

Samuel Pepys' Walk through Westminster

Distance = 4 miles (6 km)

Estimated duration = 3 – 4 hours

Nearest underground stations: This Walk is planned to start from Blackfriars station but can also be joined on route from Temple, Embankment, Charing Cross, Westminster, St James's Park, Green Park and Piccadilly Circus where it ends.

- This is based around the [Pepys Diary](http://www.pepysdiary.com) website at www.pepysdiary.com and your photographs could be added to the Pepys group collection [here](http://www.flickr.com/groups/pepysdiary): www.flickr.com/groups/pepysdiary
- London is changing all the time, so if you find anything that is out of date or can recommend any improvements, then please do send me an email about it to Glyn_Thomas123@yahoo.co.uk. Thanks!
- If there are things that you especially want to see, please check with them in advance because opening times may change.
- We'll also visit features that have no connection with Pepys if they are on the route.
- Good idea to buy a bus pass or a travel card (for both buses and trains), so that you don't have to walk the whole route but can jump on and off any bus or underground train going in your direction. In particular, any bus with "Trafalgar Square" on the destination board at the front of the bus will be going on, or very near, the route.
- Peter H Easton has provided an excellent guide to [Fleet Street](#).
- And if you aren't in London at present, perhaps you'd like to attempt a "virtual tour" through the hyperlinks, or alternatively explore London via the various [BBC London webcams](#) or [these ones](#), which are much more comprehensive.

One of Three

This is the first of three walks through London based on the Diary of Samuel Pepys which was written in the 1660s.

Samuel Pepys' Walk through Westminster

Samuel Pepys' Walk through the western City of London and the South Bank and

Samuel Pepys' Walk through the eastern City of London and Greenwich

When to Go

There are various events staged in Westminster that you might like to consider going along to if you're planning a particular day on which to take this Walk. Please contact the [London Tourist Office](#) for more up-to-date news.

Differences between Westminster and the City

Samuel Pepys spent most of his life living and working in Westminster and the City of London, which then were two separate entities. Even today each still has its own special character, and I've listed below what I feel are some of the differences between them:

- More royal monuments and national flags in Westminster
- More parkland in Westminster, almost no large green areas in the City
- Westminster is much busier, especially at weekends. Many more tourists in Westminster because it has most of London's best-known tourist sites (although the City does have St Paul's Cathedral and the Tower of London)
- The City feels much more cramped than Westminster; 21st century architects doing their best to fit buildings into plots of lands whose size and shape were decided 1,000 years earlier; the City is still influenced by the City Walls even though they have been gone for centuries
- The borders of the City are well defined but those of Westminster are much more unstructured, shading off into areas such as Pimlico, Belgravia, etc.
- The City focuses on one thing: business; Westminster is a mixture of government, tourism etc., so things are much more varied.

Starting the Walk

Although this is largely a walk through Westminster, it starts within the City of London. The best way to reach the beginning of the Walk is to take any of the following red buses and ask the driver to let you off at the junction of Fleet Street and Ludgate Circus. You should board any bus with the number 4, 11, 15, 23, 26, 76 or 172, because they all go directly past Salisbury Court.

If, however, you do wish to go by **Underground**, then take the (yellow) Circle or (green) District Line to Blackfriars Station and when you leave the station you will see one of London's most important pubs on your right, this is the **Black Friar** (Open Mon-Sat 11 – 11, Sun 12 – 10) which is one of the artistically significant pubs in London. It was built on the site of a 13th-century Dominican priory in 1875 and still has its original carvings and decorations in the Arts and Crafts style then fashionable. I do recommend that you have a cup of tea or coffee inside it before starting your Walk so that you can take a look at its interior. We won't be seeing much of the river Thames on this Walk so take the opportunity for a quick look at it and to get your bearings, and you should be able to see the London Eye and Big Ben. The London Eye and Big Ben are on different banks of the Thames, giving an idea of how steeply the river bends at that point. On the other side of Blackfriars bridge can be seen the tall brick chimneystack of the Tate Modern art gallery. Next to the Black Friar is a pedestrian subway/tunnel which you should descend into and come up again at **Exit 8**.

We are now in **New Bridge Street** near its junction with Watergate, which was where the River Fleet flowed into the River Thames in the Middle Ages. By the period of the Diary in the 1660s the Thames had receded to about halfway between Watergate and its present location. The Fleet is now a completely subterranean river flowing beneath us and we can see how confined the Thames has become.

From the junction of New Bridge Street and Watergate, walk away from the river so that you are walking slightly upwards. You'll notice a plaque about Bridewell Palace at Number 14, New Bridge Street. Walk past Bridewell Place and then turn left into Bride Lane, you'll almost immediately pass the Bridewell Theatre where you will get a good view of St Bride's church steeple before going up the steps by the Press House Wine Bar which takes you into Salisbury Square with a stone obelisk in the middle of it. Turn right into Salisbury Court where our Walk finally begins.

Salisbury Court

"This day it is two years since it pleased God that I was cut of the stone at Mrs. Turner's in Salisbury Court." – **The Diary**, 26 March 1660.

Our starting point is the square blue plaque in Salisbury Court that marks Samuel Pepys' birthplace, which is on the other side of the street from a plaque about the Sunday Times. Unfortunately there is nothing else to see in this drab and featureless street, almost halfway between the Tower of London and Seething Lane to the east and Westminster to the west: the places that were so important to Pepys in adult life. John Pepys, his father, had his tailoring business here and the area was full of both small and large houses with gardens down to the river. To imagine his house, think of a wooden plaster Tudor building: the front room was the shop where customers saw the clothes, the back room was where the tailors, including a young Samuel Pepys, would have worked, the family lived in the rooms upstairs, and there would have been a garden at the rear of the house.

Leave Salisbury Court by going up into Fleet Street and turning right, going downhill, and right again to the entrance to St Bride's Church. This gives you the best view of the immensely tall steeple, which is 226 feet (62 metres) high.

St Bride's Church

(Open Mon-Fri 8 am – 5 pm, Sat 11 am – 4 pm, Sun 10 am – 12.30 pm, 5.30 – 7.30 pm. Free. Twice monthly guided tours, £6) www.stbrides.com

"and to church, and with the grave-maker chose a place for my brother to lie in, just under my mother's pew" – The Diary, 18 March 1664.

St Bride's with its Roman pavement dated 180 AD is one of the oldest sites of Christian worship in London and is named after the Irish saint Bridget. It is especially associated with the newspaper industry and also with the American Pilgrim Fathers. The first child of English descent to be baptised in America was Virginia Dare, who was the daughter of Elenor and Ananias, former parishioners of St Bride's who were married here, and a bust of Virginia is above the font. Pepys and his brothers and sisters were baptised here too and the font that was used to baptise them is still here. Although the church was destroyed in 1666 in the Great Fire this later version by Sir Christopher Wren was built in Pepys' lifetime and he would have worshipped here. Most of the church was again destroyed by enemy bombing in December 1940 but the spire survived intact and the bombs revealed the existence of the crypt, which had previously been forgotten. There is now an interesting exhibition about the history of the church and the newspaper industry within it. Fleet Street was once the heart of the British newspaper industry and St Bride's is known as the journalists' and printers' church.

The east end of the church features a large free-standing canopied oak **reredos** dedicated to the Pilgrim Fathers which stands in front of an apparently half-domed apse. This is actually a magnificent *trompe d'oeil* (artistic illusion), and is flat rather than curved.

If you are here at mid-day you could stay for the regular performances of classical music that take place in the church, or otherwise you might care to do what Pepys often did and take in a quick lunchtime play (normally lasting 40-50 minutes) at the nearby Bridewell Theatre.

To do this, leave St Bride's by the west entrance, then turn left down Salisbury Court and immediately left down St Bride's Passage. (However, just further on at the corner of Salisbury Court and Dorset Rise a plaque marks the location of the Salisbury Court Playhouse. The plaque states its dates as 1629-1649, when it would have been closed by the Puritans, but it also reopened in 1660 and Pepys records visiting the theatre in 1661: *"and thence to Salisbury Court playhouse, where was acted for the first time 'Tis Pity She's a Whore", a simple play and ill acted, only it was my fortune to sit by a most pretty and ingenious lady, which pleased me much.*" – **The Diary**, 9 September 1661) Just further down St Bride's Passage is St Bride's Institute which contains the **Bridewell Theatre** and the Bridewell Printing Library (Tues-Thurs, opening times vary. Free).

However, if you do not have time for this, then instead leave St Bride's by the door that you entered, cross Fleet Street and turn left so that St Paul's Cathedral is behind you. As previously mentioned, the British still use "Fleet Street" as a generic term for the newspaper industry in the same way that they say "Westminster" when they mean the Government, and although the newspapers largely moved out of this area in the 1980s there are still traces of evidence of their previous existence here that you will notice as you walk down the street. Just ahead of us, for instance, is a handsome Art Deco clock that is on the front of the old Daily Telegraph building. Above the doorway is a stone relief of Mercury's messengers taking news to all the world.

Next to the Daily Telegraph building is a Pret A Manger cafe, and if you look upwards you will see a statue of **Mary Queen of Scots**. Mary never actually visited London and this attractive statue is a fake in the sense that it was commissioned in the 19th century by a patriotic Scottish businessman who named this particular building Queen of Scots House: we'll see a more authentic version of her cousin Queen Elizabeth I at St Dunstan's Church, which you can see straight ahead of you just a few buildings further along the street.

Before that, however, we are stopping at what may be the most famous pub in London and the one that gives the best impression of what a 17th-century tavern must have been like. Even if it is too early in the day for "a morning draught", it should be visited for a cup of tea or coffee.

The Olde Cheshire Cheese

Wine Office Court, 145 Fleet Street

(Open Mon-Fri 11.30 am – 11 pm, Sat 12 noon – 11 pm, Sun closed)
http://www.pubs.com/main_site/pub_details.php?pub_id=154

Frustratingly there is no record of it in the Diary but, considering its location, how could Pepys *not* have visited it? It became an inn in 1538 and has been one ever since, most notably being rebuilt in the 1670s after its destruction in the Great Fire. Historically, it is principally associated with the lexicographer Dr Samuel Johnson and his biographer James Boswell, and other regulars have included Charles Dickens (of course, and who mentioned it in *A Tale of Two Cities*), Thackeray, GK Chesterton and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. This is a rambling place with rooms and bars on several levels, and its owners the brewers Samuel Smith make a point of keeping their excellent beers reasonably priced. Things to look out for are the famous stuffed parrot in the oak-panelled Chop Room and "Boswell's chair", which was stolen from the Mitre in 1819 (I think that they've gotten away with it).

[**1st Diversion if you have some time to spare:** on leaving the pub, and if you have a few minutes to spare you can take a small diversion down Bolt Court, between Starbucks and McDonalds, and follow the signs to **Dr Samuel Johnson's House** in Gough Square (Open Mon-Sat 11 am – 5 pm. Admission charge). It was here that Johnson compiled the first comprehensive dictionary of the English language. This a standard townhouse of the early 1700s and gives us an indication of what a typical London square of the time would have looked like, with all of the houses facing on to it. Ailurophiles will have noticed that facing the house is a statue of **Hodge**, Johnson's beloved cat, sitting on Johnson's Dictionary and with one of the oysters that he was so fond of – not as extravagant as it may sound, oysters were an inexpensive source of food then.]

Resuming the Walk and, without crossing the road, look down Bouverie Street opposite you to get a glimpse of the **OXO Tower**. This is on the other bank of the Thames, showing again how close the river is even though largely hidden from us. (The OXO Tower has an information centre and art gallery on the ground floor, two floors of designer workshops, social housing in the middle levels, and a chic Harvey Nichols restaurant and brasserie at the top. However, you don't need to eat or drink here to enjoy the views but instead can take the elevator to the public viewing gallery on the eighth floor (Daily until 10 pm. Free). Definitely recommended when you're anywhere on the South Bank.) At weekends, access to the Temple grounds (*see below*) is via Bouverie Street and then Tudor Street.

St Dunstan's church is directly ahead of us and this is our next stop on the Walk, which I hope we will reach near the top of the hour.

St Dunstan-in-the-West

(Open Tues 11 am – 3 pm. Free)
www.stdunstaninthewest.org

*"... turned into St. Dunstan's Church, where I heard an able sermon of the minister of the place; and stood by a pretty, modest maid whom I did labour to take by the hand and the body; but she would not, but got further from me; and, at last, I could perceive her to take pins out of the pocket to prick me if I should touch her again – which seeing I did forbear, and was glad I did spy her design. And then I fell to gaze upon another pretty maid in a pew close to me, and she on me; and I did go about to take her by the hand, which she suffered a little and then withdrew. So the sermon ended, and the church broke up, and my amours ended also, and so took coach and home, and there took up my wife, and to Islington with her, our old road, but before we got to Islington, between that and Kingsland, there happened an odd adventure ..." – **The Diary**, 18 August 1667.*

If you want to meet a pretty maid here I suggest that you bring one yourself as I can't absolutely guarantee that there will be one waiting for you. Nothing survives of the interior of the church from Pepys' time because of a total reconstruction in the 19th century. It is now shared between the Anglican Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church, whose London headquarters it now is, and it is worth looking inside to see how well these two branches of the Christian faith are co-operating with each other.

However, the most interesting features of the church are outside in its courtyard. The clock dates from 1671 and was the first public clock in London to have a minute hand. The two giants Gog and Magog (legendary protectors of the City of London) strike the hour and turn their heads, and the clock was given to the church by the local parishioners in gratitude for having survived the Great Fire, which was finally halted just a few doors away from here. The courtyard also has a statue of Queen Elizabeth I which dates from 1586, and is the only statue of her known to have been sculpted of her in her lifetime, so presumably must be a good likeness of the queen in her forties. This statue originally stood on Ludgate Circus and was moved here in the 18th century when that road was widened. Also here on either side of the main entrance are two small sculpted heads of William Tynedale (executed 1536), who translated the Bible into English, and John Donne ("*No man is an island*") who was rector here until his death in 1631.

Before St Paul's Cathedral is completely obscured by the curve of the street, take a look back to see how appreciably the road dips down to Ludgate Circus and the course of the river Fleet, and then upward again to St Paul's Cathedral; this rise and fall of the road would have been much greater in the 1660s before it was evened out.

Directly opposite St Dunstan's is a building constructed of beige Bath stone, which is the headquarters of Messrs. Hoare the merchant bankers (No. 37 Fleet Street). The first Richard Hoare was a goldsmith who opened his bank here in the early 18th century at a time when street numbering hadn't begun, and you'll see that the bank still has "a Golden Bottle" as the sign by which it was identified. Pepys and Will Haver were both clients of the bank from the 1680s onwards, and Claire Tomalin was able to consult their ledgers while writing her biography – in passing, I wonder how many of our own bank and credit card records will still survive in 2320 AD. On the wall of the bank is a plaque to the Mitre Tavern.

Mitre Tavern

"At the Mitre in Fleet Street ... where I drank a pint of wine." – **The Diary**, 21 January 1660.

In contrast, the Olde Cock Tavern is still in existence and just a few steps further on.

The Olde Cock Tavern

22 Fleet Street

(Mon-Fri 11 am – 11 pm, Sat 12.30 am – 9 pm, Sun closed)

"Thence by water to the Temple, and thence to the Cocke ale house and drank and eat a lobster and sang, and mighty merry." – **The Diary**, 23 April 1668.

Like many British pubs, **the Cock** has a peripatetic habit of moving about a bit. Usually, as here, this happened when a landlord moved to a new place and took the name, furniture (and if possible the clientele) with him. In this case, the journey wasn't far because the "Cock and Bottle" as it was then known was originally just across the road at 190 Fleet Street, but had to move in 1885 to make way for a new branch of the Bank of England. Now, ironically, the circle has turned and the bank has been converted back into a pub called the Old Bank of England (worth a visit for the internal architecture). On his departure, the Olde Cock's landlord took many original pieces of the old building with him including the fireplace and overmantel carved by Grinling Gibbons who may have also carved the cockerel above the entrance. Pepys called in here regularly on his way to or from his home or Westminster, and Mrs Knipp, the tavern's landlady and also an actress, became both one of his lovers as well as a valued friend. Before you go in, have a look at how narrow its frontage is.

Almost next to the Cock is an original Tudor gatehouse that contains Prince Henry's Room. This did not burn in the Fire, and is typical of the buildings of the time although it would have been bigger than most, so it is evocative to try and imagine the whole street lined with buildings of this design. It is noticeable that each floor slightly overhangs the one below, which is a characteristic of the architecture of the time.

Prince Henry's Room

17 Fleet Street (Open Mon-Sat 11 am – 2 pm. Free. Update: currently, in 2012, "closed until further notice") www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/phr

This remarkable survival of the Great Fire was built in 1610 as a tavern, and survived the Great Fire, the Blitz and street widening in the 1890s. It is especially notable for its magnificent plaster ceiling. A tenuous association with Samuel Pepys is celebrated by an exhibition of contemporary items, prints and paintings of the diarist and his time and includes a hand-written business letter from Pepys in 1669 that is next to an anonymous pamphlet accusing him and Will Hewer of embezzlement and other crimes. There's nothing particularly surprising here but it's an interesting place to visit. The gateway beneath it leads into the grounds of the Temple (*see below*).

You can't avoid noticing the statue of the "griffin" in the middle of the road ahead of you but don't overlook [the plaque about the Devil Tavern](#) on Number 1 Fleet Street.

The Devil

"... and from thence with Mr Shepley and Mr Moore to the Devil tavern, and there we drank"
– [The Diary](#), 17 November 1660.

Its full name was "The Devil and St Dunstan", which refers to a well-known medieval legend about the Saxon saint [Dunstan](#), who once was a worker in gold and who became the patron saint of goldsmiths. He is usually represented carrying red-hot pincers in his right hand. The legend is that he once seized the Devil by the nose with them and refused to release him until the Devil promised never to tempt Dunstan ever again. Saint Dunstan later became Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Devil was a large, rambling building with 19 hearths (fireplaces). It was also probably the most "literary" tavern in London, and Ben Jonson seems to have moved home to be near it! John Evelyn described a gathering there in 1680 attended by 180 Members of Parliament, and John Aubrey also mentioned it in his writing. Its owner in the early part of Pepys' Diary was John Wadlow, who is mentioned by name in the Diary. He was sufficiently important to be invited to take part in the Coronation Procession of Charles II. Wadlow owned the tavern in 1640-61, followed by Jonathon Barford (1661-68) and Richard Taylor (1668-81).

Concerning the "griffin" in the middle of the street just ahead of you – this is more correctly known as the [Heraldic Dragon](#) of the City of London of which this is a magnificent example. It stands there defending the border of the City, snarling defiance with its wings unfurling aggressively while proudly flaunting the shield of arms of the City. This spot marks the site of the old Temple Bar gateway which was one of the entrances to the City. The reigning monarch is unable to enter the City without the permission of the Lord Mayor who meets them at this spot to grant permission and to swear allegiance. The base of the statue again has bronze reliefs of Gog and Magog as well as the Temple Bar gateway and a mural of Queen Victoria when she passed through the gate on her way to St Paul's Cathedral in 1872. Until 1772 heads of executed criminals and traitors were displayed on the iron spikes of the Temple Bar and people hired telescopes at a halfpenny a time to get a better look. Originally, of course, the boundaries of the City would have ended at or just slightly beyond the City Walls, but the border was extended to here to accommodate the larger population of the medieval City.

(Eventually the gate became too restrictive for modern traffic and in 1878 it was dismantled and put into storage for 10 years until its sale to Lady Meux, a banjo-playing barmaid who had married one of the owners of the Friary Meux brewery in Hertfordshire. She moved all of its 2,500 stones, weighing almost 400 tons, to the Meux family estate where she rebuilt it, but it gradually fell into dilapidation until it was rescued and returned to London for re-erection in Paternoster Square near St Paul's Cathedral (for further information see *Samuel Pepys' Walk through the eastern City of London and Greenwich*).

Next to the statue of the dragon is a light-yellow building, now a Thai Square restaurant, that was built in 1625 and survived the Great Fire of 1666 and still has much of the original timber frame. It was home to the gatekeeper of Temple Bar and I can certainly imagine Pepys giving him a small bribe to be let into the City after delaying for too long at a tavern outside the City Wall.

Return to the other Tudor gatehouse that leads into the next part of the Walk through the Inner Temple and Middle Temple (it's the one beneath Prince Henry's Room (*see above*)).

Above the doorway of the gatehouse is the inscription “T / C.T. / 1748” flanked by two winged horses. You will see similar inscriptions throughout the four inns of court, because the “T” means “treasurer” followed by the initials of whoever held this office at that time. The winged horse is Pegasus – the symbol of the Inner Temple – and 1748 refers to the gate’s renovation. The Inns of Court with their secluded gardens and quiet lawns provide a welcome respite from 21st-century traffic, and it’s sometimes difficult to believe that we are so near the city streets, especially in the evenings when the gas-lit lamps illuminate the Temple grounds.

[Anything within square brackets can be skipped over and deleted without affecting the Walk, but this might be an apposite place to talk about Legal London and why places are where they are rather than somewhere else entirely. Obviously one would expect the docks to be by the river but why were printers in and near Fleet Street, and why did the lawyers set up in the area that we are now in?

In the Middle Ages the printers set up in Fleet Street because this was midway between the only literate professions in the city who would pay for their services, the clergy and the lawyers. For the same reason but centuries earlier, the lawyers based themselves here to be intermediate between the royal court at Westminster and the merchants of the City, so that they could mediate between them in any disputes. The lawyers arranged themselves into what eventually became four “Inns of Court”: the Inner Temple and the Middle Temple (so named because they are near Temple Church and by their proximity to the City, the Inner Temple being nearer than Middle Temple; an Outer Temple was considered but never built), Gray’s Inn and Lincoln’s Inn. These Inns are now places where lawyers have their offices but originally were where law students lived (hence “Inns”) and studied. In consequence they strongly resemble (in my and other people’s opinion) the older Oxford and Cambridge colleges.

Overseas visitors may find the British legal system slightly confusing (in contrast to the clear-cut nature of the rest of British life). As a generalisation, lawyers are split into two groups called “solicitors” and “barristers”. A client will initially consult a solicitor who may deal with the matter by him or herself, including representing the client in a court of law. However, in serious matters the solicitor may decide to hire a barrister to represent the client in court. A useful analogy is with the medical profession: you may initially approach a doctor (solicitor) but in serious matters a specialist (barrister) may need to be called in. Barristers are the more glamorous of the two and are the ones who wear the wigs, and most judges are former barristers. Again in general barristers don’t specialise in prosecution or defence but may do both in different cases. Probably the most well-known current barrister is Cherie Booth, the wife of Prime Minister Tony Blair (also a qualified barrister), who is also a junior judge.]

Before proceeding through the Inner Temple’s gateway, take a few minutes to inspect the map on the left wall to orientate yourself then move onwards into the Inner Temple. You’ll note that there is no particular division between the Inner and Middle Temple, which comprise a series of open spaces of various shapes and sizes connected by courts and alleys. We have come in by the rear entrance – the main gateway faces on to the Thames. Throughout the inns of court you will find buildings known as “chambers” which are communal offices run by barristers whose names you will see listed on their exteriors (the most senior at the top and the most junior at the bottom). And if you look through the ground-floor office window at the junction on the left of the path (Goldsmith Building) you are likely to see a pile of legal documents tied up in what appears to be pink ribbon but is in fact “red tape”, which is now synonymous in the UK with bureaucracy.

Past Goldsmith Building there are two graves that could hardly make a greater contrast. One depicts a dandyish 18th-century lawyer dressed in the height of fashion of the time, with a full wig and elaborate and expensive clothing, who is now no longer remembered: the other is the plain, unadorned grave of the Irish-born writer **Oliver Goldsmith**, who was one of the founders of the English novel.

We have now arrived at the porch of the Temple Church: “*At noon to the Temple, where I staid and looked over a book or two at Playford’s*” – **The Diary**, 25 May 1661. As it is sheltered from the wind and rain, this space was rented as a shop by the musician **John Playford** to sell sheet music, and Pepys was a regular customer.

The Temple

(Open Wed-Sun 10 am – 4 pm supposedly but in fact frequently closed. On Sundays, access is only via the gate in Tudor Street from Bouverie Street. Lunchtime organ recitals 1.15-1.45 pm most Weds except Aug and Sept. Free) www.templechurch.com

“*In the forenoon I alone to our church, and after dinner I went and ranged about to many churches, among the rest to the Temple,*” – **The Diary**, 25 November 1660.

The Temple is named after the Temple of Solomon, and was built by the Knights Templar in two stages: the round church was consecrated by Heraclius, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, in 1185, and the rectangular chancel was added in 1240. The round shape is highly unusual and is based on the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. It is especially noted for the nine stone effigies of crusader knights within in it. The Order was destroyed in 1307 and this area passed first to the Knights Hospitallers and then to “students of the law” who have retained it to this day.

In the courtyard there is a pillar surmounted by a bronze statue of two knights riding a single horse eastwards to Jerusalem. This was the Templars’ seal and was to symbolise the Order’s poverty, although it was in fact their great wealth that finally led to their total destruction. The pillar marks another point where the Great Fire was finally halted, thus saving the Temple.

From here turn right and walk through the pillars into Pump Court. The houses here date from the 17th century and the large sundial was erected here in 1686. We are now in the Middle Temple one of whose barristers was Roger Pepys, an older cousin and friend. On exiting Pump Court, turn left and walk down to Middle Temple Hall. (If you can see a winged horse (Pegasus) you are in the Inner Temple; if a lamb and flag, the Middle Temple.)

Middle Temple Hall

(Open Mon-Fri 10 – 11.30 am and 3 – 4 pm, but this is a place of work and is frequently closed to the public. Free) www.middletemple.org.uk

*“I having in my coming from the playhouse stepped into the two Temple-halls, and there saw the dirty apprentices and idle people playing [dice]” – **The Diary**, 1 January 1668.*

This is a place of work and not generally open to the public. However, the doorkeepers will normally let you look inside in the mornings when the Hall is normally not busy.

This is an authentic Tudor building, dating from 1562-70, and immensely important architecturally. It has a double hammer beam oak roof that is almost as spectacular as that of Westminster Hall (*see below*) and a magnificent oak screen. Inside there is a high table that is 29 feet (9 m) in length that was made from a single oak tree and donated by Elizabeth I, and has never been moved since.

The hall has always been used as a place of entertainment and on 2 February 1601 there was performed here the first ever performance of *Twelfth Night*, almost certainly with William Shakespeare as one of the actors: the **Globe Theatre** in Southwark is very interesting but it is, after all, a reconstruction of a Tudor theatre; in contrast Middle Temple Hall is the genuine article even if that was never its main purpose. This is the actual building where the play was first staged and in which the actors would have had to adjust the staging to take account of the building’s nooks and crannies. Perhaps they asked Shakespeare to add a few lines to give them time to get on and off the stage or make their costume changes in the unfamiliar conditions.

The lawyers, including the students, have always used this hall for dining and entertainment and when the floor was replaced in 1730 the carpenters discovered several hundred dice that had rolled underneath the floorboards. Gambling was not one of Pepys’ many weaknesses and he was quite censorious about the gambling that was taking place when he visited the hall on **New Year’s Day in 1668**.

On the western wall of the hall there is a rose window and this overlooks Fountain Court. Walk up the steps to **Devereux Chambers** and through the gateway to the **Devereux pub**. On the outside of the building at the top floor there is a dark red bust dating from 1676 of Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex (1591–1646), whose father was executed by Elizabeth I for treason. Devereux’s long, flowing locks may suggest that he was a Cavalier but in fact he was a courageous, unsuccessful Parliamentarian general in the Civil War and commanded the Parliamentary forces for several years before Oliver Cromwell. A small link to Pepys is that the earl was baptised in the church of **St Olave’s** in Hart Street, and his name is recorded with that of Pepys among others on a panel by the main entrance.

Walk past the Devereux and the solitary gas lamp to the brick building, which has a plaque that identifies it as “The House of Twining”, go around it to the front of the building. We are

now no longer on Fleet Street but instead are on **the Strand**, which in Pepys' lifetime replaced Cheapside as London's major shopping location: as its name implies, the Strand was once immediately on the river but is now a little away from it.

Twinings tea shop

216 The Strand (Open Mon-Fri 9.30 am – 4.45 pm, Closed at weekends)

"And afterwards I did send for a cup of tee (a China drink) of which I never had drank before" – **The Diary**, 25 September 1660.

We can say with absolute certainty that Samuel Pepys did not drink his first cup of tea here yet in later life he may have known Thomas Twining, who was the official tea supplier to the court of Queen Anne.

This is London's oldest shop to be still in its original location and it opened here to sell tea in 1706, remaining here ever since. The sign overhanging the street is an example of what shop signs looked like at then, and the Golden Lion over the entrance to the door, like the Golden Bottle of Hoare's Bank, dates from a time before street numbering had been devised. The two Chinese mandarins on either side of the lion signify that tea was imported exclusively from China at this time. There is a small museum about tea at the back of this narrow shop.

The outside of Twinings is a good place to view the **Royal Courts of Justice** on the other side of the road. This impressive building looks medieval but in fact is a typical 19th-century Gothic Revival construction and none the worse for that. The courts deal mainly with civil cases and the most important appeals, and if you wish to see bewigged British lawyers in action you are perfectly entitled to do so. Make your way to the main hall where the staff at the information desk will tell you which courts are open to the public and provide a map of the building as well as details about any guided tours for that particular day.

[2nd Diversion if you have some time to spare: as you have seen two of the inns of court you may wish to see the other two, i.e. Lincoln's Inn and Gray's Inn, which are north of Fleet Street. However, this long diversion will take about an hour before it rejoins the Walk in Covent Garden, so please do keep your eyes open for the many things that there is simply no space to mention here. Also this should probably be done on a weekday only.

Face the Royal Courts of Justice and then go up along Bell Yard and Andrewes Close, which is on the right almost exactly opposite the heraldic dragon (*see above*). Straight across Carey Street (once nicknamed Queer Street and associated with bankruptcy cases) – but note on the left just past the Silver Mousetrap jewellery shop (established 1690) the **Seven Stars** (est. 1602), a characterful pub run by a landlady named Roxy Beaujolais (yes, really) who is also a television chef, so stop and eat here. It's one of the few places around here that is open at weekends and is a hidden gem that is what many people think of as a "typical British pub". Otherwise continue into Star Yard, the shop on your right (Ede & Ravenscroft, est. 1689) sells robes and wigs to the legal profession (shorter ones for barristers, longer ones for judges). Go to the end and through the gateway at the junction of Star Yard and Bishop's Court, and then turn right through the herb garden and into New Square. This is Lincoln's Inn. If there's time, go through the gate to the left of the war memorial and explore the gardens but otherwise go right into Old Square (both squares are reminiscent of Oxford and Cambridge college quadrangles). Lincoln's Inn Chapel (next to you) unusually has its beautiful undercroft above ground, to allow the lawyers to walk inside it while sheltering from the weather. It was here in 1659 that a secret meeting of 80 Members of Parliament discussed the restoration of the monarchy. Because it is protected from the rain, desperate mothers would abandon their babies here, perhaps hoping for adoption by rich lawyers: if they couldn't be reunited with their families they would often be given the surname Lincoln. Note the shrapnel damage caused by a bomb from a German Zeppelin (airship) in 1915. The buildings in Old Square are pockmarked for a similar reason, for details see the plaque on number 10.

From Old Square go through the gate into Chancery Lane and directly opposite are the **Silver Vaults** (containing shops that have the largest and most comprehensive collection of antique and modern silver for sale anywhere in the world – browsers very welcome and never hassled), its entrance is in the street named Southampton Buildings. Continue down Southampton Buildings, go past the red pillar box and through the gate into Staple Inn; down the steps, around the garden and through the archway directing us to numbers 1-10. The courtyard we are now in is in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* by Charles Dickens: “It is one of those nooks, the turning of which out of the clashing street imparts to the relieved pedestrian the sensation of having put cotton in his ears, and velvet soles on his boots”. Now go through the larger archway opposite and look back at it from the street known as High Holborn. The half-timbered Elizabethan building that we’ve just passed through is the most impressive surviving example of its type in London. It was constructed in the 1580s, although a steel frame was inserted in the 1930s to strengthen it, and in Pepys’ time most of London would have looked like this – see how irregular each floor-level is, and that the ground-level shops are all still only a single room each, which is just how it was when it was first built.

Cross the road by Chancery Lane underground station and turn left: the covered gateway into Gray’s Inn is immediately before the Cittie of Yorke pub (superb baronial interior, you can imagine Errol Flynn swinging from the rafters – or perhaps Johnny Depp). Go into the second square and through the arch into Field Court and Gray’s Inn Place: Gray’s Inn Gardens (Open Mon-Fri 12 – 2.30 pm) are on your right. Larger in Pepys’ time, he and Elizabeth went here to see everyone promenade in their finest, most fashionable clothes.

Return to High Holborn through the gateway flanked by the two stone heraldic beasts, cross the road and turn right, go down the alleyway (Great Turnstile) by the Penderel’s Oak pub and this takes you into the north-east corner of **Lincoln’s Inn Fields** (which is different from but next to Lincoln’s Inn on the south-east corner). In Pepys’ time this area was one of the most fashionable on London and property developers were continually trying to build on it, so much so that there were many brawls in the early 1600s between builders and law students. Finally the property developers and the lawyers decided to settle their dispute in court (guess who won). Although buildings now enclose the area, it was the first London square decreed to be preserved from development.

Turn right and walk along the north side of this square, past the **Sir John Soane Museum** (Mon – Sat 10 am – 5 pm. Free. Very atmospheric) at the north-west corner of the square go along Remnant Street, cross over Kingsway and walk along Great Queen Street past the Freemason’s Hall until you reach Drury Lane – the New London Theatre is on your right. Drury Lane is famous for its theatres, but Pepys also saw plague victims here in 1665 in what was the beginning of the great epidemic. Now Drury Lane is the beginning of London’s Theatreland: amazingly, up to 60,000 people go to plays in this area each night.

Turn left along Drury Lane and cross over to Broad Court. Turn left at the intersection with Bow Street and walk past the **Royal Opera House** where you could stop for some refreshments because non-ticket holders can take lunch or afternoon tea on the Amphitheatre restaurant terrace with views over Covent Garden Piazza. Otherwise turn right along Russell Street (on which stood the Rose Tavern depicted in Hogarth’s **The Rake’s Progress**, and upstairs in which Pepys had relations with **Doll Lane in 1667**) then go into Covent Garden Piazza and rejoin the Walk at St Paul’s Church on the other side of the Piazza.]

If you feel you’ve walked enough then go to the bus stops and take any bus going towards Trafalgar Square. We have finally left the City of London to enter the City of Westminster, and

from now on the “portcullis” of Westminster on the lamp posts and street signs that we pass will replace the symbol of the City of London Dragon.

From Twinings teashop, go along the Strand on the south (i.e. river) side past the church of St Clement Danes – the memorial church of the Royal Air Force (RAF). Only a little further on is the church of St Mary-le-Strand and on the other side of the road is a large semi-circle containing the embassies (more properly known as high commissions) of Australia and India. Further on you will probably see the national flag (usually called the Union Jack) for the first time on this Walk. It marks the entrance to Somerset House.

Somerset House

The Strand

(The buildings are open Daily 10 am – 6 pm. Admission charges to the collections but please note that the Courtauld Gallery is free every Mon 10 am – 2 pm. The courtyard is open daily. Free. Fountains in summer, ice rink in winter.) www.somersetthouse.org.uk
Webcam at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/content/panoramas/somersetthouse_360.shtml

"And thence to Somerset House and there into the chapell ... now it is made very fine and was ten times more crowded than the Queen's chapell at St James's, which I wonder at. Thence down to the garden of Somerset House, and up and down the new building, which in every respect will be mighty magnificent and costly." – *The Diary*, 24 February 1664.

To call this a house gives no indication of its size and it is a mystery to me why so relatively few people visit it. Of course you won't be alone but there will be nothing like the crowds that you get in other historic buildings of comparable importance. Perhaps this is because it is slightly isolated from the major tourist attractions (or because the Inland Revenue still have offices here and no-one visits them out of pleasure) but whatever the reason it means that you can explore the place without the crowding that you might otherwise expect.

This is probably the last survivor of the riverside palatial residences that once lined the Thames. It comprises four wings surrounding an elegant courtyard, and to me appears more Continental than English in appearance.

Somerset House was built by Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, in 1547 although most of the present building dates from the 1770s. It became a royal palace in the 17th century and later was where the body of Oliver Cromwell lay in state before his funeral, and that is the building that Samuel Pepys would have known. Somerset House is associated with two organisations that are linked to Pepys: the Navy Office and the Royal Society were both housed here at some time in their history.

The Navy Office administered the navy from Somerset House from 1790 to 1873 and in that period of 80 years the navy saved Britain from invasion, defeated Napoleon, controlled the destiny of empires, built a global economy and abolished the world slave trade in defiance of many other countries' laws – I think Pepys would have been proud of it. There are many maritime exhibits on display, particularly in the Seamen's Hall.

Things to do while here: visit what is (in my opinion) a finer collection of Impressionist paintings than there is in the National Gallery, sit on the riverside terrace, take a guided tour of the House, or relax in the courtyard and watch the 55-jet fountain perform a choreographed water dance every 30 minutes, with special displays at 1 pm, 6 pm and 10 pm. Some critics consider the water jets to be visually intrusive and noisy but I couldn't disagree more. They make a cheerful display in the daytime, with children scampering between them, and are especially effective after dusk when coloured lights at each fountain's base change in time to the display. Visitors in the winter can also ice-skate on the [temporary ice rink](#) that covers the fountain in winter.

The main artistic focus of Somerset House is [the Courtauld Gallery](#) (Old Masters, including Botticelli, Breugel, Rubens; Impressionists, including Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergere*; Van Gogh's *Self Portrait with Bandaged Ear*; 20th century artists, including Dufy, Kandinsky, Matisse, Modigliani). And to repeat that this is free on Monday mornings and absolutely well worth the admission price at any other time.

Allow yourself 30 minutes for a visit to the courtyard and the riverside terrace and perhaps another 2-3 hours if you are visiting any of the collections, then leave through the nearest exit and make your way back to the Strand to resume the Walk.

[**3rd Diversion if you have some time to spare:** this takes about five minutes. Go on to Waterloo Bridge for the views up- and down-river.]

The Strand

“In the evening I took Mons. Eschar and Mr. Moore and Dr. Pierce’s brother (the souldier) to the tavern next the Savoy, and there staid and drank with them”. – **The Diary**, 8 August 1661.

He may possibly have been drinking at the Fountain Tavern, which is commemorated on a pair of ornate plaques on either side of the road just before Simpson’s Restaurant. However, he may instead have been drinking where the Coal Hole pub now is, just a few steps further along the road. Carry on down the Strand, passing by the **Savoy Hotel**. The gilded bronze statue over the entrance is of Count Peter of Savoy (1203-68) in medieval garb with a shield and a 14-foot (over 4 m) spear, sculpted by F. L. Jenkins in 1904. Count Peter was given the land here by King Henry III and built the Savoy Palace on this site in 1246. However, by the 17th century this area was the grounds of a hospital and also a haunt for thieves and vagabonds. The hotel itself was built much later in 1889 as the most luxurious of its time, with elevators, electric lights and bathrooms on every floor – even though they were not in every room, this was considered to be amazing: “Do they think the English are dolphins?” spluttered *The Times*. Visitors can take afternoon tea here to spot the VIPs (booking advisable via their website) or alternatively just stroll in for a Martini in the hotel’s **American Bar**.

I, however, prefer to drink in **the Coal Hole** pub almost next door. Although it didn’t exist in Pepys’ lifetime it can stand in for the taverns that he would have visited on this street, and is the best in the area. Note the frieze of classical maidens around the walls, the etched glass and the mirrors. It has its own historical associations with the 19th-century actor Edmund Kean, and is often used by actors after their performances, because we have now left Legal London and moved into Theatreland. The streets outside are now noticeably more crowded.

Directly opposite the Coal Hole is Southampton Street: go up it. At the junction with Maiden Lane look left to see the Maple Leaf, London’s only genuine Canadian bar. Carry on to the Piazza and go left (clockwise) to St Paul’s Church (the actors’ church) where Pepys saw his first ever Punch & Judy Show (*“into Covent Garden ... to see an Italian puppet play that is within the rayles there, which is very pretty”* – **The Diary**, 9 May 1662), and this is officially commemorated on the left wall of the church. (**Public lavatories/restrooms are next to the church.**) Lots of licensed buskers. The pub directly opposite is called the Punch and Judy, the rooftop bar is a good place to watch some of the buskers without the risk of being conscripted into the action. **Covent Garden** is London’s first square and was laid out in 1631 (see [webcam](#)).

St Paul’s Church

(Open Mon-Fri 8.30 am – 5.30 pm, Sun 9 am – 1 pm. Free) www.actorschurch.org

*“Here lies Du Vall: Reader if male thou art * Look to thy purse, if female to thy heart * Old Tyburn’s glory, England’s illustrious thief * Du Vall, the ladies’ joy, Du Vall the ladies’ grief.”* - Epitaph for a highwayman, 1670.

Built by Inigo Jones in 1638, this is another building that dates from before the Great Fire. The doorway is imposing but for religious reasons has never ever been used. The architect had hoped to put the altar at the western end of the church rather than the more traditional eastern end, but Bishop Laud vetoed that idea and so it is the back of the church that is on the Piazza and access to the church itself is through Henrietta Street or from Bedford Street via the churchyard where Londoners eat their lunchtime sandwiches. Notice the watchman’s blue sentry box near the church’s west door and facing the churchyard, there to guard against graverobbers.

[The era of the graverobbers was roughly the century from 1750 to 1850 and the scale of it was amazing. Until researching this Walk I had assumed that it was a fairly isolated crime but in fact it took place

almost on an industrial scale. The various medical schools were each legally allowed about six corpses annually, which was completely inadequate: indeed, a noted surgeon testified to a parliamentary enquiry that each medical student required about “two and a third bodies” annually to practise on, and London had numerous teaching hospitals and schools of anatomy. A graverobber’s diary has survived from the 18th century in which he records that he and his companions would “resurrect” an average of 15 bodies every night, and his was by no means the only gang in operation. Grave robbery was legally categorized as a misdemeanour, whereas stealing the clothes of the deceased or any other goods in the coffin was a felony, earning a harsher punishment, so bodies were usually stripped naked before being taken to the various medical establishments. Understandably, people had a horror of the crime, especially as many believed it to be impossible to enter Heaven if your body was destroyed, and consequently parishioners sponsored men to sit in sentry boxes such as this one to guard against such graverobbers but often themselves also stayed at the graves of the recently dead for several days until the corpse was no longer fresh enough for dissection. (By the way, the famous graverobbers Burke and Hare weren’t in fact graverobbers at all, since they murdered their victims and had little to do with graveyards.)]

St Paul’s church has a very simple design of a double square, measuring 50 ft by 100 ft (about 15 m by 30 m). It is now known as the Actors’ Church and has many plaques to them around the walls. There was once also a floor stone (sadly, now gone) in memory of England’s then most famous and most romantic highwayman, the Frenchman Claude Du Vall whose epitaph is recorded above. We know that Pepys was in the crowd when he was hanged at Tyburn in 1670, after having been finally been arrested on Christmas Day in a tavern where the Coal Hole now is.

Leave St Paul’s church and go through the churchyard into Bedford Street, walk uphill and turn left by Tesco’s supermarket into New Row and then immediately left into Bedfordbury, which is opposite Waterstones bookshop. Between numbers 23 and 24 Bedfordbury is a dingy, sinister-looking passageway that is very easy to miss but don’t, because it leads into our next stop: **Goodwin’s Court**. Once you’ve gone through the passageway, look back to the top of the building where you’ll notice a metal badge shaped like a bishop’s cap, which was the sign of one of the private fire brigades that once existed and who would come to put your fires out. (Incidentally, it seems to be a myth that these private fire brigades would not put out a householder’s fire if he or she didn’t have the right plaque on the wall, because instead they would charge a lot more for the service as the householder would be in an understandably weak position to argue about the bill.) This narrow street is a surprising survival from a much older time; opposite number 6 there is a plaque on the wall which explains that the houses here date from 1690, so Pepys could have visited them, and the houses on the left side of Goodwin’s Court were once a row of 18th-century shops as can be deduced from their ground-floor windows, which still have the bowed frontage that was typical of shops of the period. The other feature to note are the three large gas lights that illuminate the area with a gentle glow that is distinctively different from electric lighting. Goodwin’s Court is a little grubby, but is still used by the BBC and others as a location when shooting period costume dramas.

Directly opposite the exit from Goodwin’s Court is **the Salisbury**: a superb late 19th-century “gin palace” with stunning cut-glass mirrors and windows, Art Nouveau lamps and ornate brasswork and wooden carvings that is worth visiting if refreshment is required but is otherwise of no relevance to us. Instead cross into Cecil Court because it’s a fine place for window shopping (the enterprising should go into the basement of the coin shop at number 20 – they have boxes of miscellaneous coins priced at £5, £10, and £20 that are better souvenirs of London than most of the standard tourist items. Cecil Court joins Charing Cross Road with Leicester Square underground station on your right; walk away from it down to the National Portrait Gallery.

National Portrait Gallery (NPG)

(Open Mon-Sat 10 am – 6 pm, Sun 12 – 6 pm. Opens late on Fridays. Free)

www.npg.org.uk

Pepys’s portrait by John Hayls can be found on the second floor in **room seven** taking a sideways look at Nell Gwynne and some other mistresses of the king. His patron, **Edward Montagu**, also has his portrait in this room. Few, if any, other countries have an equivalent collection and it does seem an archaic view of history, that it is made by great men (and a few women), to amass 9,000 images of the mainly male, mainly aristocratic elite of British (mainly English) history. You’ll find few rebels or union members and a lot of generals and politicians, nevertheless it is a fascinating place if you are interested in what people actually looked like and to see how the art of portraiture has changed over the centuries. Afterwards

you can buy a postcard of the Pepys painting in the bookshop or a black-and-white photograph of the engraving of Elizabeth Pepys, or take refreshment in the basement cafe or in the top-floor restaurant for its “Mary Poppins” type of view across London’s cluttered rooftops.

On leaving the NPG, retrace your journey a little by walking back up the road and around the outside of the NPG and into Leicester Square. Directly in front of you is a large booth selling **reduced-priced theatre tickets**; leading downwards from it is a small street on which is Westminster public reference library, where you can surf the internet for free, and ahead of you is the back of the National Gallery (as it declaims in huge, carved lettering). Go through the archway to the left of this and in front of you is Canada House (*see below*) with our next stop, the statue of James II outside the National Gallery, on our left.

The Statue of James II

On the western corner of the National Gallery there is a statue of James II in Roman dress sculpted by Grinling Gibbons, who is more famous for his woodcarvings. However, some have called this the finest outdoor statue in London, and while I wouldn’t necessarily concur I do feel that the imperious features of the king reveal a lot about his character, and help explain why he was overthrown in 1688 just two years after this statue was made. Do you agree that there is a marked resemblance to his brother Charles II albeit that James is clean-shaven whereas Charles invariably has a moustache?

An interesting contrast to this statue of James II is the statue to **George Washington** on the eastern corner of the National Gallery. I’ve never understood quite what it’s doing here. Surely this is like erecting a statue to Ho Chi Minh in Washington D.C. (although in fact there are at least two plaques to Ho Chi Minh in London, the nearest being just a few streets away at 88 Haymarket, on what was once the Carlton Hotel: when a student, Ho Chi Minh briefly worked there as a vegetable cook during vacations from his French university, and claimed to have served Winston Churchill). But of course that comparison is inaccurate. From a British viewpoint the conflict was considered, at least to some extent, to be a civil war rather than a revolution, with various British institutions supporting the rebels (e.g. the City of London guilds and the Whig (Liberal) party, and see Brook’s Club later in this Walk). President Washington’s statue was a present from the State of Virginia, and because George Washington once swore never to stand on English soil again, it is on American soil that was imported especially for the purpose.

Now let’s climb the steps to the main entrance of the National Gallery, which provides one of the best views to be found in London. We have passed through areas once or still dominated by the newspaper industry, the law and the theatre, and now we are approaching the political heart of the country. Trafalgar Square is in front of you with Whitehall leading to Big Ben, on the right is **Canada House** (Open Mon-Fri, 10 am – 6 pm, free), which holds art exhibitions about Canada and provides free e-mail and internet services to Canadian visitors, on the left is the South African embassy (visitors by appointment), and also the church of **St Martin-in-the-Fields** (good cafe in the crypt, also for brass-rubbings; lunchtime music Mon, Tues and Fri 1.05 pm, free). In Pepys’ time we would be standing in **St Martin’s churchyard** with the Royal Mews (where the royal hawks were kept) on the right and a jumble of buildings leading down to the statue of Charles I, which he would certainly have recognised. Beyond that the then King Street was narrower and was interrupted halfway down by a ceremonial gateway. On the left of King Street was the rambling, ramshackle palace of Whitehall of which the most modern part (and the only survival in a later fire) was the **Banqueting House**, which would have appeared amazingly futuristic and exotic in contrast to the rest of the palace. On the right of King Street were taverns and other buildings with roads leading off it and Axe Yard, where the family was living at the beginning of the Diary, was roughly where Downing Street is now.

As **Trafalgar Square** did not exist in Pepys’s lifetime, we shall choose not to notice it and instead will walk down past St Martin-in-the-Fields towards Charing Cross railway station and go down the road immediately next to it (Villiers Street), turn left along John Adam Street and go right into Buckingham Street. This will take only a couple of minutes.

The streets in this area were laid out in 1673 on the site of the Duke of Buckingham’s grand house and grounds, and their names commemorated him: *George Street, Villiers Street, Duke*

Street, Of Alley, and *Buckingham* Street (George St is now York Buildings, Duke St is now the eastern part of John Adam St, and Of Alley is now York Place but its name is still recorded on the street sign). Buckingham's house was built on the higher ground near the Strand, with Buckingham Street standing on the site of the gardens, which extended down to the river. Note that there is gas street lighting throughout.

Buckingham Street

"For Samuel Pepys Esqr at his lodging in York-streete

8 June 1684

Sir ...

Mr Flamsteed has lately advertized me of an eclipse of the moone which will happen on the 17th of this month about 3 in the morning, and wished I would give you notice of it, that if your leasure permitted he might have the honor of your company, and I should readily waite upon you.

Your most humble and faithfull servant

John Evelyn"

The "Mr Flamsteed" referred to above was the Astronomer Royal John Flamsteed, and by this time John Evelyn had been a close friend for more than 20 years.

Samuel Pepys lived in York Buildings, Buckingham Street for many years, first at number 12 from 1679 to 1688 and then at number 14 from 1688 to 1701, which both have plaques to him. He moved into **number 12** aged 46 and at a low point in his life (*see below*) but later when his fortunes revived he was easily important enough to get special dispensation to be allowed to work from home rather than at the Naval Office. By then he was no longer a struggling government official but an important man of the world – a Member of Parliament as well as a President of the Royal Society. He later moved to **number 14**. I cannot think of anyone else who has two plaques so close together.

Pepys liked to hold open house here for Royal Society members on Saturday nights, giving them the chance to meet each other over a drink and browse through his magnificent library, one of the finest in London. He also held musical evenings here for his closest friends: Evelyn wrote about one such glittering occasion in his diary for 19 April 1687: *"I heard the famous Singer, the Eunuch Cifacca, esteemed the best in Europe ... This was before a select number of some particular persons whom Mr Pepys (Secretary of the Admiralty & a great lover of Musick) invited to his house, where the meeting was, & this obtained by peculiar favour & much difficulty of the Singer, who much disdained to shew his talent to any but Princes."*

The houses are elegant terrace houses, each with five floors above ground, basements and a back garden, and were prestigious addresses. Will Hewer moved into number 12 in 1675 following his promotion to chief clerk to the Admiralty, and invited Pepys to stay there in 1679 after Pepys' release from imprisonment in the Tower of London on trumped-charges of "Piracy, Popery and Treachery" that left him unemployed and homeless. And when Hewer moved to the countryside (Clapham) in 1688, Pepys stayed and moved to number 14. Bizarrely, in 1698 Peter the Great, tsar of Russia, briefly stayed at number 15 (now demolished) while visiting London – he was interested in a great many things including the English navy and it would be fascinating to know if he ever discussed naval matters with his neighbour. Number 14 was almost destroyed by a V2 missile attack in 1944 but has been restored. Note **the Watergate** at the end of the street, which again shows how much wider the Thames then was. Pepys was living practically on the waterfront. Pepys lived here until 1701 when he rejoined Will Hewer in his house in Clapham, spending the last two years of his life there. The next tenant of number 14 was Robert Harley, the earl of Oxford and Queen Anne's first minister (i.e. prime minister), which gives us an indication of how up-market this address then was.

Walk from the Watergate through the park (afternoon free jazz sessions in the park most weekdays in summer) to the river to see for yourself how much wider the Thames was in those days, turn right and go into and through Embankment underground station to rejoin Villiers Street and walk away from the river until you reach the arches on your left opposite the Princess of Wales pub. Walk through the arches and past the Ship and Shovell pub with its nautical sign to reach Craven Street – Benjamin Franklin's house is at **36 Craven Street**, as shown by its plaque and it is open to the public.

From here you should use your detective skills to locate the passageway opposite that leads us to the Sherlock Holmes pub at 10 Northumberland Street.

The **Sherlock Holmes** was once the Northumberland Hotel where the great detective and Sir Henry Baskerville first meet in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Sherlock Holmes regularly tops the polls as the most famous fictional Londoner, so presumably that was why the enterprising owners changed this place's name in 1957 and reconstructed Holmes's study upstairs, next to the restaurant, to make it probably the city's earliest theme pub. It would be easy but misguided to be dismissive of the Sherlock Holmes, because it isn't any way exploitative or over-commercial (but do expect to find crowds of polite Japanese tourists photographing each other here). It is certainly worth a look.

Now walk towards Trafalgar Square, but notice the nondescript street called Great Scotland Yard to your left on the other side of the road.

“On the left hand from Charing Cross be also divers fair tenements lately built, till ye come to a large plot of ground enclosed with brick, and is called Scotland, where great buildings have been for receipt of the kings of Scotland, and other estates of that country.” – John Stow, *A Survey of London*, 1598. In other words it was the Scottish Embassy, both in Stow's time and in Pepys'. Scotland Yard was part of this complex of buildings and later became more famous as the headquarters of London's first police force but now has less glamorously been absorbed into the Ministry of Agriculture.

At the junction of Northumberland Avenue and Trafalgar Square there is the Grand Building, which now contains a branch of Waterstones bookshop. If you have some time to spare – and particularly if with children – then the carvings on the main entrance are worth studying. The subject is “endangered species” and 70 can be found beneath Adam and Eve and “a somewhat disillusioned God-like keystone head ... the hands of his wristwatch indicating The Eleventh Hour” in the words of the sculptor, **Barry Baldwin**. Adam is being bitten on his buttocks by an enraged snake, and the lowest panel beneath Eve contains various aquatic creatures disturbed by the sculptor's hammer splashing into the pool.

[In fact, there are a plethora of animals represented around Trafalgar Square: for instance, you may have observed that high up back on South Africa House there is an antelope, a buffalo, an elephant and a giraffe. And, of course, there are the dolphins in the fountains and the majestic lions in the Square itself. People may tell you that because the lions were all cast from the same mould that they are therefore identical but in fact this isn't so: one pair of lions have their tails curled one way, the other pair's tails point in the opposite direction.]

Let's continue the animal theme but wrench ourselves back to something approaching relevancy by making our way to the equestrian statue on the traffic island just ahead of us.

The Statue of Charles I on Horseback

“We see the great equestrian statue of King Charles the First in brass, a costly, but a curious piece ... he faces the place where his enemies triumphed over him, and triumphs, that is, tramples in the place where his murderers were hanged.” – Daniel Defoe, 1724.

This is one of the focal points in London, and is where distances from London are officially measured. Until 1647 an **Eleanor Cross** stood here, a monument to Edward I's wife Queen Eleanor (a Victorian pastiche has been erected behind you at Charing Cross railway station), and it was on this exact spot that Pepys witnessed the execution of the regicide, Colonel Harrison: *“I went out to Charing Cross, to see Major-General Harrison hanged, drawn, and quartered; which was done there, he looking as cheerful as any man could do in that condition. He was presently cut down, and his head and heart shown to the people, at which there was great shouts of joy ... Thus it was my chance to see the King beheaded at White Hall, and to see the first blood shed in revenge for the blood of the King at Charing Cross.”* – **The Diary**, 13 October 1660.

As Defoe stated, the statue faces towards Whitehall where the king was executed in 1649. It was erected here in 1660 but was actually cast in 1633 by the Huguenot sculptor Hubert le Sueur, and the sculptor's name and date appear on one of the stallion's hooves. The depiction of King Charles is accurate except for his height: the king was less than 5 ft 4 ins (1.63 m) but

the contract for the statue specified that it be “the figure of his Majesty King Charles proportionable full six feet”.

It was sold for scrap during the Commonwealth but the buyer instead buried it in secret and returned it as good as new, despite having previously sold relics supposedly made from its metal. Each year on 30 January, the date of his execution, there is a commemoration to the king which includes a parade in authentic military costume followed by the laying of wreaths at the statue.

From here, walk down Whitehall towards Big Ben, our next stop is on the left.

The Banqueting House

(Open Mon-Sat 10 am – 5 pm. Admission charge) www.hrp.org.uk/banquetinghouse

The last survival of the old Whitehall Palace, from where Charles I walked to his execution. The actual spot is marked by a small bust of the king, and we shall see an identical one later on at St Margaret’s church. The Banqueting House was constructed in the Palladian-style by Inigo Jones in 1622 and was the first Italianate building in London: it would have been in marked contrast to the rest of Whitehall. Its main artistic attractions are the ceiling paintings by Rubens which celebrate the divine right of kings: ironically, they were the last paintings that Charles I saw before walking through a platform to the executioner’s block, in front of a large crowd that included the schoolboy Samuel Pepys.

Continue down Whitehall and cross the road at the memorial to “[The Women of World War II](#)” and you come to Downing Street: the official residence of the Prime Minister, now blocked off by iron gates that were installed in 1990.

Downing Street

www.number10.gov.uk

This is the best-known street in England but probably none of the people standing outside it would know that it is named after an American. **George Downing** could probably be so described, having lived as a child in Massachusetts and being one of the earliest graduates of Harvard University: he was a man of dubious character who spied for both sides in the Civil War, becoming rich in the process. He was also Pepys' boss at the beginning of the Diary, and was detested by him. Downing Street was laid out by him in 1675 as part of a speculative building development, and became the home of England's first prime minister Sir Robert Walpole in 1735. Its modest size in comparison to other buildings with a similar function such as the White House or the Elysée Palace is because it was never intended to be the official residence of the prime minister, and indeed many of Walpole's successors preferred to remain in their own London townhouses. It was not until as late as 1902 that it became the prime minister's official home as well as his office and even then it still didn't have a bathroom (perhaps they used the Savoy). It is, however, bigger than it appears, comprising 160 rooms joined on to various government buildings in Whitehall. Click here for a [virtual tour](#).

Take the first right turning down King Charles Street and stop outside the **Foreign and Commonwealth Office**. This grandiose 19th-century edifice stands on the site of the Pepys' house in Axe Yard, which ran parallel to Whitehall, and in which they were living at the beginning of the Diary. Afterwards, return to Whitehall and walk down towards the Houses of Parliament to our next stop, which is on that side of the building that is away from the river.

Westminster Hall

Open as part of [Houses of Parliament tours](#) on most Saturdays throughout the year, in summer and normally as part of [London Open House weekend](#) every September.

"I rose and went to Westminster Hall, and there walked up and down upon several businesses" – [The Diary](#), 10 January 1662

Westminster Hall is by far the oldest part of the Houses of Parliament, and architecturally is renowned for its magnificent double-hammerbeam roof (think of the oak beams as two large inverted letter "L"s on which are mounted two smaller inverted "L"s, on which the roof itself rests). The Houses of Parliament were created in a gothic, medieval style whereas the Hall is the real thing, but paradoxically appears more modern. It was built in 1097 and added to over the centuries. By the time of the Diary, it was both the place where the House of Commons met and a court of law (Ann Boleyn, Sir Thomas More and Charles I were put on trial here) and for these reasons Pepys was often here on business throughout the years of the Diary. The Hall also contained an indoor market in which Pepys shopped (and conducted casual affairs with [Betty Lane](#) and her sister Doll Powell among others).

The Statue of Oliver Cromwell

For most of the period of the Diary, Oliver Cromwell's severed head was on display on a pole in Westminster Hall, now [his statue](#) stands directly outside it with a bareheaded Cromwell in uniform and holding a Bible in one hand and a sword in the other. It wasn't erected until 1899, which was more than 230 years after his death, and its proposed erection led to bitter debates in both Houses of Parliament, and thunderous leaders in the newspapers, with a wide and disparate range of opposition from Conservative Members of Parliament (MPs), monarchists, and Irish and Scottish MPs: a testimony to the controversy that still surrounds him. Was he a pious defender of English freedom from the tyranny of the monarchy, or a ruthless dictator and religious bigot? In the end the statue was paid for by a former Liberal Prime Minister, Lord Roseberry, and donated to the nation. Every year on 3 September, [admirers](#) lay a wreath to his memory but otherwise the statue is fenced off and out-of-bounds to the public.

Walk directly across the road to the rear of St Margaret's Church, where Sam and Elizabeth were married. Before entering, note the small sculptured head of Charles II on the right of the entrance. It is made from lead, and was placed there in 1945; the sculptor is unknown but we do know that this piece dates from the very early 19th century. As you see, the statue of Oliver

Cromwell across the road is directly in the king's line of sight, which may account for his serious expression.

St Margaret's Church

(Open daily 9.30 am – 4.30 pm. Free)

"I did entertain myself with my perspective glass up and down the church, by which I had the great pleasure of seeing and gazing at a great many very fine women; and what with that, and sleeping, I passed away the time till sermon was done, and then to Mrs. Martin, and there staid with her an hour or two, and there did what I would with her..." – [The Diary](#), 26 May 1667.

Next door there will be people lining up to pay to enter Westminster Abbey, almost oblivious to [St Margaret's](#), which will probably be almost empty and surprisingly peaceful. This is known as the parish church of the House of Commons, and has strong links with Parliament. It was built in the 11th century for the local parishioners to attend Mass, and so avoid their disturbing the monks of the abbey in their daily services.

As you see from the above quotation, although Samuel and Elizabeth were married in this church, it did not prevent him from arranging assassinations here. Others who were married here were his patrons Lord Edward and Lady Jemima Montagu, the poet John Milton and his wife Mary, and much later Winston and Clementine Churchill. Pepys' wedding certificate still exists but is not on view to the public although a microfilm copy of it can be seen at the [Westminster City Archives Centre](#).

On leaving St Margaret's church by the front entrance, continue walking along past Westminster Abbey and go across Victoria Street, past the junction with Tothill Street, where Pepys and Will Hewer were incarcerated in the Gatehouse Prison from 4 May to 15 June during the Revolution of 1688, and go towards the Central Methodist Hall. We are currently walking along Storey's Gate, which is named after Edward Storey, who was the Keeper of Charles II's royal aviary in St James's Park, and his house, at the end of Birdcage Walk, was next to the gate that led into the park, hence "Storey's Gate". (**Public lavatories or restrooms are at this end of Storey's Gate.**)

However, before reaching the gate turn left down Old Queen Street, which was laid out in 1697. From now on you will spot numerous blue plaques on the walls of these attractive Georgian houses, and they will be mainly to do with English statesmen and politicians. One example is at Number 9 commemorating Richard Savage (1660-1712), the 4th Earl Rivers and a governor of the Tower of London. His father, the 3rd earl, was notoriously close-fisted and one Sunday told his son that he had no money in the house to lend him. While the rest of the household were at church, Richard broke open a cabinet in his father's room and took the cash that he found there. His father tried to have him arrested but the Lord Chief Justice persuaded him not to press charges. As a result, Richard became known as "Tyburn Dick", having escaped the gallows to the disappointment of his father. Contemporaries described Richard as a handsome, unscrupulous rake, but he was also an outstanding soldier and a shrewd politician.

At the corner of Old Queen Street and Queen Anne's Gate are the Cockpit Steps which lead down into St James's Park, and again you'll see the gas-lamp at the bottom of the steps. Originally the **Royal Cockpit** stood to the left of the steps and was built for Charles II, who revived cock-fighting after it had been banned during the Commonwealth era. James Boswell, Samuel Johnson's biographer and a Scot, wrote in his own diary in 1762: *"resolved today to be a true-born Englishman. I went at five o'clock to the Royal Cockpit in St James's Park and saw cock-fighting for about five hours to fulfil the charge of cruelty."* The cockpit was eventually pulled down in 1810. If you wish, you can enter the park from here to take a short cut and rejoin the Walk by the lake. Otherwise, we shall continue along Queen Anne's Gate.

Opposite the steps is The Two Chairmen pub whose name doesn't refer to business executives but instead to sedan chair carriers. It was built in 1683 and sedan chairs would be waiting for hire outside it, just like taxi-ranks today.

Turn right along **Queen Anne's Gate**. Originally this was divided into two streets by a wall: Queen's Square to the east and Park Street to the west ([see map](#)), and this is the Park Street

end. The numerous blue plaques along Queen Anne's Gate include one at No. 20 where Lord Palmerston (a 19th-century prime minister) was born. Further along at No. 26 is a [conical link extinguisher](#), dating from the days before street lighting, in which [link boys](#) extinguished their lighted torches after guiding people home through the unlit streets, and there is also a well-preserved Alliance fire insurance badge, dating from the days when insurance companies had their own fire brigades. Next door at No. 28, between the drainpipe and the bricked-up window, are faint traces of a bomb shelter sign ("SHELTER S ↓") from the Second World War: anyone who was on this street when the air-raid warnings sounded could go below ground here until the "All Clear" let them know it was safe to come up again, which was normally several hours or perhaps the whole night later.

Now cross the street to the statue of Queen Anne (1665-1714), who was the last monarch in Pepys' lifetime. On the wall above her head is the faded street sign for Park Street and Queen Square, the old names for Queen Anne's Gate, and below it is a metal sign bearing the initials "C H" for Christ's Hospital, which was the school which originally owned the land. (For further information about Christ's Hospital and its link to Pepys, please see the *Samuel Pepys' Walk through the eastern City of London and Greenwich*.) The statue is made of Portland stone by an anonymous sculptor and is one of only two outdoor statues of Queen Anne in London, the other being outside St Paul's Cathedral (again, see the above Walk for details).

This statue of Anne became a favourite target of local children in the 19th century who decided (because it didn't have the identifying plinth that it has today) that it represented the Roman Catholic queen Mary Tudor. They called at "Bloody Mary" to climb down from her pedestal and when she did not respond, threw stones at her, causing considerable damage. Finally, the statue was repaired and the words "Anna Regina" were carved into the plinth in an attempt to persuade the children not to attack the statue. Yeah, right. English children are conservative by nature and these ones saw no reason to halt a pleasant pastime just because of some foreign wording on a plinth, and consequently the stone-throwing carried on for many years thereafter. If, however, you yourself would like to see the queen descend from her pedestal you should be here on the night of 1st August, the anniversary of Anne's death, when her ghost is said to walk up and down the street three times.

No. 19 is one of the earliest houses to have been built in the street (certainly before 1705), and I find the contrast between the elegance of these Georgian houses with, for example, the Tudor gatehouse of Prince Henry's Room earlier in the Walk to be amazing. The ornate hooded canopies over the doors at this end of Queen Anne's Gate are unique in their design. They are wooden but carved to resemble stone and are thought to have been made by former ship's carpenters, who would certainly have known Samuel Pepys and Will Hewer, if only by name. And note the different gargoyles above each window to ward off burglars.

Before we leave Queen Anne's Gate, take a look around the corner at No. 42, which was once the home of Lord Simon Harcourt. Harcourt was a friend of the future King George III and played an important role in the arrangements for his marriage to Princess Charlotte. After a distinguished diplomatic career, which included acting as Viceroy of Ireland, he met a bizarre end in 1777 when, at the age of 63, he fell into a well while trying to extricate his pet dog.

Ahead of us is St James's Park underground station where you can end this Walk if you should so wish, otherwise face away from it and walk through the gate into St James's Park (through the actual Queen Anne's Gate).

St James's Park

"and then to walk in St. James's Park, and saw great variety of fowl which I never saw before" – The Diary, 18 August 1661.

<http://www.angelfire.com/in/uktravelinfo/stjames.html>

Webcam: http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/content/panoramas/stjamespark1_360.shtml

Perhaps he saw his first ever pelican on this stroll, because Charles II introduced them to **St James's Park** and they are still here 350 years later – **feeding time is daily at 2.30 pm** at the eastern edge of the lake. Many Diary entries for 1660 concern the changes that the king was making to the Park. This is undoubtedly the prettiest of London's royal parks and is surrounded by three palaces: the Palace of Westminster (which is now the Houses of Parliament), St James' Palace and, of course, Buckingham Palace.

Cross over the lake and stop halfway along the footbridge for a fairytale view of Buckingham Palace in one direction and Horseguards Parade in the other, then continue through the park to St James's Palace. The palace is on an L-shaped intersection of St James Street and Pall Mall: look for a Tudor building with a sentry standing guard outside it.

St James's Palace

www.royal.gov.uk/TheRoyalResidences/StJamessPalace/StJamessPalace.aspx

"Thence, leaving Balty there, I took my wife to St. James's, and there carried her to the Queen's Chapel, the first time I ever did it; and heard excellent musick," – The Diary, 11 April 1669.

Older than Buckingham Palace and the official residence of the British monarch after Whitehall was burned down: all ambassadors are accredited to "the court of St James". St James's Palace was the home of Charles II in Pepys' time. Prince Charles has now moved to Clarence House, which adjoins the palace on the other side. St James's Palace is closed to the public except for the Chapel Royal, which is open for Sunday services only (from October until Good Friday).

The **Queen's Chapel**, which Pepys mentions in the diary entry above, is in the grounds of Marlborough House on the other side of the road and next to the Art Nouveau memorial to Queen Alexandra (the wife of Edward VII). The chapel is open to the public only for services (Easter – July Sundays 8.30 and 11.15 am). In the 1660s it was used for Roman Catholic services for the queen and her courtiers.

Now take a small diversion by going down Pall Mall to our next stop, which is on the side of the road nearest to the park.

Number 79 Pall Mall

This is now the headquarters of the P&O shipping line but in the 1660s King Charles gave a **house on this site** to his most famous mistress so that the two of them could talk over the garden wall that separated the house from the palace grounds. It is from one of these upstairs windows that **Nell Gwynne** ("*pretty witty Nell*" according to Pepys who also thought her a "*bold merry slut*") is supposed to have dangled her 6-year-old son and threatened to drop him if Charles didn't acknowledge him as his son and give Charles junior a title. The king hastily agreed and made the boy the **Earl of Burford**.

St James Street

Now walk up St James Street, past Berry Brothers wine merchants (est. 1690) and **Pickering Place** with its plaque to the Texas Embassy or Legation that was here from 1842 to 1846 (according to the plaque erected by the "**Anglo-Texan Society**"). Continue up the street past **Spencer House** and **Blue Ball Yard** on our left to our final stop on the Walk, which is number 37 St James Street near the junction with Piccadilly. This is White's gentlemen's club, the oldest one of its kind and one of the most aristocratic; it was founded in 1693 as a natural development from the coffee and chocolate houses of Pepys' youth. As you see, there is nothing to advertise that this is a club, since they feel no need to do so, and they don't even

have a street number, which is true of the other clubs on this street. For instance, we passed Boodle's club at No. 28, which is a favourite of MI6 officers and which Ian Fleming used as a model for Blade's club in the James Bond books, and we also passed Brook's club on the way here whose only distinctive feature are its two plant pots with "1776"¹ inscribed on them. White's still has a membership that includes various royals (Prince Charles held his stag party here), aristocrats and politicians. There is no evidence that Pepys ever visited but also no evidence that he didn't, and I imagine that it is more likely than not given his gregarious and clubbable nature.

This is the end of the Walk. Green Park underground station is about two minutes away, just past the Ritz Hotel. Otherwise, go back down St James Street and take the first left into Jermyn Street, window-shop your way to the end where Jermyn Street meets Regent Street, and Piccadilly Circus underground is on your left. Before leaving the area, why not visit Waterstones bookshop near the underground station — this is the largest bookshop in Europe and also has on sale overseas newspapers and magazines, as well as coffeeshops and a café-bar on the fifth floor, so why not buy a book about Pepys here!

And a Final Word of Thanks

Like many other people, I came to [Pepys Diary](#) a day at a time on the website created by [Phil Gyford](#) (www.pepysdiary.com) and I am immensely thankful to him for committing so much time to him over so many years. Thanks, Phil, from all of us.

PS: The London pubs on this Walk

On rereading this Walk, I notice that a dozen or so pubs have been mentioned, but if I had been forced to reduce them then these in my opinion are the top six and are listed in the order that they appear on the Walk: the Black Friar (p. 2), the Seven Stars (p. 9), the Citty of Yorke (p. 10), the Coal Hole (p. 12), the Salisbury (p. 14) and the Sherlock Holmes (p. 16). Many readers will disagree and for other opinions please do take a look at these two excellent websites: www.fancyapint.com and www.beerinevening.com.

Cheers!
Glyn Thomas, London
18th July 2012

¹ The original members were Whig politicians who supported the American revolutionaries. One of the club's original objectives was to collect money for "the widows, orphans and aged parents of our beloved American fellow-subjects, who, faithful to the character of Englishmen, preferring death to slavery, were for that reason only inhumanly murdered by the king's troops at or near Lexington and Concord".