

LONDON FOOTSTEPS

Walks with City of London guide-lecturer with DAVID WILLIAMS.



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NEWSLETTER AND PROGRAMME: SUMMER 2017: June, July, August

The conversations on my walks centre frequently on what people haven't seen before or didn't know about London, even though many were born, lived and worked in the City or the suburbs. London does have hidden secrets but these are often revealed when exploring the streets, the squares, the churches, the alley-ways and many of the nooks and crannies that make this such a fascinating city.

"I used to work in that building over there." I hear that on most walks and when we reach the end – usually close to a Weatherspoons pub for lunch – some are astonished about the wealth of history that was within touching distance for so long.

There are also historical, cultural and traditional events taking place all the time, which are rarely advertised. Coming up on 12th July there is the Cart-Marking ceremony taking place in front of the Guildhall, where an array of wheeled vehicles, from fruit and vegetable barrows to the latest double-decker red buses parade past an assembly of City dignitaries which includes the Lord Mayor and Masters of several Livery Companies.

This ancient ritual is celebrated every year to remember the time, several centuries ago, when the City issued licences to trades people, giving them the right to have wheeled vehicles in the Square Mile. The occasion is an opportunity for anyone to watch this free spectacle and understand a little more about the remarkable 2,000 year history of the City of London.

Open House in September is getting more popular every year, although security concerns now prevent the public having free entrance to some of our most remarkable buildings. It is held this year on the weekend of September 16th and 17th (www.openhouselondon.org.uk) The full details are on-line but consider going to some of the less familiar places in the areas around the City and be surprised at what you see and learn.

Exhibitions and museums in London are always well worth a visit. At the John Soane Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields you can appreciate the remarkable life-style of this talented architect by stepping inside the house that has changed very little in over 180 years . The Charles Dickens Museum at 48 Doughty Street currently has an exhibition about the early years of this investigative journalist who later became a giant of 19th century literature. It is running from now until 29th October. (www.dickensmuseum.com)

Like most people who come on a LONDON FOOTSTEPS walk, I also learn something new and fascinating all the time. We are fortunate to have such a wonderful 'walking city' so close. Exploring its traditions, history and cultural development is a never-ending pleasure.

The following walking programme covers the months of June, July and August.

There are six walks on offer and the cost remains at £6 per person, pay on the day. Sometimes we need to travel a short distance to the start of a walk and up to now that has always been via the buses. But the traffic is becoming a problem if we want to make a prompt start so a short journey on the tube is likely to be necessary on some walks.

Buses are free for those with a local 'senior' bus pass but you have to pay on the Underground. Getting an oyster card makes sense although you can also use a debit or credit card to 'touch and go'. I shall be emphasising this issue again before each walk.

If you are interested in joining some of the walks then please let me know in good time either by a phone call, a text or an e-mail.

Make a note of these dates

Monday, 12th June 2017:	INNS OF COURT
Monday, 26th June 2017:	MURDER, MEAT AND MEDICINE
Thursday, 20th July 2017:	WANDERING AROUND WAPPING
Tuesday, 1st August 2017:	RAILWAYS AND REGENERATION (around Kings Cross Central)
Tuesday, 15th August 2017:	SECRET CITY GARDENS
Wednesday, 23rd August 2017:	STEPPING OUT IN THEATRELAND (Embankment to Covent Garden)

Details of the walks

INNS OF COURT:

This fascinating walk begins at Blackfriars Station and takes in three of the four ancient Inns of Court, Inner Temple and Middle Temple and Lincoln's Inn. This green oasis of legal knowledge has some of the best-kept gardens in the capital and some buildings that date back to the reign of Elizabeth the First. It was the home of the Knights Templar between the 12th and 14th centuries before the lawyers moved in and established the area as the traditional home of Britain's legal profession.

Meet at Leigh-on-Sea Station at 9.00 am or the main entrance to Fenchurch Street Station at 10.10 am. You can also join the group at Blackfriars Station at 10.45 am.

MURDER, MEAT AND MEDICINE:

Sounds gruesome, doesn't it, this walk which spans 800 years of London's history. From St. Paul's we head towards Smithfield Meat Market and also take in Barts' Hospital one of the oldest in England. Farringdon Station is a major Crossrail development so this part of the City is being transformed. Yet in the nearby alleys and streets there are stories to be told of poverty, slum-living and criminal activity which provided Charles Dickens with plenty of 'colour' for some of his novels – and I'm not referring to the crops of saffron grown here in the 16th century by the land-owning Bishops of Ely.

Meet outside St. Paul's underground station at the top of the steps on the Cathedral side of the road at 11.00 am. I will also be at Leigh Station at 9.00 am in time to catch the 9.10 am train to Fenchurch Street.

WANDERING AROUND WAPPING:

The ever-popular walk around Wapping never fails to amaze those who think of this area as a forgotten, uninteresting part of the capital. The old docks are now housing estates and the warehouses close to the river have been converted into luxury residential accommodation. This is where you hear about the exploits of Captain Bligh, the painter J.M.W. Turner and Captain Kidd the pirate. Wapping was once notorious for crime, poverty and disease. Now it costs over £1 million to buy a penthouse with a river view.

Meet at Leigh-on-Sea Station at 9.00 a.m. or be outside Tower Hill underground station at 10.45 am.

RAILWAYS AND REGENERATION (around Kings Cross Central)

Anyone who remembers the dubious reputation of the Kings Cross area will be surprised to know that this has been transformed in recent years. Once the barges chugged their way between the Grand Union Canal and Limehouse through an industrial landscape. The Victorian splendour of St Pancras and King's Cross stations and surrounding areas suffered as schemes were launched to improve the image yet only succeeded in making it worse. . That has now been reversed with the newly created University of the Arts, the Google headquarters and a spectacular arts and Concert venue on the site. Historically it also has a lot to offer so why not see for yourself this dramatic change.

Meet at Liverpool Street Station (platform 11) at 10.45 am or by the Sir John Betjeman statue at St. Pancras station (upper concourse) at 11.15 am. (Leigh Station 9.00 am)

SECRET CITY GARDENS

There are over 150 green spaces within the Square Mile of the City – so we shall not be visiting them all! Many are former churchyards and bomb-sites that have been restored and are maintained by large companies and the Corporation. Greenery and wild life is a necessary and essential part of any modern metropolis. Window boxes, vertical gardens, terraces and roof-gardens – nature still thrives among the high-rise buildings. It was the vision and determination of one man, Fred Cleary, who takes much of the credit for this in a city where history and nature exist together.

Meet at Tower Hill Station (10.30 am). Alternatively those coming from Leigh should be at Leigh-on-Sea Station at 9.00 am

STEPPING OUT IN THEATRELAND

London's theatre world has stories of triumph and tragedy, glamour and despair and we discover some of them around Drury Lane. Starting outside the Royal Courts of Justice we then move on to the church of St. Mary-le-Strand, Aldwych, Bush House, the former home of the BBC World Service into Drury Lane and on to the Royal Opera House. At Covent Garden musicians and street performers always attract crowds. Finally, we step inside St Paul's Church where the names and reputations of many British actors are remembered.

Meet opposite the Royal Courts of Justice (top of Fleet Street at 11.00 am. Alternatively, meet at Leigh-on-Sea Station at 9.00 am

Check your diary and get in touch. Book early to guarantee a place on the walks of your choice.