

Week 1. Surveying London



THE DECLARATION OF A FREEMAN

I DO SOLEMNLY DECLARE
THAT I WILL BE GOOD AND TRUE TO OUR SOVEREIGN LADY
QUEEN ELIZABETH II

THAT I WILL BE OBEDIENT TO THE MAYOR OF THIS CITY
THAT I WILL MAINTAIN THE FRANCHISES & CUSTOMS THEREOF
AND WILL KEEP THIS CITY HARMLESS IN THAT WHICH IN ME IS
THAT I WILL ALSO KEEP THE QUEEN'S PEACE IN MY OWN PERSON
THAT I WILL KNOW NO GATHERINGS NOR CONSPIRACIES
MADE AGAINST THE QUEEN'S PEACE
BUT I WILL WARN THE MAYOR THEREOF, OR HINDER IT TO MY POWER
AND THAT ALL THESE POINTS & ARTICLES I WILL WELL & TRULY KEEP
ACCORDING TO THE LAWS & CUSTOMS OF THIS CITY
TO MY POWER

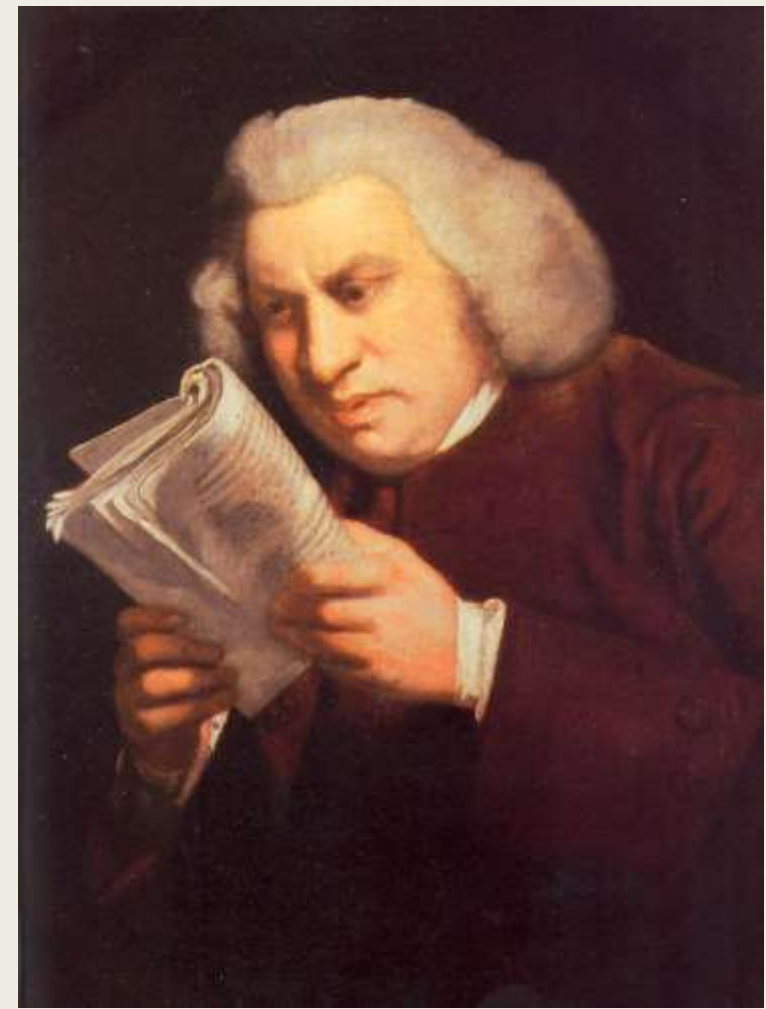


‘But failing such keys, one must perambulate early and late in all weathers, to know a little about London – no one can know much more than a little about London. One must know St. Paul’s in all its lights and must never walk east on the south side of Fleet Street like the beasts that perish; one must know and love the empty muted handsomeness of the Bayswater and Regent’s Park terraces in the summer dawn; one must have studied the backs of London which differ from all the other backs of great cities, especially the lordly and explanatory backs of Stratford Place over the huddle of little depreciating buildings; and the shadowy back of the Waterloo Bridge Road houses as they rise from the obscure river-side region, dark and sheer but for the line of protuberant balcony-hutches at the end of which on a sooty rope a monkey sometimes swings; one must know the sallow squares and courts of Mayfair with little dubious shops in their mews that sell truffles and forced fruit for expensive houses that have ‘run short’; one must know something of the waukrife London that the homeless perpetually cross and re-cross, the blanched dreary streets when you have seen ‘... the old things come creeping through // Another night that London knew.’ And you must have rejoiced in Piccadilly and the Strand when the May sun was shining and everybody’s eyes were bright.’

– James Bone, *The London Perambulator* (1925)

‘if you wish to have a just notion of the magnitude of this city, you must not be satisfied with seeing its great streets and squares, but must survey the innumerable little lanes and courts. It is not in the showy evolutions of buildings, but in the multiplicity of human habitations which are crowded together, that the wonderful immensity of London consists’.

– Samuel Johnson



Introducing London

- How do we define London?
- What are its limits or boundaries?
- Does London speak with one prevailing voice?
- Is 'London' the sum of its buildings?
- ... A location of successive historic events?
- ... The stories and perspectives of its people?
- ... An imagined place, subject to continual change?









Afbeelding van de

Representation curieuse de l'embrasement de la

Delineation of the



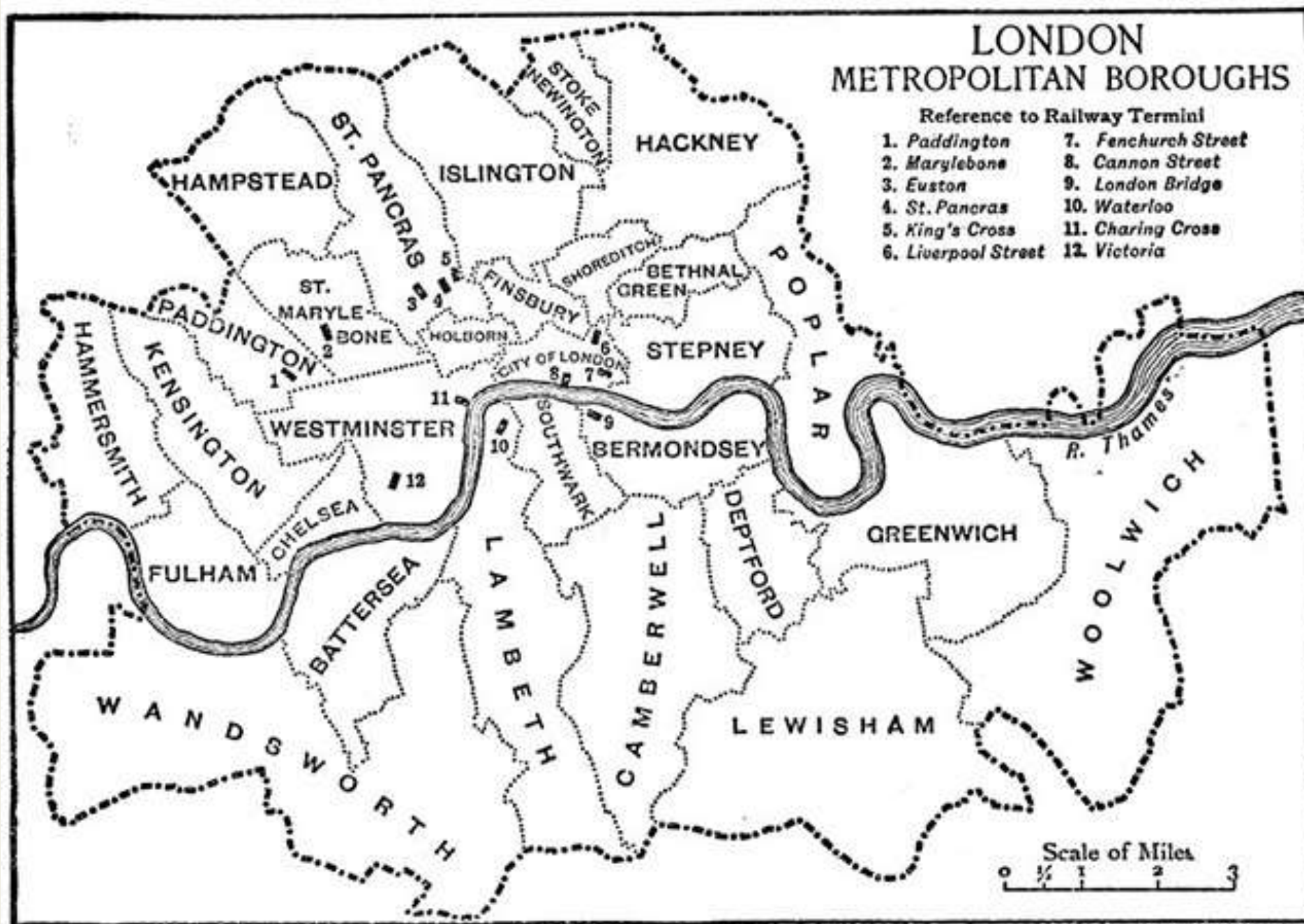
City of London Ward Map (1870)



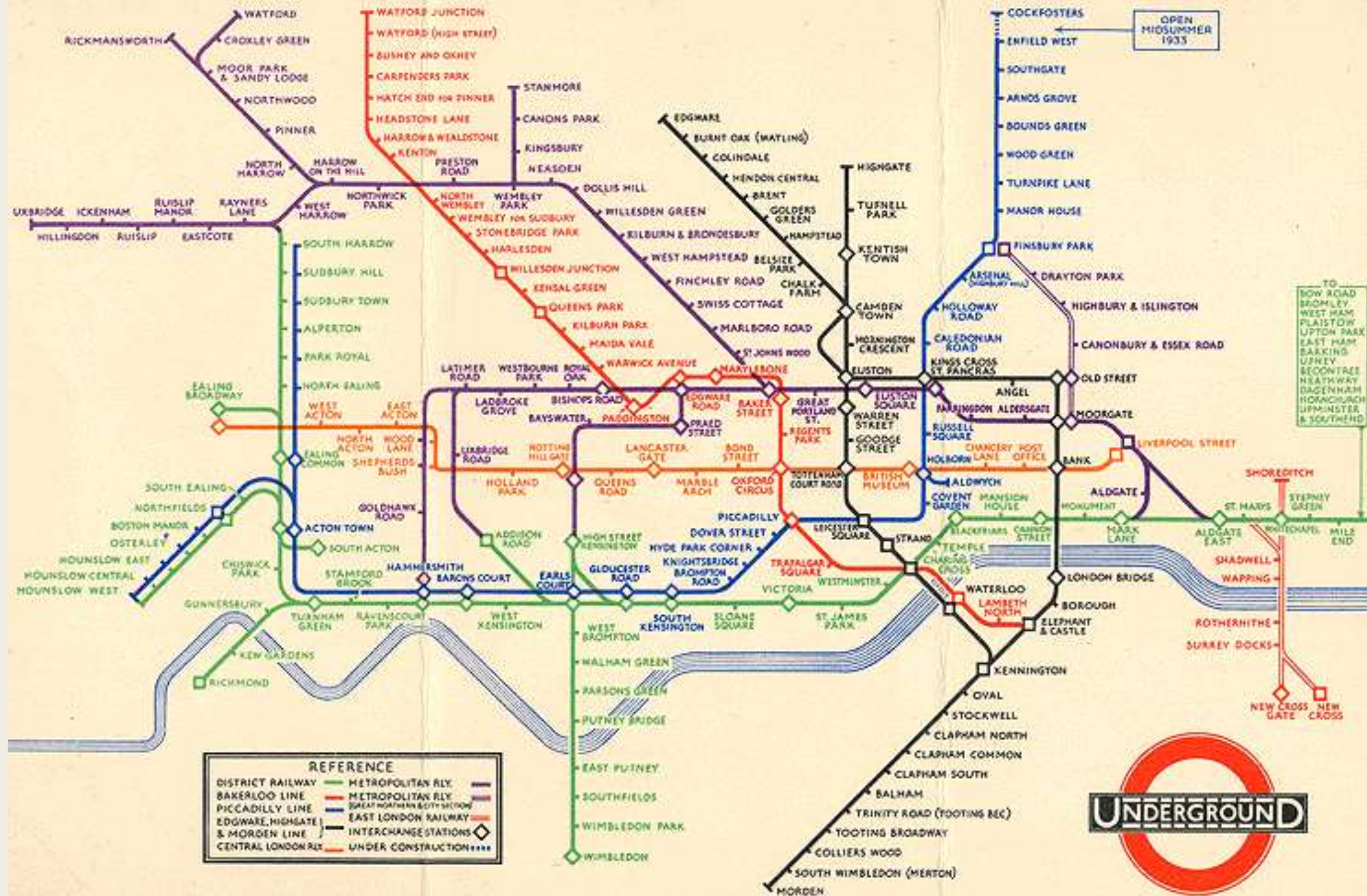
LONDON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH

Reference to Railway Termini

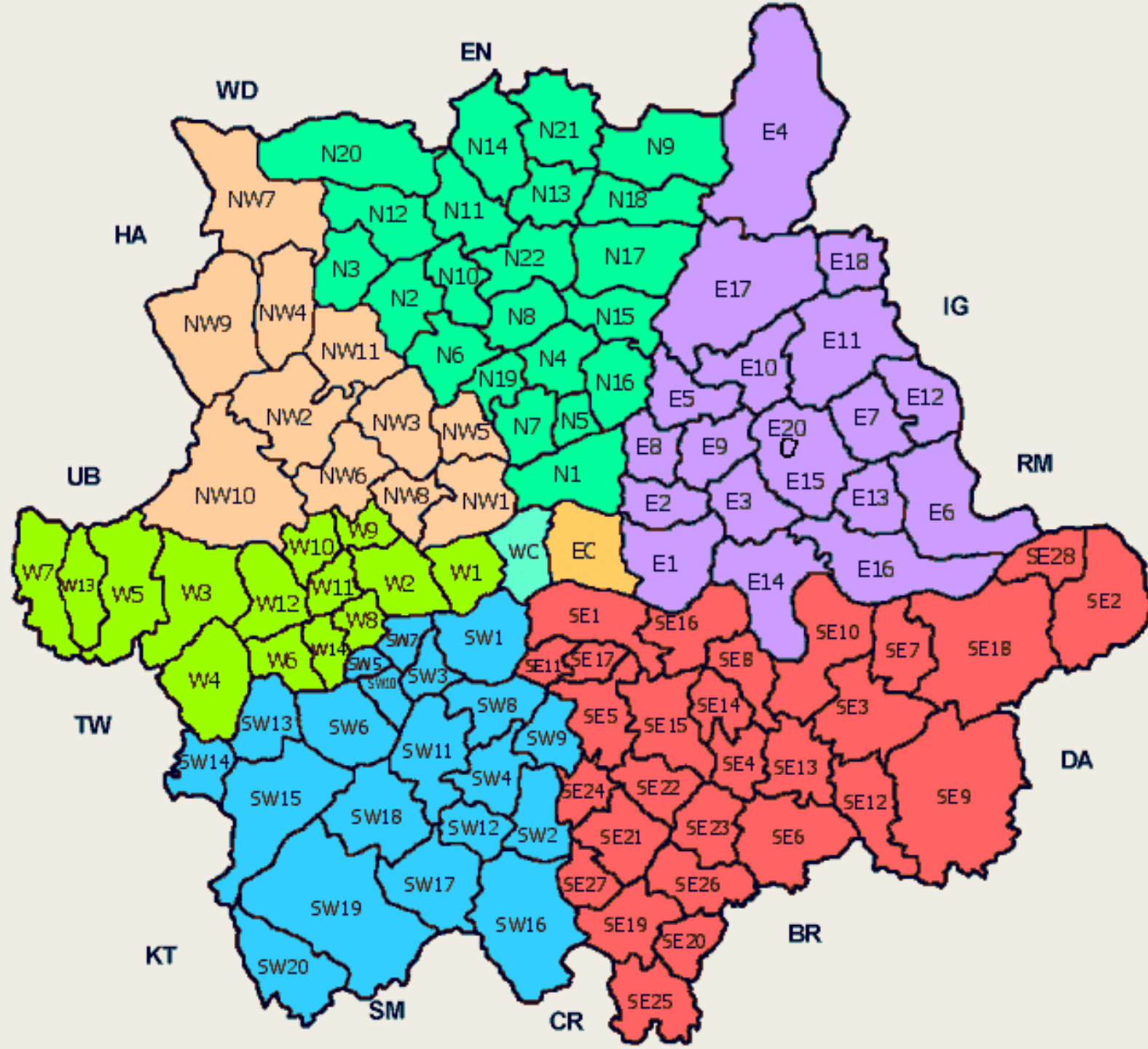
- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. <i>Paddington</i> | 7. <i>Fenchurch Street</i> |
| 2. <i>Marylebone</i> | 8. <i>Cannon Street</i> |
| 3. <i>Euston</i> | 9. <i>London Bridge</i> |
| 4. <i>St. Pancras</i> | 10. <i>Waterloo</i> |
| 5. <i>King's Cross</i> | 11. <i>Charing Cross</i> |
| 6. <i>Liverpool Street</i> | 12. <i>Victoria</i> |



Scale of Miles
0 1/2 1 2 3







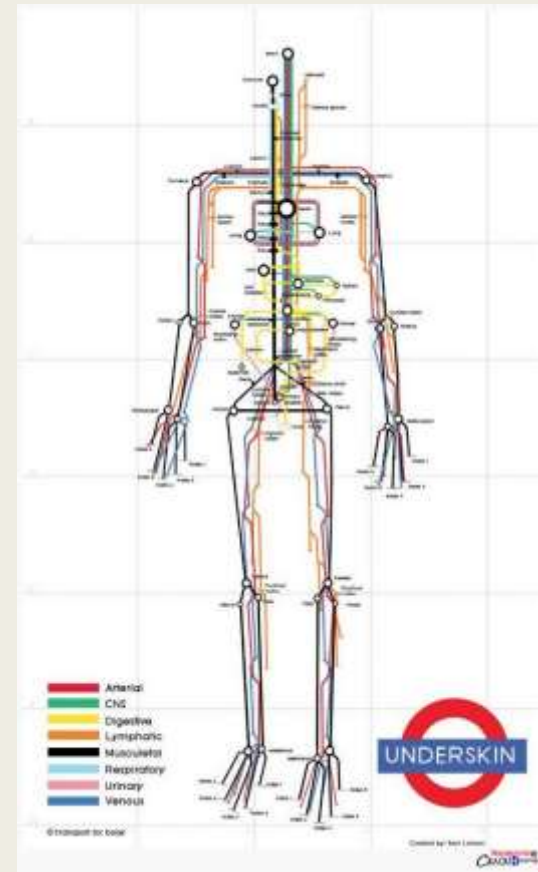






‘The byways of the city resemble thin veins and its parks are like lungs. In the mist and rain of an urban autumn, the shining stones and cobbles of the older thoroughfares look as if they are bleeding. When William Harvey, practising as a surgeon in St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, walked through the streets he noticed that the hoses of the fire engines spouted water like blood from a cut artery.’

- Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography*



Things endure, things change: improvement, deterioration, adjustment – all respond to the deep pulse of the city. And in that respect the south London community where I grew up forms a cameo of London at large: the physical fabric engages in endless dialogue with the inhabitants; the railways and roads outlive individuals. People make their own cities, but never under conditions of their choosing.'

– Roy Porter, *London: A Social History*





Genius loci

- Does London owe its history, identity and imagery to the Thames....
- Or is it in the colour and tone of its buildings? James Bone dedicates a chapter to Portland Stone, used particularly by Christopher Wren. It is white, and ‘creates a world of shadows and high lights all of its own’, composing ‘the face of London’
- Peter Ackroyd highlights ‘London Stock’ bricks, used for nearly 2000 years, a yellow-brown or red brick which ‘truly represents the *genius loci*’.
- Christopher Wren: ‘the earth around London, rightly managed, will yield as good brick as were the Roman bricks ... and will endure, in our air, beyond any stone our island affords’.
- William Blake called the bricks of London “well-wrought affections”.
- The turning of clay and chalk into the fabric of the streets was a civilising process which knits the city with its primeval past





Identifying Landmarks

- By *Landmark* we refer not just to buildings or locations, but also periods, events, ideas or individuals through which we can approach London's social and cultural history
- As well as the Thames, London stone, London wall, London stock, Portland stone, we will encounter many further landmarks which have a bearing across eras, e.g.
- London Bridge, around which the city developed
- Covent Garden, whose changing uses maps the development of London
- Bartholomew Fair, a huge medieval cloth fair with a reputation for disorder
- The River Fleet, once a site of healing wells, then an open (and now closed) sewer

Identifying Landmarks

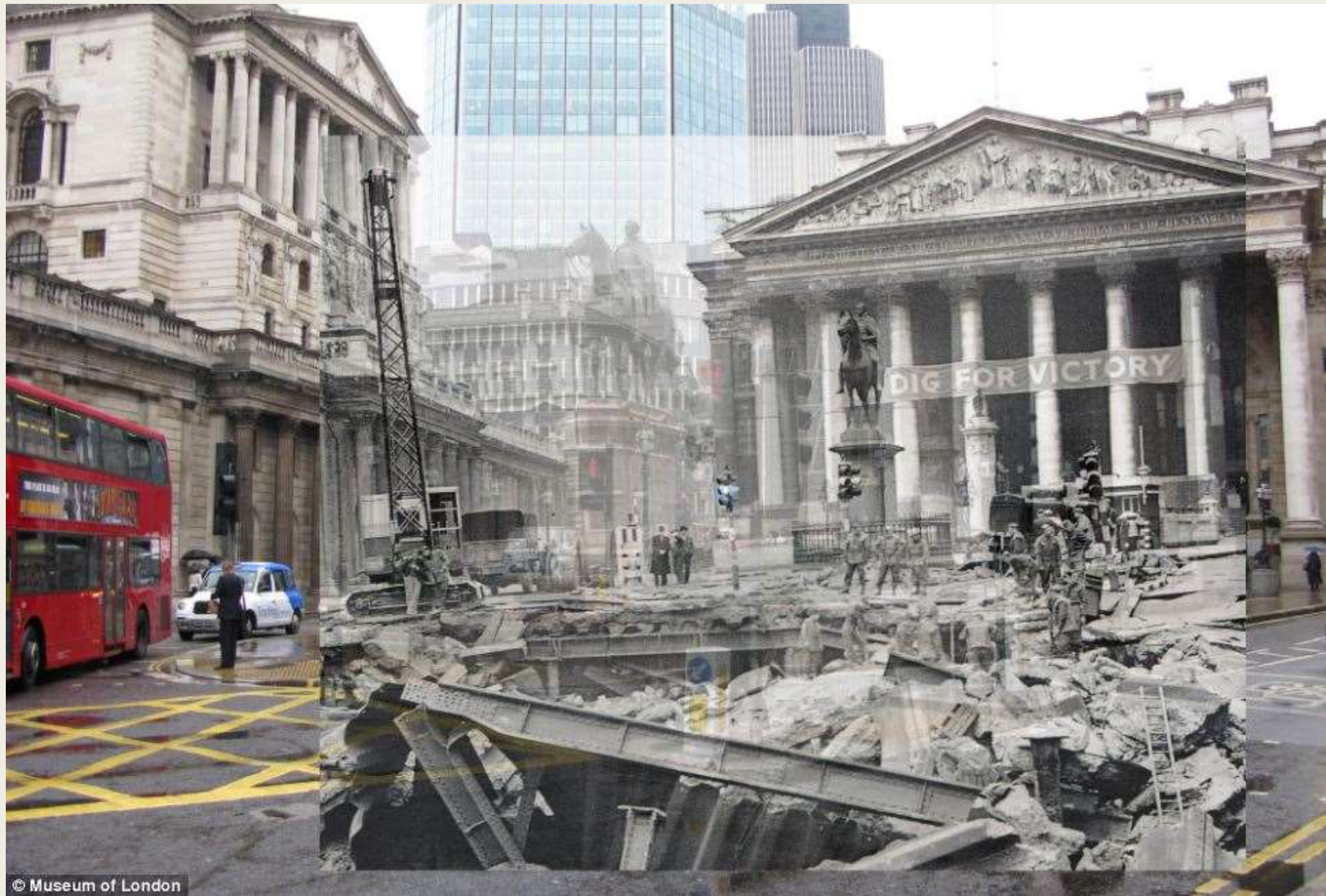
- Periods, like the growth of medieval guilds, the Georgian expansion of the West End, the development of the Royal Navy or the London docks, or the postwar suburban expansion
- Cultures, like the cockney or the pearly queens, the emergence of the coffee-house, medieval migrant communities, the exoticised urban poor in Victorian 'exploration' novels, or post-WW2 immigration
- Events, like the Great Fire of London, The Gordon Riots, the Blitz, the arrival of the Windrush, or the Battle of Lewisham
- Ideas, the City's economic independence, or late Victorian social reform and socialism, or East End anti-fascism
- Myths, like King Lud, Gog and Magog, or Dick Whittington and his cat
- Individuals, like John Wild, Mary Seacole or Phyllis Pearsall
- Objects, like London Stone, the Gilbert Scott phone box...

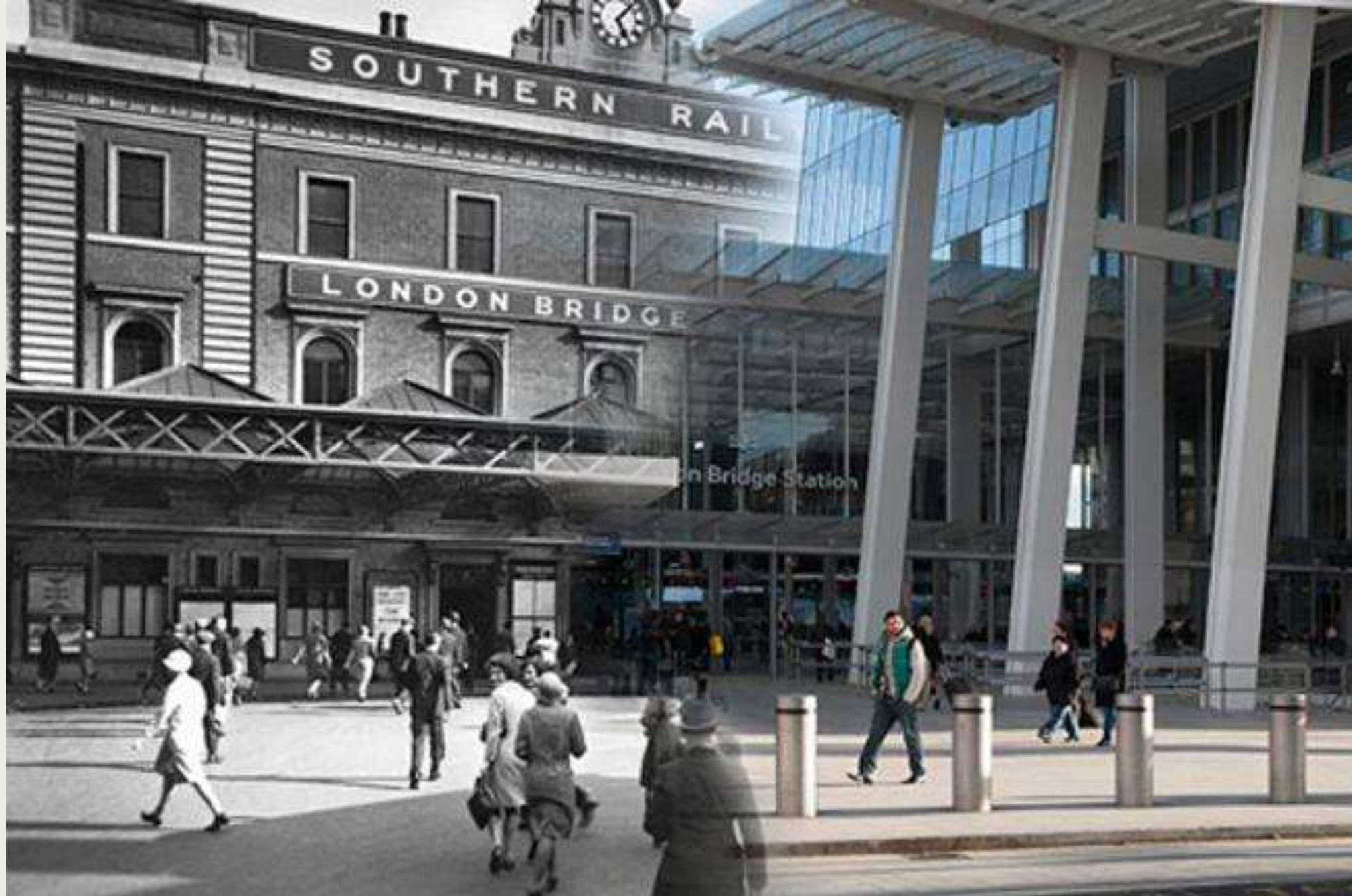
Identifying Landmarks

- There are many possibilities: this course covers a vast historic range, from late medieval to the 1970s
- As well as reading about London's history, we will also be walking it
- Together, we'll take five walks in our seminars. And alone, you will need to begin walking and discovering a particular 'landmark' of London
- You will write two blog posts on two different landmarks of your choosing
- Your final essay will also tackle London's social and cultural history. Again, with assistance, you'll be devising your own questions and research projects



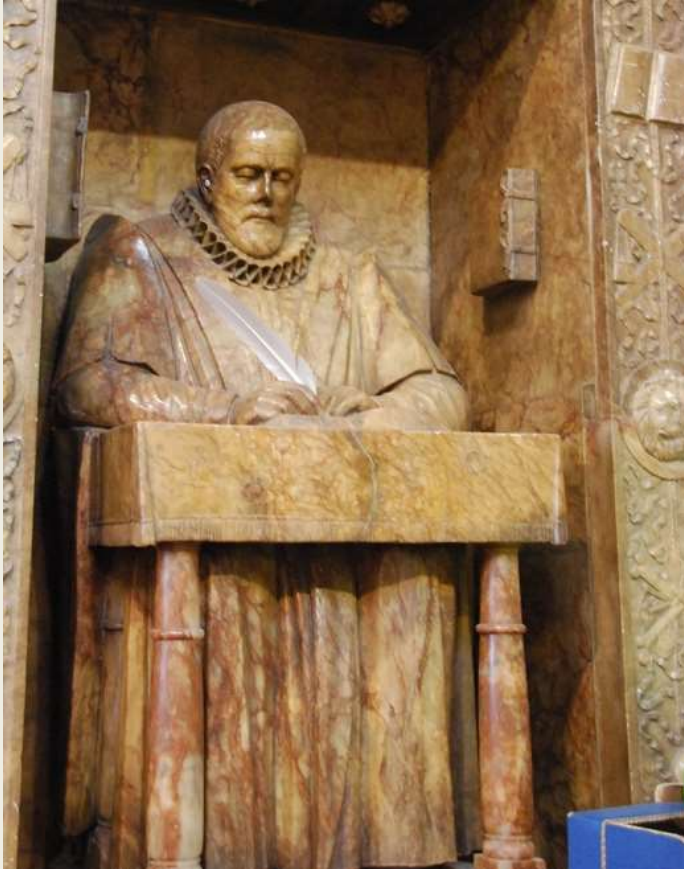








Surveying London: three introductory perspectives



‘The London which John Stow knew was considered to be an enormous sprawling octopus of a place and he was the first man to catalogue the tentacles of the octopus

- Antonia Fraser, *Introduction* to the 2005 edition of the *Survey of London*

‘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 in that condition’

- Samuel Pepys, *Diary*(1660)

‘Like the sweet ballad, this amusing lay
Too long detains the walker on his way;
While he attends, new dangers round him throng;
The busy City asks instructive song’

- John Gay, *Trivia* (1716)

John Stow (1525-1605)

- Born in 1525, parish of St Michael Cornhill, London
- Father, Thomas Stow, was a tallow-chandler. A family of 'good substance and credit', of the artisan class.
- As a child he would carry a jug from his father's house in Cornhill, past Leadenhall market and Aldgate to Goodman's Farm, where he bought three pints of milk costing halfpenny
- Stow married his wife, Elizabeth, sometime around 1549 and had three daughters.
- Stow lived in Aldgate, Leadenhall Street and Fenchurch St
- Admitted to the Merchant Taylors' Company in 1547
- 1579 = the Merchant Taylors' Company provided Stow with a pension of £4 per annum

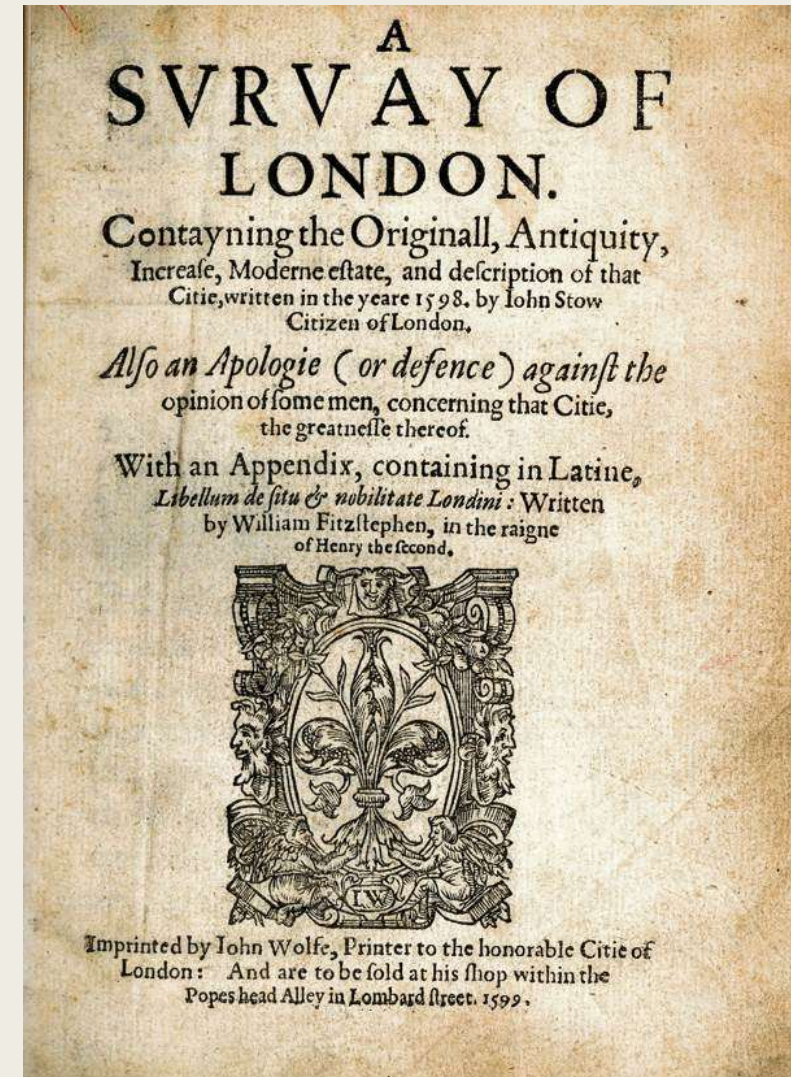


A Survey of London (1603)

- 1590 = petitioned the aldermen of London for admission to the freedom of the city in order to reduce his expenses
- First published in 1598; updated version followed in 1603
- Third reprint (posthumously) in 1618; fourth edition in 1633 with maps
- Stow's books did not sell overly well and he often pleaded relative poverty
- Left a reasonable estate and, although far from wealthy, he was certainly not as poor as he often portrayed himself
- "cost many a weary mile's travel, many a hard-earned penny and pound, and many a cold winter night's study."

Survey - Purposes

- Historical text = discussing the state of the city, detailing changes and discussing events that influenced those changes
- Topographical text = concerned with the physical 'lie of the land' and Stow documents the urban environment
- Guidebook = used by people wishing to travel around the city but without intimate knowledge of it
- Social study = an examination of the lives and habits of the people of London



A Survey of London - Method

- Based on detailed description of his walks around the city
- Portrays a London in expansion and transformation, and Stow is often mournful of a lost London, glimpsed through old stonework or great old houses or religious buildings repurposed to satisfy a swollen city
- Consulted historical works to augment his initial topographical composition with additional factual material:
 - classical and medieval historical literature
 - public and civic records
 - own intimate knowledge of the city
- The reader essentially travels through the city, with Stow acting as both a guide and an educator

‘This day, much against my will, I did in Drury Lane see two or three houses marked with a red cross upon the doors, and "Lord have mercy upon us" writ there; which was a sad sight to me, being the first of the kind that, to my remembrance, I ever saw. It put me into an ill conception of myself and my smell, so that I was forced to buy some roll-tobacco to smell to and chew, which took away the apprehension.

- 7 June 1665



Samuel Pepys (1633-1703)

- Born at Salisbury Court, Fleet Street on 23 February 1633
- 'Low' social standing; father was a tailor, mother daughter of a butcher
- Marriage to Elizabeth St Michel (1640-1669). No (known) children
- Lived in three locations in London: Salisbury Court, near Fleet Street; Axe Lane, Westminster; and Seething Lane, near Tower Hill (Navy Office)
- Appointed Clerk of the Acts at the Navy Board (July 1660)
- Member of Parliament for Castle Rising, Norfolk (Nov 1673)
- Elected Fellow of the Royal Society (Feb 1665)
- Bon vivant, who kept a lion in his office, and arrested several times for treason and piracy



Diary (1660-69)

- 1 January 1660 to 31 May 1669
- Written using a shorthand system devised by Thomas Shelton in 1642
- Ended after Pepys' concerns about his deteriorating eyesight
- Posthumously, six volumes deposited at Cambridge –shorthand considered impenetrable
- 1818: John Smith, Cambridge undergraduate, sets to deciphering the diary
- 1825: Selection of entries, edited by Lord Braybrooke, published
- 1893-99: Alost complete edition, edited by H.B.Wheatley, published (omitting sexual references)
- 1970-1983: First complete edition, edited by Robert Latham and William Matthews

Methodology

- Daily notes written-up every few days
- Different opinions as to why Pepys kept his diary: 'a means both of confession of sin and of checking upon his moral balance-sheet' – Lawrence Stone (1977)
- 'an exercise in spiritual book-keeping' – Christopher Hill (1980)
- 'The diary is essentially a narrative of social accounting by a middling man on the make' – Mark Dawson (2000)
- An invaluable source for London life during events like the Plague or Great Fire, as well as social class and class anxieties, entertainment, particularly alehouses and theatre, conspicuous consumption, the divide between public and private life, as well as key sites in London
- 149 Taverns or Inns; 46 Churches or Cathedrals; 9 theatres; most of the major Livery Companies

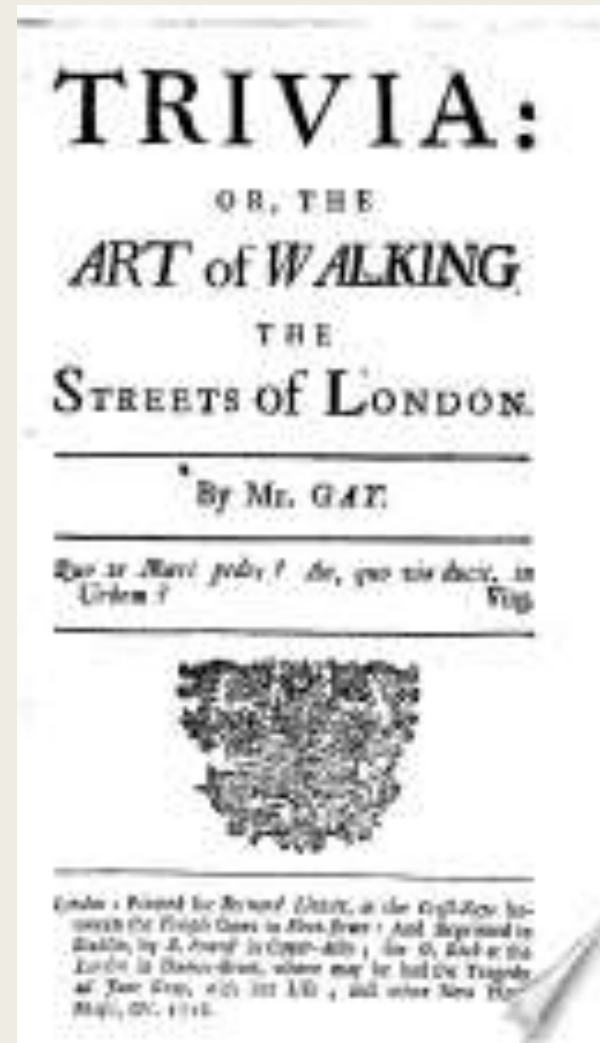
John Gay (1685-1732)

- Born in Barnstaple, north Devon, on 30 June 1685
- Parents died before he was 10; raised by his uncle's family. Apprenticed to a London silk draper in 1704
- Did not marry and had no children
- Spent much of his life around court, securing patronage
- Other key works include *The Beggar's Opera* (1729) and sequel
- Died in December 1732, buried in Westminster Abbey: 'Life is a jest, and all things show it, I thought so once, and now I know it'.



Trivia

- *Trivia: or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London*, started in 1714, completed in 1716
- A walk through day and night in couplets, with wry recommendations on how to dress, avoid falling chamberpots and pickpockets, and London characters
- Invaluable source on early Georgian London and society
- ‘one of the most lively, funny, and thought-provoking statements about urban life’ (Clare Brant, *Walking the Streets*)
- ‘The sense in which the London streets of *Trivia* are both topographically real, and literary metaphors, give the poem an animation and vitality of reference which defiantly resists any simple reading’ (David Noakes, 1995)



Seminar Questions

Address one source

1. What features of London are surveyed in this account?
2. How can we categorise this kind of source?
3. Does the author have a positive or negative view of the city?
4. Comparing and contrasting the three sources, what can we learn about these differing methods of surveying London life, society and its history?