

The Fleet Street Heritage Walk

Detailed description on www.fleetstreetheritage.com (M) indicates picture on Monuments page

VOL. 1 - No. 30

THE HERITAGE of FLEET STREET

LONDON 2023

The Heritage Walk starts at the Dragon statue (M) which marks the boundary of the City of London in Fleet Street just east of the junction with Chancery Lane.

It stands on the site of the Temple Bar which was moved for road widening many years ago, but now stands in the City once again in Paternoster Square near St. Pauls Cathedral. Proceed along Fleet Street, past the Old Bank of England, a building with an interesting interior, now a pub. On the other side of the road is one of the few buildings in the City to survive from before the Great Fire, and it has Prince Henry's Room with a fine plaster ceiling on its first floor. (It has not been open to the public for many years) Turn left into Chancery Lane, and walk for 300 yards until you reach on your right the plaque commemorating the opening of the London Silver Jubilee Walkway, the first urban walkway in the world. It's immediately opposite the Knights Templar pub.

Retrace your steps for 200 yards till you are past the Maugham Library, formerly the Public Record Office, on your left. Turn left into the pedestrian walkway just before the next big building; there is a faded sign to Cliffords Inn on the back side of the signboard. Follow the courtyard with the modern Cliffords Inn on your left, and pass under the archway of the original Cliffords Inn to reach Cliffords Inn Passage. The left hand side of this alley has a curious feature - a "splashback" dating from the times when there were no public lavatories in the City, and these alleys were used instead; the splashbacks discouraged a return visit!

The church of St-Dunstan-in-the West is next. It has three monuments (M) on its face, one to Gog and Magog, traditional guardians of the City, who strike the hours on the church clock, one to Lord Northcliffe, a press baron who paid for the return of the clock to its original position, and one to Queen Elizabeth I. This is believed to be the oldest public statue in London and originally stood on another of the City gates, Aldgate, in the east of the city

The old vestry to the right of the church has now become the home of the Worshipful Company of Carmen, one of London's 115 livery companies. Next to it are the London offices of DC Thomson, a company based in Dundee. Their building is ornamented with ceramic tiles spelling out the names of the Dundee Telegraph, Dundee Evening Post and People's Friend.

These are rare survivors of the newspaper industry in Fleet Street.

On the opposite side of the road is Hoare's Bank, which has been on this site for over 300 years and has a very nice garden. It is still a family-owned bank; at one time, there were many such banks, but nowadays this is the last one which has managed to preserve its independence.

Continue on to cross Fetter Lane, which one time had a gibbet at each end of it. This part of the north side of Fleet Street still preserves most of the original

narrow alleys dating back to before the Great Fire. Turn left along the first of these, Crane Court, which was once the home of the Royal Society. Each of these courts now has a pavement plaque at its entrance giving a glimpse of its history. At the far end, ascend a few steps and turn left to reach Fetter Lane again. Go over the pedestrian crossing to see the talking statue of John Wilkes (M), and to listen to a short description of his life. Go back over the crossing and continue straight on to New Street Square, a pleasant courtyard between all the new office buildings. At the far end, turn right, and admire the hanging garden on the two-storey building to your right. Continue straight on under the arch to enter Gough Square, with Dr. Johnson's house on your right and the talking statue of his cat Hodge (M) at the far left hand of it. Turn right there, and go on through Hind Court, to emerge onto Fleet Street at another pedestrian crossing.

Cross it and turn right for a few yards to reach Bouverie Street. High up on the wall of the building facing you is the Fleet Street Heritage Sundial, probably the largest vertical sundial in Europe, which was opened in October 2021. Bouverie Street was widened in Victorian times by demolishing 62 Fleet Street, the printing office of Richard Carlile, from which he published *The Republican* - this is the reason the *Republican* appears at the top of the list of newspapers on the sundial.

The large building on the east side of Bouverie Street used to house the "News of the World" Opposite it the brick building now housing the Polish consulate used to be the offices of *Punch* magazine. Almost opposite is the tiny Magpie Alley, with its left hand wall lined with ceramic panels portraying many aspects of life in the printing industry. It is worth going on to the end of this alley and down some steps, where you can view through a glass panel the remains of the crypt of the Whitefriars Priory. Returning to Bouverie Street, the building opposite were the offices of the *News Chronicle*.

At the cross-roads with Tudor Street, you will see to the right the entrance to the Inner Temple, with the Middle Temple, containing the Temple Church beyond it. But you turn left along Tudor Street, with the offices of the *Daily News* and the *Star*, followed by Northcliffe House on the left, and then Carmelite House (*Daily Mail*) on your right.

Go straight across Whitefriars Street and take the next turning left, Salisbury Court which leads you to Salisbury Square which is now (2023) a large empty building site which will have some new Court buildings and the city of London police headquarters. On the right hand side at the end of the street is the Reuters building designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and listed Grade 1.

You are now back in Fleet Street - the building opposite you was built for the *Daily Telegraph* and has a very large clock on which the name of the newspaper has been blanked out. Both it and the iconic *Express* building to the right of it are currently under redevelopment - the facades will be retained.

The walk ends at Ludgate Circus with a wall plaque to Edgar Wallace (M), a crime writer who was also a reported on Fleet Street for many years. The River Fleet runs under the Circus and along New Bridge Street to the Thames.



The Fleet Street Heritage Walk Additional notes

Prepared by: Piers Nicholson, 2023

Copyright: All material on this website is subject to our copyright. You may use any of our material under the terms of our Creative Commons – Attribution – Share Alike licence. This permits you to distribute, adapt, or build upon our work, for any purpose including commercially, as long as you (1) credit www.fleetstreetheritage.com (2) includes link where possible and (3) licence your new creation under identical terms to this.

Source: Original research