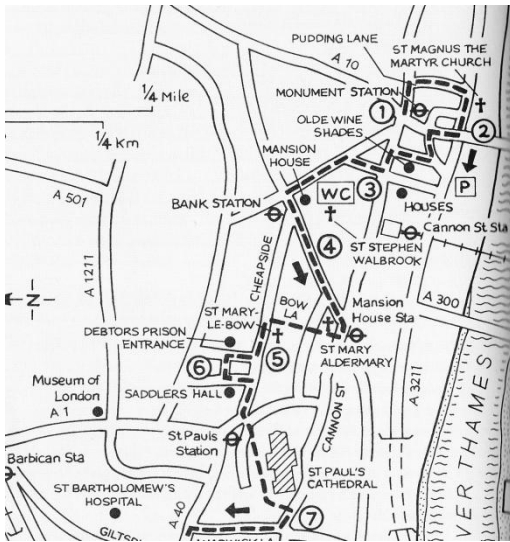


Fetcham U3A

Explore London Group 6

The Great Fire of London



Londoners in the 17th century must have wondered what had hit them when, within months of fighting off the Great Plague, a fire of monumental proportions began at a Bakery in Pudding Lane. It was 2am in the morning on 2 September 1666 when the baker discovered the fire. He escaped to safety along a roof, but his young assistant was not so lucky. Neither were the 13,000 houses, 87 churches and 40 livery halls that perished in the flames but, incredibly, only eight people lost their lives, although how many later died after being left homeless is unknown. It took five days to contain the fire, partly because of the high number of houses with timber roofs and the rudimentary fire-fighting equipment available at the time.

Directions

- 1) Take the Fish Street Hill exit from the Monument tube station and bear right towards the Monument. Then follow the cobbled street for 20yds to see the plaque that marks the spot on the corner of Pudding Lane where the ill-fated bakery once stood. Bear right, then cross Lower Thames Street at the pedestrian crossing to reach St Magnus the Martyr Church. Its position, near the bridge, played an important part in the life of the church of the City. London Bridge with its twenty arches stretching across the river from the north to the south bank and forming a barrier through which the larger ships could not pass.
- 2) A few paces further to the right of the church, climb a set of steps and, ignoring the first exit, continue to arrive on the west side of London Bridge. Continue ahead, away from the river, along King William Street and shortly turn left along Arthur Street and then sharp right into Martin Lane, past the Olde Wine Shades. At the end turn left into Cannon Street for a detour to see the red brick houses that survived the fire, turn next left into Laurence Poultney Hill.
- 3) Cross the road and turn right into Abchurch Lane. At the end bear left along King William Street towards Bank tube station. Keep to the left, past the front of Mansion House, and the street on the left, Walbrook this is the site of one of Wren's finest churches, St Stephen Walbrook Church which we will visit. Turn left into Queen Victoria Street.
- 4) Continue ahead, then turn right into Bow Lane, past St Mary Aldermary and a row of shops, to St Mary-le-Bow. Founded in or around 1080 as the London headquarters of the archbishops of Canterbury, the medieval church of St Mary-le-Bow survived three devastating collapses before being completely destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. Rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren, it was destroyed once more in 1941 but was again rebuilt and re-consecrated in 1964. Turn left into Cheapside which, despite being the widest road in the City also went up in flames.

5) Cross the road into Goldsmith Street and, at the Saddlers Hall opposite, turn left and rejoin Cheapside. Turn right and cross the pedestrian crossing to St Paul's Cathedral. Walk toward the new Millennium Bridge with Tate Modern in the distance for lunch at the H/Q of the Salvation Army. Return back towards St Pauls and walk through the churchyard. St Paul's, a Cathedral is dedicated to St Paul has stood on this site since 604AD, and throughout the Cathedral has remained a busy, working church where millions come to reflect and find peace. The current Cathedral – the fourth to occupy this site – was designed by the court architect Sir Christopher Wren and built between 1675 and 1710 after its predecessor was destroyed in the Great Fire of London.

6) Return back through the churchyard and enter King Edwards St. past the old GPO H/Q – now a Japanese Bank and enter "Postman's Park", under the sheltered area is a wall commemorating ordinary people who lost their lives trying to save others. The park was the brainchild of Victorian painter and philanthropist, George Watts G F Watts (1817-1904). In 1887, Watts wrote to the Times proposing that a park commemorating 'heroic men and women' who had given their lives attempting to save others would be a worthy way to mark Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee year.

7) Return and enter the Museum of London to visit the new gallery telling the story of London from the Elizabethan times, through the ravages of the English Civil Wars, to the cataclysmic disasters of the Great Plague of 1665, and the Great Fire of 1666.