



CITY WALK
The Medieval City

The Medieval City

Step into the medieval City of London and discover the people and places that defined the Square Mile in the Middle Ages c.1066-1500



CoLAT
The City of London
Archaeological Trust

In the Middle Ages, the City of London was the largest town in England. At its height, the c. 80,000 population fitted easily within the Roman walls. As the centre of commerce and trade, with its own independent government led by the elected mayor, medieval Londoners built wharves and warehouses to replace the Roman wall along the Thames, reclaiming land from the river, and shaping the shoreline into the one we know today.



Map of London in 1572



There are two versions of this trail: Both starting at the City Information Centre, the first part will end at the **Guildhall** 14 (taking approximately 2 hours). The second part continues for another 45 minutes and will take in more medieval remains including the **Hospital of Elyngspittal** 15, the great Priory church of **St Bartholomew** 21 and Smithfield where horses and cattle were sold, and traitors were executed.

The medieval City was made up of narrow and twisting streets, and most of the buildings were constructed from wood and straw. Little remains today of this City as the Great Fire of 1666 consumed three quarters of the buildings within the London wall. Those that are visible today were built of stone, including churches and the Tower of London. But a closer look reveals hidden fragments of other medieval buildings, and plaques indicating where there were once important structures.

Before visiting, we recommend you check websites for opening times.

Start your journey at the City Information Centre. Turn right at Peter's Hill and walk towards the Millennium Bridge crossing over Queen Victoria Street. Continue ahead, taking the stairs down to the left of the bridge. (There is a lift should that be required). Once at the bottom turn left onto the Thames path towards London Bridge.



The Thames Path

The **Thames Path** ① follows the foreshore of the river. You are now walking on land that has been reclaimed from the river: the original Roman river wall lay along Thames Street on your left. In the medieval period the foreshore would have been the busiest part of the City with boats tied

up along the numerous quays, unloading grain and firewood from the upper Thames region, spices, furs and luxury cloths from the Mediterranean and the Baltic.

The path turns left at Broken Wharf. At the top turn right onto High Timber Street and continue for about 5 minutes passing a few small alleyways on the right. Re-join the Thames Path at Queenhithe, turning right again towards the river.

As you approach the river on the wall to the right is the **Queenhithe Mosaic** ②, installed in 2014, recording almost a thousand years of London history including in the medieval period (c. 1066-c.1500). Archaeological



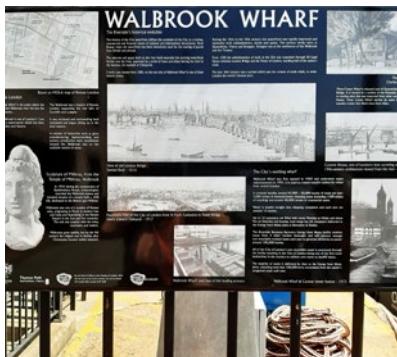
Queenhithe mosaic

research here has revealed evidence of Roman quays, King Alfred's trading shore and a succession of medieval waterfronts, each reclaiming more land from the Thames. Some of these wooden structures were built using timbers recycled from buildings and ships, giving archaeologists a rare opportunity to study saxon and medieval woodworking techniques. At low tide you can see some of the remaining posts which once supported quays and wharves out into the river.

Follow the signs for Thames Path which meanders in and out from the Thames passing Vintners Place. Follow the tunnel under Southwark Bridge and emerge at Walbrook Wharf where containers from ships are still unloaded.

During low tide you may be able to spot a large opening where the **Walbrook stream** ③ flows into the Thames. The Walbrook is one of London's lost rivers which now runs in a large pipe down to the Thames, but in the medieval period it was the site of industries such as leatherworking and

Walbrook Wharf



pottery production. This unenclosed river was an important feature because it divided the city into two halves: the hill of Ludgate lay to the west and Cornhill to the east.

Follow the path under Cannon Street Station through the area known in the medieval period as the Steelyard.

The Steelyard was the guildhall and London base of the Hanse merchants who came from around the Baltic and traded furs, timber and wax in return for English wool, cloth and pewter.

| Continue following the Thames Path past the front of Fishmongers' Hall.

Here in its 19th-century form, but the original Hall was built on this site in the 14th century.

| Pass under London Bridge ④.

The original stone bridge, which lay to the east of the present bridge, was completed in 1212 after 40 years of work. It contained twenty arches and supported a street lined with houses and a chapel dedicated to St Thomas Becket. The medieval bridge was pulled down in 1831, however, a model of the medieval bridge can be seen in St Magnus the Martyr church.



A model of the old London Bridge in St Magnus the Martyr church

| When you emerge on the east side of the bridge, turn left away from the river to visit the church of St Magnus the Martyr ⑤.

The medieval church burned down in the Great Fire and was rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren. The great master mason, Henry Yevele (d.1400), who rebuilt Westminster Hall in the reign of Richard II and paid for the rebuilding of the chapel on London Bridge, is buried here. stmagnusmartyr.org.uk

St Magnus the Martyr church



| Return to the Thames Path, passing the riverfront side of the former Billingsgate fish market building of 1875 and Custom House.

The medieval wharf here was used by large ships from overseas which could not easily pass under London Bridge. Built in 1817, the current Custom House was erected on the site of the medieval Custom House, where the fourteenth-century poet, Geoffrey Chaucer, worked in the 1380s as the 'controller', recording the custom dues paid to the Crown on the export of wool from the port of London.

| Continue along the Thames path to the Tower Millennium Pier. At the pier turn left and walk up past the Tower of London souvenir shop and ticket booths. At the top of the slight incline, you will come to All Hallows Barking (by the Tower) ⑥.



The Tate Altarpiece. Starting from the left, St Robert with a kneeling king (representing Sir Robert Tate), St Ambrose, St Jerome and St Joseph.
© All Hallows by the Tower.

This is one of the few City churches which was not destroyed in the Great Fire. The present building is largely of the fifteenth century but was restored after heavy damage in World War 2. The undercroft chapel contains a stone altar brought by the Knights Templar from the Crusader Castle of Mount Athlit in Israel. There are also fragments of Saxon crosses. In the north-east corner of the main church above, there are panels from a Flemish altarpiece, associated with the Tate family who were mercers and mayors in fifteenth-century London and lived in this parish. There are also medieval carved statues of the saints St James, St Roche and St Anthony in the church. The best collection of medieval brasses in the city is found in this church, including John Croke (skinner and

alderman, d. 1481; also, his tomb) and William Tonge (vintner, alderman and MP, d. 1389). ahbt.org.uk

From the church turn right along Byward Street towards Tower Bridge for a couple of minutes, then look right.



Tower of London

From here there is a very good view of the **Tower of London** 7. Although the Tower was first built by William I soon after his conquest of England in 1066, the walls which you can see are the outer fortifications built by Edward I. The large moat, now dry, was filled in medieval times by water from the Thames. Above the walls you can see the cupola of the church of St Peter ad Vincula, which served as the parish church for the many people who lived within the Tower.

Cross over at the nearby traffic lights towards Tower Hill underground station, to the right in the open space outside the station you will see one of the best surviving sections in this area of the old Roman and medieval city wall.



A section of the surviving Roman and medieval wall.
© Clive Totman

From the entrance to Tower Hill Underground station continue east, passing the remaining city wall on your right, and then turn left under Tower Suites into the Crescent. Just before you come to the railway bridge turn left through a gateway and follow the path bearing left which leads to an open space.



A section of the surviving Roman and medieval wall.
© Clive Totman



An etching of Aldgate Gatehouse.
© London Picture Archive (City of London)

Here is another significant remnant of the **City Wall** 8, revealed by bombing in World War 2, which stands to a height of 10.6 metres and was raised by 6.2 m during the medieval period. There are traces of the medieval stair leading to a sentry walk, the parapet and openings used by archers in defence of the City

Re-trace your steps and turn left walking under the railway bridge and bear slightly right through America Square. Turn right into Crosswall and then left into Minories, so called because the nuns of the order of Friars Minor (hence Minoresses) had a convent here outside the city wall. This road leads to Aldgate.

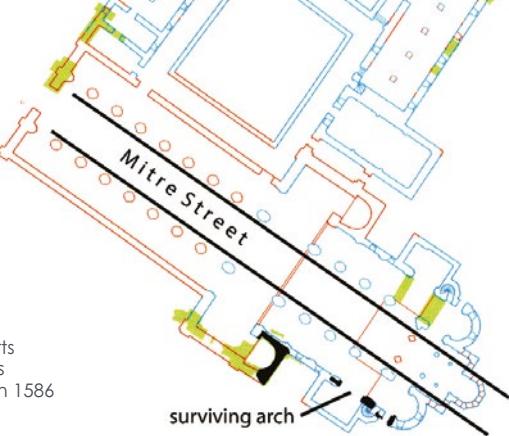
There is no trace of the gate of Aldgate itself, the main east gate of the City. Geoffrey Chaucer had lodgings above the gate and here he wrote some of the Canterbury Tales after his daily work in Custom House.

Turn left onto Aldgate Street and cross over the road at the traffic lights.



The building straight ahead on the corner of Leadenhall Street and Mitre Street is occupied by the company We Work. On the Leadenhall Street side you can enter the lobby where there is a remarkable surviving wall and arch of the great medieval Augustinian **Priory of Holy Trinity** 9, founded in 1108. The pointed arch formed part of the south aisle of the choir. The reception team will welcome you and allow pictures. wework.com

The medieval arch at Mitre Street, set within a plan of the priory buildings and the line of the present-day street.



Black = surviving parts
Green = foundations
Blue = parts known in 1586
Red = conjectured

Turn sharp left and walk along Mitre Street which runs the length of the choir and knave of the great Priory church. The original Priory site included a cloister (now Mitre Square), chapter house and extensive gardens. Turn right at the end of Mitre Street onto Creechurch Lane and left when you reach Bevis Marks. Continue along Bevis Marks, directly leading onto Camomile Street. At the crossroads turn left into Bishopsgate.

Tucked away immediately after 100 Bishopsgate is the **Church of St Ethelburga** ⑩. This small medieval City church survived the Great Fire but was badly damaged by a terrorist bomb in 1993. It has been rebuilt largely as it was. This cramped site, and the modest west facade, is squeezed between two blocks of offices, recalling the small scale of the 100 small parish churches that were scattered throughout the medieval city.
stethelburgas.org



Church of St Ethelburga
© Mike Seaborne

Continue along Bishopsgate and take the second left along Great St Helen's.

St Helen's Bishopsgate ⑪ was originally the church of a Benedictine nunnery founded in c.1200. There are two aisles, one for the nuns and the other for lay people, and some remarkable tombs including that of Sir John Crosby (alderman, MP, d. 1473) who built himself a house in the precincts of the Nunnery. Crosby was a wealthy grocer and sheriff, who entertained the future Richard III in



his house. There is also an interesting collection of medieval brasses, including those of Thomas Wylliams and his wife who were parishioners of St Helen's. After the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s it became the parish church. st-helens.org.uk

Return to Bishopsgate and cross over at the traffic lights. Turn right onto Threadneedle Street, past the plaque marking the site of St Martin Outwich church on the wall of Lloyds Bank. Stay on the left-hand side of the road until you arrive at a blue doorway which is the entrance to:



The Merchant Taylors' Hall

Merchant Taylors' Hall ⑫: By the end of the medieval period, there were over 40 livery company halls in London. Like all the livery halls, the façade was occupied by shops, and the main buildings of the hall were approached through an impressive gateway leading to an open courtyard. Although the Merchant Taylors' Hall has been much enlarged and refurbished there remains the great medieval livery hall, a fourteenth century crypt under the screens passage and the large kitchen built in 1425-33.

Continue along Threadneedle Street, cross over to the righthand side of the road and continue for a few minutes. Passing the Bank of England, cross over the junction onto Poultry which merges into Cheapside. Cross at the traffic lights and continue along Cheapside. Just after Tesco Metro you will come to;



Plaque showing the location of the Great Conduit

City's Great Conduit ⑬. There is a blue plaque on the wall just after the Tesco entrance, and on the ground, a flagstone marking the exact location of the conduit, or fountain head, which was the final access point for the medieval City's supply of fresh water brought in lead pipes from Tyburn, near Marble Arch. The stone foundations of the conduit were discovered by archaeologists when No. 1 Poultry was being built. The water was freely available, but there was a guild of watercarriers who took water from the conduit to households for a charge. In the later fifteenth century, the piped water supply was extended eastwards up Cornhill to a new additional conduit at the intersection with Gracechurch Street.

At the next set of traffic lights, cross Cheapside to the right and onto King Street leading directly to the Guildhall.

London Guildhall ⑭. Stop in the open space known as Guildhall Yard to get the full view of it. In the medieval period the yard (marked out by white paving in the modern piazza) was an enclosed space entered through a gateway. On the left the churchyard of St Lawrence Jewry extended as far as the Guildhall and on the right were the buildings of the chapel, a public library (the first in England) and the Blackwell Hall market house where woollen cloth, made in

many parts of England, was stored and sold. The facade in front of you in the 'Hindoo-Gothic' style is the work of George Dance in the eighteenth century when the medieval façade was taken down. Four statues from the medieval

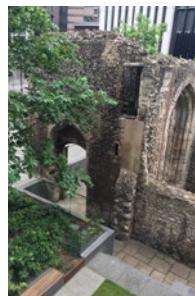


Guildhall

porch which displayed the civic virtues of Temperance, Fortitude, Justice and Discipline were discovered in north Wales in the 1970s and can now be seen in the Museum of London. Behind the facade the Great Hall retains its medieval walls designed by John Croxton between 1411 – 1430, including an original fifteenth-century window with its horn panes and medieval iron work. A wide staircase leads down to the crypt (largest medieval crypt in London): the western half (now much restored) was part of the earlier thirteenth-century Guildhall, but the eastern half from the fifteenth century is largely intact and is the best example in the City of late medieval secular architecture.
cityoflondon.gov.uk/guildhallgalleries

This marks the end of the shorter walk. If you have time, you can continue, finishing at the church of St Bartholomew near Smithfield Market.

Leave Guildhall Yard by the passage to the right of Guildhall Art Gallery leading to Basinghall Street. Turn left and follow the street north passing the Guildhall offices and turn right onto Basinghall Avenue, passing Girdlers' Hall (rebuilt after World War 2) on your left, until you come to London Wall, a busy thoroughfare. Cross the street and walk to the left. Soon you will come to:



The remains of the medieval tower of the Hospital of Elyngspittal.

The remaining tower of the Hospital of Elyngspittal ⑮. Founded in 1331 by the mercer William Elyng, the hospital cared for the many destitute people who flocked to London in the years before the Black Death of 1348, which killed half of the population of London. The Hospital later became a house of Austin canons and after its dissolution in 1536 the buildings became a private house and later the church was taken over by the nearby parish of St Alphege.

The area around the Hospital ruins is now known as St Alphege Garden, in which a ⑯ **large section of the medieval city wall** can be seen. This section shows clearly the repairs made to the wall in 1476-7 during the mayoralty of the draper, Ralph Josselyn, which were carried out in the newly fashionable brick, rather than in stone. The height of the wall can be best appreciated when seen from the Salters' Hall gardens on the north side.



The church of St Giles Cripplegate

From the gardens, walk (or take the lift) up the stairs to the St Alphege highwalk and when you reach the T-junction turn right and almost immediately left onto Wallside which will lead to a clear view of;



The late medieval church of ⑯ **St Giles Cripplegate** (1545-50) which lay outside the city walls serving a semi-rural parish. It escaped the Great Fire but was bombed in World War 2; sadly, no medieval furnishings have survived.

Continue along Wallside.



One of the bastions of the City wall which marks the north west corner of the original Roman Cripplegate fort

You will come across a good view of one of the bastions of the City wall which marks the north west corner of the original Roman Cripplegate fort. With water in the moat, it is possible to imagine what it might have been like in medieval times.



View of the cloisters at Charterhouse
© London Picture Archive (City of London)

The great **Carthusian Monastery** ¹⁸ or the House of the Salutation of the Mother of God. In 1371 this was the last religious house to be founded in London before the Dissolution. The monks lived an austere life in individual cells, one of which survives. In 1538 some of the monks, led by their Prior, John Houghton, refused to take the oath to accept the Act of Supremacy which acknowledged Henry VIII as Supreme Head of the Church in England and were ultimately martyred. After the House was dissolved in 1538 the buildings passed into lay hands and in 1611 Thomas Sutton founded an almshouse (still on the site) and a school (now located in Godalming, Surrey). The surviving buildings come from many periods but there is a good model of the medieval buildings to be seen to the right of the gatehouse. thecharterhouse.org

Leave Charterhouse Square by Lindsey Street with Smithfield Market on your right. Turn right into Long Lane and follow it until you come to the garden rotunda opposite St Bartholomew's Hospital. Walk to the hospital building where you will see two modern plaques.

Wat Tyler ¹⁹, one of the leaders of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, died here during an altercation with the young king, Richard II. He was stabbed by one of the king's esquires and taken into the nearby hospital, but later dragged out and beheaded in Smithfield. On the same wall is another plaque commemorating the death of

This painting depicts the end of the 1381 Peasants' revolt. The image shows London's mayor, Walworth, killing Wat Tyler. There are two images of Richard II. One looks on the killing while the other is talking to the peasants.

© Wikimedia Commons



A plaque memorialising William Wallace

Sir William Wallace ²⁰, a knight who became one of the main leaders of the Scots fighting for independence from England during the reign of Edward I. In 1305 he was caught and transported to London, taken to Westminster Hall, tried for treason and then executed at Smithfield.

A short distance to the left when you are facing the monument is:

A watercolour copy of the rebus of Prior Bolton. © Victoria and Albert Museum



The Church of St Bartholomew ²¹. This building was originally the church of the Priory of Austin canons founded by Rahere, a royal servant and jester, in 1123. Rahere also founded a hospital which was run by the canons. The church is the most substantial medieval ecclesiastical building to have survived in the City. After the Priory was dissolved in 1534, the hospital of St Bartholomew was given to the City in 1544 and the choir of the church became the parish church in 1543. Although most of the monuments are post-medieval the remarkable memorial tomb of Rahere (d. 1140) constructed c.1405 is notable, as is the interior oriel window built by Prior Bolton in the early sixteenth century to serve as an oratory accessible from his lodgings (see his heraldic sign – a bolt on a barrel ('tun')).

greatstbarts.com

This publication has been produced by the City of London Corporation, a uniquely diverse organisation with three main aims: to support and promote the City as the world leader in international finance and business services; to provide local services and policing for the Square Mile; and to provide valued services to London and the nation.



As a custodian of London's heritage, the City provides stewardship for a huge collection of books, archives, pictures, photographs, prints and other materials, which constitute a major part of the recorded memory of London.

cityoflondon.gov.uk

Details correct at time of printing (November 2021).

CoLAT

The City of London Archaeological Trust

The City of London Archaeological Trust (CoLAT) is a charity whose purpose is to support and initiate archaeological work in the City of London and its environs. It has partnered with the City of London Corporation to produce this publication.



City Visitor Trail

Discover more in the City with our City Visitor Trail – pick up a leaflet at the City Information Centre opposite St Paul's Cathedral or download the app.

When nature calls, take advantage of the Community Toilet Scheme. Look for the sticker in the window of participating shops, bars & restaurants.



@visitthecity



@visitthecity



@visitthecity

visitthecity.co.uk

Sign up to our newsletter to be the first to know about what's on in the Square Mile