

# LONDON FOOTSTEPS

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## LATE SUMMER/AUTUMN 2019

### Programme of Walks

This newsletter is being written when the temperature in London has reached record highs. It was also the day when the ST. GEORGE IN THE EAST walk and the visit to the River Police Museum had to be cancelled. Walking the streets of Wapping in such a fierce heat would have been uncomfortable for everyone and real threat to those who suffer in hot weather.

But there's good news as well. The planned walk and visit to the Museum has been re-scheduled for Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> October. Those who were on the list for the postponed walk will get preferential booking. Please let me know if you want your booking to be transferred to the new list.

This programme covers August, September and October and there is a selection of walks, some old favourites and others which have been created recently.

Revising the routes, adding snippets of information and visiting places which I come across when doing further research often provides some additional intrigue and interest to a walk. In recent years we have seen new buildings emerge; Sky Gardens at 120 and 20 Fenchurch Street and Mithraeum Temple in Walbrook are good examples. Back in May, DOING THE LAMBETH WALK identified several fascinating places of interest in the area across the river from the Houses of Parliament notably the Garden Museum.

The City skyline continues to change dramatically and now comes the news that West Smithfield, for many years run-down and derelict, has been confirmed as the new home for the Museum of London – but at a price. It is estimated that the cost will be over £260 million but we have to assume the final figure will be higher.

I have been impressed by what is happening in the area near the Barbican and around the present home of the Museum of London. An imaginative scheme has transformed this northern boundary of the City and London Wall Place and is included in the 25<sup>th</sup> September walk – WALKING THE WALL.

Finally, remember that Open House Weekend is on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> September when places that often deny public access will open their doors. You will have the opportunity to see and wander inside some of London's architectural gems. It's free but some buildings require pre-booking. The extensive programme of places you can visit goes live on 20<sup>th</sup> August ([www.openhouselondon.org.uk](http://www.openhouselondon.org.uk))

Now have a look at the list of walks and please let me know if you want to come along. Lists for each of the walks start immediately.

Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> August:

### HOXTON AND OLD NICHOL

Within a mile of Liverpool Street Station, this area is seldom visited by casual tourists but historians know it well through associations with Daniel Defoe, John Bunyan, William Blake and Charles Booth. You will see the John Wesley Chapel, the home of Methodism. Hoxton has links with the music hall era and Shakespeare. Talented artists and designers, smart restaurants and computer software companies are close to the Boundary Estate, once known as Old Nichol and one of the worst Victorian slums with a grim reputation for crime, disease and grinding poverty.

Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September:

### THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON

The events of early September 1666 not only devastated the City of London, it was remarkable also as the beginning of what became a new and prosperous era for London. From the ashes rose a great City, one that dominated world trade and extended Britain's influence across the world and established one of the largest and most powerful Empires the world has seen. So what were the sequence of events during this disastrous week of September 353 years ago?

Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> September

### THE TIMBER TRAIL

Surrey Quays was once one of the busiest inland dock areas close to the centre of London, mainly importing timber from the Baltic States. Altogether there were 13 docks linked by a network of canals. In the two decades after the war there was a revival of fortune for all the London Docks but they could not cope with the advance of containerisation and the area became run-down and eventually derelict. Today, however, mature woodland has replaced some of the docks, shopping centres and housing have been developed and there is a thriving water-sports centre. It's a remarkable transformation but on this walk you will still see evidence of dockland history.

Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> September

### WALKING THE WALL

Roman London has almost disappeared but remnants of the City Wall, built mainly in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century, can still be seen. The Romans needed to protect the flourishing commercial centre of Britain which, by the early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, was a city of wealth and status. Defensive towers and bastions were added but by the 4<sup>th</sup> century the influence of the Roman Empire was waning and aggressive outside forces were threatening Britain. The Romans abandoned Britain in 410 and today the remaining parts of the wall are an historic reminder of their engineering skills and domination of London for 360 years. It no longer marks commercial boundaries of the City. Although in the shadow of high-rise office blocks, areas like London Wall Place and Noble Street are still worth visiting.

Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> October:

EASY DOES IT IN ISLINGTON

Exploring some of the squares and open spaces in Islington can be a revelation. Once it was an 18<sup>th</sup> century village noted for dairy farming and those who could afford to move away from the smells, dirt and poverty of the expanding City were able to enjoy clean air and fresh water spas. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century more houses were being built as country estates were broken up. Today many celebrities, politicians, entrepreneurs, professional people and businessmen pay millions of pounds for properties in an area noted for its smart life-style and fine squares such as Cloudesley, Gibson, Milner and Canonbury.

Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> October:

ST. GEORGE IN THE EAST

This little-known area in Tower Hamlets is sandwiched between Stepney and Wapping so history here is, as you would expect, about crime, poverty, riots and poor health. Yet there are stories of heroism, bravery and individuals who have made this a colourful part of East London to explore. The highlight of the walk will be a visit to the River Thames Police Museum at Wapping. It is rarely open to the public but Robert Jeffries, the Curator, has agreed to do so for our LONDON FOOTSTEPS group. It will be interesting to learn why the River Police unit was formed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and of their early efforts to tackle the widespread criminal activity at the time.

*NOTE: This walk and visit has been re-scheduled following the postponement on the hottest day of the year in July. If you were booked on that walk, please let me know if you want your booking transferred to this new date. You will have priority!*

BOOKING THESE WALKS:

Please confirm your interest in any of these walks as early as possible and then nearer the time I will give you further details about where we shall meet and at what time. The cost remains at £7 per person, pay on the day.

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