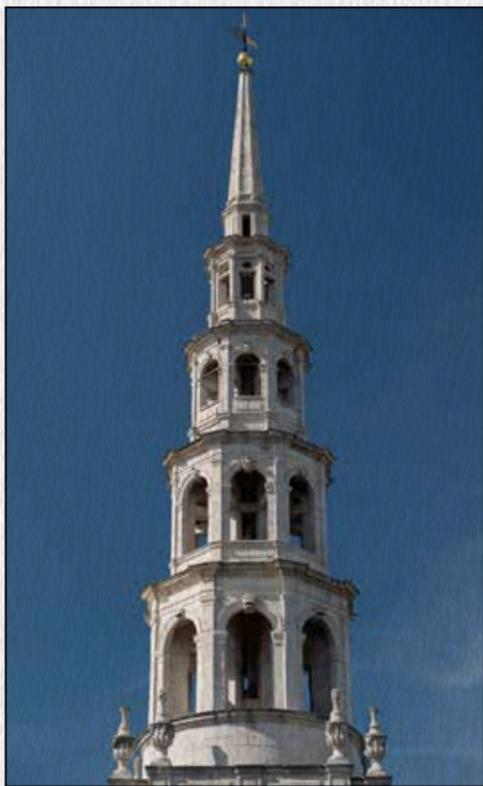


St Bride's Church

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THE HERITAGE of FLEET STREET

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St Bride's church, known as the Journalists' church and, before that, the Printers' church, has a history stretching back almost 2000 years. In the crypts can be seen the exposed foundations of the seven buildings before the present church, from the 6th Century through to the 11th and 15th Century Mediaeval buildings and a section of Roman tessellated paving and artefacts from AD 180.

Enter and be amazed by the contrast of the Portland stone exterior to the bright interior, flooded with natural light. Escape the noise and busyness of Fleet Street to this sanctuary of quiet and calm.

The present church, designed by Sir Christopher Wren, was completed in 1675 following the loss of the mediaeval church in the Great Fire of London in 1666. Disaster was to strike again in the blitz of Christmas 1940 and the interior was destroyed by fire. In 1951 the Revd Cyril Armitage was appointed to the burnt out ruins and together with the Architect Godfrey Allen and the financial support of the Fleet Street newspaper and print industries the new church of St Bride's was raised from the ashes.

The fabric of the building was restored to Christopher Wren's original designs with its clear leaded windows and Portland stone double columns and arches with 221 individually carved and gilded roses. The furnishings, however, are no pastiche of the original but are a redesign inspired by other Wren interiors. Collegiate seating set inside a screen of classical columns and the great canopied reredos based on that in

the Chapel Royal, Hampton Court are carved in English oak. Ebony plaques on the seats record the names of those who contributed to the rebuilding, a custom which continues with many notable characters from the media industry.

On the east wall is painted a curved wall and dome depicting a celestial choir, an image recorded as being in the Wren church but reimagined in this tromp l'oeil of 1957 by the artist Glyn Jones.

At the west end are statues of St Bride and St Paul by the artist David McFall and beyond them Wren's fine minstrels gallery which now houses just part of the organ, its 4,000 pipes all hidden from view; above that rises the tower and the famous spire which inspired the design for the first elaborately decorated multi-tiered wedding cake.

Rebuilding the church was not just about the physical building though and Cyril Armitage engaged the people of Fleet Street by re-establishing the Guild of St Bride – a guild first formed in the 14th century – giving a sense of purpose and duty to its members whilst wearing their distinctive russet livery gowns. The Guild continues to provide an invaluable service in its welcome and hospitality to all who visit.

At the same time a new choir was formed - 12 professional singers of an exceptional standard. This legacy continues and the choir sing two services every Sunday as well as at weddings and memorial services, many of which are for journalists and those connected with the industry and beyond.

Above all, St Bride's continues to be open to all as a place of prayer and worship, whether it is in the context of our splendid Choral Eucharist or timeless Choral Evensong, the contemplative setting of our weekday space for silence or simply as a place of refuge from the challenges of the city.



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Additional notes

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