

# City of London walk 1

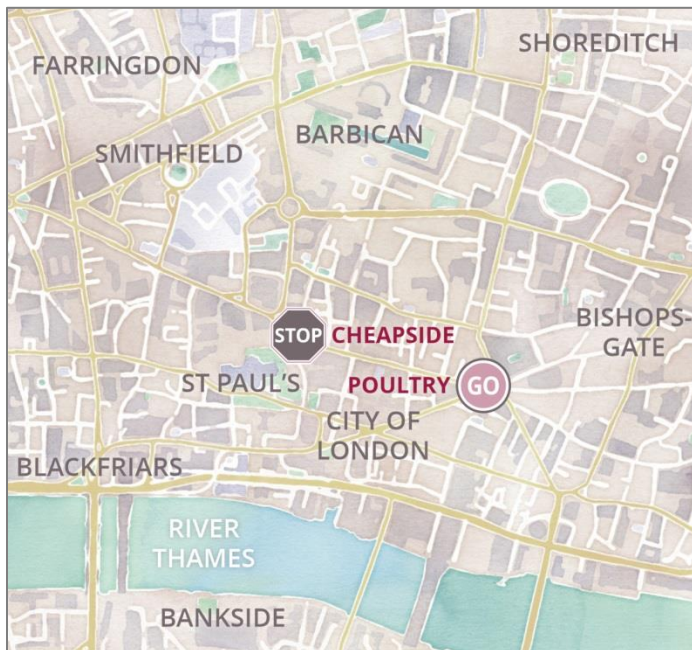
**Updated:** 24 May 2024

**Length:** About 2 miles

**Duration:** Around 3 hours

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WALK

The walk includes Bank Junction, the Ned Hotel, Old Jewry, Gresham Street, the Guildhall and the Guildhall Art Gallery, City of London Police Museum, Noble Street's Roman Wall viewing gallery, Postman's Park, St Martin's le Grand post office, Wax Chandlers' Hall, Goldsmiths' Hall & Assay Office, Saddlers' Hall, the church of St Vedast-alias-Foster, Cheapside.



## GETTING HERE

The walk starts at the beginning of **Poultry** at Bank Junction.

**Bank station** is easy to reach from most parts of London, being served by five tube lines. Be warned though – the station is a somewhat of a maze – there are nine separate exits, though they are well signposted. Bank station is currently undergoing a £600 million upgrade and this should make it easier to navigate and more pleasant experience to pass through. The project is due for completion in 2022.

The area is also served by a number of buses.

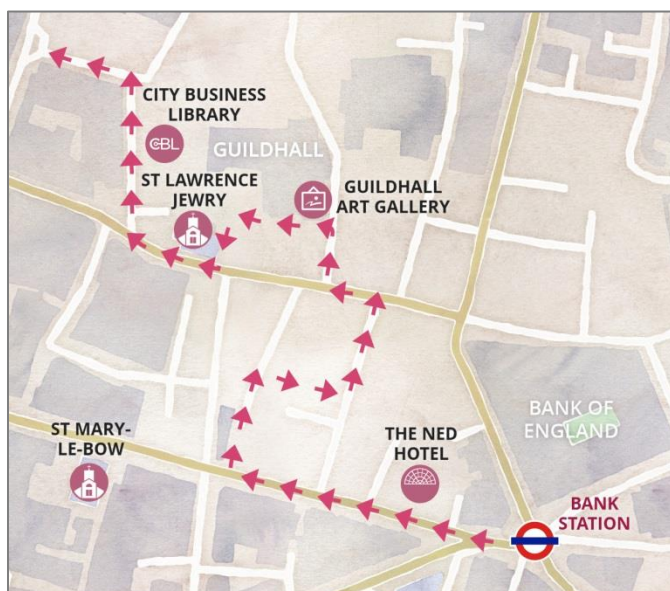
## ONCE YOU'VE ARRIVED

If you have arrived by tube, leave Bank station by Exit 1 – it's marked 'Princes Street, Lothbury, Gresham Street, **Poultry** (which is where we head first) and Cheapside'. Go up the first flight of steps then take the second flight to the left. At the top, walk straight ahead – you are in Poultry.

### Getting your bearings

As you emerge from at the top of the stairs and if you don't know the area, then –

- **looking behind you** is the Royal Exchange,
- **just to the left** of that is the Bank of England,
- **on the other side** of the road from where you are standing is the Mansion House, the official home of the Lord Mayor of the City of London (it's the building with the columns at the front).



Route map 1

## STARTING THE WALK

We start by walking straight ahead along **Poultry**. It acquired its unusual name as a result of the many stalls and shops that once prepared and sold chickens, ducks and geese here. Similarly, other streets leading off Poultry and its continuation street Cheapside are also named after the products sold there – Milk Street, Wood Street, Honey Lane, etc.

The magnificent five-storey building with the gently curving frontage and an inset pair of giant columns on the junction of Poultry and Princes Street is a **NatWest bank**. It was built in 1932 on a site that one newspaper at the time described as 'the best in the Empire', for the National Provincial Bank, despite their head office being just around the corner in Bishopsgate. If you're here on a weekday, it's worth popping in to take a look – the original banking hall has been restored, complete with domed ceiling. You can't really appreciate the building from here, but it is one of the four 'iconic buildings' on the corners of the so-called 'Bank Junction'. You will get a

better view of it a little later in the walk when you will also be able to appreciate the sculptures above its parapet. These feature Britannia in the centre, with the figures that represent higher and lower mathematics on either side, whilst above them are Mercury and Truth.

I have put more information in the **appendix** on the history and architecture of what to me is a fascinating building.

The next building you pass is even larger and was also a bank; in fact more than just a bank, it was actually the London headquarters of the Midland Bank and when it opened in 1924 it was the world's largest 'bank clearing house'. It has recently been converted into one of London's newest and most exclusive hotels, with the unusual name of '**The Ned**'. I find it quite amazing the way in which a huge 11-floor Grade I listed building has been so tastefully converted into such a prestigious 250-bedroomed hotel and private members' club.

You may have spotted the sign on the wall of the Ned announcing that you are now in the 'Ward of Walbrook' – I've explained more about the wards of the City of London in the **appendix**.

It's well worth going inside the Ned to take a look. Don't worry about the security men in black suits and ear pieces who stand outside these posh hotels – they can look somewhat unwelcoming but are there to prevent people from entering who shouldn't be there, but as the bars and restaurants are open to the public just nod, smile and stroll in.

The entrance is through the enormous original banking hall, once a feature of most major banks and designed to impress customers. Notice the amazing roof that's supported by over ninety columns carved from African Verdite stone. Within the hall are several bars and restaurants, whilst in the centre there's even a small stage where they regularly have live jazz performances.

On the terraced roof of the 11-storey hotel there's an 'outdoor' restaurant and bar with a retractable glass ceiling for inclement weather, as well as two glass domes that contain more intimate bars, and a ten metre Italian marble pool. Sadly, all of this is only open to residents and members of the Ned's private members' club. Those members also have access to a luxurious bar situated two floors below ground level in what was once the vault room. Its original 20-ton steel doors are still in place, along with some 3,000 original silver safety deposit boxes that line the walls. (You may have seen the vault before – it was used in the James Bond film Goldfinger. And another former vault even contains a subterranean spa with 20-metre pool.)

Finally, the hotel's unusual name? 'Ned' was simply the nickname of the renowned British architect, Sir Edward Lutyens.

**Continue along Poultry** – ahead you can see the tower and spire of **St Mary-le-Bow Church**. We don't visit it here but at the end of the walk you can stroll down Cheapside to take a look.

The narrow street running down the side of the Ned is **Grocers' Hall Court**, now just a distinctly unattractive rear service alley, but at the end is the Grocers' Company's livery hall,\* a mixture of an old and new building. As with most of these livery halls, it consists of a 'Great Hall' as well as a members' bar, meeting rooms and administrative offices. However, unless you happen to be a grocer, I don't think it's worth a detour to take a look.

*\* I explain more about the livery companies in the **appendix**.*

Continue on a little further, crossing over **Old Jewry** then turn down the next street on the right, by the side of Barclays Bank and into **Ironmongers Lane**. On the right is another livery

company's hall – the **Worshipful Company of Mercers**, which occupies most of the upper part of the street.

Mercers traded in both exporting and importing 'luxurious' fabrics such as wool, velvet and silk. They are ranked 'first' in the hierarchal order of the merchants' companies, which I explain in more detail in the appendix.

Take the first right into **St Olave's Court** – passing what used to be St Olave's Church, dedicated to the 11th century patron saint of Norway, St Olaf.\* It was destroyed in the Great Fire in 1666, rebuilt by Christopher Wren and then, for reasons I haven't established, demolished in 1887, leaving only the tower and west wall. It's now the offices of a firm of solicitors.

*\* **Olaf II** was Norway's first Christian king. He reigned between 995 and 1030. At the time, England, like Norway, was part of Cnut's huge Scandinavian empire. The English King Ethelbert fought alongside Olaf to beat Cnut and the invading Danes in 1013. After Olaf died in 1030, he became a Catholic saint. And I like the fact that he was known as Olaf the Fat (or Stout) – who says 'fatism' is just a modern thing?*

You emerge into **Old Jewry** – directly opposite on the other side of the street there's a plaque on the wall of the building explaining that until 1272 this was the site of the famous Great Synagogue, which was destroyed after the Jews had been expelled from England.

### **A brief history of Jews in London**

A small number of Jews had been allowed to settle in London in the 11th century when the Norman King William the Conqueror was on the throne. Many had come from Normandy and were money lenders – something Christians were not allowed to do at that time. However, within a hundred years or so, people began to turn against them, and they started to be persecuted. This culminated with King Edward I in 1290 expelling all Jews from the country. It was another four hundred years before they began to resettle in England, something that was decreed by Oliver Cromwell. The first to settle were those fleeing religious persecution in Spain and Portugal, but later Jews from eastern and central Europe also began to move here. Many settled around Old Jewry which became a 'ghetto', a term used throughout Europe for an area populated mainly by Jews.

**Turn left up Old Jewry and left again into Gresham Street**, then first right into Basinghall Street (sometimes written with a double 's', the name coming from the Bassing family who built their mansion here in the 14th century.) And as the sign on the wall explains, you are now in the Ward of Cheap.

Notice the old, church-like building on your left – when we turn left up alongside it into **Guildhall Buildings** you realise it's not actually a church, but the Mayor of London and City of London's Court, which was established here in 1921.

Opposite the court are the offices of the City of London Police, and after just a few yards you enter the actual courtyard of the **Guildhall**.

This is one of the most historically important sites in the whole of the City of London. It is where for centuries the Corporation of the City has been based – and still is today. It's a splendid sight, particularly looking across the courtyard at the magnificent Great Hall in the East Wing, which was restored in 1910 to its original 1738 design.

**The Guildhall** was built on the site of a Saxon hall that had been constructed in the 1100s, and that in turn had been built over a Roman amphitheatre. The Guildhall has been the home of the City of London Corporation (previously called the Corporation of London) for over 800 years. The building was erected in the early 1400s and designed to reflect the power and prestige of London and its leaders – in those days the Lord Mayor of London rivalled the monarch for influence and importance. Of course, the Guildhall is not to be confused with London's City Hall which is the administrative centre for the rest of Greater London – in other words, all of London except for the City.

Whilst a large part of the City of London was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666, much of the Guildhall survived, though the spectacular medieval roof wasn't so lucky. That was rebuilt, but then in the Second World War it was badly damaged during a bombing raid and subsequently rebuilt in 1953 by the great architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott.

Now Grade I listed, it is only open to the public during the annual 'Open House' weekend each September. Many official ceremonies and functions are held here during the year, some of which are full of historic and colourful tradition. One of the most important is the Lord Mayor's Banquet that is held in the Great Hall each November, when the guest of honour is often the Prime Minister, who makes a 'keynote' speech about an important aspect of the government policy. It is also used by the Lord Mayor for helping to raise money for charities – recently I saw a charity event sponsored by the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress – it was a black-tie dinner, accompanied by a shortened performance of the opera Don Giovanni, and a table for ten people could be booked for ... £10,000.

### **The Guildhall and the Roman Amphitheatre**

The Roman amphitheatre on which the Guildhall was built, is now some 20 feet below today's ground level. It was the biggest in Britain and capable of accommodating up to seven thousand spectators – a somewhat staggering number considering the total population of London at the time was somewhere between twenty and thirty thousand people.

A semi-circular line of black paving stones has been laid out in the 'courtyard' in front of the Great Hall and the Art Gallery, which gives an idea of its size. In addition, a partial re-creation of the amphitheatre has been created in the basement of the Guildhall Art Gallery – and is something worth seeing.

And the name Guildhall? There are two possible reasons, and both are likely to be correct. The first is because of the association it has had since medieval times with the City's guilds, whilst the other is that the Anglo-Saxon word 'Gild' was associated with paying taxes, and it is known that people did come to the 'gild hall' to do that.

I mentioned that the City of London is still controlled from here and the day to day running takes place in the Corporation's modern offices that are situated to the left of the square and which extend behind the old Guildhall.

The more modern building on your right is the **Guildhall Art Gallery**, which opened to the public in the mid-1990s. It's free to enter and open every day except Sundays. If you have the time, it's well worth a visit. The upper floors are predominately given over to an excellent collection of paintings, but what I find particularly fascinating is the 'basement', where the remains of the Roman amphitheatre were discovered. It is quite amazing how, by using some of the original stones, a part of the amphitheatre has been 're-created'. As I say, it's definitely worth seeing if you have time.

Leave the courtyard via the lane that runs down the side of **St Lawrence Jewry Church**. (On the opposite side of the courtyard from the Guildhall – notice the old police telephone box on your right).

At the end turn right along **Gresham Street** – and on the wall of the church, there's another plaque reminding us we are still in the 'Ward of Cheap'. All of these Ward noticeboards (there are twenty-five Wards in the City) list the names of the 'Common Councillors and Ward Clerks'. But notice the names – rarely do you see 'common' or everyday names such as Fred Smith or Bob Jones here!

If the main door (known as the West Door) of St Lawrence Jewry Church is open, which it normally is on weekdays, then take a look inside. There are usually coffee and refreshments available – and very nice loos! (As with many city churches, it's often closed at weekends.)

There has been a church on this site since at least 1156 and possibly longer. Indeed, being situated as it was next to the Roman Amphitheatre that was here a thousand years before, the site may well have been a non-Christian shrine. It burnt down in the Great Fire of 1666 and was rebuilt a year later by Christopher Wren. Samuel Pepys made a visit not long afterwards and wrote in his diary that he was "well pleased with the church's shape ..."

Unfortunately, it was another City church that was badly damaged in the Second World War, with just the outside walls left standing, but was rebuilt in 1957 in Wren's original style.

It is also the official church of the Lord Mayor of London and the City of London Corporation. As a result, dignitaries such as the Mayor, Sheriffs and Aldermen all have reserved seats. And being a 'guild church' means that it doesn't have a parish – the livery companies of the City are regarded as its 'parish'.

Finally, the reason for the 'Jewry' part of the name is simply that it is near where the Jewish community lived from 1066 to 1290.

From the church, walk past the small triangular shaped 'fishpond' and turn right up **Aldermanbury**, passing the front of the Guildhall's modern West Wing. At the end of the long glass frontage is the entrance to the **City Business Library** and the **City of London Police Museum**. Admission to the museum is free, and it is open from Monday to Friday.

The **Police Museum** is fascinating and well worth a quick visit. Although small, it's full of fascinating exhibits that cover the force's 175 or so years. Topics covered include the original Watchmen and Wards of the City, the story of Jack the Ripper, policing throughout the Blitz – through to the more modern problems of dealing with terrorism and cybercrime. In case you don't have time to visit, or it's closed, I have put more information about the Watchmen and Wards of the City in the **appendix**.

Continue along **Aldermanbury** – we will be turning left into **Love Lane**, but before we do cross over and walk through the little garden on the corner in front of you. It's on the site of the Church of St Mary Aldermanbury, which was built around 1437 on the site of an earlier church, probably around 1180 or even earlier.



Route map 2

The Church of St Mary Aldermanbury was another church that was destroyed in the Great Fire of London, rebuilt by Christopher Wren then badly damaged again by bombs in the Second World War. However, whilst the interior was destroyed, much of the exterior survived and, amazingly, in 1966 stones from the ruins were transported to the Missouri Westminster College, in Fulton, Missouri in America. There they were used to build a memorial to Winston Churchill, who had made a famous speech there in 1946.

The garden contains a bust of William Shakespeare and memorial plaques to Henry Condell and John Heminge, two prominent actors who had performed his works at the Globe Theatre. Both of them lived close by and their 'claim to fame' was that in 1623 they had published the 'First Folio', the collected plays of Shakespeare.

The wording on the plaque reads -

"Preface to the First Folio Edition of Shakespeare's Plays - 1623.

To the Great Variety of Readers, It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to have bene wished, that the author himselfe had liv'd to have set forth, and overseene his owne writings; but since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the office of their care, and paine, to have collected & published them: ... absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them."

This was also the burial place in 1688 of the feared, notorious 'Hanging Judge Jeffries'. (I write more about him in the Tower Bridge to Canary Wharf Walk.) If you go down the four steps on the right to the lower level there's a large memorial stone and you can also see the actual site of the original church - the stone 'stumps' are part of the original pillars that supported the church.

**Leave the garden via the opposite end** from which you entered and walk on down **Love Lane** - it's very short and runs alongside the City of London police station. At the end is **Wood Street** and you can't fail to see the tower that stands in the middle. It's all that's left of **St Alban's Church**, whose origins date back to the time of King Offa of Mercia who is said to have had a palace here. It had fallen into disrepair and was rebuilt in 1634, but just thirty years later it was

destroyed in the Great Fire. It was rebuilt by Christopher Wren, (what a busy man he must have been!) but this time in a Gothic style. Sadly it was yet another city church subsequently destroyed by bombs in the Second World War, leaving just the Grade II listed tower that you still see today.

**Cross Wood Street.** Directly opposite, underneath a large office building, is a lane called **St Alban's Court**, which we walk up next. (The 'modernistic' looking building at the right-hand end of Wood Street is part of the **Barbican** – a huge complex that some people love, and others hate – personally, I really like it and I will be including it in another walk).

At the end of St Alban's Court, walk up the steps and continue past the little garden that's built on the site of **St Mary Staining**, another old church that was destroyed in the Great Fire and wasn't rebuilt. (The name Staining comes from a family from Staines in Middlesex who owned considerable property in this area.) The first reference to the church was in 1187 when it was referred to as Ecclesia de Staningehuge.

Continue ahead into **Oat Lane**, passing the red brick hall of another livery company, this time the Worshipful Company of Pewterers. It was destroyed in the Second World War and rebuilt in 1960.

At the top of Oat Lane, there's a sign on the right-hand side that tells us that from 1703 to 1940, this was the site of the of the Coachmakers' livery hall, another victim of the bombing during the Second World War. Whilst the company is no longer involved in its original trade of supporting members who were the manufactures of horse-drawn coaches, it still thrives, thanks to the support of new members who are drawn from those employed in the automobile and aviation industries. Progress indeed!

You are now in **Noble Street** – in front of you is a really fascinating viewing platform, so I suggest you start at the left-hand side and walk its full length as it allows you to see one of the best-preserved sections of the original Roman Wall.

Following Queen Boadicea's attack on the Roman settlement of Londinium, which was razed to the ground, the Romans built a defensive two-mile-long stone wall around the newly rebuilt city to protect it from both foreign invaders as well as any further attacks by Britons. As the city is built on clay, the stones to build the wall – over one million blocks of ragstone – were brought to London by ship from Kent. That was in excess of 1,750 shiploads.

Over the following centuries the wall gradually became less important and eventually much of it was demolished, the stone either being used elsewhere, or incorporated into new buildings being erected alongside it. The stretch of wall you see here also includes the west wall of the original Roman fort.

At the end of the Second World War many of the buildings around Noble Street that had been destroyed by bombs revealed parts of the Roman and medieval defences. It was decided to leave these remains visible at basement level to show both the exposed parts of the original wall and where it was later strengthened, as well as how it eventually became incorporated into newer buildings.

Interestingly, the wall proved useful during the Great Fire of London, as it prevented the flames from spreading any further to the north or north-west. And it was following the Great Fire that new buildings began to be constructed of stone and bricks rather than timber, in order to prevent another fire from spreading so quickly across the City.



Two thirds along the viewing platform, at the point where the office building behind the wall becomes more modern, you will see a 'crest' with the words 'Let Brotherly Love Continue'. This is the motto of the **Worshipful Company of Plasterers** – the original name for those in the plastering trade. The Worshipful Company of Plasterers was formed as a medieval trade guild to regulate the quality of plastering in the City of London and to safeguard the welfare and interests of plasterers. It received its first Royal Charter in 1501.

Their hall and headquarters occupy the lower levels of the modern building and is their fourth hall, the previous ones having been damaged or destroyed. Although built inside this modern 1970s building, the hall was carefully reproduced in its original neo-classical Robert Adam style. I haven't yet been able to gain access, but I'm told that it is really beautiful (which, considering their trade, isn't surprising). And besides being one of the finest of the livery halls, it is also the largest. It opens onto the 'Jubilee Garden', established by the Company in 1977. Each year the Company presents a Jubilee Crown to the City of London Corporation as 'rent' for the garden.

At the end of the Noble Street viewing walkway, the tiny garden on the right was the site of 'St Olave Silver Street' – notice the sign set into the low wall that says that it was also the site of the house of Chris and Mary Mountjoy, where Shakespeare lodged in 1604.

**Turn to the left and walk along London Wall** – the modern building above you on your right houses the **Museum of London**. It's definitely worth seeing as some of the attractions are excellent, but you can easily spend many hours in this fascinating museum, so you may prefer to visit on another occasion. An escalator on your left gives access to the museum – and a plaque in the wall explains that this was once the site of St Mark's Hospital, founded by Frederick Salmon in 1835.

London Wall now becomes **Aldersgate Street**, but only for a hundred yards before it changes to **St Martin's le Grand**.

Cross over at the pedestrian crossing and in front of you is the **Church of St Botolph without Aldersgate**.

There are four churches in London dedicated to St Botolph, a relatively unknown saint elsewhere in the country, but for those who may be interested in reading more about what happened to this Saint after he had died, I have put more information about him in the appendix.

There's been a church on this site since the 11th century. It was rebuilt in 1418 and then again in 1791.

And the word 'without'? This is used quite often as part of the name of churches in the City of London and generally means 'without' or outside of the City wall – or sometimes just outside of the name of the district – i.e. in this instance St Botolph's was outside the Ward of Aldersgate.

Aldersgate was one of the four original gates into the Roman city of London and the name is thought to have come from the alder trees that grew in the area. Aldersgate Street, which in one form or another has existed since pre-Roman times, is the start of the A1, arguably the best known and certainly the longest road in Britain, that runs from here to Edinburgh.

**The entrance to St Botolph Church is on the right in Postman's Park** – a delightful little public space that's very popular with City workers, especially in summer when the flowerbeds can look particularly attractive. Originally it was the churchyard and burial ground of the church, but later also incorporated the burial grounds of the nearby St Leonards and Christ Church

Greyfriars. The reason the park is a little higher than the surrounding streets is because a shortage of burial places in the City meant corpses were often just laid on the ground and covered with soil – thus raising the levels.

Postman's Park opened in 1880 and the name came about as it was literally an open space where workers in the adjacent General Post Office would take their breaks. It is famous for two reasons – firstly, as the sign on the railings informs us it commemorates the 'evangelical conversion of Rev. John Wesley and Rev. Charles Wesley', whose home was in the adjacent street.

Secondly, it's because of the 'George Frederic Watts Memorial to Heroic Self Sacrifice'. This unusual memorial is at the rear of the garden and consists of a wooden 'cloister' that covers a stretch of wall on which are fixed fifty-four memorial tablets, each commemorating 'individual ordinary people who have died whilst saving the lives of others and who might otherwise have been forgotten'. Watts battled for a number of years to be allowed to erect this memorial, which he wanted to coincide with the Victorian Jubilee.

He was a socialist, artist and sculptor, and wrote "The material prosperity of a nation is not an abiding possession; the deeds of its people are". He also added the verse from the Bible, John 15.3 – 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lays down his life for his friends'. It is somewhat humbling, inspiring and actually quite sad to read what is written on each of the little plaques, which give brief details of how and why each individual died whilst they were trying to save the lives of others.

The road that runs alongside the right of the park is called 'Little Britain', and it leads to Smithfield Market. It has quite a history as both William Shakespeare and the two Wesley brothers once lived here, though sadly, both houses were demolished some years ago. The house with 'White Horse' carved into its frontage and 'Cross Key Square' written above the gates was for several hundred years an inn, but it closed in the 1950s.

**Leave the park by the way you entered and turn to the right down St Martin's le Grand,** passing an old police box.

On your right is the impressive **No.1 St Martin's le Grand**. In 1890 it became London's General Post Office (initially called the General Letter Office), though a postal office had been on the site since 1678. For a few years this was a very busy and congested place as mail coaches departed from here for destinations across the country. This wasn't for long though, as shortly after it had opened, the railways began to transport mail far quicker and more cheaply than could be done by horses. By 1912 it had been partially demolished and replaced with the office building you see today. However, the building had played another part in the 'communication innovation' as it was from its roof in 1896 that Marconi demonstrated his wireless telegraphy system, sending messages to another nearby post office.

On the corner, by the pedestrian crossing, you'll see a rather unusual octagonal post box. Designed in 1866 by architect John Penfold and so known at the '**Penfold post box**', this replica was unveiled by Charles and Camilla in 2016 to commemorate the knighting in 1516 of Brian Tuke, the first Master of the Posts, by Henry VIII.

**Cross over St Martin's le Grand** at the pedestrian crossing, turn to the left and then immediately **cross over into Gresham Street**, with the Piccolo café and bar on the left. The Piccolo offers a range of snacks through to full meals – there's a bigger seating area upstairs. You will often see London taxis parked outside as it's popular with cab drivers – usually a good sign of reasonably priced, wholesome food.

Next to the Piccolo is the **Church of St Anne and St Agnes**. It's no longer used as a church but is now the Gresham Centre, an international centre of excellence for vocal music. The earliest records of the church date back to 1137, though it was gutted by fire in 1548, rebuilt, then destroyed again in the Great Fire. Rebuilt by Christopher Wren, it was destroyed yet again during the Second World War and rebuilt again in the 1960s in Wren's original style. For many years it was used as a Lutheran church by immigrants from countries such as Estonia and Latvia. Following their move to another church it became the choral centre that it still is today.

**Cross over Noble Street** and in front of the modern Lloyds Bank office (much improved by the 'boxed topiary' on the first-floor level) is a small garden. It is on the site of **St John Zachary Church**, destroyed in the Great Fire and never rebuilt. The garden is owned by the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, whose Hall is almost opposite – notice the Goldsmiths' emblem of leopards' heads at the entrance to the garden. It was redeveloped in 1995 by the Worshipful Company of Gardeners in conjunction with the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths, Lightmongers and Constructors. There is another garden on a lower level that is accessed via steps in the right-hand corner.

And possibly of interest to any teacher reading this, it was here in the mid-1400s that the vicar of the church, William Byngham, founded the first ever teacher training college in Britain. And if you think you've seen the garden before – it was used in the film version of Stieg Larsson's 'The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo'.

Cross over Gresham Street and as I've just mentioned the building opposite is the large but plain looking hall of the **Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths**. And while it might be plain from the outside it certainly isn't inside.

The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths is one of what are known as the 'Great Twelve' livery companies of London and was established in the Middle Ages. They were given their Royal Charter in 1327 by Edward I. This building is also the site of Britain's 'Assay Office', which you walk past shortly.

This is their third building on this site. The first was built here in 1339 and besides the Great Hall, there was a chapel, granary, armoury, parlour and gardens. The second was built in 1636, though damaged just thirty years later in the Great Fire of London. However, it wasn't until the late 1820s that it was demolished and the building you see today was built in its place. Whilst it was hit by a bomb in the Second World War, it wasn't totally destroyed, though in 1990 some fairly major refurbishment took place. The hall has a number of beautiful and very ornate rooms, some of which are used for exhibitions, which are open to the public.

**Turn to the right and walk down Gutter Lane**, which runs between the Goldsmiths' Hall and the outwardly more impressive **Hall of the Wax Chandlers**. Their building is the seventh on the site, the first being built in 1501. Although considerably smaller than the Goldsmiths next door, I like it.

The **Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers** was established in 1371 to regulate the trade of those involved in the preparation, making and sale of beeswax and beeswax products. Candles, of course, were big business in those days, not only for illumination, but were regularly used in religious ceremonies (as they still are today).

Beeswax was also used for things such as the seals that were placed on important documents and the coating of wooden 'tablets', that were once used for the writing of important documents.

Today the company supports those engaged in the modern wax trade such as beekeepers, and sponsors the National Honey Show. The Company's membership though has declined over the years and now totals around 140.

Another livery company's hall – **The Haberdashers** – used to be opposite but they have moved to new premises close to Smithfield Market.

As you walk down **Gutter Lane**, you'll see the **Assay Office** on the side of the Goldsmiths' Hall.

The word 'assay' means to appraise, examine or test – and in the case of precious metals, it means to assay or test the purity of the metal. Once that has been done, it is officially marked to confirm its purity. This was first carried out in France in the 13th century, whilst Britain's first Assay Office was set up shortly afterwards here in the Goldsmiths' Company's Hall (hence the mark used to show the purity is called a 'hallmark') at the request of Edward I.

Edward passed a statute that required gold and silver of a defined standard to be marked with the sign of a 'leopard's head', which was said to have been taken from his Royal Coat of Arms – and so subsequently it became known as the 'King's Mark', still an internationally recognised mark of approval and guarantee. At one time there were a number of assay offices in Britain, but there are now just four.

**Pass Carey Lane** on your right and turn right into **Priest Court** – the 'lane' that goes under a large office building.

The building on the left side is another livery company's hall – this time the **Worshipful Company of Saddlers**. It's a lovely building and worth taking a look at its front before walking up the lane – (you can see the rear of it as you walk through.) The modern office building on the other corner of Priest's Court was once the hall of the **Worshipful Company of Broderers**. Built in the 17th century, it was destroyed by bombs in 1941 and never rebuilt. They now use the Hall of the Mercers for their official events. And 'Broderers'? As the name might indicate, they were embroiders, and although they are now one of the smaller of the livery companies, they still support and have close links with the Royal School of Needlework, making awards to encourage proficiency in embroidery amongst students.

At the end of Priests Court, **turn left into Foster Lane** and just a few yards along, immediately before **St Vedast-alias-Foster church**, is a doorway that leads into its tiny churchyard. A plaque inside the entrance contains part of a Roman pavement found beneath a nearby church that was demolished 1886.

The church itself is rather lovely and worth popping in for a look. I like the 'Book of the Sick' that you see displayed and which visitors are able to add names to. It is placed on the High Altar during Eucharistic prayer and Sunday services.

**St Vedast-alias-Foster** is named after a French Bishop in northern Gaul, an area that is now partly in Belgium, France and Holland. He helped to restore the Christian Church after decades of destruction by the invading tribes during the late Roman Empire. He was known for his charity, meekness and patience. Some of his good deeds are depicted in the church's stained-glass windows.

This is the official church of a number of the City Guilds, including the Haberdashers, Mercers, Goldsmiths, Salters, Brewers, Wax Chandlers, Saddlers, Weavers and Plaisterers.

I have put a little more about the church in the **appendix**.

**Turn left out of the church** back into Foster Lane, walk to the end and you are at the start of **Cheapside**, an historic and interesting street that I have covered in the City of London walk 2.

Across on your right you will see **St Paul's Cathedral** and the entrance to the underground station is just around the corner to the right. Numerous bus routes pass close by, so I won't attempt to list them all here.

# APPENDIX TO THE CITY WALK 1

## MORE ABOUT THE CITY OF LONDON

As this walk takes place in the City of London, I have begun this appendix with some background and history on the City. I have then written more specific background to some of the City's unique institutions – for example the livery companies and the wards and watch system.

Following this, I continue with my standard format, giving further details about various specific places, events or people that we encounter during the walk for those who'd like more information.

The City of London is sometimes said to be unique. It's a city within a city, and a county as well (though not a country as the Vatican is). Indeed, I have actually heard the City of London being referred to as the 'Vatican of the Commercial World'.

Rather uniquely, it is technically not subject to the Crown – nor to Parliament, where it even has its own special 'representative' called the Remembrancer. He or she sits close to the Speaker of the House – and has a similar seat in the House of Lords. They are the only non-MP or civil servant with a seat in Parliament and their job is to ensure that the City's unique rights are maintained, a role that dates back to the time of Henry VIII when the City of London felt he was interfering with their affairs. In practice they do more than that, acting as a channel of communication between the City, Parliament and the Crown.

As a result of not being technically subject to the Crown, the City is the only part of the United Kingdom where the Queen has to ask for permission to enter. When she visits, she's met by the Lord Mayor at Temple Bar, (where the Strand becomes Fleet Street), makes a little bow and asks for permission to enter. The Mayor then in turn hands her the City's Sword of State, which signifies an invitation to enter.

The City is small, measuring just under 1 ¼ acres, yet its influence has for centuries extended across the world – and in financial matters still does. Indeed, until the start of the 20th century it was regarded as being the world's centre of finance, insurance and trade. It is also the country's centre for the legal profession. Much of the wealth of Britain is created and generated through and by the businesses based in the City of London, which has always been known as Britain's principle financial and business centre. And despite the growth of financial industries in places like New York and Hong Kong, it is still one of the world's leading centres. Although over the past twenty years some of the City's financial service industry has moved a couple of miles east to Canary Wharf, the City itself still dominates.

## The 'Square Mile'

As a matter of interest I'll mention here that the entrance to the City is marked at the boundary on most roads leading into it by a cast iron 'dragon' mounted on a stone or metal plinth. Most are painted silver, with their wings and tongues in red. Examples can be seen at Victoria Embankment, Temple Bar, Holborn, Farringdon, Aldersgate, Moorgate, Bishopsgate, Aldgate, London Bridge and Blackfriars Bridge.

## A very brief history of the City of London

*I emphasise that this is just my personal interpretation of a very complex story*

It's really a 'Tale of Two Cities' and I'll begin by mentioning that whilst most cities have a cathedral – London is made up of two cities and therefore has two cathedrals. The City of London has St Paul's Cathedral (visible on the left of Daniel Turner's painting, c.1790), whilst the other is the City of Westminster, which has as its cathedral Westminster Abbey. That's the first of many 'oddities' about London.

Visitors to London – particularly those from overseas – often get confused with the concept of the 'two Londons'. There's the London of Buckingham Palace, the Royal Parks, Oxford Street shops, the West End's theatres, Covent Garden's bars and restaurants, Westminster Cathedral and the Houses of Parliament – and then when they look at a map, they can see a small one-mile square area called the 'City of London', a 'city within a city' that's famous for being a centre of international finance and banking, a place of ancient customs, towering skyscrapers and historic buildings. Then they discover it has its own police force, a mayor who is a 'Lord Mayor' and appointed not in any real democratic way, but by a small number of influential and successful businessmen within the City, completely unlike Sadiq Kahn or Boris Johnson, who are elected by the population at large. And even more strangely, whereas the 'metropolis' of London has a population of over eight million, the City of London's is just a tiny resident population of just seven thousand (in the last census of 2011 – current estimates are that it is now nearer to eleven thousand).

And of course besides all of that, it's a place where even the King or Queen must stop at its boundary to ask permission from the Lord Mayor to enter ...

No wonder visitors can get confused!

And all of this is precisely the reason why I love the City and find walking around it so fascinating.

The City was extensively bombed during the Second World War, which caused widespread damage to many of its historic buildings, (and of course we mustn't forget that much of it had previously been destroyed four hundred years earlier in the Great Fire of 1666) it is still a place of fascinating customs; historic quirky buildings, little ancient alleyways and squares, beautiful churches ... and between my two walks – City Walk One and City Walk Two, we see many of these places.

**The City of London is one of Britain's most historic areas.** For the past 2,000 years it has been the centre of commerce and trade in Britain – and in the 19th and 20th centuries, much of the world.

The City of London is often referred to as the 'Square Mile', which indeed it almost is; despite its fame and achievements it is just a very small area. It's the oldest part of London and dates back to Roman times. There were probably settlements going back even earlier, but it was the Romans who first built a 'city' here.

Indeed, its size hasn't really changed much since those Roman times. They settled here in AD50, some seven years after they had invaded Britain, creating a city known then as Londinium. They had chosen this particular site to build their settlement as at this point the River Thames narrowed sufficiently to enable them to build a bridge, allowing a connection to be made with their crossing points between Kent and the continent.

The city grew until some ten or so years later (around AD60) it was attacked by Boadicea, the Queen of the Iceni tribes who lived in an area of what today probably includes much of Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk. She attacked and burnt down Colchester, which was then

the Roman capital of Britain, before heading south to destroy Londinium, indiscriminately killing most of the population – locals and Romans alike.

However, displaying the efficiency for which they had become famous, within ten years the Romans had rebuilt the city, larger and more prestigious than it had been before, and made it their capital. In order to protect it, both from British and foreign invaders, they established the boundaries of the city and began building an enormous stone wall around them.

The wall was a mighty undertaking. London is built on clay, not rock, so the stone for its construction had to come from elsewhere, and they chose a 'ragstone' from Maidstone in Kent. Once quarried, this had to be brought by barge around the coast of Kent and up the Thames, in itself a monumental feat, as it is estimated that well over a thousand barge loads would have been needed, as the wall was around 15 – 20 feet high and around 7 or 8 feet thick.

This great defensive wall, much of which wasn't built to its eventual height and width until almost AD180-190, has played an enormous role in both the success and preservation of the uniqueness of London, making it such a fascinating place to explore.

The Roman wall had generally followed the line of existing defences, and incorporated the same gated entrances to the City, with more being added over time. Until at least the 15th century these gates were guarded at all times and locked at night. (The position of some of those gates are recognised today by street names or districts – Newgate, Aldgate, Bishopsgate, Ludgate for example).

Much of the wall has been demolished over time and the stone used in houses and other buildings, but parts of it can still be seen today – for example in the underpass between Tower Hill Tube Station and the Tower of London, or in nearby Coopers Row, at the rear of the 'driveway' entrance adjacent to the Grange City Hotel. The street called 'London Wall' follows the route of the wall westerly for just over ¼ of a mile, though you see little evidence of it. However, there is a particularly good example of it in Noble Street, that's close to the Museum of London and which we walk along in the City of London walk 1.

Defensive walls were also built along the riverside, and again gates were built into it to provide access to the Thames.

Although London had become such an extremely prosperous and prestigious Roman city, with grand public buildings, an enormous amphitheatre and the largest basilica this side of the Alps, all 'good' things come to an end, and by the beginning of the 5th century the Roman Empire was in rapid decline. Rome itself was becoming under threat from invaders from the east of its empire, and with London being its most northerly outpost, its soldiers were withdrawn to help to protect it.

As a result, within less than a hundred years, what had seemingly become a quite magnificent city became virtually abandoned – something I find hard to understand and imagine.

### **Saxon times**

The next 600 years or so, sometimes referred to as the 'Dark Ages', saw the Saxon invaders moving into southern England. By the 5th and early 6th century the Anglo Saxons had begun settling just outside the old Roman city (why they didn't just move into the city the Romans had built and left, I've never understood). They are believed to have made a base somewhere just slightly north of today's Strand/Fleet Street, which they called Lundenwic. (The Anglo-Saxon word



'wic' meant 'trading town', so it was 'London trading town'.) They based themselves here and built a small harbour as it was adjacent to where the River Fleet entered the Thames.

By the 9th century, the Vikings from Denmark had begun raiding England, particularly on the eastern side of the country, though eventually being defeated by the Saxon King Alfred the Great, who then set about strengthening and in places rebuilding the old Roman fortifications to be strengthened and in places rebuilt.

The Danes (rather than the Vikings) began attacking in the 10th and early 11th century and eventually, in 1016, Prince Cnut the Great (later known as Canute), the son of the Danish King, successfully invaded and became King of England.

By 1100 the population of London was said to be around 15,000 and within two hundred years it had increased to 80,000.

### **William the Conqueror and the Norman invasion**

The Norman invasion in the 1060s saw William the Conqueror's quickly realising the importance of London and he began to redevelop the City, reinforcing the defensive walls that the Romans had built a thousand years before. To make the City of London even more secure, he set about building the Tower of London; its massive size was designed to as much to intimidate and subdue the local population and so prevent any uprising as it was to deter any possible foreign invaders.

In addition, William quickly realised that granting rights and privileges to the City of London, in return for them acknowledging him as King (and paying taxes), made a lot of sense. As subsequent royals have also realised. It is said that since then there's been a thousand-year history of monarchs allowing the City of London to carry on doing what it does best, which is to make money and pay taxes, whilst at the same time distrusting it.

By the beginning of the 12th century, the City of London was granted an important new charter, another step towards its 'self-government'. This included the ability of the City to appoint their own Sheriffs, allow citizens to be tried in their own courts, reduce the taxes the citizens had to pay to the Crown and much more.

The population of London continued to grow, though the 'Black Death' plague in the mid-14th century saw the City lose around half of its population. but as a result of the City of London's political and economic importance - and despite further epidemics - the population continued to rise quite rapidly.

Another major upheaval that had considerable effect on London took place in the middle of the 16th century, when King Henry VIII broke away from the Vatican controlled Roman Catholic Church, founding the Church of England in its place. He brought about the Dissolution and one of its major impacts was that the Catholic church's vast landholdings, monasteries and other religious buildings were commandeered by Henry and his cronies.

Throughout the 15th and 16th centuries the City of London continued to become more successful, with its companies and the Livery Companies (Guilds, which I explain elsewhere) growing in wealth, power and prestige. This commercial success continued throughout the next two or three centuries. Trade with Europe and gradually the rest of the world, continued to grow. The formation of institutions by Royal Charter such as the Muscovy Company and the British East India Company which eventually ended up controlling most of India, meant that the City of London's fortunes continued to soar.

In December 1664 another disaster hit London when the first fatality of the 'Great Plague' was recorded, and eventually one third of its population died from it. Recent excavations for Crossrail (the Elizabeth Line) construction project have uncovered several of the 'plague pits' where the bodies of victims, dying too quickly for proper burials to be arranged, were thrown.

However, hot on the heels (in more ways than one!) came the Great Fire of London in 1666.

The City's old narrow medieval streets, with houses packed so closely together, meant that the fire was able to spread so quickly and wreak devastation on the City. However rebuilding started almost immediately, but now with far more building restrictions, such as houses spaced further apart and not constructed solely of wood, to try and avoid it happening again.

However, it was thanks to the vision, drive and enthusiasm of people like Christopher Wren that London literally arose out of the ashes. His contribution to the rebuilding of the City was inestimable and he was responsible for the rebuilding of St Paul's Cathedral, and over fifty other churches, preserving at least some of the City's original character. Indeed, just thirty years after the Great Fire it was being said that the 'streets of London were paved with gold'.

By now, the City's success and its subsequent rising population had seen it spreading far beyond its previous boundaries. This growth was partly due to a rapid rise in immigration. Religious intolerance and persecution in Europe saw an influx of Huguenots from France and the Low Countries, many of whom settled in London and brought with them their specialist skills, such as weaving, clock, watch and jewellery making, further contributing to London's financial success and wealth.

By the end of the 19th century London's population was five times larger than it was at the beginning of the century. It had become the most prosperous, populated and influential city in the world. Its companies were trading with countries across the world and it was said that one fifth of the planet was ruled from London. Indeed the East India Company was at the time the biggest trading company in the world and ended up ruling over much of India for many years. Improved mechanisation saw factory output beginning to soar. At the same time transport links were rapidly being developed across the country. The Regent's Canal had opened, enabling factory goods to be brought by barge from the industrial Midlands to London and the docks on the River Thames. Railways were spreading out from London to all parts of the country, again providing more markets for manufactured goods as well as bringing cheaper coal for the newly opened power stations in London, fresher food for City dwellers and much more.

### **The River Thames and the City's growth**

And here I must make a quick mention of the River Thames. Besides acting as the City's southern boundary, there is no doubt that one of the main reasons for the City's success has been the Thames. The Romans had realised the importance of the river and constructed the first quaysides. From the 10th century onwards the loading and unloading of cargoes, and all that goes with it, became the responsibility of companies based within the City, and very profitable it was for many hundreds of years.

Collecting taxes on imported goods – particularly high value cargoes such as spices, tea and coffee – were vital to Britain's official 'coffers' and, by the 16th century, half of England's customs revenue was being collected from cargos being unloaded in London. To ensure none were missed, the government decreed that only 'Legal Quays', where there was a Customs presence, could be used for this purpose and in 1558 twenty of these quays were licensed between the Tower of London and London Bridge.

However, as the shipping trade continued to rapidly grow, so did the queues of ships waiting to unload. Indeed, the situation became so bad that at times it was said to have been possible to have walked from the north bank of the Thames to the south bank by simply stepping on the decks of the moored ships, all waiting their turn to be unloaded. As this could take days or even several weeks to be done – and some cargoes were of perishable goods such as food – it was becoming a serious problem. In addition, there was the problem of ship owners having their expensive craft sat for long periods not earning any money. All of this resulted in the first of the London Docks being built – but even that wasn't until 1799 (I cover more about this in more detail in the Tower Bridge to Canary Wharf Thames Walk).

**But returning to the brief history of the City of London** – it would be impossible to cover here the phenomenal growth and success of the City over the next two centuries. On my 'Walk Two of the City of London' we visit a number of significant buildings that were erected in the 17th and 18th centuries – for example the Royal Exchange in 1571; Edward Lloyd's first coffee houses in 1652 (the forerunner of Lloyd's Insurance Company, which was founded 120 years later in 1773); the Bank of England in 1691; the Stock Exchange in 1801 ...

The success of London as a whole, of which the City of London was a significant 'driving' force, can be seen by the amazing growth in population; in 1851 London as a whole had just over 2½ million residents; fifty years later, at the end of Queen Victoria's reign in 1901, it was more than 6½ million.

### **The 20th century**

Jumping forward now to the 20th century – whilst the population of London as a whole continued to rise, the residential population of the City had actually been falling during the latter part of the 19th century. This had been encouraged by the better transport links provided by the early underground train networks, as people began to move further out into the new and expanding suburbs. However, as a result of the continual expansion of the City's commercial and financial businesses, the actual numbers travelling in to work in the City was increasing.

### **The Second World War**

Needless to say things changed rapidly following the outbreak of the Second World War. Destroying London was key to the German's plan to demoralise the people and then invade England. Both the City and the neighbouring docklands and its associated factories were major targets for German bombing raids. Large swathes of the City and the docks and huge areas of the East End were reduced to rubble, reducing the population still further.

In total over 18,000 bombs were dropped on London. From September 1940 to May 1941 bombing raids were almost a daily or nightly occurrence – indeed, with the exception of just one day, there was a period of almost three months when bombs fell on London every night or day. Statistics vary, but it is said that over 30,000 Londoners were killed in the war, with over 80,000 seriously injured and a million houses damaged or destroyed.

By the end of the war the City of London was one of the worst damaged areas of the country. Many residential buildings had been so badly damaged they were demolished, and replaced by new office buildings, thus further speeding up the population decline.

## **The City of London in the 21st century**

The City has always been somewhere that was frantically busy during the working week, with thousands of office workers flooding in every weekday. (Today there are said to be around 400,000 people working here, many in the financial services and insurance industries).

However, few people actually lived in the City so it was a different story in the evenings and at weekends when it would often be virtually 'deserted' and the restaurants, bars and shops closed, so even tourists didn't bother to visit.

I understand that in the last census there were only about 9,000 people registered as living in the City, however, in recent years that is changing, and the population is said to be increasing. 'Mixed use' skyscraper developments, that offer both office space and residential apartments, are being built and perhaps to avoid long commutes, people are moving back in. Whilst some shops and bars still remain closed in the evenings and at weekends, many now stay open, particularly on Saturdays. Fortunately, there are still plenty of streets you can walk around and see little sign of life on a Sunday morning. Perfect for sightseeing, enjoying the atmosphere and taking photographs.

In addition to that, the City is also becoming more popular with tourists as a place to stay as well as visit, and over forty new hotels, offering well in excess of five thousand bedrooms, have either opened recently or will be opening over the next year or so. Whilst room rates are still generally expensive during the business week, they can be surprisingly attractive at weekends and in holiday periods.

## **How the City of London was, and in many cases still is, run**

### **The Corporation of the City of London**

Its official name is the 'Mayor and commonality and Citizens of the City of London' and it's the "oldest continuous municipal democracy in the world". Or to put it another way; "The world's longest established local government authority".

After William the Conqueror had invaded England in the Norman Conquest of 1066, he may have defeated the army, but he wasn't prepared to do battle with the wealthy and prestigious City of London! So, in a Charter the following year, he granted various rights and privileges to the City, its merchants and citizens; many of those still hold good today. Further rights were granted to the City in the Magna Carta in 1215. The City also gained more independence in many areas from the Crown - too much money was being created by the City for them to dare to interfere.

There had been a form of organised 'government' in the City as far back as Saxon times, but this gradually became more formalised and by 1265 the Aldermen began to consult with a group of forty 'wise and discreet' citizens on various matters. The City had already been divided into wards and between one and four from men from each was selected. From 1376, this group had become more formalised and became known as the 'Common Council', which is still the vital part of the City's government. (I mention the Wards again shortly).

**The structure of the Corporation of London** is still the same as it has been for many hundreds of years. At the top is the Lord Mayor, followed by the Court of Aldermen, The Court of Common Council and the Freeman and Livery of the City.

**The Lord Mayor**, who serves a one-year term of office, is chosen by fellow members of the Court of Aldermen. Whilst the role is largely ceremonial these days, it is still prestigious, though

the Lord Mayor is expected to work extremely hard, which I explain more about next). And of course, it is important not to confuse the Lord Mayor of the City with the Mayor of London, a political post, who is elected by residents of the whole of London. There have now been nearly seven hundred Lord Mayors of the City since the role was established in 1687.

**Alderman and Councilmen** stand for election in each of the twenty-five wards, (more on those later), each ward being an electoral division. Residents and businesses based in the City are entitled to vote.

**The Court of the Aldermen** is chaired by the Lord Mayor and meets eight times a year.

**The Court of Common Council** is the primary decision-making body, and usually meets every month. As with any local authority it primarily works through committees but is unique in that it is non-party political.

### **The Role of the Lord Mayor of London**

Whilst the Lord Mayor's primary responsibility is to represent the City of London, it would be fairer to say that it actually means representing the City's financial services sector – the banks, insurance companies, stock brokers ... all of which are both the power house of the City as well as that of the country.

During their year in office the Mayor would often be attending between five and eight functions a day; they would make around eight hundred speeches in a year. The Mayor is also expected to travel extensively during their year of office. They would usually be abroad on official business for around a hundred days of the year.

### **The Mansion House**

This is the official home of the Lord Mayor for the year they are in office. It was built in 1752 by the architect George Dance the Elder and the Palladium-style building is now Grade I listed. Outside, its six Corinthian columns support a pediment that has as its centre piece a 'symbolic figure of the City of London trampling on her enemies'.

The most famous room, used for lavish receptions, is known as the 'Egyptian Room', on account of its marble columns

Besides the rooms used for hosting official functions, the Lord Mayor has his or her private apartments, and there are a further twenty bedrooms for staff and guests.

Some of the official functions are quite magnificent and politically very important. The 'Easter Banquet' has as its main speaker the current British Foreign Secretary, whilst the white tie dinner has as its principle guest and main speaker the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who uses the opportunity to talk about the British economy.

Interestingly, as the Lord Mayor was at one time also the City Magistrate, the Mansion House also had the courthouse within the building and there were twelve cells, eleven for male prisoners and one for women, in the basement. One of the more famous prisoners was Sylvia Pankhurst, who was held here on charges of sedition in 1930. The Magistrates Court is now in an adjacent building.

### **... and how the building of the Mansion House was funded ...**

I must just make mention here about the way in which the building of the Mansion House was funded. It was truly as unique as it was grossly unfair and actually rather wicked.

At the time there were a number of 'dissenters' living in London. These were people who opposed state interference in religion and turned their backs on the Church of England and Catholic Church. Many refused to take the Sacrament, a fundamental part of both church's worship.

So, in order to raise the money for the building, the City authorities decided to only select 'dissenters' to stand for election as a Sheriff of the City of London. They did this because they knew the rules said that to be a Sheriff you had to have taken, and continue to take, the Church of England's Sacrament – something they knew they wouldn't be able to do.

At the same time, they brought in a new 'law' that said anybody who refused to stand for election to Sheriff would be subject to a huge fine, in today's money equal to many thousands of pounds. And in so doing they systematically ruined a lot of people and raised enough money to build the Mansion House.

### **Guilds and Livery Companies**

The majority of the City of London's Livery Companies evolved from the medieval guilds that were to be found in many of the leading cities of Europe. Guilds are said to go back as far as Saxon times – groups of men from the same trade, would 'adopt' a local church, taking that church's Saint as their patron. They gradually changed from being mainly religious fraternities into organisations that would regulate the trade or craft that the 'members' were involved with. Some people have referred to them as a medieval version of today's employer's associations and trading standards officers!

Realising that having some sort of official 'recognition' by the Crown would give them more authority, they began to apply for 'Royal authorisation' and by 1180 some were even being fined by Henry I for not having sought it. The Crown had quickly realised the benefits of working with these guilds. After all, they were generally made up of clever, skilled and hardworking men, many of whom were amassing considerable amounts of money – which of course Kings (and Queens) always needed more. So in return for paying taxes and making loans to the Crown, the Guilds, as they were by then officially known, demanded to be given various powers, usually connected to having the ability to restrict and supervise their particular trade or profession. This enabled them to do such things as limit the numbers able to trade or practice, prevent cheaper or inferior goods being imported from elsewhere in the country as well as from abroad, set prices, wages and ensure quality by setting up training schemes and apprenticeships. They also had to subscribe to a code of conduct. For example, any merchandise they sold had to be of a certain quality – butchers couldn't sell rancid meat nor could bakers sell mouldy bread.

During the 14th century, members of different Guilds began to wear their own distinctive 'livery', or costumes, thus distinguishing themselves from other guilds. That was quite simply how the name 'Livery' companies came about and these uniforms or costumes evolved into a form of ceremonial dress, unique to each guild, that are still worn today at official events.

Throughout the 15th and 16th centuries the City of London thrived, as did the Livery Companies who were playing a vital role in its success and with the wealth they were creating they began to build elaborate headquarters, known as 'Halls', as they are still known today. These were often quite magnificent and elaborate buildings but sadly, many were destroyed as a result of

bombing raids during the Second World War. However, nearly forty are still in existence and are often quite magnificent buildings that are elaborately furnished. We see a number of them in the City of London Walk 1, and some do occasionally open their doors to allow the public to have a look around – many do this on the annual London ‘Open Door’s weekend each September.

By the 16th century, control of the Guilds, or Livery Companies, as they had then become known, passed from the Crown to the Lord Mayor of London and his Aldermen.

As the Livery Companies increased in prosperity, they became increasingly protective of their own status (or perceived status) within the City. Huge rivalry began to develop between them as to which was the most important and a particular aspect of this was the ‘order of precedence’. Quite simply, this was the order in which each Livery Company would take part in ceremonial events like the Lord Mayor’s or royal processions through the City. Things got so bad that at times it could even result in violence. However, it was the Lord Mayor and Court of the Aldermen that again ruled on this, basing their decision on the size, strength and importance of each Company at that time – and although it was as far back as the early 16th Century, the rules they set for ‘precedence’ still hold to this day.

And in case you might be interested, the Order of Precedence is –

1. Worshipful Company of Mercers (general merchants)
2. Worshipful Company of Grocers (spice merchants)
3. Worshipful Company of Drapers (wool and cloth merchants)
4. Worshipful Company of Fishmongers
5. Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths
6. Worshipful Company of Skinners (fur traders)\*
7. Worshipful Company of Merchant Taylors (tailors)\*
8. Worshipful Company of Haberdashers (clothiers in sewn and fine materials – e.g. silk)
9. Worshipful Company of Salters (traders in salt and chemicals)
10. Worshipful Company of Ironmongers
11. Worshipful Company of Vintners (wine merchants)
12. Worshipful Company of Clothworkers

*\* There was even a ‘battle’ between the Skinners and the Merchant Taylors for the sixth place, eventually resolved by allowing one to be in sixth position one year and the other the seventh, which would be reversed the following year ... hence (it is often said) the expression we still use today: ‘being at sixes and sevens’.*

The whole list of the present 110 Livery Company’s in London is actually quite fascinating, but too long to list here.

And in case you are wondering about the ‘Worshipful Company of ...’ – this is how they are formally referred to. As far as I can make out nobody seems to know where the ‘worshipful’ came from – it was probably just because they thought that by putting ‘worshipful’ in front of Company it made themselves sound more important.

The social and economic conditions that gave birth to the old guilds have long since gone and their role now is often ceremonial, having little or no control over the trades they once represented. However, some still have regulatory or statutory functions: for example, the Goldsmiths and Fishmongers. Most now concentrate on their charitable work (over £50 million a year is given by these companies to charity), whilst some still support the modern equivalent of their past trades. For example, the ‘Horners’, a livery company that goes back as far as 1284 and who carved and fashioned horns for used for a variety of purposes, from carrying liquids

through to musical instruments, now support the modern plastics industry by encouraging educational and training schemes.

More modern Companies cover trades and professions that didn't exist in earlier times, such as the Air Pilots and Navigators and the Information Technologists.

Livery companies often became exceedingly wealthy bodies – so much so that they were able to take care of their members in ill-health and old age. Some set up their own schools and a few of these are still in existence today – e.g. The Stationers Crown Woods Academy and the prestigious Haberdashers School.

These days much of the great wealth they accumulated has gone, (though some have significant property holdings, especially in London) but as a result of their longstanding investments they are still able to do much charitable work.

In the past, 'Liverymen' would have started as apprentices in their respective trade or profession and upon finishing their apprenticeship they became 'Freemen of the City of London' – free from being an apprentice and with many privileges, which I explain more about next. (However, the sons of wealthy people would sometimes buy their way into a Livery Company, and in some cases, it was an honour bestowed on them at birth.)

### **Freeman of the City**

In the 13th century a Freeman was exactly what the name implies – 'free' and not the property of a feudal lord. You could own land and make money as you wished. To carry on a trade within the City of London you would have had to have been a Freeman. Indeed, this was the case right up until Victorian times.

Being a Freeman had many privileges – and I must mention one that still holds good today. A Freeman could 'drive sheep and cattle' over London Bridge without paying a toll, therefore making a higher profit at market. Each year there is a ceremony when Freemen are invited to do just that! Normally held at the end of September, hundreds turn out to see the Freemen 'driving their sheep' across the bridge – in 2018 the procession was led by TV presenter Alan Titchmarsh. And the event also raises significant money for charity.

Some other privileges seem rather dubious. For example, Freemen arrested for capital offences such as treason or murder could request to be hung using a silk rope rather than a rough hessian rope that was used for the lower classes.

Another privilege was that they could carry their swords drawn, to protect themselves against thieves, something they are unlikely to do today. They were also exempt from the press gangs that would roam the city, particularly near the docks, looking for 'volunteers' to be 'pressganged' into naval service. And one privilege that could still be useful today is the right to be drunk and disorderly and be afforded a safe passage home!

These days, anybody who has been on the electoral list for the City of London may apply to become a 'Freeman of the City', though you must be nominated by two 'Councilmen, Aldermen or Liverymen'. However, people who have made a significant contribution to public life can be granted an 'Honorary Freedom', the highest honour the City can bestow. Some famous Honorary Freemen include Benjamin Disraeli, Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher, Nelson Mandela, Florence Nightingale, Presidents Eisenhower and Roosevelt, Princess Diana – and more recently JK Rowling, Mary Berry and Dame Judy Dench.



## **Wards and watchmen of the City of London**

Firstly the 'wards' – By 1550, the City of London was divided into twenty-five Wards and men from each would have to take it in turns to act as 'Watchmen' for a year, in addition to their normal work. These wards are still in existence throughout the City of London today, and as you walk around you will see signs on the walls of churches and other public buildings telling you which Ward you are in.

Each Ward, which were also known as Aldermanries, still returns up to two aldermen (depending on its size) to the Court of Alderman and each year one of these is elected as the Lord Mayor of the City of London. Wards also have 'Beadles', an ancient ceremonial office who accompany the Alderman on the various ceremonial occasions in the City.

The Wards are still used by the police for day to day policing, with each one having a constable assigned to it.

And watchmen ... The term 'watchman', who were the forerunners of today's police and fire service, goes back to biblical and then Roman times. They were men who would keep watch for untoward behaviour or events – whether invaders, criminals or a fire breaking out – and who would then either deal with the problem themselves or summon help from others. In England a statute in 1285 by King Edward reads ...

"... and the King commands that from henceforth all Watches be made as it hath been used in past times that was from the day of Ascension unto the day of St. Michael every city by six men at every gate, in every borough by twelve men in every town, by six or four according to the number of inhabitants of the town. They shall keep the Watch all night from sun setting unto sun rising. And if any stranger does pass them by them he shall be arrested until morning and if no suspicion be found he shall go quit."

## **STANDARD APPENDIX**

### **NATWEST CITY OFFICE – 1 Princes Street**

NatWest's City of London office occupies a prestigious site, being in the heart of the City of London, opposite the Bank of England, the Mansion House and the Royal Exchange. Indeed, the site was described by one newspaper in the 1920's as 'the best in the Empire'.

The original building was erected in 1887 as the head office of the Union of Bank of London, which had been acquired by National Provincial in 1918 (now NatWest). Problems with subsistence resulted in it later being demolished and the building we see today opened in 1931. When it did, the press called it a 'palace of banking'. It was designed in the English Renaissance style by the architect Sir Edwin Cooper, who had already built the Port of London's grand headquarters near the Tower of London and the offices of the insurance company Lloyds. Although a difficult triangular site, he managed to develop a spectacular looking building which was given a Grade II listing in the 1970s.

The two main facades, faced with Portland stone, feature arched windows, colonnades of Corinthian columns, statues and carved stone panels. The large statuary group on the front of the building, positioned high on a pedestal, show Britannia, flanked by Mercury and Truth, with female figures denoting higher and lower mathematics. The statues at street level represent Courage, Integrity, Prosperity and Security.

The banking hall boasted fine marble floors and walls, pillars and a beautiful domed ceiling. Unusually, the counter space occupied the apex of the site, and the public space, accessed by doors in the wings of the building, swept around it as an arcade uniting Mansion House Street and Princes Street. This allowed daylight from the street windows and dome to into the working area.

By the early 1990s, the building was no longer suitable for the needs of a modern bank and it closed in 1991 to allow extensive improvements and alterations to take place. Care was taken to preserve the original fan-shaped ground floor plan and many of the period decorative features were recreated, including bronze glazed screens, doors and skylights, light fittings and plasterwork. At the same time the upper floors were redesigned and a new gallery, overlooking the banking hall, installed.

Externally, the building's stone frontages and statues were returned to their former glory and upon completion in 1997, the bank moved back into its flagship building.

Another refurbishment took place more recently and completed in 2014 it is what you see inside today. The traditional banking hall space has been redesigned, and new open-plan counters, meeting rooms and modern self-service technology installed.

## **ST BOTOLPH**

During the walk we pass a church dedicated to St Botolph, a saint who has four London churches named after him. He's virtually unknown outside of London and East Anglia (and I guess not particularly known within them) so for those who are interested, here is a little more information.

Botolph had humble beginnings, being a simple chap from the east of England who lived in the 7th century. Both he and his brother Adolph, were sent to France to study 'monkism' and whilst his brother then went to the Netherlands to 'spread the word', Botolph returned to England. His main claim to fame was the expulsion of evil spirits from the marshlands of Suffolk, though more likely he simply oversaw the draining of swamps and removal of the noxious marsh gas, which would have given off an 'unholy' night time glow. (He also had a reputation for being able to 'hold his mead'.)

After he died his bodily remains were divided up into three – his head was sent to Ely, Thorney Abbey got his middle whilst Westminster Abbey was given what was left over. And his connections with London? Apparently, those remains destined for Westminster Abbey were brought through each of the four gates of the old City of London – Bishopsgate, Aldgate, Aldersgate and Billingsgate. As a result, a church near each of the gates was dedicated to him. Today St Botolph is known to be the Patron Saint of Travellers. This is believed to have come about due to his body – although in several parts – travelling around southern England and then through London's gates! For many centuries people coming into the City of London would pause at the gates and there 'give thanks to Botolph for saving them from the terrible world outside of London and for a safe passage!'

## **ST VEDAST-ALIAS-FOSTER**

This is the last church visited on the walk, but I find both the church and the Saint after which it is named quite interesting. St Vedast was the Bishop of Arras in northern Gaul around the turn of the 6th century. He was instrumental in the conversion of Clovis, the Frankish king to Christianity.

His name in English has been corrupted from St Vedast, by way of Vastes, Fastes, Faster, Fauster and Forster to Foster, (which is the name of the lane the church is in) and the reason for its official designation of St Vedast-alias-Foster.

The church is thought to have been founded by the Flemish community in London in the 12th or 13th century and, although damaged by the Great Fire, is not thought to be one of the fifty churches rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren. It is said that Robert Hooke and/or Nicholas Hawksmoor could have been responsible.

The church suffered a second disaster in a massive bombing raid on the 29 December 1940, which was the night when Winston Churchill ordered that nearby St Paul's Cathedral must be saved at all costs. As a result of the firemen concentrating on St Paul's, there was nobody available to deal with the incendiary bombs that hit St Vedast-alias-Foster.

After it was rebuilt it became one of churches of the "13 United Parishes", as it absorbed the worshippers of other churches that closed down as a result of the City of London's declining population. Bizarrely, one of those thirteen parishes is in the USA, a strange result of the St Mary Aldermanbury being rebuilt there in 1968. (We see the site of that church on this walk.)