The Book of

LONDON PLACE NAMES

LUMBIA ROAD MORNINGTON CRESCENT RUSSELL SQUARE OLD STREET FENCHURCH STREET SOHO SQUARE FLEET STREET BRICK LANE PETTICOAT LANE

SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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Ever wondered if Cheapside really is cheap, what you do in Threadneedle Street, or who the knights of Knightsbridge were?

Did you know that Piccadilly is actually an insult? And that Euston Road was built because there were too many cows on Oxford Street? Or that the River Fleet was covered over partly because of a drunken butcher?

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From famous landmarks to forgotten rivers, grand thoroughfares to lost palaces, and ancient villages swallowed up as the city grew, Caroline Taggart explains the hidden eanings behind familiar places. If you have ever wanted to peel back the layers of history and discover the people, events and stories that shaped London, then come on a journey that will show you our capital city in a new light...

Also by Caroline Taggart:

The Book of English Place Names

The Book of
LONDON PLACE NAMES

CAROLINE TAGGART

For Camille and Mishak, in the hope that they will one day love London as much as I do

INTRODUCTION

John Stow, the great Elizabethan chronicler whose work will be much referred to in the following pages, begins his *Survey of London* by quoting the earlier Welsh historian Geoffrey of Monmouth. According to Geoffrey, London was founded in about 1108 BC by Brute or Brutus, a descendant of 'the demi-god Aeneas, the son of Venus, daughter of Jupiter' who was also the ancestor of Romulus and Remus, legendary founders of Rome.

Stow goes on to quote the Roman historian Livy as saying that, when writing of antiquity, it is acceptable to 'interlace divine matters with human, to make the first foundation of cities more honourable, more sacred, and, as it were, of greater majesty'.

This is Stow's characteristically gentle way of telling us that what Geoffrey of Monmouth had written was tripe. Well-intentioned, entertaining tripe, perhaps, but tripe nevertheless.

That said, the early history of London is vague. The first mention of it comes from the Roman historian Tacitus in the second century AD; he tells us that 'Londinium' is 'much frequented by a number of merchants and trading vessels'. It is unlikely to have been a substantial place before the Roman invasions (Julius Caesar in 55 BC and the Emperor Claudius in 43 AD), but it certainly existed, probably as a small settlement on the hills on either side of the WALBROOK – that is, roughly modern CORNHILL and Ludgate Hill, on

which St Paul's stands. Londinium is certainly a Latinised version of an older, British name, and attempts to explain its meaning have occupied scholars for centuries. Geoffrey of Monmouth's story of King Lud (described under Ludgate in the section *The City Gates*) is generally discounted; other suggestions include 'settlement associated with Londinos', a nickname that might have been given to a man known for his boldness, or 'settlement at the unfordable part of the river'. This last would be geographically accurate – the lowest fordable point was at WESTMINSTER, some 3 kilometres upstream from the original settlement. It seems to be the favoured explanation at the moment, but who knows when further information may come to light and change people's minds?

Also lost in the mists of time is the meaning of London's most significant natural feature, the Thames. It too is of pre-Roman origin and may mean something as simple as 'flowing'. A fairly basic name for a river, you might think, but then it would have been the only major one that the early inhabitants of London knew. Modern-day Londoners still refer to it as 'the river', as if it was the only one that existed or at least the only one that mattered, and this may well have been the rationale for the Celts of 2,000 and more years ago.

Very few Celtic place names have survived in the London area; those that have tend to refer to physical features (rivers, hills, etc.) rather than settlements. The rivers BRENT and the Lea that gives its name to LEYTON and LEYTONSTONE are Celtic in origin, and the otherwise unremarkable suburb of PENGE has, for reasons of its own, also held on to its Celtic roots.

Under Roman rule Londinium grew and prospered. It wasn't a major garrison, but it was an important trading

place, with a wall (see LONDON WALL), a forum near the site of today's LEADENHALL Market, an amphitheatre under the Guildhall (see GRESHAM STREET), and all the other trappings of Roman civilisation. In due course, however, the Roman Empire started to collapse and the Roman forces withdrew from Britain. Leaving, as far as London is concerned, almost no surviving place names, but a structure of walls, gates and roads that would define the city, off and on, for another thousand years.

The city at this time was a smaller version of what we now call the City: the wall confined an area rather less than today's 'square mile'. That was to change when the Roman stranglehold on Britain weakened. Three different groups from across the Channel – the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes – began first to raid the coastline and then from the fifth century to invade and settle. The ones who took over the area around London were the Saxons. They founded what became the mighty kingdom of Wessex (the West Saxons, with their capital at Winchester) but also established southern, eastern and 'middle' groups that are remembered in the names of Sussex, Essex and Middlesex. Their language was what we have come to call Old English and it was more influential in the naming of English settlements than any other before or since.

For some reason the Saxons settled not within the London walls but further west, along what is now the STRAND. Perhaps it was simply that they didn't care for cities in the way that the Romans did: they were more likely to create a number of smaller settlements than the one very large one that the Romans viewed as the focal point of civilised life. That doesn't mean that the Saxons were disorganised – far from it. Bede (673–735), the Northumbrian-based monk regarded as the father of English history, wrote that in the early seventh century London was 'a trading centre for many nations who visit it by land and sea' and late twentieth-century excavations in

the region of COVENT GARDEN found evidence of a much more substantial town than had previously been suspected. The Saxon settlement was called Lundenwīc, with the Old English word for a trading place or harbour added to their version of the existing name.

Britain – or England, as this part of it was soon to become – was never peaceful for long in this period; and the next major upheaval was caused by the arrival of the Danes. Invaders from Scandinavia, also known as Vikings or Norsemen, had taken over most of northern England by the end of the 860s and soon turned their attention to the south, where the kingdom of Wessex was the only one to put up serious resistance.

Wessex was lucky to have as its ruler the man we now know as Alfred the Great. He came to the throne in 871, by which time the Danes, after a series of bloody massacres (or so the English chroniclers describe them), had occupied London. In 878 Alfred defeated the Danes in a battle in Wiltshire that was decisive enough for him to do a deal: the Danes would convert to Christianity and retain control of the north and east of England (the boundary was a rough diagonal running from London to Chester), leaving Alfred in charge of the rest. To protect his territory, Alfred set about fortifying or refortifying a network of towns known as *burhs*, which became the *–burys* and *–boroughs* of modern maps. Among his most significant rebuilding was that of London. Lundenwīc, along the Strand, became less important; the focus of city life moved back within the security of the walls and the old Londinium became known as Lundenburh, an indication of its fortified status.

It’s impossible to be accurate about population figures at this time but, however many of them there were, the Anglo-Saxons established an enormous number of settlements which grew into villages, towns, cities or, in the case of London, were ultimately subsumed into the growing metropolis. Place names from those days contain recurring

features that reflect the concerns of daily life and the reason settlements were founded in the first place. One of the reasons for giving a place a name is to be able to tell it apart from another, similar place; another is to point out a distinguishing feature so that strangers can find it. The most common elements in Anglo-Saxon place names are –*ham* and –*ton*, meaning respectively a homestead and a farmstead. A simple description like that is fine as long as people stay at home; once they start travelling and trading, they need to be able to tell one farmstead or homestead from another. Enter a third very common Old English element, –*ing*, either as an ending in itself or in combination to form –*ingham* or –*ington*. *Ing* has a number of subtle variations in meaning which can be summarised as 'an association with' or expanded to 'belonging to the friends or followers of someone'. Thus London abounds with names such as TOTTENHAM, KENSINGTON and PADDINGTON, which tell us that they were originally settled by men called Totta, Cynesige and Padda, or by their family, followers, descendants or whatever. These men were obviously important enough to have places named after them, but sadly they have for the most part left nothing else for us to remember them by.

Other recurring elements describe physical features: the endings of WEMBLEY and BROMLEY tell us that they were once clearings in woods; most places ending in –*den* or –*don* are on hills, though confusingly CROYDON is in a valley. Another potential source of confusion is the all too common –*ham*, which in addition to meaning a homestead (Old English *hām)* may also mean a piece of land in a bend in a river, or other enclosed piece of land (Old English *hamm)*. Because early records are often sparse and spelling erratic, it is not always possible to be certain which derivation applies to any given name. Sometimes, though, the lie of the land gives a clue: that is what enables us to be certain that FULHAM and Twickenham (see *The Round Ball and the*

Oval Ball) are *hamms*, but leaves us in doubt about CLAPHAM.

One thing that the Saxons had done before they retreated back inside the City walls was build a church and monastery to the west of Lundenwīc. This may not sound like much – they built churches wherever they went, and no shortage of monasteries either – but this one sowed the seed that made London the 'twin city' it is today. It was on this site that the pious Edward the Confessor (1042–66), the last Saxon king of England, decided not only to expand and rebuild the monastery but also to create a palace. The word 'monastery' is closely related to 'minster', a minster church being one where the monks generally lived apart from the world but 'ministered' to the sick and to any passers-by who needed their hospitality. Edward's project, being to the west of the City, became WESTMINSTER.

You may have noticed in the last paragraph that Edward the Confessor died in 1066, and you don't have to be too hot on English history to recognise that date. It was, in fact, a hectic year. Edward died on 5 January. Harold, Earl of Wessex, claimed the throne and was crowned – at the newly completed Westminster Abbey and with what some would call indecent haste – on 6 January. Other aspirants to the throne promptly rolled up their sleeves and one, Harald Hardrada of Norway, invaded from the north. Harold defeated him at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, near York, on 25 September, then almost immediately received word that William of Normandy was invading from the south. Harold dashed off to Sussex and, understandably exhausted, was defeated and killed at the Battle of Hastings on 14 October. William marched across southern England to London, burning and pillaging as he went, and settled into the palace at Westminster. He then laid siege to

the City. Although he failed to breach the wall's defences, he was scary enough that the City fathers surrendered to him and allowed him to be crowned at Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day. On New Year's Eve the Anglo-Saxons were doubtless raising a surreptitious glass and saying, 'Thank God that's over – roll on 1067.' William became King William I, 'William the Conqueror', and the Norman Conquest had taken its first decisive steps.

The Normans now became the ruling class and Norman French the language of the elite. Its effect on place names is similarly elitist: Norman landowners tended to tack their own names on to existing Old English ones to produce the likes of TOOTING Bec. Anywhere beginning with *Bel–* or *Beau–*, such as BELSIZE PARK, is likely to come from the French for 'beautiful': they were the only ones who had leisure to admire the scenery. They were also the ones most likely to have time and money to go hunting – see SOHO and ENFIELD Chase.

William didn't carry out his threat to destroy London. He granted its citizens a charter guaranteeing them rights that they had enjoyed in the previous reign and that were by no means all honoured in the rest of the country. The document is written in English and contains the word 'London', spelt as we would spell it today: this isn't the first occasion when Alfred the Great's *–burg* was dropped, but it seems to make it official. London therefore had William's blessing to expand, trade and grow rich. He wasn't taking too many chances, though: he built the White Tower (which remains the central keep of the Tower of London) and a couple of other fortresses to make sure these privileged citizens didn't take any liberties. The Tower also became a royal residence and remained so until Tudor times, though the royal household spent most of its time at the Palace of

WESTMINSTER until it moved to WHITEHALL in the sixteenth century and ST JAMES'S in the seventeenth.

It's difficult to say when precisely London became the capital of England. From about the second century AD it had been the most important city in Roman Britain, superseding Colchester – we know from archaeological finds that a lot of trading ships went up and down the river at this time. It was also treated as the capital by some of the Saxon kings. But William and his son William II (1087–1100) continued to carry out some of their affairs of state in Winchester. Transferring the Exchequer from Winchester to London in the twelfth century seems to have been one of the key incidents that tipped the balance in London's favour.

Many City place names reflect the way London expanded during the period following 1066: they refer to markets and business of one sort or another. CHEAPSIDE was the centre of the market area but all the dealers in meat and fish, bread and milk, shoes and stockings tended to congregate in the same place and have the relevant street named after them (see *What You See Is What You Get*). Banking, too, came into its own, in OLD JEWRY and LOMBARD STREET, to name but two.

With prosperity inevitably came population growth: in 1100 London's population was about 25,000, by 1300 this figure had doubled and in 1350 it had not gone down, despite the fact that the Black Death of the 1340s is estimated to have killed about half the City's inhabitants. Spreading outside the walls was an obvious step.

One place to live and work was around the Palace of Westminster, where there was always a need for service industries and the chance of a decent tip. Another was the courts, which grew up between the City and Westminster in

the thirteenth century (see *In the Name of the Law*). Places such as FARRINGDON and the BARBICAN, only just outside the walls (indeed, in the case of Farringdon, part inside and part out), expanded, as did the area south of the river that had been part of Alfred the Great's plan to control access to London Bridge – SOUTHWARK.

Skipping forward in time, TV dramas and documentaries have given most of us a rough working knowledge of the Tudor period, but in the context of place names a brief mention of the Dissolution of the Monasteries may not go amiss. In the 1530s, as a direct result of his desire to divorce Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII also became 'divorced' from the Pope. (Nowadays he'd be all over the Sunday papers; in the sixteenth century he was excommunicated. Times change.) Henry now proclaimed himself head of the Church of England. Catholic monasteries, which owed their allegiance to the Pope, were suddenly a threat. 'Dissolving' them not only brought ecclesiastical power back into Henry's hands, it enabled him to confiscate their vast wealth. He could thus both swell his own coffers and give generous pay-outs to his supporters to keep them on side. Names associated with monasteries linger on, however, in BLACKFRIARS, ST JAMES'S and elsewhere.

Elizabeth I, the last of the Tudors, died childless in 1603 and was succeeded by James Stuart, the son of Mary, Queen of Scots. The Stuarts had ruled Scotland for over 200 years and James was already James VI there; he now became James I of England.

One history of Scotland describes the Stuarts as 'a royal family so dreadful that the Scots were even prepared to share them with the English' and that sentence more or less sums them up. Their big problem was that they

believed in the Divine Right of Kings. They were kings because God said so, and anything that they said or did was the will of God; they were not answerable to the people, to Parliament or to anyone else on this side of the grave. Across the Channel in France Louis XIV believed much the same thing and got away with it; the problem with the early Stuarts was that they didn't have the political acumen to carry it off. James I's reign (1603–25) was dominated by favouritism, a blatant disregard for Parliament, chronic extravagance and financial mismanagement.

His son Charles I (1625–49) had all his father's weaknesses, in spades. Battles with Parliament over both religion and money were a constant feature of his reign and got so out of hand that the country dissolved into civil war.

It's worth emphasising just how important the religious conflict was. This is barely a century on from the creation of the Church of England. The reigns of James I and Charles I saw the new Church moving, some said, away from its simple, scripture-based roots and back towards the rituals associated with Catholicism. And you have to remember that people cared passionately about this. Or at least the rich and powerful did: the vast majority of the people were probably more concerned with where their next meal was coming from, but senior churchmen had been burnt at the stake over this issue. The Protestant hatred of anything connected with Rome and the Pope was exacerbated by the fact that Charles, although nominally a Protestant, was married to a Catholic French princess, Henrietta Maria, and there were concerns that he would be cajoled into making concessions to the English Catholics. The fact that Charles seems to have made one promise to the French Catholic royals and another to powerful Protestants at home could only add fuel to the fire.

All this led to a very divided country, and specifically to the rise of a sect called Puritanism. The Puritans were dissidents within the Church of England who – in addition

to wanting to abolish anything they considered idolatrous or unscriptural, such as ornaments or musical instruments in church – objected to the Church owing allegiance to the King rather than directly to God. Go back a couple of paragraphs to the bit about the Divine Right of Kings and you'll see that there is potential for serious conflict here.

Anyway, back to the Civil War. The combatants were the Royalists (Cavaliers) and the Parliamentarians (Roundheads), latterly led by a Puritan called Oliver Cromwell; incredibly, the war, which tore families apart as well as dividing the country down factional lines, lasted almost seven years. Charles I was eventually defeated, tried for treason and beheaded in WHITEHALL in 1649. His son, also Charles, went into exile. Cromwell took control as Lord Protector and ruled what is known as the Commonwealth of England (and later of Scotland and Ireland too) until his death in 1658. He was succeeded by his son Richard, who didn't have the backing of the military – nor, one suspects, his father's forceful personality – and lasted less than a year. The army ousted him and recalled Charles II, as he was now acknowledged to be, to take the throne. This act and the period that followed it are known as the Restoration.

Puritanism has come to be associated with the suppression of anything that looks like fun. This is not entirely fair, but the received wisdom is that England under Cromwell was a pretty miserable place to be: theatres and pubs were closed, many sports were banned and you could be fined for swearing or put in the stocks for doing unnecessary work on a Sunday. Small wonder then that when Charles II returned and allowed people to enjoy themselves again, they christened him 'the Merry Monarch'.

To revert to the subject of place names – in case you thought we were wandering completely off the track – Charles was understandably grateful to those who had

stood by him during his time in exile and rewarded them lavishly. Much of St James's and Mayfair was developed during and immediately after his reign, because he gave great chunks of real estate to friends and hangers-on. They in turn either parcelled out the land and made money from it or built themselves grand houses; Burlington House, which now houses the Royal Academy, is one example (see Burlington Arcade). As a result, many streets in this part of town are named after Charles II's chums, their wives, children and people to whom they owed favours.

This continues to be true if you move forward a few decades in time and north a few minutes' walk. The Grosvenor Estate south of Oxford Street, the Portland Estate north of it, and to the east land owned by the Dukes of Bedford – all of which had been open fields and farmland – became Mayfair, Marylebone, Fitzrovia and Bloomsbury. The developments were carefully planned and laid out around elegant squares that survive to this day; the squares and the streets are almost all named after the estate owner, his various titles, members of his family and his properties elsewhere. The street maps of these districts give us example upon example of overwhelming egos and filthy riches on the one hand and shameless sycophancy on the other.

Once you start talking about street names, it is worth noting that they change more than settlement names. Settlement names, witness all those farmsteads and woodland clearings mentioned earlier, tend to hang around long after they have ceased to be accurate. One obvious reason for the changes in street names is that streets are knocked down and replaced: the playwright Ben Jonson was born in 1572 in Hartshorn Alley, which later disappeared under building works round Charing Cross; in the 1880s various streets in Soho were destroyed to make way for Shaftesbury Avenue. Others change for the reasons discussed in the section *Changing Names*. Sadly, there is

no mention in the modern *A–Z* of Pickle Herring Stairs, though it was there in 1872, and Strype's Pease Porridge Alley has gone too.

Charles II, despite a slew of mistresses and bastard children, left no legitimate offspring, so his brother succeeded him as James II. Charles had shrewdly juggled the interests of Catholics and Protestants; James had no such ability. He was a committed and public Catholic, and it took only three years for Parliament to decide he was not what they wanted. James was deposed and his Protestant daughter Mary invited, with her equally Protestant husband William of Orange, to rule in his stead. This was in 1688–9; ever since then the British monarch has been forbidden from being or from marrying a Catholic. In the late twentieth century minor royals were still officially giving up their standing as twenty-somethingth in line for the throne because they chose to marry Catholics; as I write this in 2011 it seems likely that this age-old piece of prejudice is finally going to be revoked – but it has been a long time coming.

William and Mary were succeeded by her sister Anne, who also died childless (though not for want of trying – see HANOVER SQUARE). The nearest heir, when you had ruled out about fifty Catholics who had stronger genealogical claims, was a German second cousin who became George I and ushered in the Georgian period also referred to under HANOVER SQUARE. For our purposes – though not for the purposes of the Scots who continued to try to restore James II's descendants – things calmed down.

While all this was going on, London continued to expand. The population in 1650 is estimated at 350,000; in 1700 at 500,000, despite the fact that the Great Plague of 1665 had killed perhaps 100,000 Londoners. By 1801 (the first census) it was close to a million; in 1851 over two million. And they all had to live somewhere.

Technology came into its own here, in three major ways. Substantial parts of the outskirts of London had once been marshes and moors; draining them enabled more people to live in, for example, HACKNEY, LAMBETH and WANDSWORTH. Building the great embankments along the Thames (see VICTORIA EMBANKMENT and MILLBANK) provided road access to such outlying suburbs as CHELSEA, which expanded rapidly in the nineteenth century. And the advent of the railways meant that people working in the City could live as far afield as CLAPHAM, PUTNEY and beyond. All those outlying hamlets, the BALHAMS and the PADDINGTONS, the ISLINGTONS and the STEPNEYS, became part of the same vast built-up area.

This sort of population explosion brought its problems, of course, notably in the slums made famous in the cartoons of William Hogarth (1697–1764) and the novels of Charles Dickens (1812–70). The most notorious, the area round ST GILES, was once perfectly salubrious; then it became too popular and not exclusive enough for the upper classes who had first moved here, away from the crowded City. Those who could afford to moved further west, the price of property in St Giles plummeted and the poor surged in, six or eight to a room. The nineteenth-century authorities managed to ignore quite a lot of this – that's why philanthropists such as Angela Burdett-Coutts (see COLUMBIA ROAD) and campaigning writers such as Dickens were so numerous and so important – but they did get wise to two things. One, they needed to bury these people when they died (see KENSAL GREEN) and two, they needed to provide them with fresh air and open spaces (see

FINSBURY/HIGHBURY and ALEXANDRA PALACE). Interesting that the idea for the cemeteries should have come along forty-plus years before the idea for the parks, but that's the way it was.

Queen Victoria's reign (1837–1901) also saw the zenith of one other recurring characteristic of London place names: royalness. At one point it seemed as if every new feature that wasn't called Victoria was called Albert after her husband (and see LANCASTER GATE for an idea of just how desperate this could get). But this was far from being a nineteenth-century phenomenon. There are Charles Streets, James's Streets and George Streets, King Streets and Queens Roads all over the place. The most famous of them are dealt with in the section *Which King, Which Queen?* and in individual entries, but clearly 'You can't go wrong sucking up to the royal family' is an attitude that prevailed for some 300 years.

So we come close to the modern age and the modern city, which from the late nineteenth century acquired a more clearly defined administrative structure than it had ever had before. The City of London Corporation has been in existence since time immemorial, but its jurisdiction has only ever extended over the City itself. Until the London County Council (LCC) was created in 1889, local government of other areas was in the hands of metropolitan boroughs or counties: BARKING was in Essex, for example, and EALING in Middlesex. The LCC became responsible for all of what is now Inner London – the first time this area had had a single governing body. It was abolished in 1965 in the course of a major restructuring which created the Greater London Council (GLC, abolished in 1986) and the thirty-two boroughs that today make up Inner and Outer London. One of the new boroughs,

surprisingly, was the City of WESTMINSTER: the term has been in use for 500 years, but became official only in 1900 when the Metropolitan Borough of Westminster was granted – by royal charter – the right to call itself a city. Westminster expanded to include the areas round MARYLEBONE and PADDINGTON only in the 1965 reshuffle.

The vast majority of the new boroughs, from HOUNSLOW to HAVERING, adopted existing names, most of them dating back to Anglo-Saxon times. If it ain't broke, don't fix it, may have been the policy; or it may have been motivated by prudence: the entry for FINSBURY/HIGHBURY shows how fiercely Londoners can react to anyone messing about with their names.

This book is divided into sections that broadly reflect the existing boroughs, with further subdivisions within the Cities of London and Westminster. I have split Westminster into three parts, south, central and north, with KNIGHTSBRIDGE and THE MALL marking the approximate boundary between south and central, and OXFORD STREET separating central from north. Within these three sections there are further subdivisions, some of which are necessarily arbitrary: most people would agree, for example, that SOHO is bounded by CHARING CROSS ROAD, OXFORD STREET, REGENT STREET and SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, but would be less sure about where Victoria ended and BELGRAVIA began.

In addition to individual entries there are boxes scattered through the book covering themes such as railway stations and places named after royalty. Some entries also cover more than one place because the etymology or history of these places is closely connected. Thus Cannon Street and Liverpool Street, King's Road and Queensway do not have entries of their own, Bedford Square is covered under RUSSELL SQUARE, Savile Row gets a passing mention under BURLINGTON ARCADE and so on. All these 'subsidiary' entries are listed in the index, so please

check there if it looks as if your favourite place has been left out. Most of the entries are to do with streets or localities. I also thought that a few buildings, such as Big Ben, the Festival Hall and the Ritz Hotel, were worth a mention: they are indicated in the text like so  .

The place names of London bear witness to a long and complex history. Arrive at PADDINGTON and you are in a place named after a long-forgotten Saxon; come to MARYLEBONE and you are commemorating a church that no longer exists by a stream that is now largely underground; use LONDON BRIDGE and you are at the place where a drawbridge was once raised to stop anyone getting into the City after nine o'clock at night. Wandering the streets in the City you find evidence of ancient markets in amongst the twenty-first-century bankers (and seventeenth-century churches peeping out between later concrete monstrosities); at Waterloo or TRAFALGAR SQUARE or even MAIDA VALE the names evoke victory in long-ago battles; above the shops and the small hotels at street level in MAYFAIR and BLOOMSBURY are the homes that developers once sold to a socially ambitious clientele. Go out into the suburbs – even if it is no further than BALHAM or ACTON – and the names remind you that these were once tiny hamlets far too far from London for anyone to go there on a regular basis.

The only things you need in order to enjoy London to the full are an enquiring mind and a pair of comfortable shoes. Do go and look: it is all there, lurking just below the surface, in the place names.

SOURCES REFERRED TO IN THE TEXT

The Domesday Book (1086) is a remarkable survey, carried out for tax purposes under the auspices of William the Conqueror, to show who owned what land and how much it was worth. It records some 13,000 place names across England and in many cases is the first written mention of them.

Geoffrey of Monmouth (died 1155) wrote a *History of the Kings of Britain* which is our principal source for stories about King Arthur, 'Old King Cole' and Shakespeare's Lear. He is now generally considered to have been an entertaining writer rather than a rigorous historian.

John Stow (c. 1525–1605): London is fortunate to have had a number of antiquarians who made it their life's work to chronicle every possible detail of city life. Stow's *Survey of London*, published in 1598, is a minute account of the roads, buildings, history and people of the city of his day and of several centuries previously. As the introduction to a 1908 edition of the book says, he was blessed with 'a long life, a retentive memory, a zeal for accumulating material, and the painstaking capacity for giving it shape'. Many experts maintain that the *Survey* has never been bettered.

William Camden (1551–1623) compiled the first topographical survey of the British Isles, *Britannia*, published in 1586. He was a friend of Stow and a fellow antiquarian; like Stow he winkled into the origins of place names and was not above reproducing old wives' tales – he may have poo-poohed them, but he wanted to record local folk wisdom as well as what he felt was the truth. Again like Stow, this makes him a surprisingly entertaining read.

John Strype (1643–1737) took Stow's work and expanded on it vastly, to cover the changes that had taken place in the intervening 100-plus years. Not only had London

expanded – this is the period when MAYFAIR and WESTMINSTER were becoming built up – but the Great Fire of 1666 had destroyed swathes of the old City, rendering chunks of Stow's work obsolete. Although he is hot on such social issues as public health and water supplies, Strype seems to have been a terrible snob and much concerned with the 'quality' of the people who inhabited the streets he describes.

John Evelyn (1620–1706) and **Samuel Pepys** (1633–1703) were two of the great diarists of their or any other time. Pepys' background was humbler than Evelyn's, but both served at court and became very well connected. From them we glean extraordinary insights into seventeenth-century life.

Daniel Lysons (1762–1834) wrote a four-volume study of *The Environs of London* in the 1790s. His coverage extended about 18 kilometres from the centre of the city, much further than Stow or Strype.

H B Wheatley's three-volume *London Past and Present*, published in 1891, has as a subtitle 'Its history, associations, and traditions'. It contains lots of information on the development of districts and streets, but also a pleasing amount of gossip about who lived there when and how they behaved themselves. Wheatley quotes Pepys, Evelyn and many other early diarists and commentators, giving his work an eminently readable 'I was there' feel.

Ben Weinreb and **Christopher Hibbert's** *London Encyclopaedia*, published in 1983 but recently revised and reissued, expresses a debt to Wheatley and brings the subject matter up to date. Full marks to whoever thought of including buildings and streets that aren't there any more but indicating them with a different typeface.

THE CITY

FOR MANY CENTURIES the City of London was enclosed by first the Roman and later the medieval wall (see LONDON WALL). As time went by, however, it expanded and overflowed, so that today ‘the square mile’ (actually 1.12 square miles, or 290 hectares) spreads west up FLEET STREET, north to the BARBICAN and beyond, and east to encompass LIVERPOOL STREET and the area around (but not including) the Tower. In terms of local government, the City isn’t a London borough – it is a separate entity under the jurisdiction of the City of London Corporation, an authority that has been in existence for over 1,000 years. It is also, of course, one of the world’s leading financial centres: ‘the City’, written with a capital C and without further explanation, is universally recognised as meaning ‘the City of London’ and the financial institutions within it.

WITHIN THE WALL

Even though very little of the wall remains, it is the obvious way to divide the City into two. Most of the entries in this section refer, therefore, to the older part, recalling a time when this was primarily a residential area, needing markets and shops and tradespeople; and recording its rise as a centre for world trade.

Aldermanbury

–*bury* (the source of the modern word *borough*) comes from the Old English for a fortified place, but was later used to describe a manor, the estate of a landowner of substance. It will crop up again and again throughout this book, from CANONBURY to BLOOMSBURY to GUNNERSBURY. In medieval London, an alderman was the chief officer of a ward, next in rank to the mayor. (As a ward is defined as 'a district under the jurisdiction of an alderman', we could go round in circles a bit here, but you get the gist.) Anyway, aldermen could become very wealthy and a number of them lived on a grand scale, comparable to that of the nobility and the highest ranking churchmen, in houses in and near this street. The name is recorded in the twelfth century.

Bank

The underground station sits in the shadow of the Bank of England, established as a concept under William III (1689–1702) and moved to its present building in 1734. Whatever you may read in the papers about the current banking system, the Bank of England is the only institution in the country that really does have a licence to print money. See also THREADNEEDLE STREET.

Bevis Marks

One of the most intriguing names in a city full of intriguing names, this was once called Burie's Markes, because it marked the boundary of land belonging to the Abbots of Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. This was presumably around the time that St Edmund was performing his miracles at Cripplegate (see *The City Gates*). There has been a synagogue here since the early eighteenth century, but the Christian connection persists – obscurely enough for most people not to notice – in the name of the street.