

A walk from Farringdon to Clerkenwell

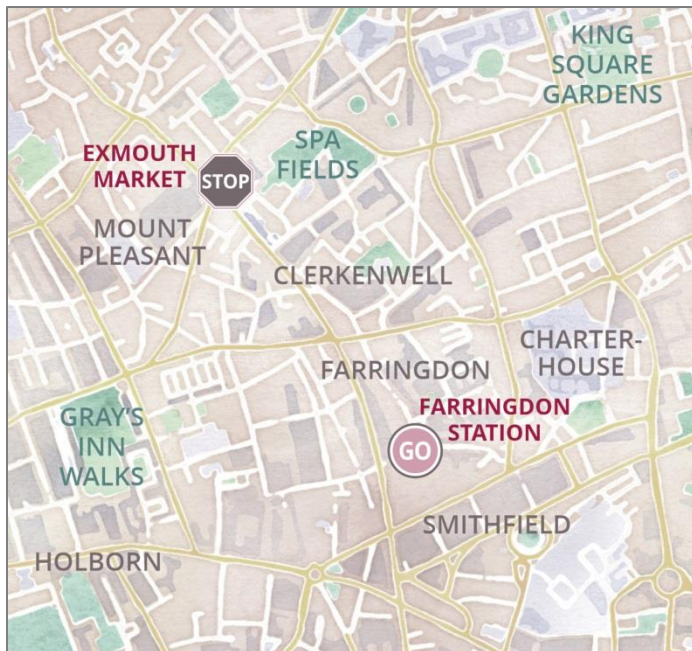
Updated: 31 July 2024

Length: About 3 miles

Duration: Around 4 hours

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WALK

Smithfield Market, St Bartholomew's Hospital and churches, St John's Gate and Priory Church, Clerkenwell Green, Charterhouse Priory and Museum, Exmouth Market, Mount Pleasant Postal Museum and the underground postal railway – Mail Rail.



GETTING HERE

The walk starts at Farringdon station, which is served by three underground lines – Circle, Hammersmith & City and Metropolitan – and by Thameslink overground services. From around March 2021 the station will also be served by the Elizabeth line (Crossrail).

If you are travelling by bus, the closest bus stop to the station is served by number 63 (from King's Cross). Buses that stop within a five to ten-minute walk include the 17, 45 and 172.

CLERKENWELL – A BRIEF BACKGROUND

Clerkenwell developed from a hamlet serving the monasteries that had been established here from the 11th century. Lying outside of the City of London, it was free from the standards of behaviour and various restrictions that those living in the City were forced to abide by.

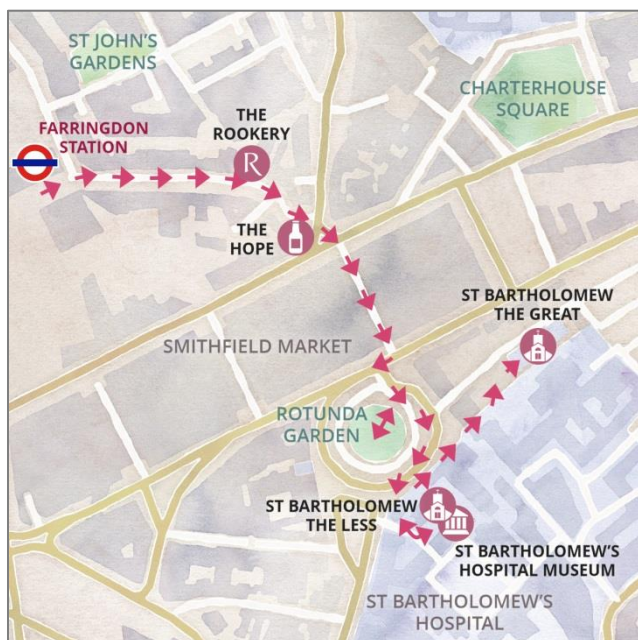
A description of Clerkenwell in the 16th century read, “there were a great number of dissolute, loose, and insolent people” ... harboured in “noisome and disorderly houses, poor cottages, and habitations of beggars and people without trade ... taverns, dicing houses, bowling alleys and brothel houses.”

During the 17th century many Huguenots, escaping from religious persecution in northern Europe, settled in Clerkenwell and brought with them their highly specialised skills, such as clock and watchmaking, for which the area had become well known by the early 18th century.

Clerkenwell's proximity to the City of London and its good water supplies meant that it grew rapidly, particularly in the 18th and early 19th centuries, and this resulted in it becoming extremely overcrowded and subsequently infamous for its slums and levels of crime.

It also became known for its radical and revolutionary politics. John Wilkes, an 18th century ‘defender of free speech’, lived near Clerkenwell Green, as many years later did Lenin. And it's still home to the Marx Memorial Library, which we see on the walk.

I have put a fuller version of this background in the **appendix** (below).



Route map 1

STARTING THE WALK

Please note – there are two stations entrances at Farringdon, facing each other across Cowcross Street, and there will soon be a third, on Farringdon Road. **Assuming you emerge from the original station building, or are at least standing with your back to it, then turn left along Cowcross Street.**

As you do so, look back up at the façade of the underground station where engraved into the stone work above the entrance it says, 'Farringdon and High Holborn Station' and adds 'Metropolitan Railway'. This was once the terminus of the first underground line in London – and indeed the world – and it opened in 1863. The other end of the line was Paddington, and the stations it called at then are those the Circle and Hammersmith & City Line pass through today.

After 50 yards, fork right to **continue up Cowcross Street**, so named because cows did literally cross over here on route to the nearby market (more about this in the section on Smithfield Market). It is now a street of bars, fast-food outlets and restaurants – and although the Three Compasses Inn that you pass on your right has been here since 1723, it has clearly been modernised since then.

As you approach the bend at the top of Cowcross Street on the left you pass a row of six 18th century houses, which had shops on the ground floor and living accommodation above them. You can just about make out some of the trades – a pork butcher, confectioner and a dairy – from the signs on the fascia above, although they are now somewhat faded. Although you wouldn't know it from here, the building is now a lovely 'boutique' hotel called The Rookery, with its entrance in Peter's Lane, which runs alongside the building.

The name 'rookery' means both slum as well as 'criminal area' and this area had a terrible reputation for crime and violence. And seemingly the violence hasn't completely disappeared – apparently it was in this hotel that Pete Doherty, lead singer of the Libertines and one-time boyfriend of model Kate Moss, beat up a filmmaker who was also staying here – and ended up in prison as a result.

Continue on to the top of Cowcross Street, passing the **Hope Inn** on the right.

The Hope has been here since 1790 and was one of several pubs in the area that until fairly recently used to open at 5am to serve the market workers with their lunch. And I have to confess that in my younger days, when I was working on a morning newspaper in Bristol that meant finishing work around 2.am, being still wide awake, I would sometimes drive to London (pre-motorway as well) and arrive at Smithfield by 6.00am. I would head straight for the Hope Inn for a 'late night' pint – for me it was the very end of my working day; for the market workers, 6.00am was their lunch break.

Ahead of you is the impressive **Smithfield Market** – more of which shortly. **Cross over Charterhouse Street and walk through Grand Avenue**, which divides the two halves of the market.

There are several very interesting information boards attached to the railings that explain various aspects of the market's history and I have put some of this additional information both here and in the **appendix**.

This enormous Victorian cast iron structure houses Europe's biggest meat market and has traded in sheep, pigs, cattle and poultry from 1173 onwards. The market was just outside the walls of the City of London, in which the slaughter of animals had been banned. Until 1855 it was a livestock market as well, but when that was relocated to Islington it left Smithfield as just a wholesale and retail market.

The market buildings were designed by Horace Jones, who was the official architect to the City of London. He also designed and built both Leadenhall Market and Billingsgate Fish Market. They were badly damaged by bombs in the Second World War but rebuilt afterwards and still supply much of the meat for London's restaurants, wholesalers etc. However, it is now in decline and I explain more about that shortly. Part of the site is already under redevelopment and will soon become the new home of the Museum of London, which is relocating from its present site.

Although the market is nowhere as hectic as it was in its heyday, it is still busy early in the morning. It opens at 2am and closes around mid to late morning, though much of the buying and selling has usually been done by 7am. However, you will see the refrigerated trucks that bring the meat to the market arriving and parking up at all times of the day, ready for unloading in the evening, particularly if they have travelled long distance from Ireland, Scotland or continental Europe.

The City of London Corporation, who are the owners of Smithfield Market and the buildings and land it sits on, have confirmed that the market will close some time in 2025/6.

It will be moving to a new 42-acre site, which cost the City of London around £100 million, situated close to Dagenham and Barking in east London. Two other London wholesale markets – the Billingsgate Fish Market and the New Spitalfields Fruit and Vegetable Market – will also move to the new site. (The latter moved out of Spitalfields to Leyton, in east London several years ago, so it's now moving again).

The new site, which was formerly Barking Power Station, is near to the Thames and the Corporation say this will allow the river to be used for bringing freight to the markets, as well as allowing space for thousands of new homes to be built.

I find it all rather sad. Smithfield, the last of the famous London wholesale markets, has been selling meat on the site for more than 800 years.

Building work has been taking place for some years on and around the existing Smithfield Market buildings. This started with the construction of the new tube station for the Elizabeth Line.

Several years later it was announced that the Museum of London would move from its existing site near London Wall into buildings that are no longer used by the Smithfield markets, which over the past few decades had considerably 'shrunk'.

These new museum buildings, which are currently under construction within the disused Victorian market buildings, are fortunately Grade II listed, so at least limiting how much of the exterior can be changed.

I've also read that there are plans to turn part of these buildings into a 'cultural centre', though I'm sure developers also have thoughts of also creating expensive apartments, shops, etc.

The other end of Grand Avenue opens out into Long Lane, which we cross over the at the traffic lights.

Once on the other side, take a look back at the market buildings – from this side you can get a better appreciation of their size and architecture. Notice the two domed turrets at each end that certainly help to give it such a classical look. They were only constructed in 1953, replacing wooden lantern-shaped structures that looked like Japanese pagodas, resulting in the General Market becoming known as the 'Japanese Village'.

You can see the extent of the market buildings by looking further on down West Smithfield, which is where the new Museum of London will be. (If you want to walk down to take a look, then simply pick up the walk again here.

Having crossed over **Long Lane**, you'll see a little 'garden park' with railings around it. Look over the railings and you'll see the circular roadway that leads to an underground car park; however, this was once an enormous storage area where cattle, and later the carcasses, were kept before being brought up on barrows and taken into the market to be sold.

At one time it also led to an underground railway station that was built under the market to accommodate the freight trains that brought in animals or meat from different parts of the country. Previously they were brought in by 'drovers', sometimes from hundreds of miles away. Now the cattle are slaughtered elsewhere and arrive by lorry. The railway is still there – at the far end of the carpark you can hear the trains rattling past as it's now the Thameslink line that runs from Luton to Brighton, going underground after King's Cross and emerging at London Bridge Station.

Walk into the garden and in the middle you'll see a fountain and a statue – a popular place in fine weather for office workers to take their lunch.

The **West Smithfield rotunda garden** wasn't always so peaceful. Indeed, it was a particularly infamous place, notorious for its public executions. Criminals, heretics and rebels were either burnt at the stake, boiled alive or beheaded. Among these rebels were Scottish hero William Wallace, who was hung, drawn and quartered and Wat Tyler, the leader of the Peasants Revolt (also known as the Great Uprising).

In 1381 Wat Tyler had gathered together his motley 'army' on Clerkenwell Green, just a short distance away and which we see later and was heading for the City of London when he was met here by the Lord Mayor of London and his troops. The Mayor stabbed Wat Tyler, who was then taken to St Bartholomew's Hospital, just a few hundred yards away. However, this didn't please the crowd. They followed him in, dragged him back out and had him beheaded on this very spot.

Many religious martyrs were also slaughtered here, including two hundred Protestants who were tortured and burnt at the stake.

Fortunately, there hasn't been a hanging or burning here for some years and sitting in this lovely little garden it's hard to imagine some of the gruesome activities that have previously taken place. Perhaps somewhat ironically, in the middle is a statue of the figure of Peace, standing on an octagonal stone platform with marble bowls on each side.

Leave the garden the way you went in and follow the railings around to the right (in a clockwise direction) crossing over the entrance road that leads down into the carpark and when

you are almost half way round look out for the magnificent Henry VIII Gateway you'll see on the other side of the road that will take you into **St Bartholomew's (Barts) Hospital**.

St Bartholomew's is the oldest hospital in Britain. It opened in 1123 on a site given by Henry I and 'devoted to the relief of pain and the cure of disease among the poor of London through the increase of knowledge in the medical art, here attained to the alleviation of human suffering throughout the world.' However, during Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, he had the hospital closed. He later changed his mind and allowed it to be reopened, which is why there is a statue to him on top of the gateway, erected as a tribute to him for doing so. The gate was rebuilt in 1702 as a gift from the stonemasons who had worked on St Paul's Cathedral as some of those who'd been injured during its building were said to have been treated here.

St Bartholomew's is regarded by many in the medical profession as England's 'premier hospital', and it has played a major part in the improvement of standards of nursing care and of the working conditions for nurses. Two of the early matrons were largely responsible for this and I have put more information in the **appendix** about this.

Fortunately, the hospital survived both the Great Fire of London and the Blitz during the Second World War.

Once you've passed through the gateway, on your left is the **Church of St Bartholomew the Less**. It's open every day and certainly worth taking a look inside.

The Church of St Bartholomew the Less was founded before the dissolution of the monasteries and gained its own parish in 1547; it is unique in having had a dual role as both a parish church and a hospital chapel. The incumbent was titled 'vicar and hospitaller'; the hospitaller ministered to the sick, whereas the vicar was responsible for the spiritual welfare of those who lived within the hospital's site and later the two posts were combined.

Sadly, nothing remains of the original church except for the tower and part of the west wall; these date from the 15th century and are the oldest structures still standing within the grounds. The rest of the church was rebuilt in its present form in the 1820s.

Leave the church and turn left and under the archway just a few yards further on, is the **Museum of St Bartholomew's**. It's actually in the hospital's historic North Wing and overlooks the famous 18th century square. Open from Tuesday through to Saturday, it is free to enter and definitely worth visiting.

The museum has a number of interesting information boards and exhibits that cover the history of the hospital as well as explaining how nursing and medical knowledge have progressed over the centuries. Some fascinating displays include the surgical and medical equipment used by the hospital in the past.

There's a door in the museum behind which is a magnificent staircase that leads to the equally magnificent Great Hall in the old and original part of the hospital. On the walls of this impressive staircase are the famous two murals – The Pool of Bethesda (shown below), painted in 1736, and The Good Samaritan, which he painted the following year.

When I first visited a few years ago I came across the door and, discovering that it wasn't locked, I took a look inside, so was fortunate to see this beautiful painting. (It had already been 'out of bounds' for several years due to needing significant restoration, something I didn't realise at the time).

Michael Palin, the ex-Monty Python star, later more famous for his television documentaries, has donated several million pounds towards the restoration work, whilst his son, Will Palin, who is a building heritage and conservation expert, has been appointed Chief Executive of Barts Heritage, a charity founded to rescue and repair buildings within this famous hospital, which is one of the oldest in Europe.

After leaving the museum turn left and just a few yards further on you can see the hospital's magnificent central square.

Then turn around and walk back the way you have just come, pass out through the entrance archway and **turn to the right** walking back up alongside the hospital.

In front of you will be an Elizabethan half-timbered building under which is an archway that leads you next into the entrance of **St Bartholomew the Great**.

This is a fascinating church, with a mixture of architectural styles that include Gothic arches and Norman columns. Once part of the adjacent Augustinian priory that was founded in 1123, it is London's oldest parish church. The Tudor gatehouse and raised graveyard were once part of a huge nave that was destroyed during the dissolution of the monasteries, whilst the flint and stone checked exterior is a Victorian restoration.

Fortunately, the church wasn't badly damaged in either the Great Fire or the Second World War, which was the case with so many churches in this area of London.

The church is much larger than you imagine from the outside and worth a visit, though they do charge £4 per person to go in. The church is certainly 'media friendly' and has been used in many films and TV shows – *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *League of Gentlemen* and several more. And a few years ago the extremely clever spoof royal wedding video was filmed here. If you haven't seen the clip before, it's still available on YouTube.



Route map 2

Leave the church the way you came in and **turn right, then right again into Cloth Fair**, a rather ancient street that has been reasonably well preserved. As you walk past the church you can see

how large it actually is; and what is interesting is how much lower than the surrounding ground the older part at the rear is compared with the rest.

In the 15th and early 16th centuries, the annual Cloth Fair, one of the biggest cloth markets in Europe, was held here on St Bartholomew's Day.

Take a look at **No.41 Cloth Fair**; the colourful panels beneath the windows date back to 1647 and, together with the church opposite, are among the few remaining buildings that survived both the Great Fire and the Blitz.

Just along, at number 38, is the **Rising Sun**, an 18th century pub that was once the haunt of an infamous gang of body snatchers. They would drug drunken strangers and sell their bodies to the doctors and students at the nearby St Bartholomew's Hospital who were keen to practice and learn more about human anatomy.

Next on the right after the church is the **Hand & Shears** – the sign on the wall outside says, "Last Ale before Newgate Public Execution". Nicknamed the 'Fist and Clippers' by locals, it used to be popular with the cloth merchants. Built in 1537, it still has a very old-fashioned feel inside with dark wood partitions and if it's open then perhaps take a look. It was from the pub's doorway that Lord Mayors of London would declare when Bartholomew Fair was open. The pub was also used as the unofficial 'court' where licences for those wishing to trade at the fair would be granted and where the weights and measures they used would be checked for accuracy.

We leave Cloth Fair here, so turn left opposite the Hand & Shears, and after just a few yards you'll see another very old Smithfield tavern – **The Old Red Cow**. A sign on the wall explains that a previous landlord entertained many personalities of stage and screen here, including the likes of Peter Ustinov and Bernard Miles.

The inn is on the corner of **Long Lane** which we turn left into but then after only about 50 yards cross over and **turn right down Lindsey Street**, (with the eastern side of the market on your left.) The building currently (2019) under construction on your right will be the ticket hall and station entrance to the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail), with the usual shops, offices and no doubt apartments on the floors above.

After just 50 yards or so, turn right into Charterhouse Street and after around 100 yards you come to the historic **Charterhouse Square**. Walk to the far end of the square and turn left down the side of the gardens – as you do so look out for the art deco building on your right called **Florin Court**; you may recognise it as Whitehaven Mansions, where Hercule Poirot lived, or at least did in the television series. Built in 1927 by architects who previously had worked for Edwin Lutyens, it is now Grade II listed. Its rather unusual 'U' shape was carefully chosen to allow as many apartments as possible to overlook the square. And with a roof garden, Jacuzzis and basement swimming pool it must be a rather nice place to live.

I like Charterhouse Square. Despite all the changes, demolitions and renovations over the years, the northern side of it still seems to retain the feel of a 'cathedral close' in one of England's smaller cities.

Charterhouse Square, and the area immediately around it, has had a long and interesting history. The gardens in the centre of the square had been used as a burial ground during the Black Death and huge numbers of bones and skeletons were discovered during building works that took place here in the 19th century.

Despite this, its close proximity to the Priory meant it had become the home of 'residents of high status', particularly so after the monastery closed and was lived in by Lord North and then the extremely wealthy Thomas Sutton. Lying just outside the jurisdiction of the City of London, whilst being so close to it, and being rather secluded, the Square became the home of a number of distinguished and wealthy residents. In order to make it look like a posh West End Square, they built elaborate town houses and mansions, laid out the central garden with lawns, trees and paths to cross it (which are still there to this day).

In the middle of the 18th century the square was fenced, and iron gates installed at each of the four entrances into it (three of which are still there today) by the local residents. They feared it would "become a Receptacle for Rubbish, Dirt and Dunghill", as well as attracting "common Beggars, Vagabonds, and other disorderly Persons, for the Exercise of their idle Diversions, and other unwarrantable Purposes", thereby making it "unfit for the Habitation of Persons of Character and Condition". Indeed, so bad did things get that in 1894 an "inmate from a working-man's hostel at No 7 Charterhouse Square was found in a compromising position with a young woman on a bench in the square." Such outrageous and shocking behaviour can hardly be imagined ...

The square then became popular with the clergy and a number of London parishes had their parsonages around the square – amongst the residents listed in the 1790s was 'five clergymen'. Then it became popular with the surgeons of the adjacent St Bartholomew's Hospital and the Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital, with eight of them shown to be living here in 1842.

However, in 1864 the area began to go downhill as a result of the Metropolitan Railway obtaining permission to dig a cutting immediately behind the houses on the south side of the square. They wanted to extend their railway from Farringdon to a new station, then called Aldersgate (now Barbican). By then the list of residents in the immediate area included three schools, two lodging houses, an infirmary, and various craftsmen including watch and clock makers and a goldsmith. Things began to slide further once the railway had become established and the 'middle-classes' moved out leaving many of the houses and buildings to be turned into workshops, particularly those of hat makers, as well as warehouses for clothing manufacturers.

Bringing things right up to date, the new Elizabeth Line station we saw a short while ago, has resulted in considerable interest from developers but, as you can see, not all of it is particularly sympathetic in design. However, the square itself still retains some of its exclusivity and its gardens and iron gates still remain.

At the bottom of the short road on the eastern side of the square is the entrance into the Queen Mary University campus and the Barts and London School of Medicine and Dentistry, **but we turn left** along the north side, past three well-preserved townhouses. The one on the left was until recently an excellent café called '14 on the Green' – there may be a new café here by the time you pass by.

Next to it is the entrance to the ancient **Charterhouse Priory**. It has a museum which is free to enter and certainly interesting and worth a visit if you have time. There' also an excellent gift shop – and of course the all-important toilets. You can also visit the ancient cloisters, with its magnificent ceiling. It's open Tuesdays through to Sundays from 11am to 4.45pm.

The Carthusian Priory of Charterhouse was established in 1370 and closed around two hundred years later during Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries. This resulted in the prior and the monks eventually being put to death, sadly in the cruellest manner imaginable.

Following this it was used for a variety of purposes, until in 1611 Thomas Sutton, who had made his fortune as a result of the discovery of coal beneath two estates he had leased near Newcastle-upon-Tyne, gave money for a hospital to be built on the site together with a school to educate forty boys as well as a chapel. He also provided funds for an almshouse to provide a home for eighty male pensioners – ‘gentlemen by descent and in poverty, soldiers that have borne arms by sea or land, merchants decayed by piracy or shipwreck, or servants in households to the King’s or Queen’s Majesty’.

The almshouses are still here, accommodating forty residents, called Brothers, to respect the monastic traditions (although they don’t have to be practising Anglicans). They each have their own room but take their meals together in the beautiful Great Hall. (If you take the Charterhouse Tour, which I recommend and mention next, then you get to see the Hall, often laid up for the residents next meal.)

I have put more of the history of the Charterhouse Priory and the Carthusians in the **appendix**.

Daily tours of the Charterhouse are normally available, though at busy times they will need pre-booking. There are three tours a day and they last around 55 minutes. I can certainly recommend them – they are excellent and take you into some of the fascinating parts of the building, including the Great Hall and the Great Chamber. For more information go to www.thecharterhouse.org/visit-us/book-a-tour.

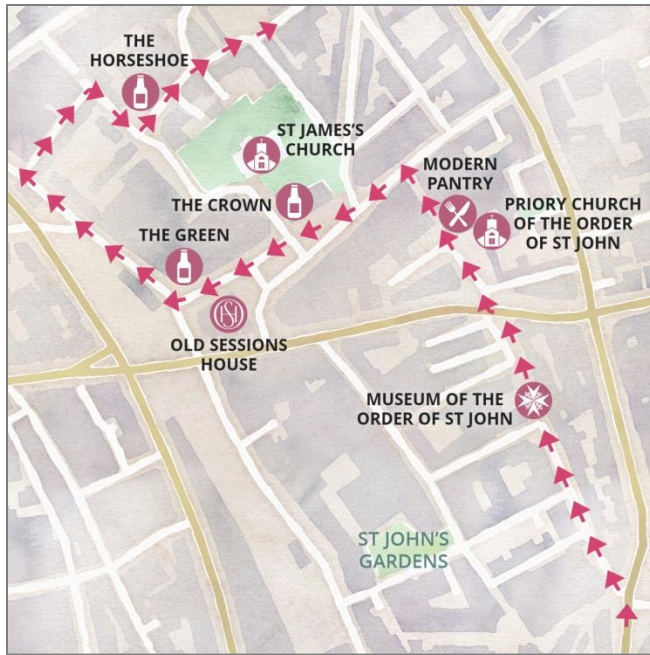
Leave the priory and turn right, passing its original small, gated entrance, passing out through the iron gates and past the Malmaison Hotel. It might be considered a strange name for a hotel as in French it means ‘bad house’, but having stayed there I can recommend it. It opened in 1856 as the Cocker’s Hotel, later becoming known as the Charterhouse Hotel. For a while it was then used for accommodation for nurses working at the nearby St Bartholomew’s Hospital.

Pass the short passageway that leads to the delightful (and expensive) Café du Marché French restaurant and then you pass the attractive looking Fox & Anchor Inn that opened in 1893 – look up and notice its lovely Art Nouveau façade. A few doors along there’s another old pub, the Smithfield Tavern, which was rebuilt in 1871.

When you reach the next corner, you’ll realise we’ve done a ‘circle’ as you are now back to where we started before entering Smithfield Market.

Turn right up St John’s Street, passing the top of Cowcross Street and continue straight ahead for a couple of hundred yards. **Where the road divides, cross over and take the narrower, left hand fork up St John’s Lane** (the wider St John’s Street carries on up to the right).

On the right you pass the modern **Watchmaker Court**, which is presumably on the site of various watchmakers’ businesses as there are a number of names of such craftsmen carved into the wall of the building. (In the 17th and 18th centuries Clerkenwell was a centre of the watch and clock-making industry.)



Route map 3

A sign on the wall of No. 28 explains the building was partly destroyed by German aircraft in the First World War – unusually not the Second. And next to it notice the narrow **Passing Alley**. Around 200 years ago maps showed it being called ‘Pissing Alley’, apparently on account of it being used for that purpose!

You’ve now arrived at the historic **St John’s Gate**, the South Gate entrance of the enormous **Clerkenwell Priory** that once covered an area of over six acres. The priory was closed following the dissolution of the monasteries and whilst much of it was eventually demolished, St John’s Gate survived, and now houses the **Museum of the Order of St John**.

The museum is free to enter and although small, is well worth a short visit. It tells the story of the Venerable Order of St John, from its origin as the ‘pan-European’ Order of Hospitaller Knights that was founded in Jerusalem during the Crusades, right through to today’s St John’s Ambulance Corps, whose volunteers give up their time to provide emergency first aid help at public events across the country.

Whilst visitors to the museum aren’t able to see the other parts of the building, these can be seen on one of the excellent regular daily tours that include the magnificent Chapter Hall and Council Chamber.

St John’s Gate has had a fascinating history. At one time it was the Office of the Master of the Revels – in the time of Elizabeth I, it was he who would decide whether to grant a licence that would enable a play to be performed in public, and before making a decision would often ask for it to be performed here in front of him. William Shakespeare came here on a number of occasions to seek licences for the performances of around thirty of his plays.

In 1703, Richard Hogarth, father of the painter William Hogarth, opened a coffee house here ‘to enable gentlemen to enjoy a coffee whilst conversing in Latin’, which not surprisingly was a failure. In 1725 it became a printing workshop where Benjamin Franklin worked before going to America, and his ‘Experiment and Observations on Electricity’ was printed here. Shortly afterwards it became the office and printers of the Gentleman’s Magazine, a popular periodical

that ran for nearly 200 years and at one time employed Dr Samuel Johnson as an editor and translator. Johnson had several of his books printed here. However, this didn't include his English Dictionary; the first authoritative dictionary ever compiled.

Besides all of this, it has been a parish watch-house, the offices of a Masonic order and the Jerusalem Tavern, where Charles Dickens was a regular customer. It was also where the 18th century actor David Garrick gave his first public performance, later having both the Garrick Theatre and Garrick Street named after him. Finally, in 1874, it was purchased by the British Order of St John.

Continue on through the archway. Sadly you're now confronted with an awful mismatch of modern buildings – the one on the left at No.1 St John's Square is to my mind particularly out of keeping and just plain ugly.

You can get some idea of how large the priory once was as St John's Square, which you are now in, extends ahead as far as you can see, though since the 1870s it's been dissected by Clerkenwell Road.

Cross over Clerkenwell Road (I suggest you use the little traffic island as it's a busy road) and walk up on the right-hand side of the square. The large brick building on your left is the Zetter Hotel – and a point of interest to older readers who may remember Zetter Pools, this was their headquarters.

On your right you will see the fairly modern brick-built **Priory Church of the Order of St John**, to my mind looking more like a local government office than a church. It had been destroyed during the 1381 Peasants' Revolt and eventually rebuilt, but then destroyed again during a bombing raid in the Second World War, being rebuilt in its present form in 1960.

If you stand outside the front of the church you can see the outline of the original circular nave, marked by a line of different coloured stones in the ground. The design was based on that of the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem, as is the other Knights Templar church that still stands in the Temple grounds, south of Fleet Street.

The 12th century crypt, which wasn't damaged on either occasion, was at one time used to store dead bodies, but these were removed in the late 19th century when the crypt was restored. It is now only open for pre-booked tours or by special arrangement.

If you walk into the entrance porch of the church, you can see the lovely priory memorial garden, which was established in 1958 whilst the church was being restored. The garden is planted with medicinal herbs, including many used in patient care in the order's medieval hospitals. As previously explained, the order's historic caring role and medical heritage are the foundations of its current charitable work through both St John Ambulance and the St John's Eye Hospital, in Jerusalem.

After leaving the priory church, continue to the top of the square. The walk continues up the narrow Jerusalem Passage that runs up the left-hand side of the red brick Modern Pantry restaurant that faces you. (Jerusalem Passage was once the northern entrance to the Clerkenwell Priory, which again gives you an idea of its size.)

Before you walk up Jerusalem Passage, notice on the left at the bottom what looks like a private house – however, a small sign on the door explains it is the Zetter Hotel Town House. Look in the windows and you will see a cosy room with comfy chairs. Even better, pop inside and you'll find

one of London's most delightful little bars. It's more like the sitting room of a country house. It's open to the public as well as residents, so if you can find somewhere to sit, maybe enjoy a coffee (or something stronger).

Walk to the top of Jerusalem Passage, past the Belgian bar that sells beer and mussels, and **at the top turn left into Aylesbury Street**. A rather interesting gentleman used to live in the house on the corner. His name was Thomas Britton, who was both a coal merchant and book seller and in his long and somewhat narrow loft (apparently reached by an outside staircase) he used to stage musical evenings, even having Handel himself playing there on more than one occasion. Despite the unattractive surroundings, these concerts were extremely popular and ran for forty years until his death in 1714.

After 50 yards or so the street sign tells you it has now become **Clerkenwell Green**. Cross over to the right-hand side and if you look up to your right you can see the surprisingly large churchyard of **St James** (take a look if you aren't in a hurry, though the entrance to the church is just a little further along and we see it shortly).

It's clearly been many years since there was any 'green' here, and it's hard to imagine that this small triangular space is famed for being at the centre of revolutionary activity in London for several hundred years. It was where back in the 14th century Wat Tyler, the leader of the Peasants Revolt, was captured by the Lord Mayor of London and his troops after Tyler had led his 'mob' to storm the St John's Priory that we saw just now. And then in 1831 this was where the infamous Clerkenwell Riots took place. Since those days Clerkenwell Green has become renowned for its links with revolution – at one time the area was called the 'Headquarters of Republicanism, Revolution and ultra-non-conformity'. Lenin worked and lived in one of the houses on the Green and Karl Marx was also said to have been a visitor and it is still the headquarters of the British Communist Party. As a result, this was where the first ever May Day march set off from back in the 1890s (and still does to this day).

Continue on until you come to the **Crown Tavern**, said to be where Stalin and Lenin first met in 1905.

Running up the side of the pub is **Clerkenwell Close**, where you can see **St James's Church**. The original church dated back to 1540, though it was rebuilt in 1792. It is an interesting church so if you have time it's possibly worth a little look inside. However, with such steep steps leading up to the front door, it clearly wasn't designed with any thought for possible disabled or infirm churchgoers.

Having crossed over Clerkenwell Close, look out for No. 37A in the next row of buildings. There had been a Welsh school close by since around 1718, and in 1738 it moved into new buildings at **No.37A Clerkenwell Green**.

The Welsh School had been established to assist the children of poor parents of Welsh parentage who lived in and around London. It was initially just for boys, many of whom were trained for apprenticeships, but later girls were also admitted. Some years later the school moved to Ashford in Middlesex, where it is now called the St David's School for Girls.

However, its building then became the offices of various socialist organisations and a printing press was installed to enable them to produce their literature. As an example by 1902 they were printing Lenin's Russian Social Democratic newspaper. A library, with a wide selection of socialist books, was opened and Marx spent a considerable amount of time reading and studying here. Indeed, in 1933 it became the **Marx Memorial Library**, founded with the aim of advancing

education and knowledge of all aspects of the 'science of Marxism, the history of socialism and the working-class movement'. The Library is still here and is open Mondays through to Thursday from noon until 4pm. Guided tours of the building are available on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1pm, when you can visit the historic vaults and see the room where Lenin worked in exile from 1902–3.

The large and grand building on the left at the bottom of the square was once the **Courthouse of the Middlesex Sessions**.

The courthouse was built around 1780 in what was regarded as a 'classical Palladian style' and the magnificent dome that covers the entrance hall and staircase is modelled on the Pantheon in Rome. The jurisdiction of the court was extensive, and it was said to have been one of the busiest courts in Britain.

It continued as a courthouse until 1921 when the building then became the headquarters of the Avery Weighing Machine Company. They left in 1973 and the building was empty for a few years until it was restored as a masonic conference centre. Apparently, a couple of years ago there were plans for it to have been become a bar and restaurant or even a private members' club, but instead it has been beautifully restored and the lower floors are the offices.

Continue down to the bottom of the road then turn to the right up Farringdon Lane. (To your left is Turnmill Lane which runs back down to Farringdon Station; its name a result of the watermills that were once here, powered by the River Fleet that runs under the adjacent Farringdon Road.)

I'll mention here a little more about the **River Fleet**; it's actually two rivers – one that rises on Hampstead Heath and the other on Highgate Hill – and they merge near King's Cross, eventually flowing out into the Thames under Blackfriars Bridge. For many years it was navigable for quite some distance and small ships and barges would use it to carry coal and other goods further into the city. However, in the days before sewers everyone's effluent – as well as rubbish, dead cats and even the remaining bits of butchered animals that couldn't be sold at Smithfield Market – would end up in the river. The resulting stink, together with disease and flooding, meant it was covered over and it now flows underground for almost its entire route.

However, in Ray Street, that's just a couple of minutes' walk across the other side of Farringdon Road, there's an iron grating in the road outside the Coach and Horses pub and, particularly after heavy rain, you can hear the River Fleet beneath you.

A few yards up Farringdon Lane, and just past the Green Pub on your right – look into the last window of the marble-clad building called **Well Court** and you can see the original **Clerks' Well**.

The Clerks' Well is an ancient water well that was rediscovered in 1924. It's situated on the edge of the St Mary's Benedictine Nunnery and was where the sisters obtained their water. But the clerks? They were the parish clerks who had become famous for the medieval miracle plays they performed in this area. The plays date back to the 15th and 16th centuries and depict scenes from the Bible that encouraged the audience to lead Christian lives. They were usually organised and funded by the guilds of craftsmen and merchants and at times were even watched by royalty.

Continue on a little further up **Farringdon Lane** until you reach the **Betsey Trotwood** pub, which is built directly on top of the railway lines coming out of Farringdon Station. (Betsey Trotwood was the name of a Dickens character in David Copperfield, but there doesn't seem to

be any connection with the pub. I guess they just preferred it to the previous name, which was the Butcher's Arms.)

From here take a look across to the other side of Farringdon Road and notice the tall brick buildings, which were once workshops, small factories and warehouses. Fortunately many have been restored rather than be demolished and replaced with modern concrete and glass structures, as has happened too often. As a result, from being a 'derelict area' a few years ago, it has now become a fashionable and desirable place to live, and apartments in old industrial buildings like these are now very expensive.

To the right of the pub we turn right up Pear Tree Court. On the right-hand side are a number of large blocks of flats – these are part of a Peabody Trust housing estate, one of several in London that were built thanks to the generosity and vision of the American millionaire philanthropist George Peabody. The different coloured bricks certainly help make the otherwise austere looking blocks more attractive.

In the mid-19th century the American banker George Peabody came to London and not only fell in love with the city but was horrified by some of the deprivation he saw (although there was of course plenty of that in American cities as well). He gave huge amounts of money to develop public drinking fountains, schools and libraries, as well as building housing estates for lowly paid workers and tradesmen that replaced some of the worst of the city's slums. This was one of over thirty such developments.

This estate opened in 1884 and there were originally eleven blocks of flats, but during the Second World War a bomb fell on two of them and a number of residents were killed. The estate was modernised in the 1960s and 70s and is still managed today by Peabody.

Walk to the top of Pear Tree Court and turn to the right – when you reach the **Horseshoe pub turn immediately left up Clerkenwell Close** (the road that carries on ahead is of the same name, so make sure you turn left up the side of the pub.)

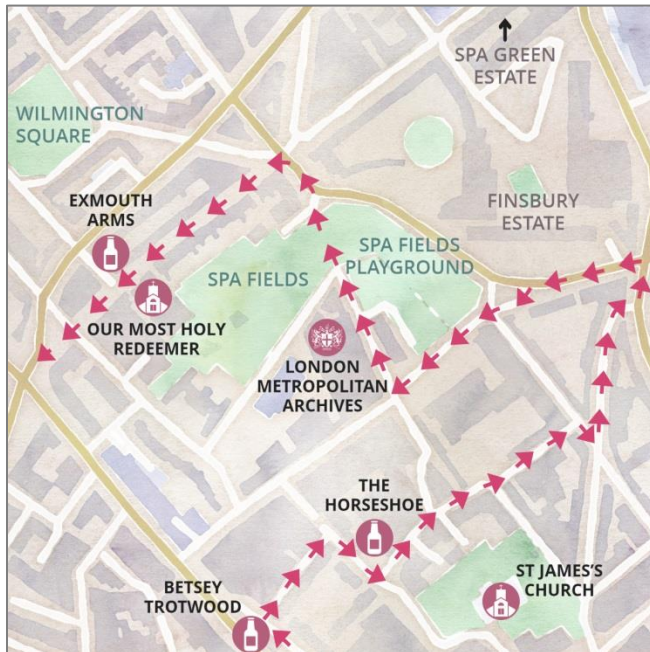
All around you are some remarkably well-restored old warehouses and industrial buildings that have become trendy apartments.

At the top of Clerkenwell Close **don't** follow the road to the left **but go straight ahead up the narrower Sans Walk**. (And just as a small point of interest, you may have noticed how Clerkenwell Close, which we originally saw a few minutes ago from Clerkenwell Green, follows a strange winding pattern – this is because it follows the outline of St Mary's Nunnery, which was demolished in the 16th century).

After 50 yards or so, you'll see on your left a small wooden gate at the start of the brick wall – this is the entrance to the underground catacombs of the **Clerkenwell House of Detention**. Although the main prison was above ground – in a moment we see what's been built on the site it occupied – there were many cells and chambers underground.

The last time I walked along here the gate was open and being curious, I couldn't resist going in. A narrow flight of steps leads directly down into the 'catacombs' and to my surprise I was able to wander around. It had been used for an exhibition that had just closed, and nobody seemed bothered about my being there. Some parts were dimly illuminated, whilst others were in complete darkness, all of which gave the place an added air of mystery and spookiness.

Little seems to have changed down here, although many of the cell doors have been removed. Hardly surprisingly, the place has a notorious reputation for being haunted and, having been down there, I can understand why. It's been featured in a number of television programmes, particularly those dealing with such things as ghosts and the paranormal and is now only very rarely open to the public.



Route map 4

Continue ahead for a few more yards and you come to the building that has been built on the site of the prison. Originally a school, called the Hugh Myddleton School, it closed in the 1970s and the building was turned into apartments, known as Kingsway Place. Take a look through the entrance gates and you can see what a good job the developers appear to have made of this grand old school building.

Continue walking along **Sans Walk**. At the end a tiny sign high up on the wall on the right says, 'This wall is the entire property of the County of Middlesex' – a reminder that this area, like much of north London, was once part of that county.

Bear to the right, **cross over Woodbridge Street** and walk to the left around the railings of the house on the corner and **turn up Sekforde Street**. (Thomas Seckford, or Sekforde, was an Elizabethan 'man of law' who owned a large estate in this area.) I particularly like the style of the houses along this street, but halfway along notice the attractive building between Nos.18 and 19 with an inscription carved into the stone fascia that reads, 'Finsbury Bank for Savings'. The bank had been set up in 1816 for 'tradesmen, mechanics, labourers, servants and others' and moved to these premises in 1840.

At the top, **turn left** into the busy **St John Street** and at the crossroads **turn left** into the wide **Skinner Street**.

Where the road bends, take the **left fork at the traffic island** and walk straight ahead into Corporation Row (there isn't a street sign). On your right you'll see **Spa Fields**, a two-acre park.

Spa Fields park was a pleasure ground in the 18th century. There were three bowling greens (nearby there is still a street named Bowling Green Lane), a bear garden, duck ponds and numerous pubs. But what had made this area popular was the Spa. Known as the 'London Spa', it opened after a local beer and wine merchant discovered (supposedly with the help of a scientist) that the waters in his well were the best of the local 'medicinal iron waters', with all sorts of health-giving properties. (The area was already beginning to be known for its 'waters', hence Sadler's Wells and the Islington Spa.)

It has, however, a more sinister past – the Bone House.

From around 1787, part of Spa Fields was used as a burial site for the poor to lay their families to rest. It became very popular as it was a cheaper alternative to the city's overcrowded churchyards. When it was set up, there was space for 2,722 bodies. Over the course of 50 years, there were, in fact, 80,000 burials. Hmm... as you can see, it doesn't quite add up.

Every night, the burial ground staff would move gravestones around in order to give the impression that there was always space for more bodies. And they would exhume bodies and then burn them in the Bone House – which stood on the site of today's park hut. There's a plaque recounting this horrible history at the park today.

One gravedigger, Reuben Room, was quoted as saying: "I've been up to my knees in human flesh by jumping on the bodies, so as to cram them into the least possible space at the bottom of the graves." Another, Joseph Naples, launched a notable career as a "resurrectionist" – more commonly known as a body snatcher. He would sell his "wares" to doctors and anatomists. Naturally, many of the local residents complained about the vile fumes. Some became ill from them, and others simply moved away in disgust. In 1845 Charles Bird, the burial ground's manager at the time, was dismissed and replaced, but the nightly nightmare continued until 1853, when the site was finally closed.

And the Spa Fields are also remembered for the riots that began here in 1816, following a meeting held by a group campaigning for reform of many social injustices – demanding an end to child labour and high taxation, and for redistribution of land, universal suffrage and much more.

Take the first right into Northampton Road. You'll see the huge London Metropolitan Archives and Finsbury Business Centre on the left. It was formerly the Temple Press printing works but is now the largest public records office in Britain and the principal archive repository for the City of London and the Greater London area. They have 72 miles of shelves of archives dating as far back as 1067 and handle 30,000 visitors a year and an equal number of written enquiries. Just a few yards further on you pass the Bourne & Hollingsworth bar and restaurant – which I can certainly recommend.

At the top of the road walk straight ahead up the short pedestrianised lane through the **Spa Fields Park**, which as you will see has extensive and well-equipped children's play areas – a wonderful facility for kids living in the tower blocks of the huge nearby Finsbury housing estate and, to its north, the smaller, pioneering Spa Green estate.

The **Spa Green estate** consists of three apartment blocks that were considered very innovative when they were built after the Second World War – so much so that they are now Grade II* listed. They were designed by Berthold Lubetkin, a modernist architect who had emigrated from Russia and who believed that "nothing is too good for ordinary people". The building incorporated such things as cleverly designed canopies on the roof that directed the wind through clothes-drying areas; balconies that were accessible from the living room yet also

overlooked by the kitchen; ventilated larders, heated linen cupboards – even rubbish chutes to save the residents having to take it down to the bins in the basement. Other innovations, particularly for social housing, were the provision of lifts, fitted kitchens with both electrical and gas appliances, slide-away breakfast counters and ironing boards.

At the top, cross over **Rosoman Place** into **Rosoman Street**. Ahead is a junction of several roads. We're going to walk on for just a few more yards **then turn left into Exmouth Market**.

This lively, semi-pedestrianised street had been a market for over a hundred years, but eventually it died out. The street had become rather run down but is now a very popular spot both during the day and evening thanks to the number of bars and restaurants that have opened, as well as several gift-type shops. Many of the bars and restaurants have outside seating, making it a particularly attractive place to visit in nice weather.

In addition, the market has now been reintroduced on weekdays, with many of the stalls selling street food, so becoming popular with local workers at lunchtimes.

Two-thirds of the way along the street you pass the **Church of Our Most Holy Redeemer**. I like it; it has an Italianate look and is one of a select few basilica-style churches in London.

If it's open, take a look inside and you could easily believe it is a Catholic church; however, it's actually Church of England, although known as 'Anglo-Catholic'. This means it is within the catholic tradition of the Church of England and receives 'alternate episcopal oversight' from the Bishop of Fulham. (Episcopal oversight is commonly known as a 'flying bishop' – a Church of England bishop assigned to minister to those clergy and parishes that 'are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests'.)

Almost opposite the church is a pub called the **Exmouth Arms**. The street was originally called Baynes Row, but in 1939 was renamed after the pub.

At the end of the street is **Farringdon Road**. If you look diagonally to the right across this busy junction, you can see the **Mount Pleasant Royal Mail Sorting Office**, the world's biggest postal sorting office, which opened in 1889 and was built on the site of the Coldbath Fields Prison. The reason the area had become known as Coldbath Fields was because 'cold baths' were actually established here around 1690 for the cure of rheumatism, convulsions and other nervous disorders. Then in 1794 the Middlesex House of Correction opened. It was said at the time to have been the largest prison in the country. It soon became more commonly known as the Coldbath Fields Prison.

And the name 'Mount Pleasant'? That came later and was given to these fields with ironic intent after local people had begun to dump their refuse in them.

The Royal Mail site is huge, covering around nine acres, six of which were sold off to private developers in 2017 for £193 million. Plans were submitted to build 681 apartments and houses, as well as office and retail shops on the site but as a result of objections from local residents the proposal was rejected by the local authority. However, it went to appeal and controversially the plans were passed by Boris Johnson when he was Mayor of London.

The Royal Mail still use part of the remaining site for sorting mail. In addition, an independent charitable trust has opened a Postal Museum that features a short ride on the now disused Post Office railway.

The Postal Museum is an independent registered charity that is partly financed by the Royal Mail. Besides numerous historical displays that cover all aspects of Britain's postal service, it also

offers the opportunity to ride on the old postal railway (which I mention below). As the mail wagons were never intended to carry passengers, they have had to be refurbished and adapted. I haven't yet tried it, but I've read that anybody who suffers with claustrophobia would be well advised against it. Although the ride only lasts for about 15 minutes, it's not cheap – ticket prices are up to £17 for adults (2019).

The museum is open every day and the entrance is in Phoenix Place, on the other side of the Mount Pleasant site.

The Post Office Railway

Due to problems as far back as the early part of the last century of transporting mail through London's congested streets, a unique six-mile underground railway was built in 1922 that connected Mount Pleasant with other London postal sorting offices and two railway termini. It closed in 2003, and once again, mail and parcels were sent by road across the city. As with the abolition of the Post Office mail trains that used to cross Britain carrying post, it was decided that it was more economical to use lorries. So much for any possibility of government 'joined-up thinking' on traffic and pollution!

We're at the end of the walk.

To get back to central London – there's a bus stop on the triangle at the end of the street and details of the buses from there are:

Number 19 – takes you to Cambridge Circus, Piccadilly Circus, Hyde Park Corner, and terminating south of the river in Battersea.

Number 38 – takes you to Gray's Inn Road, Cambridge Circus, Piccadilly Circus and terminating at Victoria.

Number 63 – takes you to Farringdon Station, Newgate Street (Old Bailey/City Thames Link station), Blackfriars.

Number 341 – takes you to Holborn, Aldwych (Somerset House) and Waterloo.

Unfortunately, **the nearest tube station is back at Farringdon** – and to get there it's a 12-15-minute walk (just under half a mile) down Farringdon Street, which is to your immediate left.

Although you have probably had enough walking for one day, there is a separate walk on the website that starts from Exmouth Market and finishes at the Angel Islington.

APPENDIX TO THE CLERKENWELL WALK

AN INTRODUCTION TO CLERKENWELL

The area known as Clerkenwell developed from a hamlet serving the monasteries that had been established here from the 11th century. The name 'Clerkenwell' came from a fresh water spring, near which the parish clerks (a term used for someone who was a member of the clergy or perhaps just highly educated) would organise and put on religious plays. These would be watched by the mainly illiterate local people, with the hope it might give them an insight into the bible, which of course, they couldn't read.

Its proximity to the City of London and its good water supplies meant that it grew quite rapidly, particularly in the 18th and early 19th centuries, and this resulted in it becoming extremely overcrowded and subsequently infamous for its slums and levels of crime.

The area centred on the Priory of Clerkenwell, the headquarters of the Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem, whilst also close by were the Priory of Charterhouse and St Mary's Nunnery. All three were closed down during Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries.

Being outside of the City of London, Clerkenwell was free from the standards of behaviour and various restrictions that those living in the City were forced to abide by. As a result its reputation for crime, violence and prostitution steadily grew; prostitutes, who were banned from plying their trade within the City, established themselves as close as they could, whilst staying outside its walls.

A description of Clerkenwell in the 16th century read, "there were a great number of dissolute, loose, and insolent people" ... harboured in "noisome and disorderly houses, poor cottages, and habitations of beggars and people without trade ... taverns, dicing houses, bowling alleys and brothel houses."

The infamous reputation of streets such as Turnmill Street was referred to by Shakespeare's Falstaff, whilst another account said this was "the most disreputable street in London, a haunt of thieves and loose women".

The cattle market that had been established in Smithfield continued to grow, bringing with it yet more 'disreputable people', resulting in it being closed and the building of the famous Smithfield meat market, which could be more easily controlled.

The annual Bartholomew Fair, which used to attract vast crowds, was held each year around the saint's feast day on August 24th, and eventually became so troublesome that in 1855 the authorities banned it from ever taking place again.

However, over time some areas of Clerkenwell did begin to improve and small industries started to develop. The good water supplies meant it became a popular place for brewing and gin distilling – Nicholson's gin distillery was based here until 1961, though its building has now become trendy apartments.

During the 17th century many Huguenots, escaping from religious persecution in northern Europe, settled in Clerkenwell and brought with them their highly specialised skills, such as clock and watchmaking, which by the early 18th century the area had become well known for.

Another area of Clerkenwell became known as Little Italy as a result of the number of immigrants from the northern part of that country that began to settle there. A report by the

Italian consul in 1895 said that most of them were working as 'organ men, ice vendors, ambulant merchants and plaster bust sellers. However, Little Italy doesn't exist anymore, as the Italians moved on to live elsewhere in London. By the mid-19th century the area's reputation once again began to decline, and it had some of London's worst slums.

Somewhat ironically, bearing in mind its history of crime and violence, Clerkenwell eventually became a sort of 'centre of justice', with the huge Middlesex courthouse being built at the bottom of Clerkenwell Green and the opening of several prisons, including the Cold Bath Prison, at the time the biggest in Britain.

It also became known for its radical and revolutionary politics. John Wilkes, an 18th century 'defender of free speech', lived near Clerkenwell Green, as many years later did Lenin. And it's still home to the Marx Memorial Library, which we see on the walk. Britain's first May Day march, which is still very popular with communists and socialists, set off from Clerkenwell Green – as it continues to do every year.

SMITHFIELD AND ITS MARKET

Situated just outside the walls of the City of London, Smithfield is one of Britain's oldest surviving urban areas. A priory and a hospice (the forerunner of the first hospital to open in Britain) which were dedicated to St Bartholomew were established here in 1102, receiving a significant income from the adjacent annual 'cloth fair', which became one of the biggest cloth markets in Europe.

The name 'Smithfield' comes from its early description as a 'Smooth Field', a broad grassy area that led down to the River Fleet. It was ideal for the watering and the grazing of cattle, hence the growth of the cattle market that had been held there since medieval times. Indeed, centuries ago, Welsh drovers would herd their flocks from the hills of Wales to the 'sale yards' that were in front of the St Bartholomew's Hospital.

The streets around Smithfield were always full of live animals on their way to the market or slaughterhouses and Dicken's description of it reads, "It was market morning. The ground was covered, nearly ankle-deep, with filth and mire; a thick steam perpetually rising from the reeking bodies of the cattle and mingling with the fog, which seemed to rest upon the chimney tops ... unwashed, unshaven, squalid and dirty figures constantly running to and fro, and bursting in and out of the throng, rendering it a stunning and bewildering scene, which quite confounded the senses".

Besides the Cloth Fair that was held on St Bartholomew's Day on August 24th each year was the annual St Bartholomew's Fair, that even by the reign of Elizabeth I it had become notorious for the crime and violence that it caused. Prostitutes had been banned from plying their trade within the City walls and had established themselves in Smithfield, so it was hardly surprising that its reputation worsened over the centuries. Rife with muggers and pickpockets it had a reputation as being one of the roughest places in London, with a particular dislike of outsiders. Indeed, in the 19th century the area was said to have the highest murder rate in London and was described as 'a den of thieves and murderers'. Indeed, Charles Dickens based Fagin and Bill Sykes, the villains of his 1838 novel 'Oliver Twist' in Smithfield, on two such characters that he was said to have met here.

Smithfield was also known for its 'wife sales'. Yes, you read that correctly! In the early 19th century getting a divorce was extremely difficult, so men would bring their wives along to sell, along with their other goods, and at the end of this section I reproduce a ballad that was popular at the time.

All of this resulted in a concerted effort by the authorities to 'clean the area up' and in 1855, after 600 years, the fair was finally shut down.

In addition to this, in 1852 the Smithfield Market Removal Act was passed, forcing the live market to relocate to Copenhagen Fields in Islington, and in its place Sir Horace Jones, the City of London's Surveyor, designed the buildings for a new meat market which opened in 1868, much of which we still see today.

It had a quite revolutionary design, with iron pillars that supported iron lattice girders that let in both light and air and a louvred roof that helped keep the sun out. All of that, as well as its location being slightly higher than its surroundings, meant there was more of a breeze which helped to keep the temperature cooler than outside. This was obviously good for keeping meat fresh in the days before refrigerators.

The market was a great success, so much so that several years after the main market buildings opened, it was further extended by the opening of the poultry market to the west of the meat market.

All of this, together with the newly constructed Metropolitan line that actually ran under the market, contributed to Smithfield's continuing growth and success. The new railway line meant a station could be built under the market, allowing special trains to bring the meat directly here from all parts of the country. Alongside it, enormous underground storage areas, accessed by the wide circular 'ramp' you see today enable the meat could be brought up into the market. Those storage areas are now used as a car park.

Obviously there were many changes in the Second World War, when the market was closed by the government who were concerned about large gatherings of people in buildings that were easily recognisable from the air. The meat stores were then spread around London, with just small amounts stored at Smithfield and some of the space left was used as an army butchers' school.

The market was badly bombed during the war – indeed it was hit as late as early 1945 by the last but one V2 rocket to land in England, when the fish, fruit and vegetable sections of the market were badly damaged, and 160 people were killed. War-time rationing of course had its effect, which didn't end until 1954 when the market gradually returned to normal activities.

Following the war, the market was rebuilt and today still supplies much of the meat for London's restaurants, wholesalers, etc. However, it is now in decline and the Corporation of London, which owns the site, has announced plans for it to close and move to Barking Creek, in east London. This will be wonderful news for the many developers who've been desperate to get their hands on such a prime ten-acre site. Its western end is already in the process of being redeveloped as the new home for the Museum of London.

Finally, during research into the market, I read an article about some of the old trades that were connected to it and found the following paragraph, which I found rather interesting, so I thought I'd share it here:

"For centuries so much of the trade of the area around Smithfield had been based around the cattle market and apparently even as late as 1980 a few of those old trades were still in existence – bacon smokers, sausage skin makers, pie men, cutlers – even button makers (buttons were made from the hoofs and horns of the cattle)."

I mentioned the wife sales earlier – and here is a ballad that was written in 1811:

John Hobbs and His Wife

A jolly shoe-maker, John Hobbs, John Hobbs,
A jolly shoe-maker, John Hobbs;
 He married Jane Carter,
 No damsel looked smarter,
 But he caught a Tartar,
John Hobbs, John Hobbs,
Yes, he caught a tartar, John Hobbs.

He tied a rope to her, John Hobbs, John Hobbs,
He tied a rope to her, John Hobbs,
 To 'scape from hot water
 To Smithfield he brought her,
 But nobody bought her,
Jane Hobbs, Jane Hobbs,
They all were afraid of Jane Hobbs.

Oh, who'll buy a wife? Says Hobbs, John Hobbs,
A sweet pretty wife says Hobbs;
 But somehow they tell us,
 The wife-dealing fellows,
 Were all of them sellers,
John Hobbs, John Hobbs,
And none of 'em wanted Jane Hobbs.

The rope it was ready, John Hobbs, John Hobbs,
Come, give me the rope, says Hobbs,
 I won't stand to wrangle,
 Myself I will strangle,
 And hang dingle dangle,
John Hobbs, John Hobbs,
He hung dingle dangle, John Hobbs.

But down his wife cut him, John Hobbs, John Hobbs,
But down his wife cut him, John Hobbs, John Hobbs,
 With a few hubble bubbles,
 They settled their troubles,
 Like most married couples,
John Hobbs, John Hobbs,
Oh happy shoe-maker John Hobbs.

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL

– and the role it played in improving the standard of nursing care in Britain

St Bartholomew's, regarded by many as England's 'premier hospital', played a major part in improving the standards of nursing care and the working conditions for nurses. Two of the early matrons were largely responsible for this. One was Ethel Gordon Manson who was appointed matron in 1891. Sadly, she had to leave in 1887 to get married (married women weren't allowed to continue working then) and later as Mrs Bedford Fenwick, she began a 30-year campaign for

state registration of trained nurses. This wasn't actually achieved until 1919 when an Act of Parliament was passed, and the General Nursing Council was established – Mrs Fenwick then becoming 'State Registered Nurse No. 1'.

Her position as Matron was taken over in 1887 by Isla Stewart, who was Matron from 1887 until 1910, and who continued the campaign for the state registration of nurses. She was also an ardent campaigner for the formal training and education of nurses and became the first Superintendent of St Bartholomew's Training School as well as founding the League of St Bartholomew's Nurses.

She saw a nurse as a working woman, 'wishing for independence ... and to have a profession ... owing no man anything'. One of her quotes was "There was something about St Bartholomew's Hospital – it may be its age, its history or its associations – which creates towards it a unique feeling among its members."

As a result of their efforts, from 1925 onwards pupils would spend seven weeks at a preliminary training school before starting work at the hospital.

A plaque on a wall where the house of Dame Joanna Astley, nurse of Henry VI, once stood explains that this particular building is "devoted to the elucidation of problems in the nature and treatment of the diseases of those who have sought relief from suffering in this hospital."

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL MUSEUM

I mentioned the museum in the text of the walk and said it is fascinating and well worth a visit but I felt that it is worth a little more of a mention.

There are a number of detailed information boards and exhibits that cover the history of the hospital as well as explaining how nursing and medical knowledge has progressed over the centuries.

For example, you learn that at one time there were usually three hospital surgeons attending to the patients. They were initially apprentices and regarded as being craftsmen. The surgeons were subordinate to the hospital's physician and had inferior status, something that didn't change until the 18th century. However, some of the early surgeons at Bart's were skilled practitioners and highly regarded in their day.

From the 16th century until later in the 19th, surgery was a rather crude and barbaric affair and operations were actually quite rare. For example, in the 1770s only around one a week were performed at the hospital and the most common were amputations and lithotomy (the removal of bladder stones, a common complaint in those days). Another 'remedy' for certain ailments was the removal of pieces of the skull.

Surgeons more commonly dealt with accidents and injuries caused by knife and gunshot wounds, burns and fractures. They also pulled teeth and treated skin disorders, venereal infections, tumours and ulcers. Enemas and blood-letting were also common in those days.

'MONTY PYTHON AND THE GRAND STAIRCASE!'

Whilst he was in St Bartholomew's Hospital recovering from open heart surgery, Sir Michael Palin, (star of Monty Python and author and broadcaster of fascinating travel documentaries), was taken in a wheelchair through the hospital to see the famous artistic masterpiece created by William Hogarth in 1736.

It is one of the 'hidden secrets' of Barts, which I was fortunate to see (as a result of an unlocked door and the fact that the person supervising the museum that day was otherwise busy when I first visited, which was a few years ago!)

To say that Michael was impressed is certainly an understatement, so much so that he has made a substantial seven-figure donation.

The staircase, which is accessed through a door in the museum, has two 30-foot canvases on its walls, both painted by William Hogarth in the 1730s. They depict scenes from the Bible – the Pool of Bethesda and the Good Samaritan. The former shows the scene from the Gospel of John when Jesus instructs a paralysed man to walk, whilst the other shows sick and injured people (thought to have been modelled on real life patients of Barts at the time), who are waiting to bathe in the healing waters of the pool.

They are the largest Hogarth ever produced and portray characters that display almost every known ailment in the late 18th century.

Will Palin, Michael's son, who as I explain below is responsible for the renovations, says it is interesting that Hogarth was generally known more for his scandalising caricatures of political and social life. He wanted to demonstrate that he wasn't just a popular satirist, so the opportunity to do something on this scale – a historical narrative within the walls of one of the most important institutions in the country was said to be irresistible.

Hogarth, who at the time lived locally, had heard that the hospital's governors were thinking of hiring an Italian painter to undertake the work and, having recently completed *A Rake's Progress*, he was keen to take on the job himself, and he never asked for payment.

Will Palin, who is a building heritage and conservation expert, was appointed Chief Executive of Barts Heritage, a charity founded to rescue and repair the oldest buildings within the hospital. And with the help of sizeable donations from his father and others, he has managed to raise over £10 million towards the restoration. He said it wasn't too difficult as his father's life was saved by Barts!

Will has already had considerable experience of such renovations as he led the team to restore the Painted Hall at the Old Royal Naval College, in Greenwich.

For the two-year project, which began in the autumn of 2023, Will has recruited experts who have already carried out restoration work on St Paul's Cathedral and the Duomo in Florence.

CLERKENWELL PRIORY AND ST JOHN'S CHURCH

Clerkenwell Priory was founded in 1140 as an 'Augustinian Monastic Order of the Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem' and was the residence of the Hospitallers' grand prior of England and therefore their headquarters. They were powerful and wealthy, owning land in areas of London such as Marylebone and St John's Wood.

The Knights of St John were a religious order, founded in Jerusalem around 1099 to care for sick and poor pilgrims. Later they developed a military role, moving from Jerusalem to Acre, Cyprus, Rhodes and then Malta. I rather like an account, written in 1237, of their departure to the Holy Land, which I quote here;

"The Hospitallers sent their prior ... a most clever knight, with a body of other knights and stipendiary attendants and a large sum of money to the assistance of the Holy Land. They having

made all arrangements, set out from their house at Clerkenwell and proceeded in good order, with about thirty shields uncovered, with spears raised and preceded by their banner, through the midst of the City, towards the bridge, that they might obtain the blessings of the spectators, and bowing their heads with their cowls lowered, commended themselves to the prayers of all."

Later the prior had many roles and was the first secular baron in Parliament, as well as having other civic and judicial duties. He also sat on the King's Privy Council, a committee that offered the king confidential advice on affairs of state. Priors also held their own courts and were responsible for local justice on all the lands the order owned.

The priory must have been quite substantial building and was said to resemble a palace with a 'very fair church and a tower steeple raised to a great height with such fine workmanship that it was a singular beauty and ornament to the City". Few knights actually lived there, but many would pass through on their way to the Holy Land, Rhodes or Malta. The actual residents included the church chaplains and officials such as the prior himself, as well as servants and stable boys. Women did not live there, with the exception of some pensioners and the laundress.

Many royal guests stayed at the priory, including King John, Edward I, Eleanor of Castile, Henry IV and Henry V. As a result of the amount of entertaining that was done, both by the Grand Prior himself as well as various members of his court, it was constantly running out of money.

The order was dissolved during Henry VIII's reformation and dissolution of monasteries. He subsequently confiscated their buildings and lands and, sometime later in the 16th century, part of the priory was blown up with gunpowder and the stone used for buildings elsewhere in London. Indeed, with the exception of St John's Gate, which we mention elsewhere, there is little left of the original priory.

And I must mention the description of a feast that was held here in 1541, following Henry VIII's 'takeover' of the priory. It was to honour ten newly created Serjeants-at-Arms and the food consumed by the guests included, "thirty-four great beehives, thirty-seven dozen pigeons and fourteen dozen swans". Some feast!

The site later became the townhouse of the earls of both Ailesbury and Elgin and the church became their private chapel, with a library on one side, whilst the crypt was used as their private wine cellar.

ST JOHN'S GATE

St John's Gate had been built as the South Gate entrance of Clerkenwell Priory but after Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, when the priory was closed, this part of the building was preserved and since then has had a variety of uses, some most fascinating.

During Elizabeth I's reign in the 16th century the Master of the Revels, the official who had the responsibility of deciding which plays would be granted licences allowing them to be performed, had his offices here. He would often ask for a play to be performed here in front of him, so he could decide whether or not to grant a licence for it to be performed in public. England's most famous playwright William Shakespeare came here on a number of occasions to seek licences for the performances of around thirty of his plays.

Many years later, in 1703, Richard Hogarth, the father of the famous painter William Hogarth opened a coffee house here 'to enable gentlemen to enjoy a coffee whilst conversing in Latin' and his son William lived here until the age of five.

An early printing press was also set up and it was here where Benjamin Franklin worked in 1725, before going to America. Indeed, it was on this press that Benjamin Franklin's 'Experiment and Observations on Electricity' was printed.

In 1731 it became the offices and printers of the Gentleman's Magazine, the famous periodical that ran for nearly 200 years. The magazine was the first employer of Samuel Johnson (who later wrote the first authoritative English Dictionary but hadn't yet been awarded the title of doctor). He worked here as an editor and translator for the magazine. Later it was where several of Johnson's books were printed.

In the late 18th century the gate was considered to be unsafe and various improvements were made, including the removal of the battlements that had been above it.

Over time it had also been a parish watch-house, the offices of a Masonic order and a tavern, known firstly as 'The Old Gate', then the 'St John's Gate Tavern' and finally the 'Jerusalem Tavern', where Charles Dickens was a regular customer.

It was also where the famous 18th century actor David Garrick, who later had both a London theatre and street named after him – the Garrick Theatre and Covent Garden's Garrick Street – made his first public performance.

Finally, in 1874 it was purchased by the British Order of St John, and is now used as an excellent museum that explains the order's history – and is well worth a short visit.

THE ORDER OF ST JOHN

The order developed from the work of Benedictine monks in the Holy Land who, while tending to pilgrims in their hospice, decided that they wished to become another order. Promising Pope Pascal II that they would honour poverty, chastity and obedience, in 1115 the Order of St John of Jerusalem was raised.

They became the Knights Hospitallers and another promise was to defend the faith. They used the Knights Templar to guard them whilst they tended the wounded on the battlefields of the Crusades.

Over time the order carried on its work in areas of conflict and during the Crimean War its members went to Queen Victoria to ask for royal approval to officially re-establish the order in England – it had been dissolved by Henry VIII. Because the Pope wouldn't approve of a multi-denominational order Victoria agreed and made it the Most Venerable Order of St John.

There was a great need to have proper medical cover in factories after the industrial revolution and the St John Ambulance Association was set up in 1877 by the Order of St John to train factory workers in first aid. It began by offering 30 or so classes around the country.

Eventually members wanted to form a uniformed volunteer squad that could attend people who became ill or were injured at public events. The first public event attended by St John volunteers was Queen Victoria's Jubilee Parade in London.

This developed into a public ambulance service around the country and soon there were separate divisions for men and women, divided into ambulance and nursing sections. Later, children joined as cadets and later 'badgers'. The NHS took over the ambulance service in 1948, leaving St John Ambulance still responsible for some of the work until the 1960s.

Nowadays the organisation still has uniformed members who are trained up to a high standard and includes health care professionals who give up their time on a voluntary basis. Additionally, many types of training classes are available for companies or the public. While its military aspects have been significantly reduced and the organisation modernised, with the uniform brought up to date in green and black, the principle that nobody should die for want of trained help is rigorously maintained. St John Ambulance now operates throughout most Commonwealth countries.

THE CARTHUSIAN PRIORY OF CHARTERHOUSE

The name 'Charterhouse' comes from the French word Chartreuse and this was one of thirteen monasteries to be established in England by Carthusian monks, a monastic order started by St Bruno of Cologne in 1084. He built a hermitage in the Chartreuse region of the Alps, north of Grenoble in France. (And if anybody wonders whether there is a connection with the 'Chartreuse' alcoholic drink, then yes ... it was originally made by there by the monks over 300 years ago. And they still make it).

Charterhouse opened in 1371 and soon became the wealthiest of them, mainly as a result of being supported by merchants in the City of London, who no doubt hoped this gesture would help get them into God's 'good books'.

The life of a Carthusian monk was then – as it still is to this day – one of humility and contemplation, which is basically solitude and silence and indeed they were known as 'hermit monks', who were supported by 'lay brothers'. The former lived very isolated lives in small, individual rooms, called cells, which were built along or around a cloister. (There were twenty-five of them in the Charterhouse priory). They had two meals a day (lunch and supper) which were passed to them through a small opening into their cell, which meant they did not have to see or speak to whoever brought it to them. Interestingly, in an account I have read of a visit to the monastery some five hundred years ago, it said that "thanks to their diet of mainly fish, the monks stunk like otters."

They spent their days meditating and praying, normally only leaving the cell for prayer services in the chapel. On Sundays they often joined together with others for a 'silent' community meal, and once a year they met a close family member.

Charterhouse Priory

Following the Reformation, the Catholic religion was banned by Henry VIII as a result of the Pope's refusal to allow his marriage to Catharine of Aragon to be annulled, as she hadn't been able to provide him with a male heir. Henry then established the Church of England in its place and closed down the many Catholic monasteries, of which Charterhouse was one. He had the Prior and monks put to death for refusing to acknowledge him as head of this new church.

Following its closure, the buildings were for a time used by Henry VIII to store the equipment he used for his hunting expeditions, whilst some of the monk's cells were used by a family of makers of musical instruments. Charterhouse was later purchased by Edward North, who Henry had put in charge of disposing of the Catholic Church's properties in England, so no doubt for a very advantageous price.

Edward North demolished the monastery's church and, in its place, built what was said to have been a 'rather magnificent mansion'. This included the Great Hall and the adjoining Great Chamber, (later known as the Throne Room for reasons I explain below).

Following his death the property was purchased by Thomas Howard, who renamed it Howard House. However, as so often happened in those days, Howard later found himself incriminated in a 'political plot' and was put under 'house arrest' in his Charterhouse mansion by King Henry, for allegedly taking part in a plot to have his successor, Elizabeth I, killed and replaced on the throne by her Catholic supporting sister Mary. He used his enforced time at Charterhouse to create the magnificent gardens that we can see today. His fate was sealed when a 'coded letter' was found under a doormat in his mansion that had apparently been sent by Mary Queen of Scots. Not surprisingly, he himself was sentenced to death, following which ownership of the house passed to his son Thomas Howard, 1st Earl of Suffolk.

Then in 1611, the property was purchased by Thomas Sutton who had made a vast amount of money as a result of the discovery of coal beneath two estates he had leased near Newcastle-on-Tyne. In his will he left money for a hospital to be built on the Charterhouse site, together with a school to educate forty boys and also a chapel. He also provided funds for an alms-house to provide a home for eighty male pensioners – 'gentlemen by descent and in poverty, soldiers that have borne arms by sea or land, merchants decayed by piracy or shipwreck, or servants in households to the Kings or Queens Majesty ...'. (Although members of his family contested his generous charitable will, they failed to have it overturned and Thomas's good works were put in place.)

The almshouses are still there and home to 'forty pensioners'. Although they are called 'Brothers', they don't have to be practicing Anglicans, though they are expected to respect the church's traditions. Until 2018 only single or widowed men were admitted, but since then single or widowed women can also apply. Each of the Brothers has their own individual accommodation but take their meals in the Great Hall. (The reason for being called 'Brothers' (or in the case of women, Sisters) is simply to respect its monastic past.) It is still run as a charity, with a board of sixteen governors, one of whom is always a member of the royal family.

And in case you might be thinking how nice to live in such a lovely community when you reach retirement, I'm told there is a very long waiting list for places.

The school became the famous **Charterhouse public school**. It has several interesting 'claims to fame', one of which is surprisingly to do with football. Back in the 19th century football was a very popular game at the school. Unlike some other public schools, being in a monastery meant that the Charterhouse boys had very little space to play football, (in practice just the cloisters) and as a result had to play to a rather strict set of rules that had been devised to cope with this.

One of these was an 'off-side' rule that was different from that used elsewhere, as was another that involved when the ball could be thrown. When the Football Association was being formed in the 1860's and the rules being established, both of these rules that were used at Charterhouse were adopted for what became our national game. (Indeed, for a number of years, players from the 'Old Carthusians', a team made up of 'old boys' of the school, had great success in the FA Cup, even winning it on more than one occasion. And a number of ex-Charterhouse boys were then playing in many of the FA league teams.)

In 1872, Charterhouse School moved out of London to Godalming in Surrey, where it still is today, and is one of the 'Great Nine English Public Schools'. Past pupils include Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt; singer Peter Gabriel; TV broadcaster Johnathon Dimbleby; John Wesley, the founder of Methodism; the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams and Baden-Powell, founder of the Scouting Movement.

The priory buildings

Two of the most important parts of Charterhouse are the magnificent Great Hall, which although damaged during the Second World War, has been fully restored and the Great Chamber.

The Great Chamber was built by Edward North in the 1540s and known then as the 'Throne Room'. This name came about as a result of Elizabeth I holding her first Privy Council meeting in it before being crowned Queen. James I also held his first 'court' here, when he arrived in London from Scotland to take up the crown.

(And whilst it may have seemed like a great honour to have a king or queen staying with you, many would dread it. For a start, it wouldn't just be the royals themselves and a few of their closest 'hangers on' – it could be dozens or even scores of members of the Royal Court and various associates. All would want accommodating, and most in great style. Enormous banquets had to be laid on with vast amounts of food and wine. And of course, none of it was ever paid for. It is said that some members of the aristocracy were virtually bankrupted as a result of a royal deciding to come to stay.

Finally, a little about the English Reformation

The reason for adding a few paragraphs on this is because I have referred to it several times during the appendix as it had such a huge influence on several of the buildings we visit during the walk.

The Reformation was a time of enormous change in England, particularly to the established Catholic Church, which in those days was a fundamental part of the way of life for many people.

It was called the 'reformation', because things really were reformed and changed during the reign of Henry VIII. He decided that as his wife had not yet given him a son and was convinced that she was now too old to have children, he wanted to divorce her. He had already chosen Anne Boleyn as his new wife.

Unfortunately for him, England was a Catholic country, (as was most of Europe), and divorce was forbidden – marriage really was 'for life'. Although he was the King of England and extremely powerful, he was a Catholic himself so had to ask the Pope, the head of the Catholic Church, for permission to divorce. He could no doubt have just gone ahead but was concerned that if he did so then he would be 'excommunicated' (i.e. thrown out of the church). Not wanting to take a chance and upset God by going against the religion, he had a problem.

Despite his appeals directly to the Pope, he was refused permission, so in desperation, he went to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the head of the Catholic Church in England. The Archbishop knew what the Pope had said, but equally he knew it wasn't wise to argue with the powerful King of England – so he took it upon himself to give Henry the divorce, enabling him to marry Anne Boleyn.

It's all a very long and complicated story, but the result was that knowing the Pope's reaction to this, Henry decided to 'break away' from the Catholic Church and had an

Act of Parliament passed in 1534 that made him the head of the newly formed Church of England. (And of course, over five hundred years later, it is still the Monarch of the United Kingdom who is head of the Church of England).

Henry probably wasn't taking too much of a risk in doing this; he knew that many people – and not just in England but across Europe – were getting rather fed up with what was perceived by many to be the 'money making' methods and general corruption of the Catholic Church, which

was based in the Vatican, in Rome. The church was growing ever wealthier by all manner of means, but what affected the everyday life of people was the way the church was charging them – and by no means small amounts – for everything to do with the church. To be baptised, (which the church said you had to be, or you'd never get to heaven), to get married, to be buried ...

If people protested and didn't pay, then they would be told that they would go to hell. That really worried everyday people, particularly as most were poorly educated and believed what they were told. So, even if you were very poor, you were faced with either finding the money, or spending eternity in hell!

So, in view of this growing dissatisfaction with the Catholic Church, his decision to abandon that religion and set up a new 'Church of England', of which he, rather than the Pope, would be the head, wasn't as unpopular as might have been thought. In fact, many people supported what he was doing.

Whilst some of the monks in the monasteries did lead very 'Christian lives', many lived in somewhat luxury and owned vast buildings and areas of land. Many monks were indeed regarded as being 'fat and indolent', and so clearly didn't like what Henry was doing and stayed loyal to the Pope.

Henry wasn't one to lose! In the face of their opposition, he simply decided to close down the monasteries – and those monks who protested were simply despatched (often quite horribly) to an early grave. This was called the Dissolution of the Monasteries – and it meant that those Catholic monasteries and the church buildings and various estates who refused to acknowledge Henry as head of the new Church of England and continued to stay loyal to the Pope, were closed down. They were literally 'dissolved'.

Some of what happened during this period was extremely unfair. Henry despatched his officials to visit the monasteries to gather evidence of their disobedience ... but many of the reports that Henry received back were simply written accounts of what the officials knew Henry wanted to hear ... so there was a lot of unfairness, corruption and often 'damn right lies' going on. Indeed, for going against Henry and his new law, many Catholic religious leaders and even lowly monks and lay priests were accused of treason, the punishment for which was invariably a particularly gruesome death.

Some of the now empty monasteries were demolished and the stones they had been built with eagerly acquired by the local population to build houses, whilst others were sold off remarkably cheaply, often to the very same officials who had visited them and given false witness to Henry about the activities that had been taken place there.