

A Brief History of London

by George Sandford

Packed with iconic landmarks and thronging with a huge, multicultural population, London is one of the must-see capitals of the world, but how did it become this vast metropolis? *English Matters* leafs through the history books to uncover the explanation.

Romans and Saxons

Scholars dispute whether the origin of the name is Roman or Celtic, but it's certain that as early as the first century AD there was a Roman settlement called Londinium on the site. Being well inland

from the coast and offering a deep port on the River Thames, London provided the ideal location to build a substantial town. It's believed that Roman London housed as many as 45,000 people and offered all the facilities typical of Roman town planning. This included a forum, basilica, public baths and, of course, an amphitheatre, although it was too early to throw Christians to the lions, as Christianity didn't reach Britain until Augustus's mission of 597. Coming under frequent attack from Saxons, Picts and Scots in the north and west of Britain, and Vandals and Visigoths closer to home, by 410,

the Romans had pulled the plug on their British excursion, leaving the way clear for the Saxons. They inhabited the city on a smaller scale, focusing on silverwork and trading until 500 years later, when raiding Danes popped in to rape and pillage. In the eleventh century, King Olaf of Norway and his men also invaded, giving rise to the children's rhyme, London Bridge is falling down.

Fire!

The commencement of rule by William the Conqueror from Normandy in 1066 brought stability and consolidation ►

o brief | krótki

1 packed with | pełen czegoś

landmark | charakterystyczny obiekt

to throng with sth | być pełnym czegoś

huge | ogromny

must-see | *pot.* warty zobaczenia

vast | ogromny

to leaf through sth | kartkować coś

to uncover sth | odkrywać coś

Romans | Rzymianie

scholar | uczony, badacz

to dispute | debatować, spierać się o coś

origin | pochodzenie

AD=Anno Domini | naszej ery

settlement | osada

site | teren

inland | położony w głąb lądu

2 coast | wybrzeże

to provide sth | zapewniać coś

location | lokalizacja

substantial | znaczący, duży

to house | dawać schronienie, mieścić

facility | obiekt

to include | obejmować coś, zawierać coś

basilica | bazylika

bath | łaźnia

to come under attack | być atakowanym

frequent | częsty

Picts | Piktowie

Scoti | Gaelowie, północni Szkoci

3 to pull the plug | zaprzestawać czegoś

excursion ɪk'skɜːʃ(ə)n / ɛk'skɑːʃ(ə)n | wyprawa

to leave the way clear | zostawić komuś wolną drogę

to inhabit sth | zamieszkiwać coś

to focus on sth | skupiać się na czymś

silverwork | wyroby ze srebra

trading | handel

to raid sth/sb | najeżdżać coś/kogoś

Danes | Danowie

to pop in X | wpadać do X

to rape | gwałcić

to pillage | rabować

to invade sth/sb | najeżdżać coś/kogoś

to give rise to sth | dawać czemuś

początek

rhyme | rymowanka

commencement | początek

William the Conqueror

'wɪljəm ðə 'kɒŋk(ə)rə | Wilhelm Zdobywca

stability | stabilność



1

2

3



Oil painting by anonymous artist, ca. 1670.

to the city. The mark one versions of the Tower of London and St. Paul's Cathedral were built, although the Christopher Wren design would replace the latter in the seventeenth century. The city became a great trade hub and this contributed to the disaster that struck in 1348. The arrival of the plague called "The Black

Death" wiped out at least a third of the London population. In time, the city recovered, but there was another outbreak of bubonic plague in 1665 that killed 25 percent of the city's half a million inhabitants. Those that survived were living in narrow, cobbled streets, cheek by jowl in thatched dwellings next to foundries, smithies and bakeries. It was in the last of these establishments, a bakery owned by Thomas Farynor in Pudding Lane, that the Great Fire of London broke out just one year after the plague. It raged for days, and, with woefully inadequate fire-fighting equipment, it destroyed an estimated 13,500 dwellings, although apparently, relatively few people were killed in the blaze.

From Parks to the Blitz

Like all good phoenixes, London rose from the ashes stronger than before. The city prospered and the landed gentry introduced Hyde Park and Richmond Park, and commissioned the building of grand abodes such as Buckingham Palace, Marlborough House and The Mansion

House, home of the Lord Mayor of London. As international trade grew and exports of wool, clothing, beer, foodstuffs and furniture expanded, West India, London, St Katharine and Millwall Docks were added. To accommodate the growing population, the city spread out to absorb what had previously been the country areas of Chiswick, Putney, Wimbledon, Richmond and Ealing, to name but a few. By 1900, the city was connected to a national rail network, had an underground system, street gas lighting and a population of six million. If there was ever any doubt about its credentials, these were vanquished as the city truly arrived on the world stage, being not only the capital of England but of the British Empire. The Nazis tried to reduce the population somewhat, and during the Second World War, the city took quite a pasting. In the air raids, known as the blitz, which took place between 1941 and 1944, over 20,000 people were killed and many more injured. Up to 150,000 people took refuge each night in the London Underground, which now served as a vast air raid shelter.

4 **mark one** | *pot. pierwszy (z wielu)*

although | mimo, że

to replace sth | zastępować coś

the latter | ten drugi

hub | węzeł (np. komunikacyjny)

to contribute to sth | przyczyniać się do czegoś

disaster | katastrofa

to strike | uderzać, nawiedzać

plague *pleig* | zaraza, dżuma

5 **to wipe out sth** | zmieść coś z

powierzchni ziemi

to recover from sth | podnosić się po czymś

outbreak | wybuch

bubonic plague | dżuma dymienicza (jedna z postaci dżumy)

inhabitant | mieszkaniec

to survive | przetrwać

narrow | wąski

cobbled | brukowany

cheek by jowl | bardzo blisko

thatched | kryty strzechą

dwelling | domostwo

foundry | odlewnia

smithy | kuźnia

establishment | przybytek

to break out | wybuchać

to rage | szaleć

woefully | żałośnie

inadequate | niewystarczający, nieodpowiedni do czegoś

fire-fighting | strażacki

to destroy sth | niszczyć coś

to estimate sth | szacować coś

apparently | *tu:* jak się okazało

relatively | stosunkowo

blaze | wielki pożar, pożoga

phoenix | feniks

to rise from the ashes | podnosić się z popiołów

to prosper | prosperować, rozwijać się

landed gentry | szlachta ziemiańska

to introduce sth | wprowadzać coś, zapoczątkować coś

to commission sth | zlecać coś

grand | wielki, okazały

abode | *lit.* dom, siedziba

6 **foodstuff** | artykuł spożywczy

to expand | rozwijać się

to accommodate sb | przyjmować, dawać dach nad głową

to spread out | rozciągać się, rozrastać się

to absorb | wchłaniać

previously | poprzednio, wcześniej

to name but a few | na przykład, aby

wymienić tylko kilka

rail | kolej

network | sieć

underground | podziemny

credentials | *tu:* status

to vanquish sth | pokonywać, rozwiewać, przewycięzać

stage | scena, arena

empire | imperium

somewhat | nieco

to take a pasting | dostać lanie

air raid | nalot

to take place | mieć miejsce

injured | ranny

to take refuge *ta tetk 'refju:dʒ* | schronić się

to serve as sth | służyć jako coś

shelter | schronienie

Remarkable and surprising facts about London

- The Tube was started in 1863 and now comprises 250 miles of track served by 270 stations. 52 percent of the underground network is actually above ground.
- London's orbital motorway, the M25, is the longest city ring-road in the world at 117 miles.
- Big Ben is not the name of the clock tower on the Houses of Parliament but the actual bell inside.
- Despite the advent of GPS, to get a London Taxi Licence, drivers still need to learn 'The Knowledge,' where they have to memo-
rise and know off by heart over 25,000 roads, routes, landmarks and buildings.
- Royal Navy ships entering the Port of London are required to give a barrel of rum to the constable of the Tower of London.
- The world's first traffic light was installed outside Westminster Palace (the Houses of Parliament) in 1868.

remarkable | wyjątkowy
to comprise of sth | składać się z czegoś
track | tor
network | sieć
orbital (road) | obwodnica
motorway | autostrada
ring-road | obwodnica
actual | tu: sam
despite sth | pomimo czegoś
advent | nadejście czegoś
to memorise sth | zapamiętywać coś
by heart | na pamięć
navy | marynarka
to enter sth | tu: wpływać do czegoś
barrel | beczka
constable | BrE posterunkowy
traffic light | światła

From Fog to Fireworks

A peacetime tragedy that beset the city was the notorious Great Smog of December 1952. A combination of cold weather and still air trapped the pollution of factory chimneys and thousands of domestic coal fires under a cloud of smog that engulfed the city and pressed down upon it. The "pea souper" was so dense that public transport was suspended and even walking in the day required the hazardous shuffling of tiny footsteps, but the health impact was more catastrophic. It is estimated that as many as 12,000 people died from respiratory problems. It remains to this day, Britain's biggest environmental disaster, but at least it precipitated the introduction of the Clean Air Act in 1954.

The post-war years saw a major programme of slum clearance and modernisation. Business thrived again, spurred by the burgeoning car market and increased consumer demand. New landmarks were added to the London skyline, such as the distinctive, rocket-like Post Office Tower which opened in 1965 and the 135m high

7 fog | mgła
peacetime | czas pokoju
to beset sb/sth | nękać, dręczyć coś/kogoś
notorious | niesławny, o złej sławie
combination | połączenie
still | nieruchomy, stojący
to trap sth | więzić coś
chimney | 'tjɪmni | komin
domestic | domowy
coal | węgiel
to engulf sth | pochłaniać, ogarniać coś
to press down | napierać na, naciskać, osiadać na
pea souper | tu: gęsty smog
dense | gęsty
to suspend sth | zawieszać coś
to require sth | wymagać czegoś
hazardous | niebezpieczny
shuffling | szuranie, powłóczenie nogami
tiny | malutki
footsteps | krok
impact | wpływ
respiratory | związany z układem oddechowym



Ferris wheel, The London Eye in 2000. Now, it always takes centre stage at the New Year's firework display.

A Melting Pot

One of the things that any visitor to London will notice is the city's remarkable ethnic diversity. Indeed, in a 2013 census, only 45 percent of the 8.5 million Londoners described themselves as white British. As many as 300 languages are spoken in the city by immigrants or descendants of people coming from every corner of the globe, but this influx is ►

to remain | pozostawać
disaster | katastrofa
to precipitate sth | przyspieszać coś
act | ustawa
post-war | powojenny
major | tu: szeroko zakrojony
slum | slums
to thrive | kwitnąć
to spur sth | pobudzać coś
burgeoning | rozkwitający, rodzący się
demand | popyt
skyline | panorama
distinctive | charakterystyczny
display | pokaz
melting pot | tygiel kulturowy, mieszanka kultur
remarkable | wyjątkowy
diversity dɪˈvɜːsɪti / dɪˈvɜːsɪti | różnorodność
indeed | istotnie, w rzeczy samej
census | spis ludności
descendant | potomek
globe | glob, świat
influx | napływ

not just a recent phenomenon. Persecuted Huguenots arrived in numbers in the 1670s, and slavery and trading in the East Indies opened the door to Indians, Pakistanis, Africans and Caribbeans. Jews and the Irish have always been well represented, but have since been joined by Greeks, Turks and Italians, by Bangladeshis in the rag trade area of Brick Lane and the Chinese in Soho. A visit to London's China Town is well worth adding to the itinerary of a call on the capital, but you can find something of interest wherever you look. Stand on any tube station platform and you'll see a worldwide fashion show of saris, wrappers and dashikis and, with this immense ethnic diversity, you'll never be stuck for a bite to eat. Pretty much anywhere in the bustling streets of London, you'll be spoilt for choice, with the opportunity to tuck into virtually any nation's cuisine from Armenian to Zambian.

A Creative Capital Still Trading

As well as being a hive of activity with a cornucopia of culinary delights, London has always been a magnet for musicians, artists and architects and a catalyst for creativity. Beyond the obvious Buckingham Palace, Houses of Parliament and

**The Pink Floyd
album cover of Animals (1977)**



Tower Bridge, you might try an alternative sightseeing tour taking in Sir Norman Foster's 30 St Mary Axe, aka The Gherkin, and the iconic Battersea Power Station, as featured on the Pink Floyd album cover of Animals. Buildings aside, the city is

perhaps still best remembered for the swinging sixties, with Carnaby Street fashion, Mary Quant esigns and boyish London supermodel, Twiggy. On the musical front, we can thank the city for producing the likes of The Rolling Stones, George Michael, Coldplay, Pet Shop Boys, Queen, Elton John, Adele, not forgetting The Clash with their apocalyptic anthem, London Calling.

If London does beckon you, by all means take a stroll down Oxford Street to Marble Arch and on to Trafalgar Square and Nelson's Column, but dare to go off the beaten track, too. Visit the Sikh enclave of Southall, the predominantly black district of Peckham or the markets at Camden and Petticoat Lane. After all, London was built as a trading port and 2,000 years on, it is still doing good business.

If you're good at haggling, there's no better place to pick up a bargain and you'll be following in the footsteps of generations of Londoners before and probably, those that will follow in years to come. ■

- 9 **recent** | niedawny
phenomenon | zjawisko
persecuted | prześladowany
slavery | niewolnictwo
rag trade | przemysł odzieżowy
itinerary | plan podróży, trasa podróży
call | tu: wizyta
tube | pot. BrE metro
platform | peron
wrapper | chusta, szal
dashiki | dashiki (kolorowa i luźna koszula afrykańska)
immense | ogromny
to be stuck | być uwiązany, być ograniczonym
bite | coś na ząb
bustling | tętniący życiem
to be spoilt for choice | mieć zbyt dużo możliwości
to tuck into sth | pot. pałaszować coś,

- obżerać się czymś
virtually | w zasadzie, praktycznie
cuisine | kuchnia
to be a hive of activity ta bi: ə haɪv (ə)v
 ak'tɪvɪti | aż wrzeć, roić się od czegoś
cornucopia | róg obfitości
delight | przyjemność, rozkosz
magnet | magnes
catalyst | katalizator
beyond | poza
obvious | oczywisty
 10 **sightseeing tour** | wycieczka ze zwiedzaniem
gherkin | korniszon
power station | elektrownia
to feature sth | przedstawiać coś
cover | okładka
aside | poza
 11 **perhaps** | być może
the swinging sixties | swingujące lata 60-te

- boyish** | chłopięcy
the likes of X | temu podobni
anthem | hymn
to beckon sb | przywoływać kogoś
stroll | spacer
to dare to do sth | odważyć się coś zrobić
to go off the beaten track | zbaczać z utartej ścieżki
enclave | enklawa
predominantly | głównie, w przeważającej mierze
district | dzielnica
after all | wszak, przecież
to pick up sth | łapać, znajdować coś
bargain 'bɑ:ɡɪn | okazja
to haggle | targować się
to follow in sb's footsteps | podążać w czyjeś ślady
in years to come | w najbliższych latach