City of London Walls

Map labels (streets, places and landmarks):

CHISWELL STREET · COWCROSS STREET · Charterhouse Sq · Charterhouse STREET · CHARTERHOUSE · HAYNE ST · LONG LANE · KINGHORN ST · ALDERSGATE · Smithfields Market · St Bartholomew the Great · St Bartholomew the Less · WEST SMITHFIELD · LITTLE BRITAIN · St Giles Cripplegate · Barbican Development · BRIDGEWATER HIGHWALK · ANDREWS HIGHWALK · MOORFIELDS HIGHWALK · MOORFIELDS · MOORGATE · St Mary Moorfields (RC) · FINSBU · OCTAGON ARC (subsurface) · BISHOPSGATE · Liverpool Street sta · LIVERPOOL STREET · DEVONSHIRE

SNOW HILL · COCK LANE · GILTSPUR STREET · St Bartholomew's Hospital · St Sepulchre · St Botolph Aldersgate · θ · η · ε · St Alphege Lane · St Alphege London Wall · LONDON WALL · MOORGATE STA (Circle, Northern, Met, Elizabeth) · Finsbury Circus · BLOMFIELD ST · BROAD STREET · St Botolph Bishopsgate

HOLBORN VIADUCT · ι · λ · μ · NOBLE ST · ζ · 4 · E · Cripplegate · St Alban Wood St · D · St Mary Aldermanbury · K · All Hallows on the Wall · LONDON WALL · St Ethelburga's Bishopsgate · HOUNDSDITCH · BEVIS MARKS

Newgate · Aldersgate · KING EDWARD STREET · STANING LA · WOOD STREET · LOVE LA · Guildhall · BASINGHALL ST · MASONS AVE · MOORGATE · COPTHALL AVE · AUSTIN FRIARS · St Helen's Bishopsgate · Bevis Marks Synagogue · St Helen's Bishopsgate

St Anne & St Agnes · U · GRESHAM STREET · St Lawrence Jewry · COLEMAN ST · TELEGRAPH STREET · TOKENHOUSE · St Margaret Lothbury · OLD BROAD ST · SUNDIAL CT · Dutch Church

OLD BAILEY · Christchurch Greyfriars Garden · NEWGATE STREET · A · St Vedast alias Foster · FOSTER LA · ST PAUL'S STA (Central) · St Olave · ADAMS

St Martin Ludgate · WARWICK LANE · AMEN COURT · NEW CHANGE · Ludgate · LUDGATE HILL · φ · COBBS COURT · CARTERLANE · St Pauls · St Botolph Aldgate · ALDGATE STA (Circle & Met) · ALDGATE HIGH ST · St James Pass Square · σ · HENEAGE · ST JAMES PASS

BLACK FRIARS LANE · CHURCH ENTRY · BURGON · ADDLE HILL · CARTER LANE · F · St M Col · VICT · Katharine Cree · FENCHURCH STREET · LLOYDS AVENUE · ρ · India · MINORIES

PLAYHOUSE YD · NEW BRIDGE STREET · St Andrew's by the Wardrobe · St Benet Welsh Church · CASTLE · BAYNARD STREET · UPPER THAMES ST · H · St N Som · CHURCH STREET STA · δ · 3 · CROSSWALL · PORTSO

BLACKFRIARS STA · St Olave Hart Street · Seething Lane Gardens · 2 · 1 · γ · TOWER HILL STA (Circle & District) · β · α · COOPERS ROW · Trinity Square Gardens · START · BYWARD STREET

Legend / note box:

Very little of the walls remains standing. If you only want to see the remains then they can be accessed in two parts. Start at Tower Hill and after Vine Street walk to Aldgate and take the train to Moorgate.

— site of wall
-- early walls demolished
— visible remains
— concealed remains
K church remains
steep steps
pedestrian area
pedestrian high walk
■ information plaque

1 Start the walk from Tower Hill Station. There is a subway under the road which leads to the postern.

2 Access to the wall here is through a hotel forecourt, and you walk through the wall itself.

3 The basement here houses a museum as well as part of wall. Access is from the north west of the building.

4 See enlarged map of this area at the end of the notes.

Most of the notes below come from information plaques along the route:

Scale / key box (top right):

0.5 kilometre
— walk 4.5 km (3.3 km to end of Noble Street)
— options

N

The wall is not pretty - having been patched up over the years with various materials.

About the Roman Wall

London was founded by the Romans around AD 47 and for many years its boundaries were marked by a palisade of wooden stakes and a ditch. (Boudicca's sack of the city occurred in AD61). Over 1000 Roman soldiers worked for the provincial governor in London by AD110 when they were housed in a stone fort.

Between AD190 and 230, the palisade was replaced by the city wall. See end page. As well as a defensive barrier separating Londinium from inland Britain the wall also provided opportunities for tolls or taxes to be levied on those entering through its gates, and was a physical symbol of pride in the city.

Using more than one million blocks of ragstone shipped in from Kent on over 1750 boat loads, this massive defensive stone wall stretched almost three kilometres, from Blackfriars in the west to where the Tower of London now stands in the east. The 3.2 km long wall was constructed with coursed blocks of ragstone which sandwiched a rubble and mortar core. Layers of flat red tiles were used at intervals to give extra strength and stability, and in so doing provided its characteristic appearance. Complete with its battlements the Roman Wall would have been about 20 feet/6.3m high and was visible for miles around. Outside the Wall was a defensive ditch.

In AD 410 Emperor Honorius gave instructions to evacuate and the inhabitants were left to their own devices. The city changed hands several times and a new centre was established upriver, Lundenwic. It was King Alfred, realising the advantages of fortifications against the Vikings, who ordered the City to be retaken in 886 and had the fortifications repaired and Lundenwic brought inside the walls (from Aldwych).

The medieval wall

The Roman City Wall set the shape of the City of London for the next 1600 years although throughout those centuries, workers continued to maintain it, using various building techniques. During the medieval period the Wall was heightened by 21 feet/6.2m with irregular masonry which narrowed to a sentry walk 3 feet/0.9m wide. At the same time the ditch outside the Wall was re-dug and broadened.

The parish churches, religious houses and the street pattern (still visible in this area), became firmly established throughout the medieval and Tudor periods and although London began to grow beyond the City Wall, the wall remained a defensive barrier.

The wall overcome

As the city expanded, buildings were constructed beyond and along the length of the wall, absorbing parts of it into their structure, as party walls. Other parts found their way into basements as the ground level of the city rose.

When German bombing raids in 1940 destroyed the area, the City Wall was revealed once again. For more than 20 years, the area remained undeveloped, allowing archaeologists to identify the site of the Roman fort for the first time. A new road, London Wall, was constructed in 1956, as a new city emerged from the ruins. New developments have been designed to preserve and enhance the area's historic core.

β City wall at Tower Hill

This impressive section of wall still stands to a height of 35 feet/10.6m. The Roman work survives to the level of the sentry walk, 14.5 feet /4.4m high, with medieval stonework above. The layers of Roman tiles are clearly visible. Complete with its battlements the Roman Wall would have been about 20 feet/6.3m high. Outside the Wall was a ditch.

To the north is the site of one of the towers added to the outside of the Wall in the 4th century. Stones recovered from its foundations in 1852 and 1935 included part of the memorial inscription from the tomb of Julius Classicianus, the Roman Provincial Procurator (financial administrator) in AD 61.

γ City wall, Cooper's Row

The Wall survives here to a height of 35 feet/10.6m. The lower section, is Roman and stands to the height of the sentry walk. The characteristic red tile and ragstone can be seen and at the base on the outer face the red sandstone plinth which marks Roman ground level. During the medieval period the Wall was heightened by 21 feet (6.2m) with irregular masonry which narrowed to a sentry walk 3 feet wide. The ditch outside the Wall was re-dug and broadened.

A double staircase led to the medieval sentry walk. On either side are loopholes which could be used by archers. There is no surviving means of access and the loopholes were probably reached by a timber platform keyed into the socket holes which are visible. There is no parallel for this arrangement elsewhere on the Wall, indicating the special care taken with defences close to the Tower. The outer face gives a good impression of the original strength of London's defences.

δ City wall, Emperor House (Vine St)

Excavations in 1979-80 revealed a 32 feet/10m length of the Roman City Wall. The red sandstone plinth at the base marks the position of Roman ground level. Above are layers of ragstone with bonding courses of red tiles. Outside the Wall was a V-shaped defensive ditch 16 feet/4.8m wide. The earth from this was used to form a supporting bank on the inner side of the Wall.

In the troubled years of the later 4th century (AD 351 to 375) at least twenty towers were added to the eastern side of the City Wall in response to

fears of attack by Saxon raiders. These towers, probably 26 to 30 feet (8-9m) high, provided a platform for catapults. The ditch was also filled in and a larger one dug further away from the Wall. The base of one of these Roman towers can be seen. The towers were built from ragstone, crushed chalk and tombstones removed from nearby cemeteries. The builders stepped the foundations into the earlier ditch to prevent subsidence. Many of the towers were re-used in the medieval defences but this one had been demolished by the 13th century.

Projecting out from the wall are the chalk foundations of one of these towers. While other bastions survived into the later medieval period, this one did not. It may have been pulled down, robbed for its stone or simply collapsed. Today, only the stepped foundations remain, visible below the Roman ground level, which is marked by the line of red sandstone blocks. Its unexpected discovery in 1979 contributed to our understanding of the history of the wall.

As the city expanded, buildings were constructed beyond and along the length of the wall, absorbing parts of it into their structure. In the 1800s, this section became a party wall at the back of the warehouses which stood on this site. When the Metropolitan Bonded Warehouse was pulled down in 1979, archaeologists exposed the original Roman and medieval stonework, as well as brick and plaster from the 1800s. Modern cement blocks were introduced below the red sandstone plinth to support the ancient structure. The combination of old and new building materials reflects the wall's age and continued use. It has been a defensive structure, a statement of civic pride and a party wall. Now, it is repurposed once again, as a monument to London.

ρ Aldgate, City gate

Nothing remains to be seen here. When the Roman City Wall was built a stone gate perhaps already spanned the Roman road linking London with Colchester (Camulodunum). The gate probably had twin entrances flanked by guard towers. Outside the gate a large cemetery developed to the south of the road. In the later 4th century the gate may have been rebuilt to provide a platform for catapults. The Roman gate apparently survived until the medieval period (called Alegate or Algate) when it was rebuilt in 1108-47, and again in 1215. Its continued importance was assured by the building of the great Priory of Holy Trinity just inside the gate. The medieval gate had a single entrance flanked by two large semi-circular towers. It was during this period that Aldgate had its most famous resident, the poet Geoffrey Chaucer, who lived in rooms over the gate from 1374 while a customs official in the port of London.

Aldgate was completely rebuilt in 1607-9 but was finally pulled down in 1761 in order to improve traffic access.

σ City Wall at Bevis Marks

Bevis Marks was a lane that ran along the inside of the wall. The name is a corruption relating to Bury St Edmonds. On the outside, beyond the ditch, was another lane. The historian John Stow, writing c 1580 recorded the many unsuccessful attempts to prevent the City ditch becoming a dumping ground for rubbish including the dead dogs, which gave Houndsditch its name. In the 17th century the ditch was finally filled in and the area used for gardens.

τ Moorgate

The gate here was a late addition, being added in 1415 to replace a postern gate, demolished 1762.

ζ City wall and towers

This section of the Wall originally formed the northern side of the Roman fort, built c AD 120. The defences were completely rebuilt in the early medieval period and most of the surviving stonework dates to this time.

The modern lake indicates the approximate position of the medieval ditch, which then contained a great store of fish. In the 13th century a series of towers was added to the outside of the Wall and the remains of two such towers survive here. The battlements in this section were rebuilt in brick probably in the late 15th century as at St Alphege. From the early medieval period there grew up a suburb outside the Wall around the church of St Giles founded c1090. After the ditch was filled in in the 17th century the City Wall became the southern boundary of the churchyard. This ensured the survival of the Wall until 1803 when, it was demolished.

η St Giles Cripplegate, tower

This medieval tower marks the north-west corner of the Roman and medieval defences. Most of the Roman Wall was completely rebuilt in the early medieval period. In 1211-13 a new defensive ditch was dug around the outside of the Wall and soon after a series of towers was added along its western side. This tower survives to two-thirds of its original height. It would have had wooden floors. In peacetime the towers were rented for a variety of uses and some were occupied by hermits. This tower may have been used for this purpose since in the 13th century the hermitage of St James in the Wall was built nearby. In 1872, when the area was redeveloped, the crypt of the hermitage chapel was removed to Mark Lane where it still survives. Although the City ditch was eventually filled in and the churchyard of St Giles was extended up to the Wall, the tower survived. It became almost buried in earth dumped to raise the level of the churchyard, but was uncovered during the Barbican redevelopment of the 1960s.

υ Aldersgate was a late addition when the gate in west wall of the fort was closed, probably 4th

century. The date of origin of Newgate is disputed; it seems to relate to the building of the fourth St Pauls which impeded access via Ludgate. So much about the gates remains speculation. Newgate is of course well know for its use as a prison.

φ The wall here was diverted west to the Fleet at some time in the Middle Ages

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Map (Barbican)

St Giles without Cripplegate

THE POSTERN

WOOD STREET

FORE STREET

ST ALPHEGE GARDEN

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WALLSIDE

MONKWELL SQUARE

ST ALPHEGE HIGHWALK

LONDON WALL

This route remains at ground level except for the Postern and Wallside. You may prefer to take the Highwalk

BARBICAN

N

110

Fleet

Walbrook

fort

Forum & Basilica

230

Fleet

Walbrook

?

Newgate

Ludgate

Cripplegate

fort

Bishopsgate

Aldgate

Forum & Basilica

375

Fleet

Walbrook

?

Aldersgate

Newgate

Ludgate

Cripplegate

site of fort

Bishopsgate

Aldgate

site of Forum & Basilica