

LONDON FOOTSTEPS

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Taking time out!

The walks have gone into hibernation until the weather improves but I can look back on a year when numbers were up and many people have been added to the data-base. Most of walks were well received although the exception was the ST. GEORGE IN THE EAST which included a visit to the Thames Police Museum.

Ironically, on both occasions cancellation or abandonment was caused by extreme weather conditions. On 27th July, the temperature touched 38 degrees in London and it was hardly surprising that most of those who had booked a place decided a day with cool drinks in the shade was better than melting on the pavements of East London.

Museum Curator Bob Jeffries agreed another date with me - 24th October – but that didn't work out either. The rain bucketed down and although it was possible for everyone to step inside the small museum in two separate groups, the upstairs bar of the Captain Kidd pub next door was designated as the 'waiting area' with coffee and biscuits. The rain didn't stop and by lunchtime abandonment was the only option.

As in previous years, enthusiasm for walking around Christmastime and during the colder months drops off quite considerably but by the time we start again in late February there should be more optimism about the weather. Let's hope so.

What can you expect in 2020?

I do try to find themes and destinations in and around London which are not part of the tourist trail and then spend a period of research to dig up some revealing stories about the people and events that can often be surprising and intriguing. EASY DOES IT IN ISLINGTON is a recent walk which comes into that category while THE TIMBER TRAIL is a parkland and open spaces walk through the docks of what was derelict Surrey Quays

It was also clear that people enjoyed a walk round the City of London to see and learn more about the newer high-rise blocks, their shapes and architectural innovation. So THE HIGH RISE CLUSTER which features the new City landscape will be part of the programme early in the year.

Mini-Walks

Several of my regular walkers have requested that some walks should be shorter in time and distance. They will be about 60-90 minutes each and still have historical interest and appeal. That allows walkers more time to enjoy lunch and maybe stay on afterwards to 'do your own thing'. So I am going to offer some of these in this programme and if they prove popular more will be included into future programmes.

Currently I am considering the following as mini-walks...

LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS (including a possible visit to Sir John Soane's Museum)

THE WHITECHAPEL WAY (some of the characters and stories about this area)

CORDWAINER'S (all about this small City ward and the shoe-making history)

Preliminary Dates

Here are some dates to put in your 2020 diary. More information will be available after Christmas. If you have any particular areas of London – East, North or South – which you would like to see included in the programme then please let me know.

Wednesday, 19th February	Lincolns' Inn Fields
Tuesday, 25th February	Livery Companies Pancake Racing, Guildhall
Monday, 2nd March	High Rise Cluster: Bishopsgate, Leadenhall Street, Cheapside
Thursday, 9th April	Walking the Wall (the route of the Roman Wall)
Wednesday, 22nd April	Hoxton: Highwaymen and Music Halls
Thursday, 30th April	Secret Gardens (mall City spaces where nature thrives)

The talking programme

There has been an encouraging response to the talks I have given during the past year. Organisations where I have been invited to speak include U3As, Probus Clubs, Genealogy Societies, Women's Clubs, Historical Societies, Residents' Associations. I have also been a guest speaker on cruise ships.

I am travelling further afield to give talks. Visits to Suffolk, Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex have been added to the calendar. Understandably, some organisations like to book speakers well in advance but although willing to discuss dates and subjects at any time I do not take firm bookings over a year ahead.

Speaking on cruise ships was a new experience. Being on stage of a theatre with state-of-the-art lighting, sound and projection was a bonus. I have added some new talks to my catalogue which focus on cruise destinations. Now I have THE VIKINGS, THE ORKNEY ISLANDS, THE WHISKY STORY (The industry in Scotland and Ireland), SAILING UP THE SEINE, LIVING WITH THE SEA (Amsterdam) and GATEWAY TO THE WORLD (Hamburg).

Two established talks that were well received on the ship were THE FLOW OF HISTORY (about the way London's history has been linked to the fortunes and tragedies of the River Thames) and THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON (how and why this devastating event of 1666 shaped London's future and landscape).

There is now a longer list of talks available and once again the most popular of these is POUNDS, SHILLINGS AND POVERTY, a profile of the Victorian age and the difference between those enjoying privileged lives of wealth and status and the working classes who were just about surviving in the overcrowded urban slums and struggling against poor health, non-existent sanitation, crime and appalling working conditions.

The recent addition of THE GREENING OF LONDON is a story about how London, a city with a strong commitment to bio-diversity, has become one of the greenest mega-cities on the planet with parks, gardens, squares and even window boxes bringing colour and nature to places dominated by the concrete, steel and glass of the high-rise buildings. It is a story that has its roots back in the 16th and 17th centuries when visionary horticulturalists realised that plants, trees, shrubs and flowers could have benefits for future generations.

If anybody wants more details of the talks then please get in touch.

...and finally

Enjoy the holiday break and I hope to see most of you in good spirits and good health when we meet up again in the New Year.

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