to keep a watch on those coming and going. As the sign tells you, entrance is permitted to the street, but the rules of the Commissioners of Ely Place must be observed at all times.

And as a complete aside, I do find it interesting that, despite the opulence of the Palace, it was surrounded on almost three sides by some of the worst slums in London. One of those was known as Saffron Hill that was said by Charles Dickens to have been so bad, it was where he had set Fagin’s Den. (Incidentally, Saffron Hill was named after the herb that grew here in medieval times.)

## **SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON**

I have mentioned Sir Christopher Hatton several times as he played an important part in all of this, but the more I read about him, the more I find him a rather interesting character. He was described at the time as being ... “Handsome, tall, of good proportion and an excellent dancer” all of which attracted the attention of Queen Elizabeth I when she met him at a ball.

He soon became a great favourite of hers, becoming a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber, then Captain of the Yeoman of the Guard and Vice-Chamberlain of the Royal Household. He was then knighted and became a member of the Privy Council. As we have just read, he desperately wanted to build his own mansion in the grounds of the Bishop of Ely’s Palace and as a result of his influence with the Queen, he achieved it – even borrowing large sums of money (which he never repaid) to build it. It was hardly surprisingly that rumours flourished that he was the Virgin Queen’s lover – something that Mary Queen of Scots had later accused him of.

His success clearly went to his head – in Northamptonshire, where he was also an MP, he had built what was said to be one of the largest privately-owned Elizabethan mansions and country estates in England. It was said to have been as large as Hampton Court Palace, but it drained his financial resources even further and he was forced into making speculative investments. One of these was to help fund Sir Francis Drake’s voyages, including his ‘acts of piracy’ around South America. Not only did Hatton then make a huge return on his investment, but Drake was clearly impressed, or at least grateful enough, that during his circumnavigation of the globe, he renamed his ship the Golden Hinde. That was because Hatton’s personal coat of arms contained a ‘golden hind’. He also gave him all the gold he had captured from the Spanish!

Despite all this, his extravagant ways were such that he died owing vast sums of money. Indeed, the Queen visited several times shortly before he died, pleading for the return of the money she had lent him – which would apparently have amounted to around six million pounds in today's money!

## **DE BEERS**

De Beers was founded by Cecil Rhodes in 1888, and in 1926 it was bought by a company called Anglo American, founded in 1917 by Sir Ernest Oppenheimer. At one time, the combined company had a 90% share of the world's diamond market.

De Beers' diamond sorters had worked at this site in Holborn since the 1930s. However, like many other premises in this part of London, the building was badly damaged in the Second World War, but subsequently 'patched up'. It was eventually rebuilt in the 1970s, which you can tell from the brutalist architecture. It was then the 'high-security hub' of international diamond trading and until a few years ago, 'diamantaires' from around the world would come here for regular diamond sales events called 'sights'. This was when De Beers would offer boxes of 'rough' stones that they and other companies had mined. At the height of De Beers' diamond cartel, more than 80% of the world's stones were bought and sold in this building. However, in 2013, the company moved the \$6billion sorting operation to Botswana.

De Beers moved out of its mammoth offices, said to be a labyrinth inside, in March 2017. Its parent company had intended to sell the building but afterwards had a change of heart and decided to refurbish it as a headquarters complex for both Anglo American and De Beers, with a new 'softened' exterior, as shown here in the architect's CGI.

And one last mention; whilst I was writing this guide, I was standing close to their offices and having just read an article about the company, I discovered that for security reasons, diamonds were transported to their office by helicopter. I thought that sounded rather unlikely as the building is in a densely packed area of London – but then I heard a loud clattering sound and lo and behold, from the roof of the De Beers building arose a very large helicopter. So it was true!

## **THE VIADUCT TAVERN**

The Viaduct Tavern is a fine example of a Victorian gin palace, of which there were many hundreds in London alone, and this one is Grade II listed. The tavern got its name from the Holborn Viaduct, which opened in 1869.

For a couple of hundred years, gin was London's most popular drink and at one time, virtually every street in the city was said to have somewhere you could buy it, either to drink on the premises or take home. It was cheap, usually badly made and the desperately poor virtually lived on it. Hence its 'mother's ruin' reputation, shown of course in the famous paintings by Hogarth that portrayed the desperate state of the thousands of poor alcoholics in the city's slums.

Eventually, gin's reputation changed and thanks to various Acts of Parliament, it began to be sold in more respectable establishments. Licensed by the authorities, these were becoming quite attractive places, with ornate fittings, gas lighting, long counters and large glass windows. They quickly became known as 'gin palaces'. And as I say, the Viaduct Tavern is a good example. And of course, today gin has again become the trendiest spirit of all, with numerous gin bars opening across London – history repeating itself!

## **NEWGATE PRISON**

The Newgate Prison had a long and infamous history. Originally opening in the 12th century in a building that contained one of the gateway entrances into the old city wall, it was simply called the 'New Gate' and said to have been the first 'prison' as we understand the word today. It was enlarged and rebuilt in the 15th century but continued to have a terrible reputation; it was said to have been the most notorious prison in London and one of the worst in the country, a reputation it maintained for over 600 years! The prison was destroyed in the Great Fire and rebuilt in 1770. Ten years later it was damaged by another fire, this time started deliberately during the Gordon Riots, when 300 prisoners were let loose on the City.

Until 1783, public hangings took place at the gallows at Tyburn, (where Marble Arch is today), but then moved here and, as at Tyburn, became a common place event until 1869. The condemned man (or woman) would be taken along 'Dead Man's Walk', a caged walkway between the prison and the court that had been built next to it. The small water fountain or feature at the top of the Old Bailey road is said to mark the spot where the execution of prisoners actually took place.

And a couple of other pieces of information; William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania was once imprisoned in Newgate for holding a Quaker Meeting, which was then an 'unlawful assembly'. And the condition of both the prison and the prisoners was so dirty that the floors of the courts were covered with sweet-smelling herbs and Judges carried posies of garden flowers to counteract the unpleasant smell. This tradition is still carried on today!

Newgate Prison was finally closed in 1902 and demolished two years later when the extended Old Bailey Courthouse was built on the site.

## **VISITING THE OLD BAILEY COURTS**

The public entrance to the new courts is in a little lane called Warwick Court, two thirds of the way down the street. It is certainly not 'welcoming' – there is a bell, which you are told to press just once and then wait for someone to come to the door. You are not allowed to take any personal property in with you – no handbags, brief cases, phones, cameras – and the penalties for being caught with them on you are high! Fortunately, a travel agency just a little further down the street, called Capable Travel, will store those items for you for just a small fee.

Once you are inside, you will be asked which court you would like to visit, and you'll be taken there via a narrow staircase. There are a number of courts on different floors – I find the staff quite helpful and if you don't have a particular case you want to sit in on, then just ask them to recommend one! They generally know what you mean and will take you to one that they think might be of interest. (By the nature of the prosecution, some are very boring and long-winded!) And a final note of warning – you can't just wander in and out of the court rooms – you have to stay in whichever one you choose for a minimum of half an hour.

If you'd rather visit the older courts, then the entrance is in Newgate Street. However, being older, they are even more cramped, so you might be better advised to stick to the newer courts, unless of course there is a specific case you want to sit in on.

Courts number 1 and 2 tend to hold the more important trials – the Kray brothers and the Yorkshire Ripper are just two of the infamous murderers who were tried in Court 1, whilst the number two court is generally for 'high security' trials, such as cases involving terrorism.

There are 18 courts altogether.

**Old Building** – Ground floor Court 17, 18

First Floor – Courts 1, 2, 3, 4.

**New Building** – First floor – Courts 13, 14, 15, 16

Second floor – Courts 5, 6, 7, 8

Third floor – Courts 9, 10, 11, 12

Sitting times for all courts is normally 10am – 1pm and 2pm to 4.30pm on weekdays.

### **THE CUTLERS' COMPANY**

The Cutlers' Company is one of the most ancient of the City of London of London's Livery Companies, receiving its Royal Charter from Henry V in 1416. As the name implies, the Cutlers were craftsmen who produced and traded items with a 'cutting edge' – such as swords, knives and the like. Originally, many of their products were for military and similar purposes, but gradually it extended to implements for domestic use such as cutlery, scissors and shaving razors. As swords fell out of use, so the Cutlers' Company began diversifying their interests into such things as surgical implements, as well as encouraging the indenturing of apprentices.

Today it is now one of the smaller Livery Companies, with a membership in the hundreds, but still proud of its ancient heritage and tradition.