

WALKS IN LONDON

TO SEE SOME ENGLISH HISTORY IN A WEEK IN LONDON

In January 1998 a couple wrote from the States. In a week in London the husband was keen to cover some English history, and his wife keen on the same, plus a chance to walk and to view handsome buildings and good townscapes. My comments may be of use to other enquirers.

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I started by remembering that their joint interest was history, so I did not include beautiful views, fine buildings, famous tourist spots, and so on, unless they say something about our history. I drew up two lists. The first was places to reflect on major periods of the British past. The second was the same list, but turned into a programme from east to west, to stop them wasting time zig-zagging around London.

The order by period is this.

Museum of London: London's history from the old stone age to now

The Sutton Hoo ship burial, shown upstairs in the British Museum. Anglo Saxon

Tower of London: Norman

Westminster Abbey: medieval, various centuries

The Church of St Bartholomew the Great: twelfth century

Temple Church: thirteenth century

Hampton Court: Tudor

The National Maritime Museum: seventeenth century

St Bartholomew's Hospital Great Hall: eighteenth century benevolence

Sir John Soane's Museum: eighteenth century taste

Dr Johnson's House: eighteenth century learning

Parliament: nineteenth century

Florence Nightingale Museum: nineteenth century

The National Portrait Gallery: mostly for the nineteenth century

The Cabinet War Rooms: mid twentieth century

Brick Lane: late twentieth century: a multi-cultural London

Now an order that cuts down travel time.

Day One. Start with a morning in the Museum of London, St Paul's tube, to get a picture of the last 2000 years. The museum is open weekdays ten to five fifty. After the museum take the Central line to Liverpool Street, and walk 300 yards east to Brick Lane, for a Bengali lunch. Or if you walk, leave the Museum of London. South on Aldersgate Street. First left at St Anne and St Agnes (Wren church: good music some lunchtimes) onto Gresham Street. See front of Guildhall, perhaps go in. Lothbury, by the Bank of England (it has a small Bank museum, free). Turn south into Bartholomew Lane. Carry on south on the paved area east of the Royal Exchange. Turn east at Cornhill. Turn

south at Gracechurch Street, then at once east through Leadenhall market (nineteenth century flamboyance: good lunches upstairs). At Lime Street turn north. Walk north east along Lime Street, St Mary Axe, Cutler Street, Harrow Place, Wentworth Street, and at Brick Lane turn towards the smell of curry.

If you want your curry very moderate you ask for Khorma, and a saucer of yoghurt. But the waiter will gladly advise you. Look at fellow lunchers: curry is now as British as fish and chips. Go from Aldgate East tube to Tower Hill tube (only one stop, but it's a dull walk) and see the Tower, open Sunday and Monday ten to five, other days nine to five.

Day Two. Start at Farringdon or St Paul's tube, and see the Church of St Barthomolew the Great, and the Great Hall at St Barthomolew's Hospital. I think both are open about ten to four thirty. If you walk, go from St Barthomolews north through the Smithfield meat market, then west along Cowcross Street, on west along Greville Street, and see the jewellery quarter on Hatton Garden. Then one street eastwards to Leather Lane, turn south and walk through the market, cross the main road to no 24 High Holborn, and go into Barnard's Inn Hall, to see Gresham's College in the old Merchant Taylor's School. Carry south through the college yards, turn east, and you're in Fetter Lane. Walk south, and just after Bream's Buildings (on the right) turn east to Dr Johnson's House. After your visit there ask your way to the Old Cheshire Cheese, a pub he may have liked, but don't lunch there There's a better lunch upstairs in the Devereaux, just west of the Inns of Court. Carry on south to Fleet Street, turn west, and just after you pass Fetter Lane on your right you find Prince Henry's Room (which is Tudor) on the south side. At the next gateway turn south into Middle Temple Lane. Two courtyards down turn east to the court that has the Temple church, built by crusaders. After you see that leave westwards, walk through three courts, and ask any lawyer the way to the Devereaux pub for lunch upstairs. Then up the alley north to the Strand, see the front of the Law Courts, walk eastward by Bush House (with a BBC shop) and St Clement Danes (with a mounument to Polish airmen who fought beside our Few), past Somerset House (pop in to see the courtyard), straight through the Savoy Hotel to the Victoria Embankment Gardens (if you dare: if not drop down the Coal Hole), through those westwards to Villiers Street, and so to Embankment tube station.

Day Three. Start upstairs at the British Museum (tube Holborn) to see the Sutton Hoo ship burial, the funeral ship of an Anglo Saxon prince. If you've not read "Beowulf" you might try it now. You can spend days in the BM, but there's no point if you want a week of British history. The BM is open on weekdays ten to five. Go east along High Holborn (which is dull) to Lincoln's Inn Fields, and see Sir John Soane's museum. Now hop on a bus to Trafalgar Square: the best views from the bus are upstairs. If you bought it in England your tube and rail pass covers busses too. If you walk, go west along Remnant Street, Great Queen Street, and Long Acre to Covent Garden tube station, drop south into Covent Garden, and then walk west along Maiden Lane, Chandos Place, and William IV Street, to come out opposite the National Portrait Gallery.

With only a week, every minute will count. It might be that from some places your wife should leave two hours before you do, carrying the street atlas, and walk to the next

historical building, whereas you take a tube or bus there, and meet her there. You'd have to agree a place and time of meeting. An example is British Museum to National Portrait Gallery: your wife could see Convent Garden at length, skip Sir John Soane's Museum, and meet you in the National Portrait Gallery.

Day Four. Westminster Abbey, which I think is open from nine to four thirty. The Cabinet War Rooms, west of Whitehall along King Charles Street, open weekdays 9.30 to 6. Parliament. There's a good weekday lunch upstairs in the Two Chairmen pub on Queen Anne's Gate, a block from St James' Park tube station. The landlord tells me that he gets Members of Parliament in, a fact which may add atmosphere. If you walk, then between the Cabinet War Rooms and the Two Chairmen you can visit the lake in St James' Park. If you take a couple of slices of hotel bread Her Majesty's ducks will be glad.

Walk over Westminster Bridge (Do you know Wordsworth's Ode from there ?), and on the south bank, in the end of St Thomas' Hospital nearest the bridge, is the Florence Nightingale Museum. After you finish there you can reach the Albert Embankment riverside walk, and walk south to Lambeth Bridge: by Lambeth Palace you have the classic tourist view of the Palace of Westminster.

Day Five. The Science Museum, open weekdays ten to six. Also your choice of a nearby spot: Kensington Palace, the Victoria and Albert Museum, or the Natural History Museum. A good lunch six doors from South Kensington tube station is Polish, the Daquise Restaurant. Those streets also have ethnic cooking from about five countries.

Your wife might leave you to the entrance hall of the Science Museum, miss it and walk to the Round Pond. There she would see boys of all ages sail toy boats, and the Arab and Philipino mothers and nannies of London airing their charges, and their opinions. There are few languages we don't speak in London. She'd then see Kensington Palace (open nine to five, Sundays eleven to five), and four hours later she'd meet you on one of the benches back in the same entrance hall

Day Six. A train from Waterloo Station to Hampton Court Palace, open Tuesdays to Sundays 9.15 to 4.30. I think they sell a combined train and entry ticket at Waterloo.

Day Seven. A boat from Embankment along the river to Greenwich, to see the National Maritime Museum and perhaps the Royal Observatory. They are open daily ten to five. All three pubs in the old market at Greenwich do lunches, but the best is in the Mitre pub, next to the splendid St Alphege Church. Come back by train to Charing Cross. Or if you want to think a little about American history, take a late afternoon bus two miles upstream to Rotherhithe, and see the outside of the Church of St Mary Rotherhithe and the inside of the Mayflower pub (the quality of their supper is variable). It was here that the Pilgrim Fathers took ship for Holland and so for New England.

I'll add one half day for a walk with no museum visits -- perhaps the afternoon and early evening of your Greenwich day or your South Kensington day. It is simple. You start at

Charing Cross Main Line station, go to the gate of platform one, turn left and then right and walk along a high-level pedestrian path above Villiers Street, beside the railway line. Cross the Thames, and as soon as you can take the steps to your left. Walk downstream, in front of the Royal Festival Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall. Drop to the Albert Embankment, and carry on walking downstream, with stops for coffee in pubs, or something stronger. At Southwark Cathedral (which you might well visit: fine, and little known) turn left into Montague Close, walk under London Bridge, and carry on downstream. At Tower Bridge (if you go so far) climb up to the bridge, walk over the Thames, and take the tube. This walk takes you by some of our finest buildings, and there are no motor cars.

To enjoy walks you need the most detailed map you can find of central London. I have beside me the A-Z Visitors' London Atlas and Guide, 2 pounds 95, spiral bound, and very small (no weight to carry around). Or for the embankment walk you could be guided, for four pounds each: details are in the events magazines "Time Out" or "What's On in London" which you can buy at the news desk in the concourse of the airport you arrive at. They make good reading on the dull train into the West End. But I'd vote for taking the little atlas and guiding yourselves.

The one week two zone pass for tube, bus, and local trains including that to or from Greenwich costs 17 pounds a person, plus a passport photo each. You can buy it at the tube station in Heathrow, the rail station in Gatwick, or at any rail or tube station.

You'll see that this is by no means a standard tour of famous sights. Rather, it is a meditation on how we came to be the people we now are. I expect questions will arise: please feel very welcome to write to me.

WEST END AND WESTMINSTER

Written in November 2003

To take these walks you need a street atlas: the best for you will be the Superscale Inner London AZ, ISBN 0 85039 139 3, price about five pounds, as it marks the lanes and alleys you need. You can buy it in a newsagents in your arrival airport.

You can start at Green Park station, walk north up Berkley Street, east up Hay Hill, north on Dover Street, turn east into Grafton Street, right again into Albemarle Street, and there is the Royal Institution, with the Faraday rooms, which are the laboratory of Michael Faraday, the next scientist after Benjamin Franklin to work on the properties of electricity. They are open nine to five on weekdays.

Now south on Albemarle Street, west through the Royal Arcade, with a good, small, shop for household silver, north on Old Bond Street, window shopping, east on Burlington Gardens, and at once south through the Burlington Arcade. As you enter the arcade you can read the regulations: you will see that you must not whistle. In case you are tempted, there is a uniformed beadle to ask you to desist. Both these arcades are for expensive

window-shopping.

At the southern end of the Burlington Arcade you turn east on Piccadilly and at once north into the courtyard of the Royal Academy, to enjoy the courtyard, note the doors of the learned societies, look at the small permanent collection of pictures given by painters when they were admitted members, and to see the current exhibition if you like the subject. The caf on the ground floor is attractive, and much used by county ladies on their monthly visit to London.

Pretty well opposite the Royal Academy, across traffic-laden Piccadilly, is another arcade, the Piccadilly Arcade, and at the southern end of that you are in Jermyn Street. There I suggest you look for Lewin's outfitters and Paxton's cheese dairy and pop in to see the displays, then walk eastwards to St James Church, a fine church by Christopher Wren, good for lunchtime recitals of classical music.

Walk through the church back into Piccadilly and turn westward. Fortnum and Mason, grocers to Royalty, at 181 Piccadilly, are worth a visit, and if you are rich you can buy a packet of tea. Beyond them, still eastwards, you find the Ritz Hotel, where a cup of tea costs about five pounds, but looking is free.

Next to the Ritz is St James Street, and west off that on Park Place is the Royal Overseas League off St James Street, two fine town houses run as a club. If you ask the club porter he will welcome you to make a short visit. Spencer House is very near, overlooking Green Park. The Spencer family (Princess Diana, et al) once lived there in the Season, but have not done so since the thirties. Completely restored, it is a gorgeous miniature palace. The house is open to the public for viewing every Sunday (except during January and August) from 10.30 a.m. - 5.45 p.m. Access is by guided tour, which lasts about an hour. Tours begin at regular intervals and the last admission is at 4.45 p.m. The maximum number of visitors on each tour is 20.

The modern Economist building offers a pleasant contrast from the ornament around you.

Drop a little south on St James Street, turn east into King Street, and at number 8 are Christies Auctioneers, usually with a roomful of fine things awaiting auction, which you are welcome to inspect. Nearby are Locks the hatters on St James Street and Lobbs the shoemakers at 88 Jermyn Street, both worth a visit to enjoy the old style, hand crafted, expensive, atmosphere. Each firm has the wooden formers made to the exact sizes of their customers. At the foot of St James Street turn west and you soon come to a guard, in fine uniform and bearskin, guarding St James Palace. You can admire the glitter of his brass and boots. But this is a real soldier, no toy, who may well have served his stint in Bosnia or Basrah. Meanwhile, you will notice a policeman discretely inspecting you: it is correct to say Good morning, officer. Now east again, long Pall Mall. On your right you will find the Royal Automobile Club, and if you ask the hall porter he will happily let you look about the great entrance hall. Many St James clubs have closed, but this one thrives. Further east and you are in Waterloo Place, a grand composition with the Institute of Directors and the Athenaeum marking two corners. I am afraid both are

closed to us visitors, but you can go southwards between them, turn west on Carlton House Terrace, and look for the building of the Royal Society, where the hall porter will admit you to see the main hall. Or at home you can check their web site to find lectures and events. Anybody can go, and this takes you to the heart of this fine building.

Back to the statue of the Duke of York, Frederick Augustus, the second son of George III, who lost the thirteen colonies. (There is a children's song about him: The grand old Duke of York, He had ten thousand men, He marched them all to the top of the hill, And he marched them down again. And when they were up, they were up, And when they were down they were down, And when they were only half-way up they were neither up nor down). At the foot of the Duke of York steps, then on your left, is the Institute of Contemporary Art, even more confusing than the Tate Modern, with a good cafe. Cross the Mall, swing left (south east) past the bandstand, and cross the bridge over the lake. If you have brought a slice of bread from your hotel you can feed Her Majesty's ducks: she does not mind. They prefer brown bread to white, which gets soggy too soon.

Over the bridge you carry straight on south to Queen Annes Gate, turn east on Birdcage walk, go up the Cockpit Steps, and on your left is the Two Chairmen, an eighteenth century pub that serves an excellent lunch upstairs and good supper downstairs, Monday to Friday. Some Members of Parliament use it. You can ask the bartender for directions to St James Park underground station, and call there to see what they sell in the shop: I like their goods.

Now you need to follow the map closely, for a walk that is short but twisty. From the station go south along Broadway to boring Queen Victoria Street, almost wholly rebuilt after Hitler's war. Go straight over to Strutton Ground, with a fairly good open air market. At the end of that turn east on Great Peter Street, then north on Tufton Street. This ends at a door. Go through, and you are in Dean's Yard Westminster. Archways on your left, that is on the east side of the Yard, lead to Westminster School (which is private, of course), to Little Dean's Yard, and to College Garden, cultivated for more than nine hundred years. On the north side of the yard is the Jerusalem Chamber, a fine fourteenth century room, but seldom open.

If you leave by the gate you used to enter and turn left, east, you are on Great College Street, and can visit the Jewel Tower, one of only two surviving buildings of the original Palace of Westminster, built by Edward III. The Jewel Tower houses an exhibition "Parliament Past and Present" which traces the history of the two houses. Slightly dazed, you find your feet again as you face the Houses of Parliament, also called the Palace of Westminster. If Time Out magazine says there is an exhibition in Westminster Hall you can go to the Strangers Entry door, bypassing any queue (line) and ask the police officer there to let you see the exhibition. The hall is a fine sight of itself, a great medieval hall, brilliantly roofed, with markers of the history of Thomas More, Charles the First, and Winston Churchill. But if you want to see into the Victorian palace you need to be devious. Before ever you fly to London you look at the site of House of Commons Select Committees at <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk>, then Commons, then Select Committees, then weekly agenda, and note meetings that will be in committee

rooms in the old building (marked in the last column by a room number, not those in modern Portcullis House). Or for the Lords the same first web site, then Lords, then committees, but after that I cannot find my way to notes on where they meet. This time you go to the Strangers entry, and ask to attend that committee. You follow directions to the committee door, slowly, looking about you, and at the door you turn round and walk slowly back to the street. Easy when you know how.

Westminster Abbey opens earlier than most attractions, at nine. Subject to demand and when the Abbey is open to visitors, tours leave from the Enquiry Desk in the Nave at the following times in March: Monday to Friday at 10, 11, 2, and 3 (not Friday) Saturday 10, 11, and 12.30. Booking may be made by telephone on 020 7222 7110. The seven pound fee includes admission to the Chapter House, Treasury and Museum. The tour adds to your enjoyment. Next door is St Margarets church Westminster, open for visits. For a quiet and beautiful forty minutes you can check the web site and go to Evensong, a service of good music and old prayer.

I think it worth the detour to greet Queen Boudicca, cross the river (admiring Big Ben and the London Eye), and see the Florence Nightingale Museum in the north end of St Thomas Hospital. She was founder of modern nursing in Britain and the Empire. The museum is open Monday - Friday 10 to 5 (last admission 4pm). and Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays 10 to 4.30 (last admission 3.30 pm) .

Whether you cross the river or no, I suggest you go north along Whitehall. First, if you are a fan of early James Bond, you can stand on Parliament Square and look at the north side, the Treasury. On the first floor is a row of windows two of which I have identified as those for M's office. On the square itself is a good statue of Churchill. Just north of the Treasury building and south of the Foreign and Commonwealth office is King Charles Street, and under the steps at the far end of that are the Cabinet War Rooms, bombproof, for running the British part of the war against Hitler, well worth an hour or more. Open daily 10 to 6, last admission 5.15pm. Back on Whitehall, note the Cenotaph, memorial to the fallen of two wars, and to the west the entry to Downing Street. North again, and on the east side of Whitehall is the Banqueting House, open Monday Saturday 10 to 5. This is the only part left of the former Palace of Whitehall, and is the place in front of which Charles the First was beheaded, at the start of our republic. It did not last long, we brought the new king back, and having made our point left it to the colonials and the French to follow up later. North again, and you see the horse guards, protecting the Queen from anybody confused enough to think this a good way to rush the palace.

Whitehall ends on Trafalgar Square, a large set piece. Just in front of you is the statue to Charles I, king and martyr, behind that Nelson's column. To the west is Canada House and to the east is South Africa House, where Nelson Mandela on his state visit stood to greet the huge welcoming crowds (My goodness, what a day that was: I for my part went to his welcome in Brixton). Up the steps to the north is the National Gallery, with such a number of paintings that the only sensible thing is to choose just three rooms and go to see them. The gallery is open daily 10 am to 6 pm, Wednesday until 9pm. Behind that

gallery to the east is the National Portrait Gallery, good for a view of our history since about 1450. The Gallery is open Saturday - Wednesday: 10.00 - 6pm and Thursday - Friday: 10.00 - 9pm. They offer good public talks, so before you leave home you can read <http://www.npg.org.uk/live/lecindex.asp> to see whether they have anything to interest you during your stay.

Opposite that is the post office, with a good and queue-free counter at the far end for buying commemorative stamps from a range of good designs, just the thing to improve postcards home.

North of the post office you are on St Martin s Lane, and at number 89 is the Salisbury. A note rightly says that glittering cut-glass mirrors and old-fashioned banquettes, plus lighting fixtures of veiled bronze girls in flowing togas, re-create the Victorian gin-parlour atmosphere in the heart of the West End. Theatregoers drop in for homemade meat pie or salad buffet before curtain. Wes Fowler added: Dates from the mid 19th century and is notorious for the bare-knuckle fights that were held there in that era. It s a stunning pub and you may find it filled with theatre people.

West off St Martin s Lane is Cecil Court, for interesting bookshops and print dealers

East off the lane is the Lamb and Flag at 33 Rose Street. Wes Fowler said: This one is really old, being one of the few wooden structures to survive the Great Fire of 1666. It was once known as the "Bucket of Blood" because of all the fights that broke out in it. It was also one of Charles Dickens favourite pubs.

Then just north of the Lamb and Flag is Stanford's shop for maps and books, good for window shopping on floors on two levels. Their stock is large and their staff are helpful and well informed.

And here I end, very near Leicester Square tube station.

THE STRAND

Like Zagreb and Berlin London grew around two medieval centres, in London these were the City for living, making, and trading, and Westminster for praying and ruling. Each centre stood on the Thames, and the rich, like the kings and Thomas More when Lord Chancellor, moved between them by boat. But the ordinary people walked between them along the northern shore (strand) of the river. You know the word strand from Lewis Carol: "and hand in hand on the edge of the strand they danced by the light of the moon". You know too that we Londoners get bored if a street runs more than a mile without changing its name, so from Westminster we walk along Whitehall (once the king's white hall, as bit like the White House, but a few centuries older), the Strand, and Fleet Street (the street that ran from the Vikings' Old Wyke (Aldwych) to the stinking Fleet ditch, now a clean-smelling railway line with a fine modern art deco station at City Thameslink, a kind of New York Central in miniature.

Space was tight inside the walls of the City, so great and powerful men built their own enclosures or mini-palaces between the Strand and the river. Care for a walk ?

We shall start a little south of Stanfords map shop, at St Martin in the Fields. I told you the two settlements had space between them, and St Martin's was indeed built out in the fields at the end of town. It is good for lunch in the crypt, but the evening concerts are poor. As good democrats we want to walk downstream, from royal power to bourgeois democracy. A little along is the new monument to Oscar Wilde, quite disintegrating, and I think well done. In part it is a bench to sit on. Over the road is the Victorian grandeur of Charing Cross station (trains for Dover and the Continent) and the station frontage, which is the Charing Cross Hotel. If you ask politely you can walk up the grand staircase to see the still grander Betjeman restaurant, with a good carvery. You can see the rooms only if you book there, but the chain, Thistle Hotels, may have current special offers, and it is a good choice. If one shoe of yours is stolen there you need to worry: that is how all that trouble started in first chapter of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, in the same hotel. Left of the hotel is a pedestrian street, Villiers Street, down to the river and boats to Greenwich, passing (but I seldom pass) Gordon's wine bar, and in summer to the bandstand for lunchtime music. I once saw a two-hour display of Egyptian belly dancing by London housewives, with their faces covered in beaded yashmaks, and their large and versatile tums all that Rubens could have wished. OK, eyes down, back to the Strand and downstream. Villiers is the family name of the Dukes of Buckingham, whose ornamental water gate is just by the wine bar.

At Durham House Buildings you stand by the former London palace of the Bishops Palatine of Durham, whose courts and the king's courts were the only ones in medieval England with the right to condemn to death. Those bishops were not too strong on the sermon on the mount. Well, they could not be: there were rogue Scots cattle thieves just over the border, for whom hanging alone was good enough. You can see there the back door to the Royal Society of Arts, a set of fine town houses, dedicated for the last 2 ½ centuries to the promotion of arts, manufactures and commerce. Benjamin Franklin was a Fellow, and remained so throughout the incidents of 1789. Many fellows felt as he did that there should be no taxation without representation. Their free public lectures now are good, if you can get a ticket: please see <http://www.indiana.edu/~victoria/lectures.html>. To the left of the Strand are narrow seventeenth century lanes up to Maiden Lane, home of the expensive, unfashionable, eighteenth century, and good Rules restaurant. Please book ahead, and men please wear a tie. On the Strand itself, to the right, is a similar but Victorian restaurant, Simpsons in the Strand. Then almost at once you are at the entry to the Savoy Hotel, reached by the only twenty yards of road in London where you drive on the right. Here the great of Wall Street and Hollywood gathered between the wars to take the world's fastest and grandest ships to New York, starting with a Pullman boat train from Waterloo over the river. If you have the chutzpah you can walk into the Savoy from the Strand, and leave it two floors down by the riverside garden door. Just beyond it, buried in the buildings, is a medieval chapel, the Savoy Chapel. The hotel and the chapel are both named for Savoy, whose rulers had their London connection here. The chapel is a Royal Peculiar, like

Westminster Abbey and the Chapel of Peter ad Vincula in the Tower, which means that the Queen appoints the clergy there. Of her courtesy she now asks the Bishop of London to help, but she does not have to. (Of course, she must ask Tony Blair). Carry on, and the road on the right to Waterloo Bridge is called Lancaster Place, because it was the London territory of the Dukes of Lancaster (York Buildings are a less distinguished street to the west, and as the play Richard III tells you the two Dukes gave up fighting at the Battle of Tewksbury in 1485).

If you cross Lancaster Place and walk riverwards a little you can walk down a slope to the newly re-opened Somerset House, good for jewels, Russian treasures, French impressionists, in summer for ornamental fountains and in deep winter for open air ice skating. Next building along is Kings College, with a huge chapel on the first floor, designed to mark the Anglican (that is, Episcopalian) character of the college, in contrast to its contemporary rival, University College, which accepted Methodists, Presbyterians, Unitarians, and even Jews, had no chapel, and was called Godless Gower Street. Buried in the college is a grubby street with a grubby window behind which you can discern a grubby bath, in situ 300 or 1800 years. Next comes modern Surrey Street (the land of the Earls of Surrey: an old Italian family serve proper tea, no teabags, in their café beside Temple underground station), Arundel Great Court (the land of the Earls of Arundel) and the old church of St Clement Danes. Danes because as I said the Vikings or Danes settled here in their Old Wyke in the ninth century. They did not want to settle in the ruins of Roman London: too untidy. The church features in the nursery rhyme Oranges and Lemons, and now marks the sacrifices of young World War Two pilots who defended us against Hitler. It has a fine silver collection and interior, always staffed, and you can ask to see the floor monument to the free Poles who flew furiously to honour their oppressed country. West of the church is on your left stand the Royal Courts of Justice, a Victorian extravaganza featuring the lawgivers Moses, Jesus Christ and King Alfred on pedestals, on your right the entrance to Devereaux Court and the lawyers' space of the Temple (good lunch at the Devereaux Arms: medieval Templar church in a courtyard), and straight ahead a large statue of a griffin. The griffin is the heraldic supporter of the arms of the City of London, and here the Queen must stop for the Lord Mayor to admit her to his free city. It is not just Benjamin Franklin who wanted monarchs kept in their place.

FROM BLACKFRIARS TO BRICK LANE, a three hour walk

Start up at the station concourse of Blackfriars main line station, above the Circle Line. On the west wall of the concourse you see the destinations list from some 120 years ago, when the Company Directors saw this unlikely spot as departure point for Chatham and for St Petersburg. While there was a city of Leningrad the carved stone remained unchanged -- you could say a long-term approach to save money.

Stay at that level, walk eastwards, and you reach a modern wooden sculpture, a totem pole, of the seven ages of man. Drop to the street, admire the pub over the road, cross Victoria Street, go left of the Church of St Andrew by the Wardrobe. It's beside the place

where in the middle ages the royal court kept linen and crockery that they didn't need just then. Up St Andrews Hill, turn right, Ireland Yard, Playhouse Yard (from before the Shakespeare time when a Puritan City closed playhouses and sent the actors to the stews of Southwark), and find the door of Apothecary's Hall. The Apothecaries are one of the Livery Companies, and still licence people to practise medicine (though if course not surgery: that belongs to the Worshipful Company of Barber-Surgeons). Now up Black Friars Lane and turn right onto Carter Lane (so called because that's where carts full of goods for and from the City of London rolled to and from the riverside quays and inlets). There are a good grocer, little lanes, and pubs to your right, but it's a bit early yet for a pint, and a cup of coffee in the youth hostel on your left will be a better choice. The hostel is the former Cathedral choir school, converted.

Carry straight on eastwards on Carter Lane, and go into the City of London tourist information kiosk to see what lunchtime music there is at St Anne and St Agnes next day.

Out again, and ever eastwards. Turn left at New Change, look behind you to enjoy the 20 year old ornamental clock, and almost at once turn right into Watling Street. You're now on a Roman road. We haven't too many of these. We think that, as in Chester, when Roman buildings collapsed to rubble about the fifth century they made great heaps in the roadway, so it was easier for Saxons to walk parallel to the Roman streets. You'll see that the City of London is still rectangular in layout, as a Roman city should be: the diagonals like Queen Victoria Street are all Victorian aberrations. I'd quite like to close them, and plant gardens there. But few medieval lanes do coincide with Roman streets. At Bow Lane divert two minutes left, to Bow Church, which serves good vegetarian lunches, looks well, and features in the rhyme "Oranges and Lemons." Now go back down Bow Lane, 200 yards, round St Mary Aldermanbury Church (and pop in, perhaps), and walk up Queen Victoria Street to the Temple of Mithras. We found this only forty years ago. Mithras was a Persian god, brought west by Roman soldiers, and for about a century he ran neck and neck in popularity with Christianity.

A few yards further up Queen Victoria Street, turn right into Bucklersby, along St Stephen's Row, Mansion House Place, St Swithun's Lane, admire the church with a tube station in the crypt, and as Elliot says in *The Waste Land* a dead sound at the stroke of nine. Circuit it, and you're on Lombard Street. Lombard, because in the fifteenth century Lombards, people from Milan, Verona, and Padua, came to trade and to found banks. You'll see the many hanging signs of the banks we have now on the street. You realise that the whole rich City around you depends on the need for bankers to meet and talk. If they ever took to video conferencing we'd be in trouble. Even as it is, retail banking is in decline, and you'll have noticed grand bars that are converted banks. Turn right into Pope's Head Alley, skirt the eastern end of the Royal Exchange (founded by Thomas Gresham in the seventeenth century to compete in commodities with Amsterdam, now good for specialist hops), and reach the Bartholomew Lane side of the Bank of England. The small museum there is worth a good look.

Back along the same side of the Royal Exchange, over Cornhill, Birchin Lane, Castle Court, Bell Inn Yard, cross Gracechurch Steet, into Bulls Head Passage, turn left on Lime Street, and into Leadenhall Market, a fine Victorian covered market, painted up like

billyo. In the market turn right, along Leadenhall Place, and at Lime Street (ah, but a different Lime Street) turn left around Lloyds Building, a post-modern thing, onto Billiter Street. Turn right on Leadenhall Street, and take the first right, St Mary Axe, around St Andrew Undershaft church. Look out for St Helen's Bishopsgate church on your left, one of the few gothic churches we still have: the Fire didn't reach it. Walk past it to Bishopsgate. Turn right up Bishopsgate, and drop into Liverpool Street station. There you can see the glass case display to mark the Jewish children who came in trains from Hitler's Germany to England, leaving their parents, and you can admire the roof: after the disgrace of the destruction of classic Euston, this was the first triumph of preserving Victorian station Gothic on the grand scale.

Leave the station, carry on up Bishopsgate, and at the Bishopsgate Institute turn right into Brushfield Street, and admire the fine front doors of the little Huguenot houses of Spitalfields, now mostly under renewal and repair. The Huguenots were Protestants who fled to us in 1689, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and brought with them the knowledge of fine spinning and weaving. They were thus the first big wave of immigrants in modern times. (If idiots say "The British race" I want to know "What British race?"). Wander into and out of Spitalfields Market, cross Commercial Street, and you'll see Christ Church Spitalfields, one of the Waterloo churches built about 1817 to celebrate the defeat of the French (who were, of course, foreigners and thus thought suitable to be defeated) and to help civilise the slum dwellers of the new Dickensian slums that were growing up all around the inner suburbs. Walk along Fournier Street to Brick Lane and turn left around the mosque. Smell something? But first, look in shop windows at the clothes, the gorgeous saris, and go into any supermarket to see mangoes of more kinds than you knew could grow. OK, now your reward. Find a restaurant you like, take advice from the waiter (or ask me for my note on choosing curry: ben.haines@btinternet.com), and have yourself a lager and a curry. Marks and Spencer sell more chicken tikka massala than any other ready-made meal. When Marks and Sparks announced that they were closing in France, troubled British customers rushed along to stockpile ready-made curries. As you look around in the restaurant, you'll see London, my London, any colour, any language, any age.

So thanks for coming with me.

Ben Haines