

LONDON'S SECRET WALKS

Explore the
City's Hidden
Places

Carnival Books

Graeme
Chesters

LONDON'S SECRET WALKS

Explore the City's Hidden Places

by Graeme Chesters



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Last, but not least, a special thank you to the many photographers who provided images (listed on page 318) – the unsung heroes – whose beautiful images add colour and bring London to life.



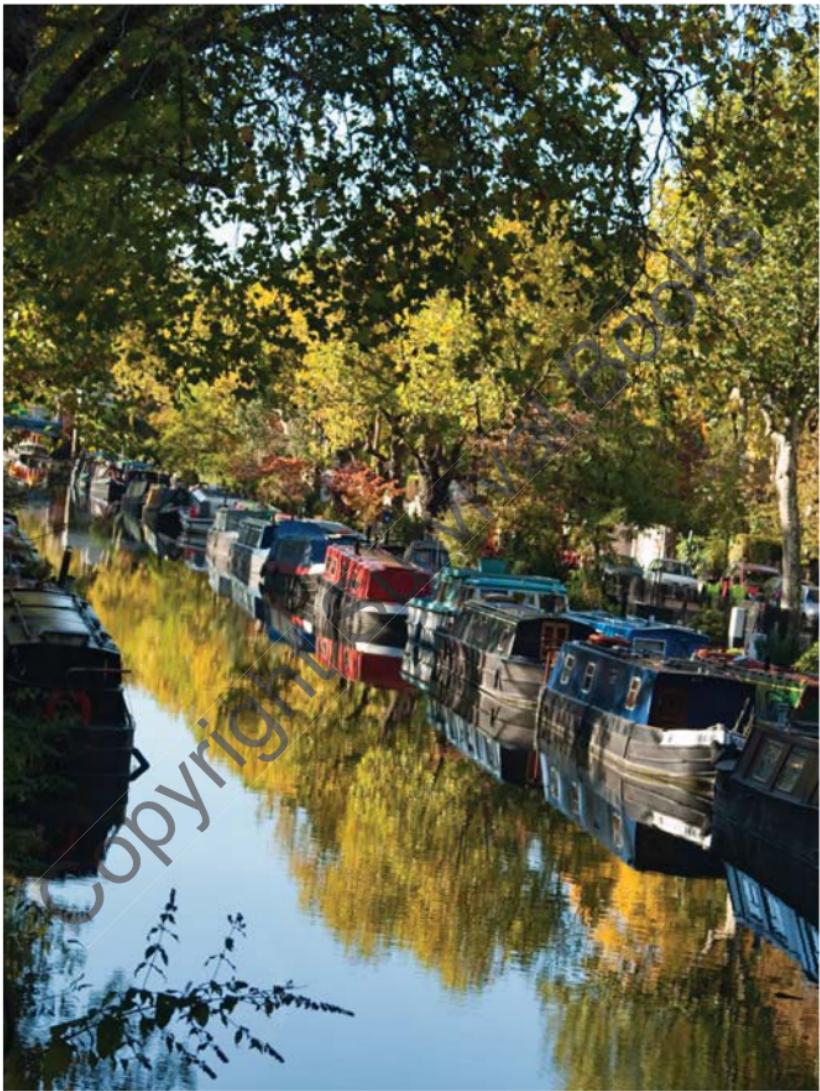
Editor's Notes

Please note the following regarding the walks in this book.

- ◆ The walk lengths are approximate, as is the time required to complete them – shown as a half or full day – particularly if you make a lot of stops (coffee, lunch, museums, shopping, etc.). You can, of course, terminate any walk at any point and combine a number of walks to make a longer walk.
- ◆ All walks start at or near a tube or railway station and directions are provided to the nearest station at the end of each walk. There's a tube map inside the rear cover. Buses aren't listed as there are simply too many to include them all.
- ◆ The maps aren't drawn to scale but the length of walks is shown. Overall maps are included on pages 8-13 so that you can see the location of the walks on a larger map of London.
- ◆ The opening hours of many sights and museums (etc.) are listed. Bear in mind that these are liable to change. Where opening times are erratic or not stated, a telephone number is included. Where there's an entry fee, the fee for an adult is quoted. There are usually (but not always) reduced fees for children, families and concessions, e.g. pensioners, students and the unemployed. If no fee is listed, then entry is free.
- ◆ Recommended 'pit stops' (Food & Drink) have been included in all walks - shown in blue on maps and in the text. If you're planning to stop at one of the pubs, restaurants or cafés listed, bear in mind that many only serve lunch between say noon and 2.30pm and dinner from 6 or 7pm. Many pubs are also open in the mornings for coffee, etc. Some establishments don't open at all in the evenings or at weekends (which is noted), particularly in the City of London. When not listed, pub/restaurant opening times are the 'standard' times, e.g. noon-2.30pm and 6-11pm, although some are open all day (and may also serve food all day). Telephone numbers are shown when bookings are accepted or advisable, otherwise booking isn't usually necessary (or even possible).

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Little Venice

Introduction

Walking makes a lot of sense in London, whether it's for pleasure, exercise or simply to get from A to B. Although the city has a comprehensive public transport system, it's also one of the world's most expensive and very crowded, so walking is often the quickest and most enjoyable way to get around – at least in the centre – and it's also free and healthy! London's reputation for rain is largely unfounded – it actually enjoys lower annual rainfall than New York, Rome and Sydney – and is rarely too hot or too cold to make walking uncomfortable (but take your brolly just in case).

London has a somewhat haphazard street pattern (to put it mildly), the result of having grown organically over 2,000 years, rather than being planned logically like some modern cities. As a result, many attractions are off the beaten track, away from the major thoroughfares and public transport hubs. This favours walking as the best way to explore them, as does the fact that London is a visually interesting city with a wealth of stimulating sights between destinations; you don't see a lot from the seat of a cab or bus – and see nothing at all when cocooned in a tube train!

The starting point for this book was Samuel Johnson's advice to his friend Boswell in the 18th century, on the occasion of the latter's arrival in London: "survey its innumerable little lanes and courts." By extension, wander off the beaten tourist track and you'll find a world of fascinating sights, as you would expect in a city as large and old as London. My aim was to compile a list of these hidden attractions and construct walks around them – which resulted in the 25 walks contained in this book.

Most of the walks can be done in half a day or less, depending, of course, on how quickly you walk and how long you spend at the highlighted sights, particularly the pubs and restaurants. The walks don't always follow the most logical route, but that's deliberate and part of the fun: the aim is to maximise enjoyment and provide a flavour of the area, rather than to get from the start to finish as quickly as possible.

Writing this book has been a fascinating, educational and enjoyable journey, which has had the added bonus of returning me to the weight I was when I got married (16 years ago). I hope you find the walks as engaging, rewarding and stomach-flattening as I have.

Graeme Chesters
June 2012

8. Bloomsbury



6. Clerkenwell

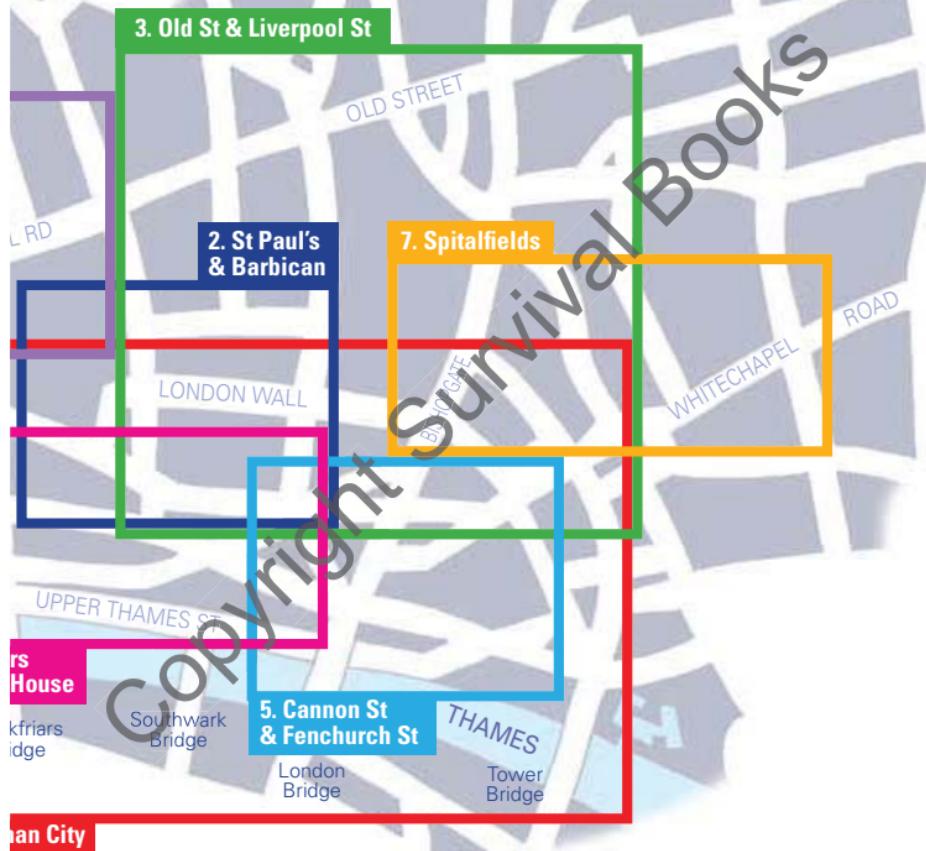


4. Blackfriars & Mansion House

Blackfriars Bridge

1. Roma

Walks 1-8



16. Regent's Park



15. Mayfair

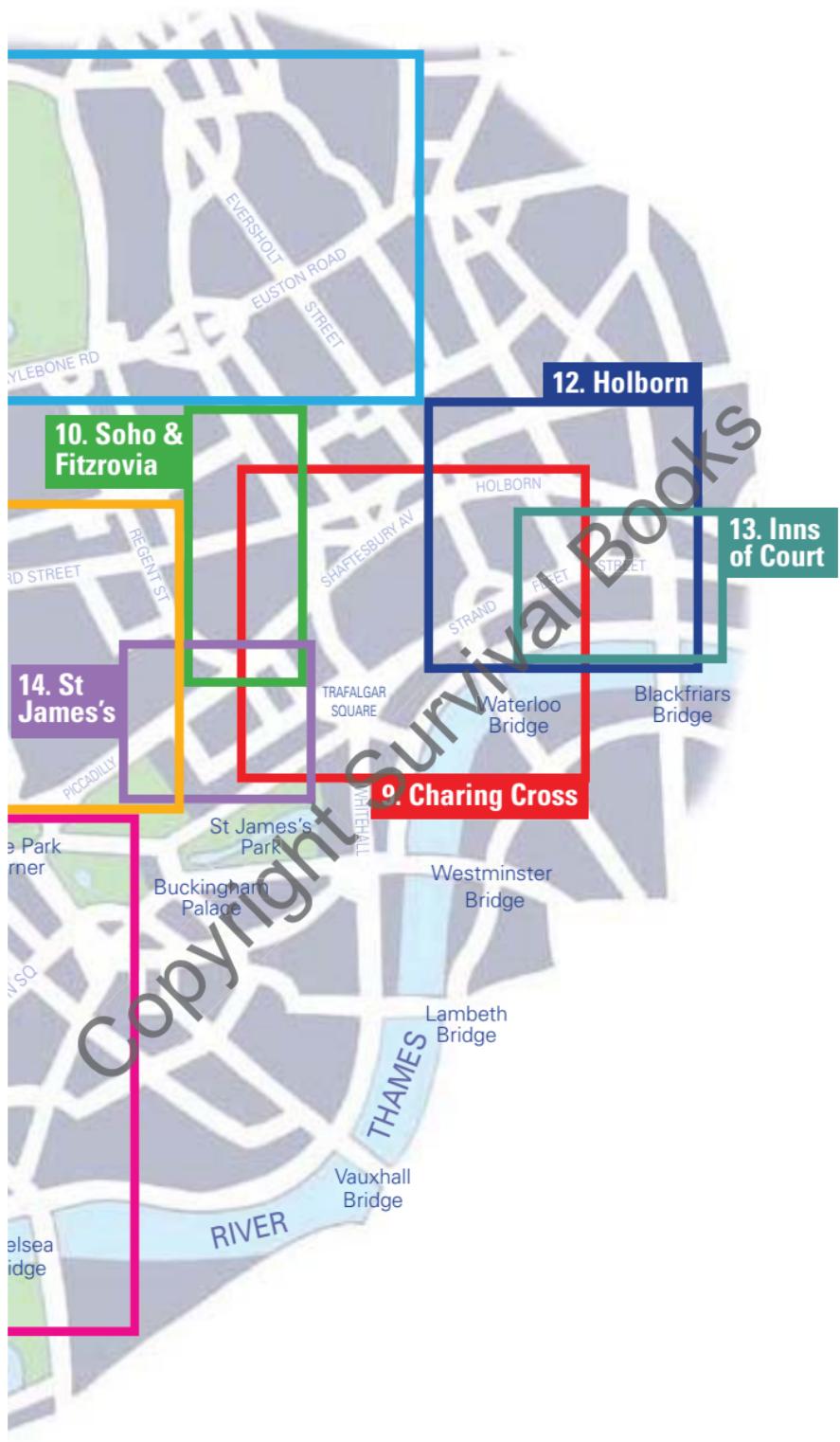


11. Belgravia & Chelsea



Walks 9-16

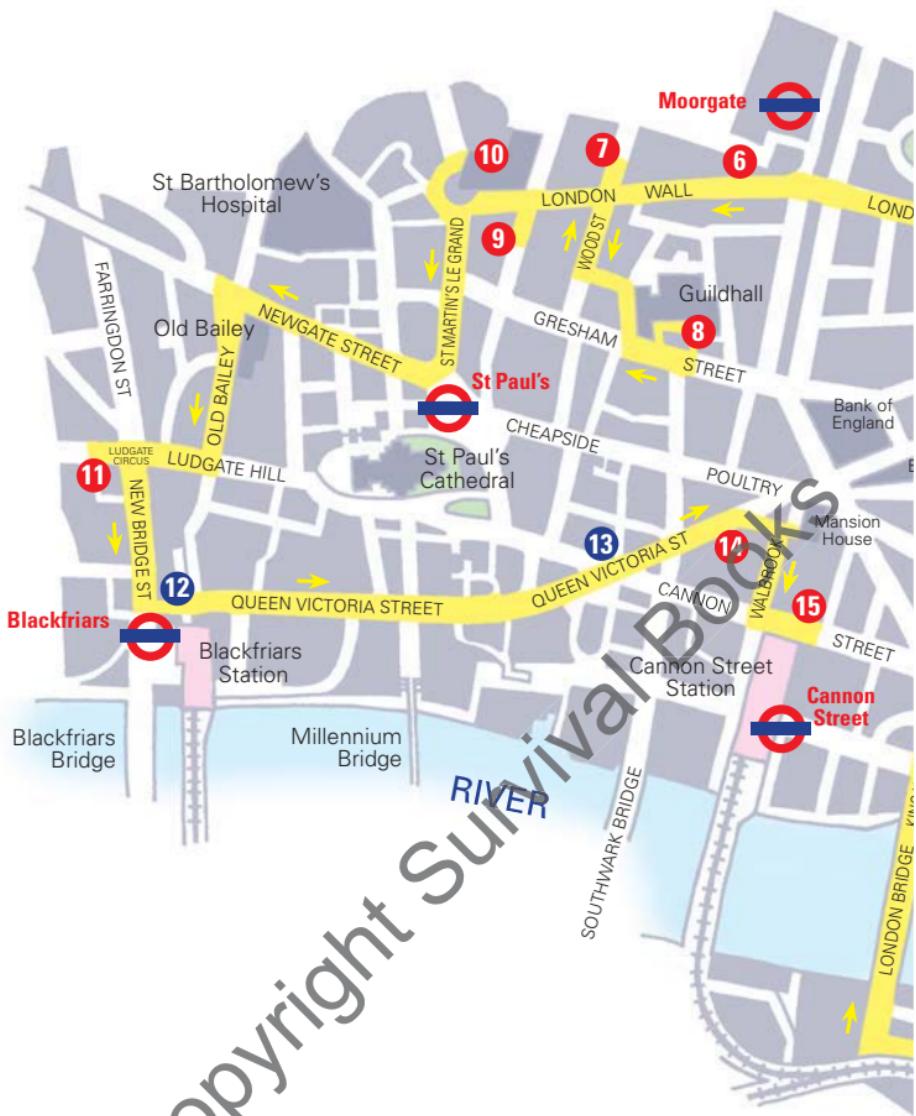
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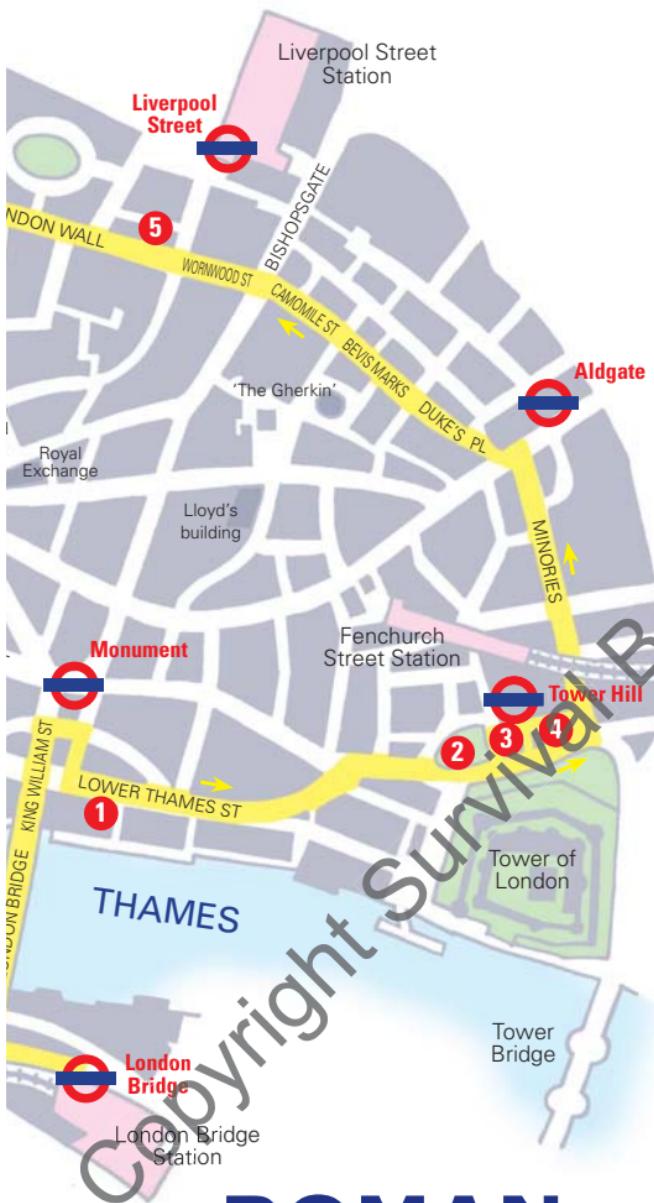
Walks 17-25





- 1 St Magnus-the-Martyr
- 2 All Hallows by the Tower
- 3 Trinity Square Gardens
- 4 Roman wall
- 5 All Hallows on the Wall
- 6 St Alphage Garden
- 7 Roman wall
- 8 London's Roman Amphitheatre
- 9 Roman wall – and turret
- 10 Museum of London
- 11 St Bride's
- 12 Black Friar
- 13 Planet of the Grapes
- 14 Roman Mithraeum
- 15 London Stone

WALK 1



ROMAN LONDON



WALK 1



Distance: 3.84mi (6.19km)

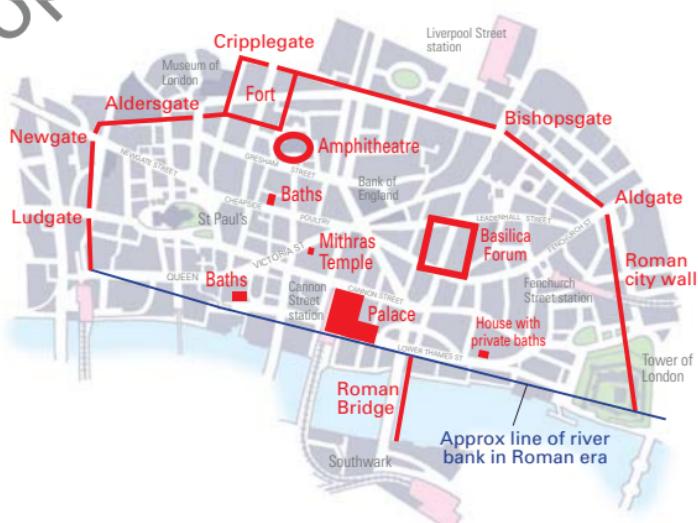
Duration: full day

Start: London Bridge station

End: Cannon Street station

Modern London has been shaped by generations of architects, entrepreneurs and immigrants – not to mention a few invaders – but the city's first stones were laid by the Romans, who founded the city in around 50AD. Londoners may regard their city as being as ancient and noble as Athens or even Rome itself, but there's little evidence of major, permanent settlement on the site before the Roman conquest of Britain in 43AD.

The wider Thames Valley had been occupied for millennia before the founding of London; archaeologists have uncovered signs of human habitation dating back at least 500,000 years. But the Romans probably founded the first proper urban settlement on the site of modern London. Before this, all that existed were a few sacred sites and a hill fort or two. London's location was chosen because it was the lowest easy bridging point of the River Thames, which was wider and shallower then. There was also a way through the marshes to the south and two convenient hills, at St Paul's and Cornhill, which rose safely above the floodplain and provided useful vantage points

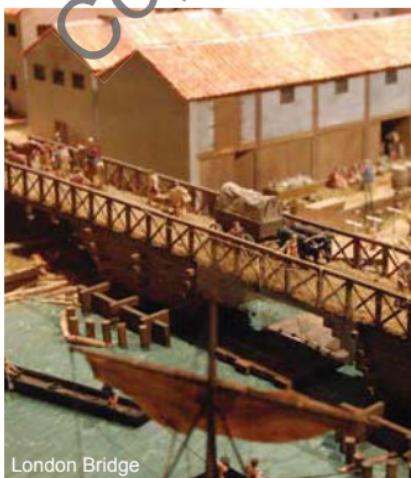


ROMAN LONDON

Start Walking...

To explore the remains of Roman London, leave London Bridge station and follow the signs for London Bridge itself. As you cross the River Thames, to the right are the Art Deco splendour of Hays Wharf, HMS Belfast, Tower Bridge and Canary Wharf; ahead are two of London's iconic structures, the Monument and the Gherkin (30 St Mary Axe), while to the left you can see the dome of St Paul's Cathedral and, in the distance, the Post Office Tower. When you reach the north bank, you're close to the spot where London was founded.

The first London Bridge was probably wooden, built between 100 and 400AD by the Romans, and a number of bridges have come and gone over the centuries, some swept away by floods or destroyed by fire or even frost. The current concrete structure was built 1967-72 to replace John Rennie's five stone arches which had spanned the river since the late 1820s; the Rennie bridge was sold



London Bridge

to a US oil magnate and shipped to the US stone-by-stone to be rebuilt in Lake Havasu City, Arizona.

In previous centuries, London Bridge was crowded with houses and shops, some reaching seven storeys high; the last ones weren't demolished until 1758-62. For a time, traitors' heads were displayed above bridge gatehouses, a macabre tradition which began in 1305 with the head of Scottish independence leader William ('Braveheart') Wallace.

Billingsgate porters were known for their distinctive hats, which they wore from 1415 onwards to mark the English defeat of the French at the Battle of Agincourt. The hats resembled the leather helmets worn by the English archers who were instrumental in the victory.



On the north bank, the first street on the right is Monument Street, the site of the impressive, gold-topped Monument, built to commemorate the Great Fire of London in 1666. Continue down Monument Street and turn right into Fish Street Hill, so-called because it was one of the City streets where the retail sale of fish was authorised. At the bottom is Lower Thames Street, the site of the famous Billingsgate Market from the 14th century until 1982, selling food, wine, and later, fish (it's now on the Isle of Dogs in East London).

WALK 1

Ahead, across Lower Thames Street, is the parish church of **St Magnus-the-Martyr** ①, (Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm) named after a hapless Norwegian earl who was murdered by his cousin in 1110. A church was founded here in the 10th century and rebuilt by Wren after the Great Fire. It's here that we find our first evidence of Roman London in the church forecourt up against a pillar: a hefty portion of timber which, according to the sign, is 'from Roman wharf AD75, found Fish Street Hill 1931'; some experts think it's from a bridge rather than a wharf.

On leaving the church, turn right and head east along Lower Thames Street. The road swings to the left and becomes Byward Street, which gets its name from the daily bywords, or passwords, that are still issued to staff at the



All Hallows by the Tower ②

Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm, Sat-Sun, 10am-5pm, except during services.

nearby Tower of London. At the lights, cross to the large traffic island ahead to reach **All Hallows by the Tower** ②. This ancient, Grade I listed church is London's oldest, established by the Saxon Abbey at Barking on the site of a Roman building.

All Hallows was lucky to survive the Great Fire in 1666. It was so close to the inferno that diarist Samuel Pepys famously climbed the spire to watch the fire lay waste to the city.



Inside is a Saxon arch from 675AD, with Roman tiles visible at the top, typical of the architectural recycling in London as civilisations succeeded one another. The arch is next to a small flight of stairs leading down to the atmospheric Crypt Museum. At the bottom of the stairs on the left is a large section of well preserved, tessellated Roman pavement from the floor of a 2nd-century domestic house.

The museum has plenty of other Roman finds – bowls, keys, lamps, needles, pots and more – as well as casts of Roman tombstones; the originals are in the British Museum. There's also an informative model of Roman London and exhibits from later phases of the church, including some striking Saxon carvings. The church's gorgeous baptismal

ROMAN LONDON

All Hallows by the Tower



font cover (1692) by the renowned Dutch wood carver Grinling Gibbons – Sir Christopher Wren's favourite – is regarded as one of London's finest carvings.

Behind the church, Gloucester Court provides a splendid view of the Tower of London. But leave exploration of the Tower to another day and cross to the north side of Byward Street to enter Trinity Square and **Trinity Square Gardens** ③. The gardens have a poignant monument to the merchant seamen and fishermen killed in the two World Wars: around 12,000 in WWI and 24,000 in WWII; their names are inscribed on a series of plaques.

Cross the square to Tower Hill tube station to find another unexpected reminder of the Romans: a tall section of **Roman wall** ④ located down some steps to the right. Built around 200 AD of Kentish ragstone, it's part of a wall that ran in a two-mile arc from Tower Hill to Blackfriars, enclosing 330 acres (134ha) of land. In front stands a life-sized, 19th-century statue of Trajan (Emperor AD98-117). The wall here rises to 35ft (10.6m), although only the lower section up to around 15.5ft



Trinity Square Gardens

(4.4m) is Roman; the stonework above is medieval. The Roman build is better constructed than the medieval wall above and includes layers of red tiles to strengthen it.

On the far side of the wall, you can enjoy a vista which combines ancient and modern London, as the Roman structure shares the skyline with a distant view of The Shard (London's newest skyscraper) on the south bank by London Bridge station. Walk through the small park by the wall and turn left up The Minories, named after an order of nuns of the same name founded in 1293. Despite its religious connections, this street was described in the 18th century as a 'hotbed of brothels and gin palaces'.

WALK 1

At the top, another left turn takes you into Aldgate High Street. Aldgate was the most easterly of the six original city gates built by the Romans, and the road which passed through it led directly to Colchester, another important Roman city. Cross a second set of lights into Dukes Place and continue as it becomes Bevis Marks, a corruption of Buries Marks, the town house of the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds, which stood here. On the left is Bevis Marks The Restaurant, which is one of London's best kosher restaurant, next to the elegant synagogue (see page 49).

Bevis Marks leads into Camomile Street, which follows the line of the old Roman wall; it was named after the medicinal

plant which grew here. Turn left down St Mary Axe for a view of the curvaceous Gherkin and, at the end of the road, the distinctive Lloyds of London building. St Mary Axe is named after a church that was demolished in the 16th century – the axe referred to is from a gory legend about 11,000 murdered virgins. Retrace your steps to Camomile Street, turn left and, at the end, cross Bishopsgate, named for another Roman gate where the London to Lincoln road called Ermine Street began. Continue ahead, now on Wormwood Street which becomes London Wall.

In 1993, an IRA bomb exploded on Bishopsgate, killing one, injuring 44 and doing damage costing £1bn. The buildings which rose from the ruins now include some of the City's most spectacular 'skyscrapers'.

The church of **All Hallows on the Wall** 5 is on the right, built against a section of Roman wall; as at Tower Hill, the upper parts

Roman wall



ROMAN LONDON



All Hallows on the Wall 5

Most Fridays, 11am-3pm,

020-7588 2638

12 Black Friar:
Nicholson's pub with award-winning ales, good honest pub grub – great pies!

13 Planet of the Grapes:
Wine bar with some 450 wines, plus meat and cheese platters and traditional 'pub' grub.

of the wall are medieval. Inside the church you can see where the Roman tower was, in the vestry. The church is first mentioned at the start of the 12th century and was partly destroyed in the Great Fire, but later rebuilt.

Leaving the church, turn right along London Wall. You may expect to see few signs of anything Roman in this vista of concrete and glass but as you approach the Museum of London, there's a high section of Roman wall on the right by the bland tower block of St Alphage House. It sits in the small, tranquil **St Alphage Garden 6**, in what was once a yard of St Alphage Church, of which only part of a wall and some windows survive.

Continue along London Wall as far as Wood Street on the right, where wood was sold in medieval times; there's another remnant of **Roman wall 7** here in a small garden. At the northern end of Wood Street is the site of the insensitively-named Cripplegate, which was one of eight medieval gates at the edge of the City. Its name derives either from the Anglo-Saxon *crepel*, meaning tunnel, or from the crippled beggars who plied their sad trade here, although the gate was demolished in around 1760.

Walk back along Wood Street, cross London Wall and carry on along the southern part of Wood Street. Just before Love Lane – a haunt of prostitutes in medieval times – to the left, in the middle of the road, is a private house that was once the tower of a Wren church. Swing left down

WALK 1



London's Roman Amphitheatre

Love Lane and at the end is the Guildhall.

Follow the route to the right heading anticlockwise from Aldermanbury, past St Lawrence Jewry (see page 36) on Gresham Street. Turn left into Guildhall Yard for the entrance to the Guildhall Art Gallery (Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm, Sun, 12-4pm). The Gallery's basement houses the imaginatively displayed remains of **London's Roman Amphitheatre**

⑧ It's an evocative presentation in a cool, dark environment, with a clever use of lighting.

London's Amphitheatre, discovered in 1988, was built originally of wood in around AD70 and renovated in the 2nd century, with brick walls and tiled entrances. While it was no Coliseum, it was an impressive structure, able to accommodate between 6,000 and 7,000 spectators, at a time when London's total population was only some 20,000.

Returning to Wood Street, walk north and turn left along London Wall and left again along Noble Street. It boasts the longest and most striking section of **Roman**

wall – and turret ⑨, which provides an indication of just how large and impressive the structure must originally have been.

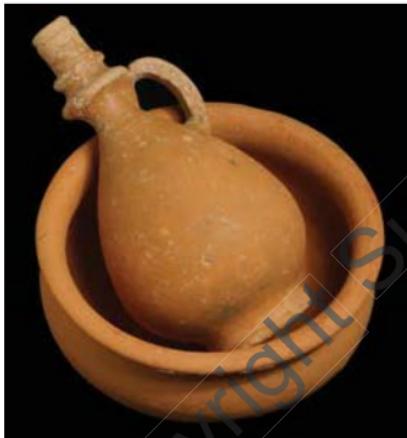
Return to London Wall, cross over and ahead is another section of wall in a garden next to 140 London Wall; the wall here is mainly medieval, built on a Roman base. Past the garden is a sign for the **Museum of London ⑩** (10am-6pm), the world's largest urban history museum. The entrance is situated at first-floor level on a traffic island ahead; take the stairway on the right, just past 140 London Wall.



Battersea Shield, Museum of London

ROMAN LONDON

Don't be misled by the museum's unprepossessing concrete exterior, as it's excellent; the gallery devoted to Roman London is alone worth a visit. The museum opened in 1976 and is an amalgamation of the collections of the London and Guildhall Museums. Its displays cover the history of the Thames Valley from deep prehistory to the present; its location, overlooking a section of Roman wall, is appropriate, linking the museum to the past it so comprehensively maps.



When you leave the museum, go straight ahead and take the escalator down to ground level and Aldersgate. Heading south, Aldersgate becomes St Martin's le Grand with St Paul's Cathedral looming large ahead. At the end, turn right into Newgate Street, named after a Roman gate (one of six which date back to Roman times), which was the original site of Newgate Prison. The notorious jail was later expanded onto the site of the Old Bailey and remained in use until the early 20th century. Swing left down

Old Bailey and turn right along Ludgate Hill, heading for Fleet Street.

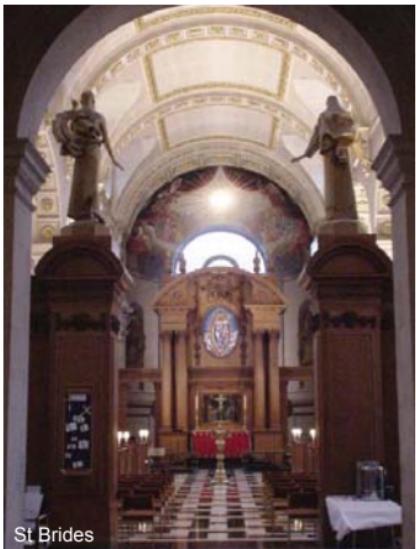
Ludgate might be the source of London's name: legend tells that Brutus, grandson of the Trojan king Aeneas, built a city, New Troy, on Ludgate Hill in 1100BC. So the story goes, this was rebuilt in 113BC by King Lud, although another version has him build just a gate in 66BC. It was renamed Caerlud, city of Lud, which was later corrupted to Caerlundein, then Londinium and finally London.

Turn left off Fleet Street down St Bride's Lane to visit the church of **St Bride's** 11. The crypt under the church contains the remains of a 2nd-century Roman pavement and building, as well as traces of no fewer than seven previous



St Bride's 11
Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm, Sat, hours vary,
Sun, 10am-6.30pm

WALK 1



St Brides

churches on the site. The fairly scant Roman remains are at the back and can be viewed with the aid of a mirror.

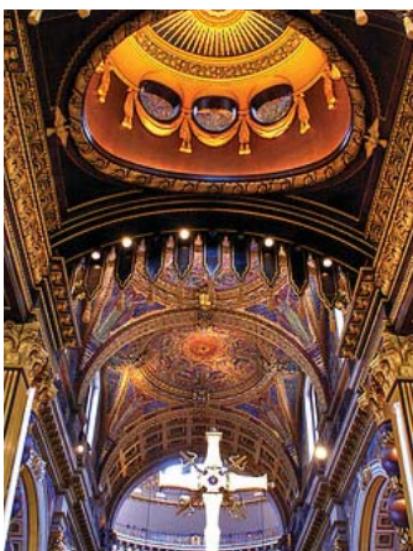
The church sits on an old pagan site dedicated to Brigit, or Brighde, a Celtic fertility goddess. In the 6th century a church was built to St Bridget, an Irish saint, the first of eight churches here. St Brides is sometimes known as the journalists' church, due to its position on Fleet Street, the former heart of the British newspaper industry.

The famous spire of St Brides which measures around 230ft (70m) was the tallest structure in London when it was added to Sir Christopher Wren's original design in 1701-3. It's said to have inspired a pastry chef, William Rich, to design the tiered wedding cake still popular today; he could see the steeple from his window.

Return to Fleet Street, head east and turn right down New

Bridge Street and left along Queen Victoria Street. On the corner of the two streets is one of London's most striking pubs, the Grade II listed **Black Friar** 12. Built in 1875 near the site of the 13th-century Dominican Priory which gives the area its name, Blackfriars, its shape resembles a slab of cheese or an iron. The pub is decorative externally, but the real glory is its interior, which is splendidly over-the-top and Art Nouveau in character. We're fortunate still to have it as there were plans to demolish the pub in the '60s; it was saved by that great champion of historic buildings, the Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman.

Leaving the pub, head left along Queen Victoria Street, passing the Church of Scientology London at number 46 on the left. Walk a little way further to take in a great view of St Paul's Cathedral on your left. As you continue along Queen Victoria Street, the Gherkin and the Lloyds of London building



St Paul's Cathedral

ROMAN LONDON

appear ahead. When you pass Mansion House tube station on the right, to the left is **Planet of the Grapes** ⑬. It's at the bottom of Bow Lane, on the corner with Queen Victoria Street (number 74-82), and is a bright basement wine bar with a short, inventive menu and over 450 wines. There are also a couple of tables outside at pavement level which are good vantage points from which to observe this lively junction.

Continue left along Queen Victoria Street and towards the

end of this long thoroughfare, the ruins of the **Roman Mithraeum** ⑭ are visible on your right. The Mithraeum was discovered in 1954 during post-war rebuilding work and the subsequent archaeological dig attracted great public interest, with crowds of up to 30,000 at times. It's a temple to the god Mithras, of Persian or Anatolian origin, who was popular with Roman soldiers. The Mithraeum was actually discovered a short distance away, on the banks of the River Walbrook; it was moved to its current location due to building considerations, but there's talk of returning it to the original site.

The temple was built in the mid-3rd century and was of modest size, 60ft by 25ft (18.3m x 7.6m). It had a sunken nave, to



Roman Mithraeum