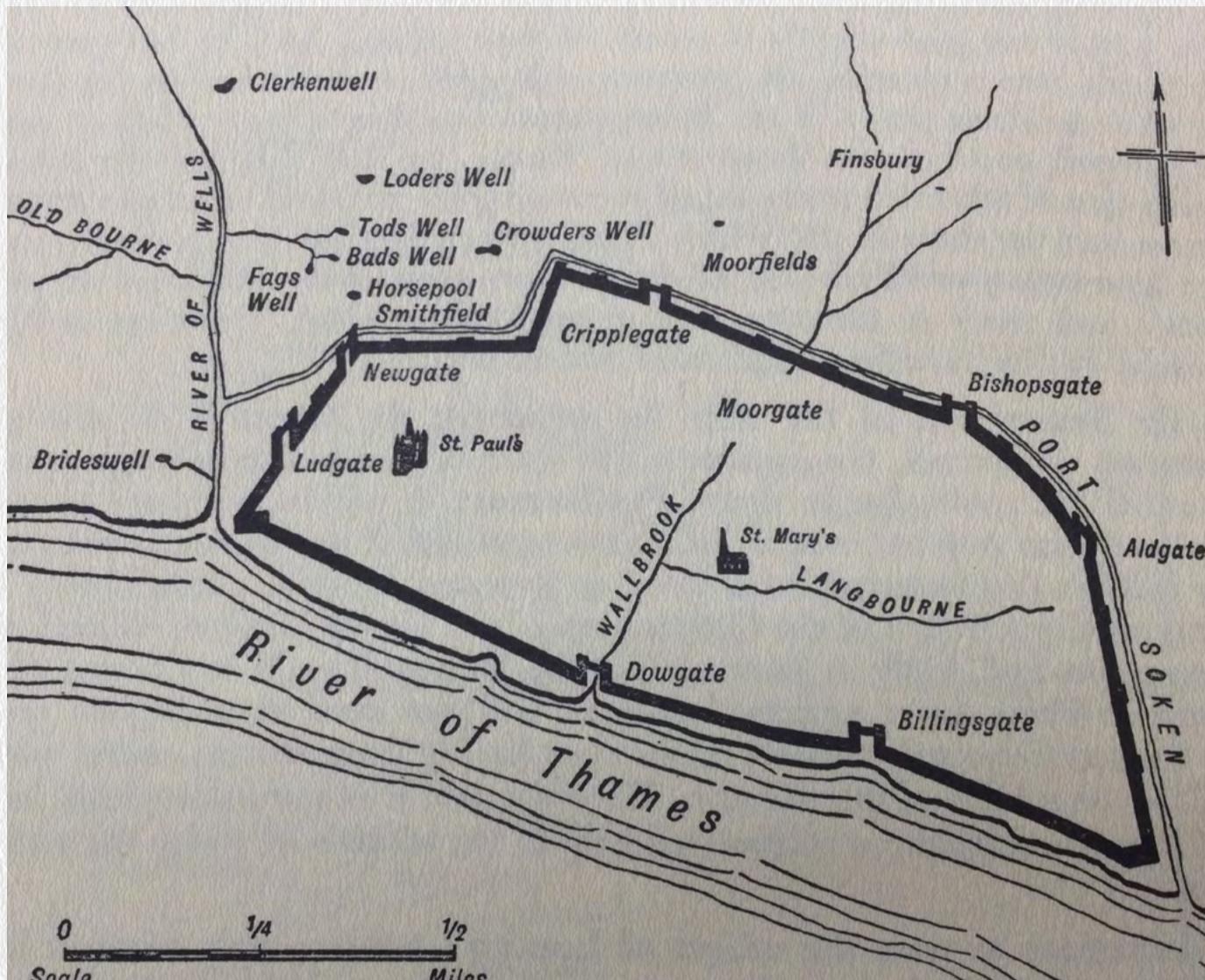


The Great Conduit

VOL. 1 - No. 65

THE HERITAGE of FLEET STREET

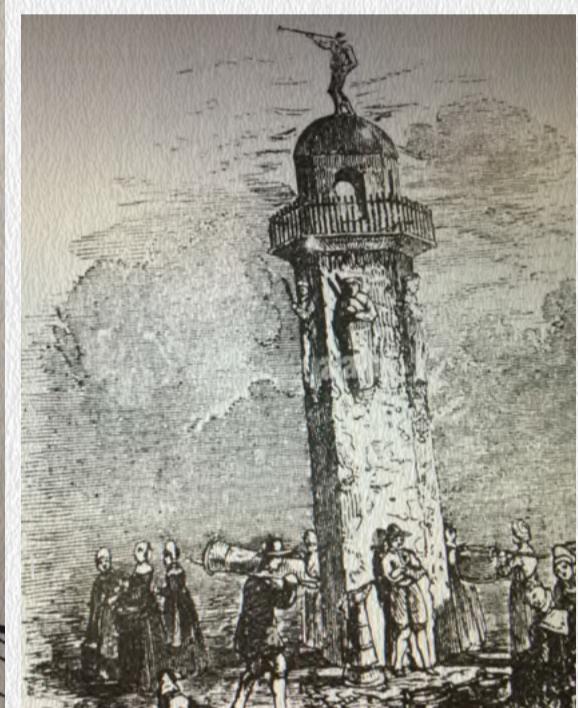
LONDON 2024



Map of Saxon London, Circa 1000 AD



The conduit passing over the River Fleet



The Conduit of River Fleet

Until early medieval times, Londoners relied on water from the River Fleet (known earlier as the River of Wells) or the River Wallbrook with its tributary, the Langbourne, or from the many wells on the northern fringes of the city. These sources proved inadequate for a growing population.

In 1237, a Conduit through pipes was arranged from the River Tyburn, (near the modern Bond Street station) William Fitzstephen wrote in the late 1100s of the 'sweet, wholesome and

The Conduit in Fleet Street was a small tower-like structure, apparently in the middle of the road at the junction with Shoe Lane. Stow reports that it consisted of a stone tower, decorated with an image of St. Christopher on top and angels lower down round about it and with sweet-sounding bells which chimed every hour through a engine placed in the tower. The Conduit started from a source near Paddington, and came past Charing Cross and the Strand to Fleet Street, and went on to Cheapside.

In 1237, the City of London acquired the source of the River Tyburn, and built a small reservoir. There is a plaque at the corner of Marylebone Lane and Wigmore Street which records the sources of the River Tyburn. Work on the conduit started in 1245.

A 1478 record describes 'a wax chandler in Fleet Street had bi crafte perced a pipe of the conduit within the ground and so conveied the water into his selar'. The Conduit not only supplied water to the Fleet Street area, but it also formed a feature in many of the pageants held in the City from medieval times up to the Great Fire. When Anne Boleyn processed from the tower to her coronation at Westminster, the Conduit was reported to be flowing with wine rather than water, and it was decorated and surmounted with angels. A pageant was held at the Conduit when Philip II of Spain came to wed Queen Mary, and another pageant was held there for Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1558. The Conduit was also a favoured place for the posting of proclamations.

The conduit gave frequent problems for neighbouring houses and businesses, which on a number of occasions petitioned the Lord Mayor to repair the Conduit "in order to obviate the damage done by the overflowing of the Conduit frequently through the breaking of the pipes there, rotted and damaged their houses and cellars and their party walls thereof, and their goods and wares



The Great Conduit

Additional notes

Prepared by: Piers Nicholson 2024

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.co.uk (2) includes link where possible and (3) licence your new creation under identical terms to this.

Additional notes

Wikipedia articles on Great Conduit and other sources.