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# London: A Short History of the Greatest City in the Western World

## Course Guidebook

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## Robert Bucholz, D.Phil.

Professor of History
Loyola University Chicago

Professor Robert Bucholz received his undergraduate education in history at Cornell University. He graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa in 1980, whereupon he received a Keasbey Memorial Scholarship for study at the University of Oxford. At Oxford, Professor Bucholz studied under G. V. Bennett and P. G. M. Dickson. He took his doctorate in Modern History from Oxford in March 1988. He taught at Cornell University; the University of California, Los Angeles Extension; California State University, Long Beach; and Loyola Marymount University before joining the faculty in history at Loyola University Chicago in 1988. He currently holds the rank of professor.

Professor Bucholz's primary research interest is the English court and royal household for the period from 1660 to the 19th century. He is the author of *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture* (Stanford, 1993); coauthor, with Sir John Sainty, KCB, of *Officials of the Royal Household, 1660–1837* (Institute of Historical Research, 1997–1998); and coauthor, with Professor Newton Key of Eastern Illinois University, of *Early Modern England, 1485–1714: A Narrative History* (Blackwell, 2003; 2nd edition, 2009). He is the project director of the Database of Court Officers, which contains the career facts of every person who served in the British royal household from the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 to the death of Queen Victoria in 1901. The database was launched online by Loyola University Chicago in 2005 and was archived by the British Library in 2008.

At Loyola, Professor Bucholz teaches both halves of the Western Civilization survey as well as upper-division courses in early modern (Tudor-Stuart) England, English social history, and early modern London. He has received several awards for his teaching, most notably the Sujack Award for Teaching Excellence (the highest such award from Loyola's College of Arts and

Sciences), which he received in 1994, the first year of its presentation. He was also Loyola's Honors Program Faculty Member of the Year in 1998 and 1999.

Professor Bucholz was named Prince of Wales Foundation Scholar for Architecture in America, which led to his being invited to speak on the etiquette of the public rooms and the experience of going to court in the 17th and 18th centuries to Royal Collection Studies at Windsor Castle in September 1997. (Professor Bucholz's week-long stay at Windsor coincided with the death and funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales.) This talk was repeated in 2000 and published in 2001 in *The Court Historian*. Professor Bucholz's work has been solicited and commented upon by the Prince of Wales. For his work, Professor Bucholz has been named a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

Professor Bucholz is past president of the Midwest Conference on British Studies. He is occasionally asked to comment on British history and the activities of the British royal family to the Chicago media, most notably *Chicago Tonight* with John Calloway and *Extension 720* with Milt Rosenberg. ■

# Table of Contents

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# London: A Short History of the Greatest City in the Western World

**Scope:**

Samuel Johnson famously said that "the man who is tired of London is tired of life, for there is in London all that life can afford." After all, London is the seat of an ancient monarchy, yet a stronghold of modern democracy; home of the language of Shakespeare where you can now hear the music of myriad tongues; a treasure trove of priceless ancient artifacts and a wellspring of art, literature, theater, music, and fashion both past and present. No other city in the world offers such bounty, and no city on earth has had so profound an impact on worldwide culture for so long in so many areas of life.

In fact, this course will argue that London, more than any other city on the planet, catalyzed modernity. It was in London that constitutional monarchy, participatory democracy, a free press, public concerts of music, and viable commercial theater first flourished in modern times. Throughout the early modern period, London was a leader in world trade, the capital of a rich and powerful global empire, and (despite a few notable flare-ups of intolerance) a community that became a home to people of all nations, all faiths, and all political beliefs. On a more sober note, London was arguably the first city to demonstrate that bombs—whether from the Luftwaffe in 1940, the IRA in the late 20th century, or terrorists at the beginning of the 21st—could not break its will.

Over its 24 lectures, this course will ask: Why London? Why did it increase 10-fold in size to become the largest city in Europe by 1750? Why did it come to dominate a world-encircling empire of trade and finance? Why did it come to represent freedom and economic opportunity for persecuted religious groups, immigrant groups, artists, and thinkers, and how successfully does it assimilate all these groups? How did London weather repeated bouts of plague, fire, and warfare? How did it remain a world city even after the loss of empire and manufacturing? How is London facing a new millennium? Equally interesting and important is the question of why and how people

become Londoners. In other words, this course is not merely about a place and a structure; it is about people. The course considers not merely the growth of London or its rise to world prominence or its forging of many of the milestones of modernity, but also how London's people coped with each of these things to forge that combination of proud humility, recalcitrant loyalty, and spirited resilience that we know as the Londoner.

We examine this great city in terms of six of its most remarkable characteristics: its growth, wealth, diversity, modernity, resilience, and ambiguity. Chronologically, this course traces how Johnson's hometown rose from a tiny outpost on the fringes of the Roman Empire to dominate the economic, political, and cultural life of first England, then a worldwide Empire, and now an informal but powerful global network of finance, communication, and culture. During the 24 lectures, we will confront the best recent work in urban history, accounts by contemporary Londoners and tourists, and fictional works in which the city is a character.

We will start our examination with London's Roman foundations (Lecture 2), then watch the dramatic changes through the Middle Ages and the Tudor and Stuart periods (Lectures 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, and 13). In the 19th century, we will meet the Victorians and Edwardians (Lectures 13, 16, and 18) and watch the city's evolution through the two World Wars (Lectures 19 and 21) and postwar bleakness into the swinging '60s, the millennium, and beyond (Lectures 22 through 24).

We will also pause frequently to experience London's life as it was actually lived by some flesh-and-blood Londoners who were also its brightest literary stars—Geoffrey Chaucer (Lectures 4 and 5), William Shakespeare (Lectures 8 and 9), Samuel Pepys (Lectures 11 and 12), Samuel Johnson (Lectures 14 and 15), and Charles Dickens (Lecture 17). Then our own eyes and others' will show us the contemporary experience of millennial London (Lecture 24).

These sources will expose us to "all that life can afford" in London, ranging from the contemplative splendor of Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, and the parish church; to the opulent galleries of Whitehall and Buckingham Palace; to the damp and sooty alleyways of the East End. Along the way we

shall meet Boudicca, Dick Whittington, Will Shakespeare, Sam Pepys, Jack the Ripper, the Bloomsbury set, and of course Dr. Johnson. We shall brave the dangers of plague and fire and Blitz; witness the diverse spectacles of royal coronations, the Lord Mayor's Show, and the hangings at Tyburn; and take refreshment in the city's pleasure gardens, coffeehouses, music halls, and pubs.

So, to quote another famous phrase, "Let's to London, for there's variety." ■

# There's No Place like London

## Lecture 1

**"The man who is tired of London is tired of life, for there is in London all that life can afford."—Samuel Johnson**

This course is an interdisciplinary introduction to the history of the greatest city in the Western world. Proponents of other cities will disagree, but just to name three, New York never fought the Nazis; Paris wasn't burned to the ground in four days and rebuilt within six years; and Rome had no Samuel Pepys. Arguably, no city on earth has had so profound an impact on worldwide culture for so long in so many areas of life: politics, trade, finance, media and the arts, and so forth. This course will argue that London, more than any other city on the planet, catalyzed modernity.

This lecture poses several questions to be addressed in the course.

- Why between 1450 and 1750 did London increase 10-fold in size to become the largest city in Europe?
- How did it come to dominate a world-encircling empire of trade and finance?
- Why did it come to represent freedom and economic opportunity for persecuted religious groups, immigrant groups, and artists and thinkers?
- How, and how successfully, does it assimilate all of these groups?
- How did it weather repeated bouts of plague, fire, and war?
- How did London remain a world city even after the loss of empire and manufacturing?

- How is London facing a new millennium?

- Why and how do people become Londoners?

This course traces how Pepys's and Johnson's hometown rose from a tiny outpost on the fringes of the Roman Empire to dominate the economic, political, and cultural life of first England, then a worldwide empire, and now an informal but powerful global network of finance, communication, and culture. It confronts the best recent work in urban history, eyewitness accounts by contemporary Londoners and tourists, and fictional works in which the city is a character.

The course will trace London's history in several ways. First, we move chronologically from its Roman foundations through the Middle Ages, Tudor, and Stuart periods; then the 18th century, the Victorians, and the Edwardians; the two world wars; and through postwar bleakness to the swinging '60s, the millennium, and beyond. We will also pause frequently to experience London's life as it was actually lived by flesh-and-blood Londoners, such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Pepys, Johnson, and Dickens, as well as the contemporary experience of millennial London.

For as long as it has existed, London has been important—but not always in the same way. Londinium, founded by the Romans, was the central garrison and chief port of the farthest-flung outpost of the Roman Empire (c. 50–410 C.E.). It was hardly central to the defense of the empire, and it was easily abandoned by its founders when the empire started to crumble at the end of the 4th century. During the Middle Ages (c. 410–1485), London took centuries to recover, but once it did, it established itself as the country's chief harbor and financial center, a crucial military chokepoint, and a major religious center. From about 800 on, London was so crucial to the political and economic health of the country that as London went, so went the nation. Still, the country of which London was capital remained itself on the fringes of Europe, hardly the center of world civilization at this time.

During the Tudor and Stuart periods (1485–1714), London grew from fewer than 50,000 people to well over half a million. Those people had to be fed and clothed, heated and housed, leading to the diversification and greater

efficiency of the national economy. More people patronized entertainment possibilities: the pleasure garden and public theater at the end of the 16th century; the public concert, coffeehouse, and club at the end of the 17th century. During this period London weathered great disasters, including civil wars, revolutions, plots and counterplots, six deadly visitations of plague, innumerable fires culminating in the Great Fire of 1666, and the perception of high taxes and repeated crime waves.

During the 18th century, London was still the seat of government and greatest city in England, but England was now the most powerful country in the British Isles, which had, in turn, become a dominant player in Europe and the proprietor of a worldwide empire. London was now the capital of that empire, the greatest port in Europe, and its financial and banking center. The resultant wealth generated immense real estate and entertainment opportunities, but also massive problems and anxieties. By 1750 London was inhabited by nearly 700,000 people, making it the greatest city in Europe. London had become the great entrepôt for Europe's most desirable products from overseas. It was the headquarters of a constitutional monarchy with more elements of democracy and popular participation than any Western country before the United States. It was an artistic center with a vibrant theater and musical life and a thriving and relatively free press. But the city was also gripped by crime, disease, and poverty.

**Twenty-first-century London has faced the millennium with exuberance and dogged determination in face of terrorism.**

Nineteenth-century London grew to 8 million people, the largest city in the world. It was the capital of an empire covering one-fifth of the world's land mass and one-quarter of its population. It was a site of political demonstrations leading to governmental reform and a wider democracy. It was still an infamous concentration of poverty, disease, and crime. London and the national government would make some attempt to solve those problems by creating citywide administrative bodies and pouring public money into public works and regulatory agencies.

Twentieth-century London would have to adjust to Britain's declining role in the world. London nevertheless recovered and remained a thriving center of

culture and finance. Twenty-first-century London has faced the millennium with exuberance and dogged determination in face of terrorism. As London becomes ever more diverse and ever more interconnected globally, it is no longer a purely English or British city but a world city.

This brief chronology raises themes that we will highlight again and again in the course.

- London's growth: From a sleepy port town on the fringes of Europe to "the Great Wen," a vast megalopolis, London became a world financial and cultural capital.

- London's wealth: We will look at London in trade and high finance.

- London's diversity: There will always be two—or more—Londons economically and ethnically.

- London's modernity: London pioneered or was at the forefront of many developments that produced our modern world.

- London pioneered modern democracy, opposing the Stuarts and creating a constitutional monarchy.

- London was a leader in world trade and experienced a financial revolution in the late 17th century.

- London was an early printing center, with, from 1695, a relatively free press, including the first real newspapers and essay magazines.

- London's resilience: London has survived—from the burning and massacre by the Iceni in 60 C.E.; to the Black Death and the Great Fire; to the ravages of war; to the unexpected madness of terrorism, culminating in the bombings of July 7, 2005.

- London's ambiguity: Commentators either love or hate London. ■

## Suggested Reading

Inwood, *A History of London*, introduction.

Manley, *London in the Age of Shakespeare*, chap. 1.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why does London remain a world city despite its relative slip in size of population?

**2.** How have Londoners managed to cope with the many disasters the city has experienced?

# The Rise and Fall of Roman Londinium

## Lecture 2

**"Long this red wall, now mossy gray, withstood while kingdom followed kingdom in the land unshaken neath the storms of heaven. Yet now its towering gate hath fallen. Radiant, the mead halls in the city bright; yeah, many were its baths. High rose it's wealth of horned pinnacles while loud within was heard the joyous revelry of men, till mighty fate came with her sudden change."—from *The Ruin* (anonymous, 8th century C.E.)**

There hasn't always been a London. During the Middle Ages, Londoners made up a pedigree for their city. They claimed that, long before the incarnation of Christ, King Brut (or Brutus), a descendant of Aeneas and a refugee from the Trojan Wars, founded London. According to this myth, London was originally called Trinovant, or "new Troy." Medieval Londoners wanted to associate their city with ancient greatness so as to claim that their rights predated (and so did not flow from) the English monarchy. According to one medieval chronicler, not only was London older than Rome, it "possesses the liberties, rights, and customs of the ancient city Troy and enjoys its institutions." But the association with Troy was also a warning of London's vulnerability; it was old and great, but it could fall.

Unfortunately, all of this is nonsense.

There is no evidence of any large prehistoric settlement at London's location. Nor was there much settlement in London during the period of Celtic migration to Britain (800–200 B.C.E.). Because travel by water was always easier in ancient times than travel over land, the Thames estuary and river was the highway of choice into southern Britain for the waves of Celts who came from Europe. Nevertheless, given the fertility of the Thames Valley, some undoubtedly settled there. In fact, "London" is a Celtic word, not a Latin one, for "wild" or "bold."

It was the Romans, not the Celts, who founded London. The Romans first visited Britain under Julius Caesar in 55 B.C.E. They attempted permanent

conquest during the reign of Emperor Claudius in 43 C.E. In 43, he dispatched an invasion force of about 40,000 troops under the command of Aulus Plautius. They easily defeated a local tribe, the Catuvellauni, and established a base camp at Westminster. By 50, the Roman governor, Ostorius Scapula, had established a permanent trading post on the north bank of the Thames at its highest point, what is today Cornhill in the area called "the City." By 60, "Londinium" was the largest Roman settlement in Britain.

Perhaps this site was attractive because it resembles that of Rome itself. Just as Rome straddles the Tiber River in central Italy, so London straddles the Thames. Both rivers operate as east-west highways for people and commerce. Moreover, like Rome, London is situated where the river is just wide enough and deep enough for big ships from Europe to dock yet narrow enough for a bridge. The combination of an east-west river and a north-south bridge made London, like Rome, a crossroads for immigration and trade.

**The combination of an east-west river and a north-south bridge made London, like Rome, a crossroads for immigration and trade.**

While the city developed on the hill on the north bank, the southern terminus of the bridge—the "south work," or Southwark—was important enough for the Romans to establish a garrison there. Thus the Romans had established London's first major characteristic. It was a harbor and trade entrepôt. Archaeologists now know that this early version of the city consisted of the bridge, a wharf on the north side below the bridge, a market area on Cornhill, and two streets parallel to the river. By this time, London also had a garrison of several hundred, forming a military choke point and thus a second component of its importance.

In 60 C.E., a Celtic tribe named the Iceni, led by Queen Boudicca, slaughtered some 70,000–80,000 Roman colonists in a swath from Colchester to Londinium, burnt the latter to the ground, and nearly drove the Romans out of Britain. In response, the Romans drew upon the vast resources of their empire and superior military tactics and technology, wiping out the Iceni, leaving 80,000 dead, including Boudicca.

Londinium was rebuilt between 80 and 120 C.E. as a magnificent city of temples and basilicas, a forum, a fort with 1,500 soldiers, and a makeshift wall. But in the late 120s, a fire devastated about 100 acres in the center of the city. It took decades to recover, and Londinium was still a scene of devastation in 150.

By 200 C.E., Londinium was at its height—a great Roman town of perhaps 100,000 people and the capital of Roman Britain (the third element of its importance). Londinium once again had a forum, basilicas, and temples and now boasted a governor's palace and a regular grid street pattern. It was governed by 2 senior magistrates, 2 junior ones, and a town council of 100 property owners elected by free-born males in an annual assembly. Thus London has always had an element of democracy and public involvement.

Archaeology has enabled us to reconstruct some aspects of city life. Londinium was tied into an imperial network of distribution and consumption, but Londinium did not seem to have any exports. As the Roman Empire became a Christian empire in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th centuries, the temples were converted into churches, which established a fourth pillar of London's greatness: It became a religious center. Londinium's streets were interconnected with Roman Britain via excellent Roman roads, many of which form the basis of modern roads into the countryside today. Those roads were crucial to all four of Roman Londinium's functions: trade, governmental communication and religious communication from the capital to the countryside, and the movement of troops. Also, to aid defense, around 200 C.E. the Romans added a substantial wall around the town. It set London's boundaries for the next 1,500 years.

The latest evidence indicates a measure of economic and population decline in Londinium as early as 200 C.E., probably because of the vagaries of imperial trade. By the 3rd century, the whole empire began to be affected by the invasions of Germanic and other tribesmen. The Celtic military tradition was not much help in resisting these invaders, and this meant that defense would have to come from Rome. Britain was always considered an outpost to the empire, and the financial burden of defense began to wreck the imperial economy. So by the late 4th century, the Roman administration had begun to

pull its troops from the British garrison anyway in order to defend the heart of the empire.

Roman Britain was subject to repeated invasions, raids, and settlements by the Angles and Saxons, and this had a number of dire results for Londinium. The governmental, religious, and commercial infrastructure that made trade possible began to fall apart. As Romano-British society and culture faded, Anglo-Saxon society and culture did not, at first, take up the slack. Londinium itself was dying. As its security fell away, then its power, then its trade, Londinium, for the first and only time in its history, ceased to have a reason to exist. Gradually its people seem to have fallen away as well. The period 450–600 C.E. has left almost no evidence of habitation for this part of the world, so historians and archaeologists still debate whether Londinium was abandoned entirely or merely shrank to a shadow of its former self. Most historians suspect that its population dwindled to perhaps 10,000. At best, Londinium had become an artificial construct, a sad monument to former greatness. It would take centuries for its conquerors to revive it. ■

## Suggested Reading

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap. 1.

Perring, *Roman London*.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why was London so attractive a site for the Romans?

**2.** Why was it so easy for them to give it up?

# Medieval London's Thousand-Year Climb

## Lecture 3

**King Alfred (or Alfred the Great), who ruled from 871 to 899, and his descendants would eventually unite all of Angle-land into something like what we today know as England, but they faced two obstacles—one internal, one external—in attempting to do so. The first obstacle was London itself.**

By about 500 C.E., Londinium was a shadow of its former self. It was cut off from the rest of Britain and the Continent. It was economically, and probably culturally, moribund. It was militarily defenseless. It was certainly depopulated and possibly deserted. The exception to all of this devastation was the church. In 597, Pope Gregory I sent Saint Augustine to Britain to convert the Anglo-Saxons. One of Augustine's successes was Aethelbert, King of the Saxons of Kent, who established London's first cathedral, dedicated to Saint Paul, in about 604. By the 8th century, London was a Christian city. By 1200, some 127 churches had been built within the square mile of the walls, endowed by wealthy patrons to save their souls from long sentences in Purgatory. As a result, the church ended up owning much of medieval London. The church was also the main provider of services like schools and hospitals. Meanwhile, the Anglo-Saxons gradually began to settle down and become farmers and even city dwellers in the 6th and 7th centuries. The kings of Essex, in England's southeast, found London a convenient administrative center, which also implied military significance. Between 600 and 800, the port of London began to revive.

Perhaps the pillar of London's significance that took longest to re-erect was that of government. Basing their capital at Winchester, the Wessex line, most notably King Alfred (r. 871–899) and his descendants, would eventually unite "Angle-land" into something like what we today know as England. But they faced two obstacles: The city's independent streak (because of which its citizens resisted incorporation into a Wessex empire) and the Vikings, a group of warrior tribes. Based in Scandinavia, between 700 and 1100 they became a menace to all Europe, riding their swift longboats down European rivers, across the North Sea and beyond to attack any settlement that

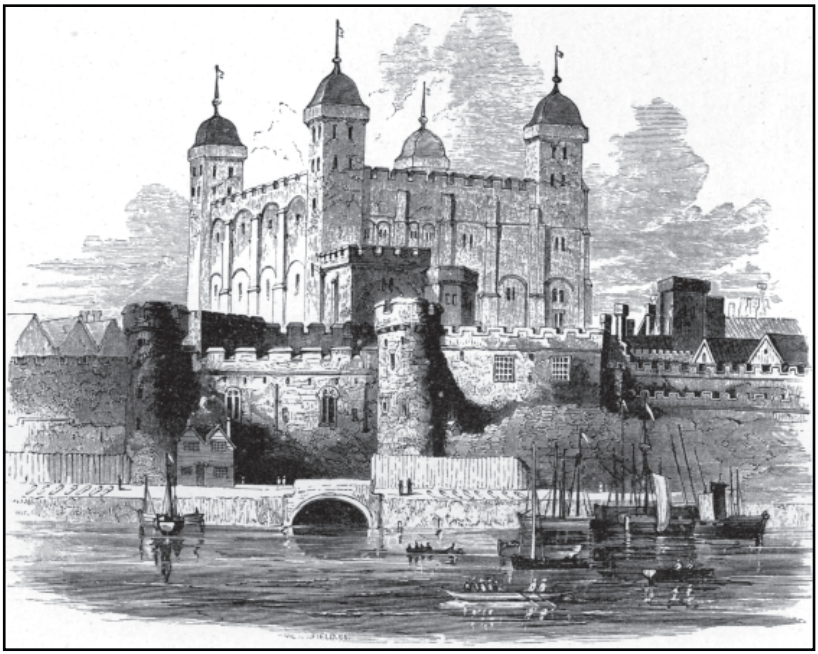
promised plunder, such as an increasingly prosperous Anglo-Saxon London. In 851 London was taken by storm and held off and on by Viking kings until 886. They were good in the long run for both the Wessex kings and their largest city.

Londoners realized that they needed the protection of a powerful king, and in 886 Alfred "liberated" London from the Vikings and strengthened the city's fortifications and infrastructure. England continued to face Viking invasions in the 10th and 11th centuries—and as London went, so went England. At the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, Edward the Confessor (r. 1042–1066) founded Westminster Abbey.

The death of the childless Edward the Confessor on January 5, 1066, produced a succession crisis that would, in turn, put an end to Anglo-Saxon rule in England. It is generally accepted that William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, won the English crown when his army killed the Anglo-Saxon claimant to the throne, Harold II, and defeated his forces at the Battle of Hastings in Sussex on October 14, 1066. But William needed London. The surviving Anglo-Saxon leaders had rallied to yet another claimant, Edgar, who had fled to London to organize resistance. William spent the remainder of the autumn burning crops and laying waste to a wide swath of land, about 100 miles in diameter, centered on London. Then he burned Southwark. The Anglo-Saxon ruling elite capitulated.

William was crowned in Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day 1066. William the Conqueror introduced a new, Norman dynasty and a Norman-French ruling class, who displaced the old Anglo-Saxon elite in office, titles, lands, and wealth. Not trusting his Anglo-Saxon subjects, he built a number of castles, including the Tower of London at the wall's eastern anchor point. The other major change the Norman kings brought to London was to make Westminster the capital.

The period of 1066–1485 was one of intermittent conflict between the king and his barons. Throughout the period, London was a key player because of its strategic location, wealth, and prestige. Generally, when the king was strong and successful, city authorities were happy to lend him money and support, providing troops, huge tax revenues, and—later—loans. But when



The Teaching Company Collection.

**The Tower of London, the eastern anchor of the Norman city, still stands today.**

the king was weak, his rule subject to question by powerful barons, London asserted its independence. To win municipal support, medieval kings would often grant concessions, usually by means of a charter under the Great Seal of England. Henry I granted London a charter, which in turn granted it the right to elect two sheriffs, to hold its own courts, to fix the total city tax burden at £300, for trade to be free of taxes and tolls, and not to pay the Danegeld or have troops billeted. In the reign of John—when he was regent for his brother, Richard the Lionhearted—the Crown granted London a charter guaranteeing the right to govern itself.

Subsequent kings tried to revoke the privileges granted by John. Henry III set aside the aldermen's choice for mayor 10 times between 1239 and 1257. London responded in the 1260s by supporting the rebel Simon de Montfort. Henry's son, Edward I, ruled the city directly in 1284–1297 but was eventually forced to relent. Subsequently, when the monarch kept London's

loyalty, he kept his crown. Under Richard II in 1381, the lord mayor stood up to the leaders of the Peasants' Revolt, and it failed. But in 1399, Londoners supported the deposition of Richard by Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Lancaster. During the Wars of the Roses (1456–1485), in 1461, Londoners opened their gates to the Duke of York, who thereby became Edward IV. A quarter century later, after the Yorkist Richard III had lost his crown on Bosworth Field, London welcomed Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, as King Henry VII.

**When the monarch kept London's loyalty, he kept his crown.**

By about 1500, as the Middle Ages ended, London had resumed its position of primacy among the cites of England. It was once again the capital and seat of government, the most important port and economic hub, the military keystone of the country, and a major religious center. ■

## Suggested Reading

Brooke and Keir, *London 800–1216*.

Inwood, *A History of London*, chaps. 2–3.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why was London a natural capital for England? Why did it take so long to figure this out?

**2.** Who was ultimately in the stronger position, the king or London?

# Economic Life in Chaucer's London

## Lecture 4

**According to the story, young Dick [Whittington] was asked to contribute something to his master's trading voyage to North Africa. All Whittington could come up with was his cat. While the ship was away, Dick grew discouraged and he attempted to leave London by the Great Northern Road but on Highgate Hill he heard the bells of St. Mary-le-Bow, Bow Bells, calling him: "Turn again, Whittington, thrice mayor of London." Returning, he found that the king of Morocco was so pleased with the cat's mousing abilities that young Whittington was now a rich man; the king of Morocco having paid an exorbitant amount of money for this cat. This enabled him to marry his master's daughter and become lord mayor. This became the archetype of London's story, poor boy makes good.**

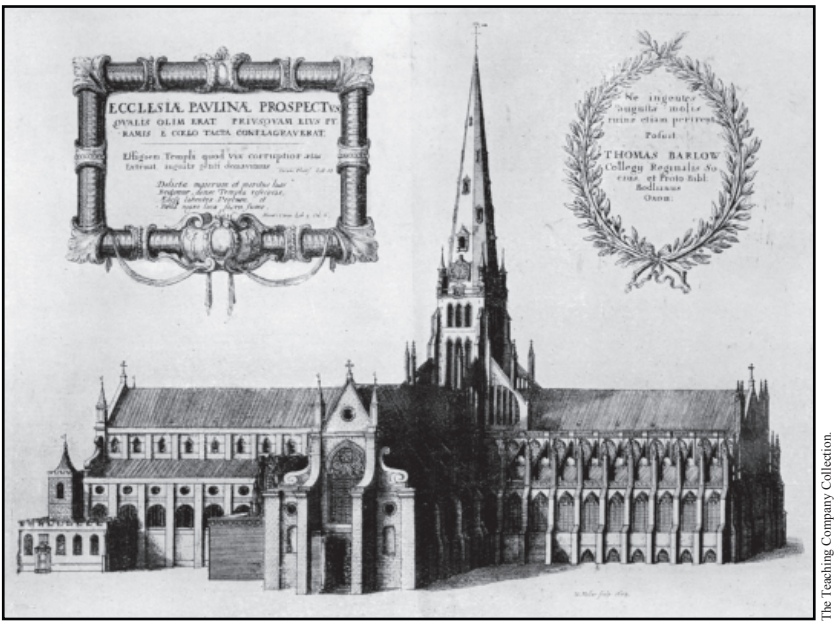
So far, we have discussed London's importance, its foundation under the Romans, and its development of an independent streak during the Middle Ages. But what was London actually like to live in? Medieval London was the most populous city in England, but at only about 30,000–45,000 people, it was still a rather modest capital for a small country on the fringes of Europe. Medieval London was still a walled town, with a few roads connecting it to the countryside. But its overseas trade brought luxury goods from Europe in exchange for raw wool. This lecture takes us on a walk through the commercial sector of medieval London, culminating in the shopping district of Cheapside, dominated by the livery companies.

Geoffrey Chaucer, arguably the first great English poet whom we know by name, was a lifelong Londoner, so he never immigrated there, never arrived for the first time. Therefore, our tour of Chaucer's London will begin with one of his contemporaries, who, according to legend, came to London from the country, a poor scullery boy who rose to be lord mayor three times: Dick Whittington.

In fact, historians now know that the real Whittington was not poor. He probably came to London at the traditional age of apprenticeship, 14, which

would place his arrival in about 1365. He probably arrived along the Great Northern Road laid out in Roman times, and one route would have taken him down Hampstead Heath and Highgate Hill. We pause, as young Whittington must have done, at the top of Highgate Hill to get our first view of the city below us about 1365. Looking south and slightly east, we spy the horizontal thread of the river, dividing the city in two. Most of the city lies on our side, the northern bank, and the two banks are connected by London Bridge, built in 1176. Across the bridge we notice a small community, Southwark, which like Westminster is outside of city control. Since Roman times, it has been the home of the Bankside stews, riverside brothels owned and regulated by the bishop of Winchester. But for most of London's history, the action has been on the north bank.

London's vertical profile is dominated by the spire of St. Paul's Cathedral, which rises to nearly 550 feet. We now plunge in, making our way, as




The Teaching Company Collection.

**Old St. Paul's Cathedral dominated London's skyline in the late Middle Ages.**

Whittington probably did, down Highgate Hill, to the village of Islington, through the old city wall at Aldersgate, into Aldersgate Street. Aldersgate was one of the eight gates that funneled people and goods through London's ancient wall. The wall itself was about 18 feet high and 6–9 feet thick, with battlements. The area within the Roman walls of the old city is today known as "the City." This area of 330 acres defines the official city of London.

Because the medieval city developed haphazardly, the old Roman grid pattern was distorted by a bewildering maze of lanes, alleys, and courtyards. Because everyone wanted to live within the walls, substantial houses were narrow in the front at street level but were five and six stories high, overhanging the street, their tops almost touching. Houses of poor Londoners were built of wattle and daub and prone to collapse. They were so crowded together that they tended to burn.

**Because the medieval city developed haphazardly, the old Roman grid pattern was distorted by a bewildering maze of lanes, alleys, and courtyards.**

Walking east along London Wall, we head for the river and reach London's first great landmark, the Tower on Tower Hill. Originally, as built under William the Conqueror and finished by his sons, the Tower was just the Great Keep or White Tower with its four turrets. Subsequent medieval kings built additional buildings: a wall around the White Tower, the Bell Tower, the Wardrobe Tower, a moat, and an outer wall. In 1235 Edward's son, Henry III, was given three leopards by the Holy Roman Emperor, the beginning of the King's Menagerie. From 1303 the crown jewels were deposited here, and from the 13th until the 17th centuries, English monarchs spent the night before their coronation at the Tower. The Tower was also a notorious prison.

If we move west from the Tower, we come to London's docks. Many of them were named for the goods they serviced, (e.g., the Hay Wharf or Wood Quay). We can't help but notice the sights, sounds, and smells of London's commerce at work.

From the docks we move, like the goods themselves, north up any one of a number of narrow lanes to an east-west street called Eastcheap. Shopkeepers in particular trades tended to congregate in the same part of town. Because the London livery companies set prices and wages, there was no real competition, no reason to set up shop in an underserved area. Moving west down Eastcheap, we note London's meat market. Moving northward at the corner of Gracious (or Gracechurch) Street and Eastcheap, we look down three streets forming a wedge called the Poultry: Lombard Street, Cornhill, and Threadneedle Street. Cornhill was and is the economic heart of the City. This was where the grain factors met. Threadneedle Street was at this time home to the tailors. Lombard Street was where the Italian bankers worked, outdoors. The Poultry itself was London's market for fowl, pigs, and rabbits.

Moving west from the Poultry, we emerge into one of the widest and most impressive thoroughfares in central London: Cheapside. This was London's chief shopping street. It was lined with shops, as well as makeshift stalls in the center. Because of its length and width, Cheapside was also a grand street for tournaments and civic processions, such as the lord mayor's annual installation. Because Cheapside was such a public space, it was also, during the Middle Ages, a place of exemplary punishment, especially for dishonest merchants.

The street is connected with other trading areas. To our right are Grocer's Lane, Ironmonger Alley, and Milk Street. To our left are Bread Street and Goldsmith's Row. Nearly all of these occupational groups had their own guilds (or as they are called in London, livery companies). While most towns had only one guild, London had one livery company for each trade, about 50 in all, each with its own impressive gothic hall. These organizations grew out of the medieval church's hostility to certain aspects of capitalism, in particular the potential for sharp practice and social mobility. They were called livery companies because, traditionally, each trade had its own distinctive uniform, or livery. Specifically, a livery company was an organization of London tradesmen granted privileges by a royal charter as well as by the lord mayor and aldermen to set prices, wages, and standards of quality for all its merchants and tradesmen. The fundamental fact of economic life in London

in 1365, and to a declining extent well into the 19th century, was that it was organized around the livery companies. ■

## Suggested Reading

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap. 4.

Myers, *London in the Age of Chaucer*.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why did the myth of Dick Whittington trump his reality?

**2.** Why were the medieval church and its livery companies so opposed to capitalism?

# Politics and Religion in Chaucer's London

## Lecture 5

**St. Mary-le-Bow's tower was significant, for this church's bells rang out London's curfew. … Having visited economic London at the docks, and on Cheapside, and military and royal London at the Tower, and civic London at the Guildhall, Bow bells remind us that it's now time to get some religion.**

Heading north up Ironmonger Lane to Basinghall Street, we reach London's city hall, the Guildhall. The current Guildhall was built in 1411 and would survive the fire in 1666 and a bomb hit in 1940 to remain the official headquarters of City government into the 21st century. This is the seat of the lord mayor, the Court of Aldermen, and the Common Council, the legislative branches of London government.

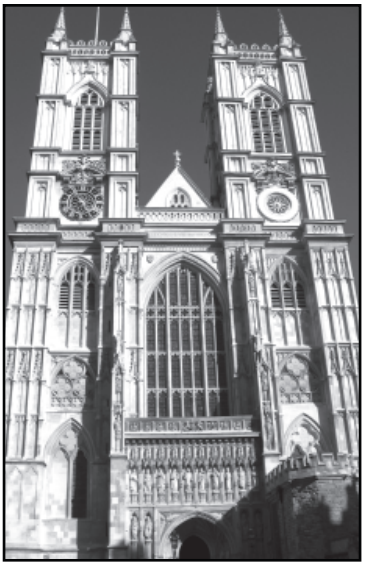
The lord mayor was elected annually by the citizens (i.e., guild members) of London. To assist the lord mayor in his executive functions, London had by 1365 two sheriffs, a recorder, a town clerk, and an army of subordinate officers: constables to enforce the law, scavengers to pick up trash, and criers and night watchmen at the precinct level. The key figures were London's 25 aldermen. The Court of Aldermen appointed people to subordinate offices, issued proclamations and orders regarding public health and morals, and had the right to veto any legislation passed by Common Council or Common Hall. There was much potential for conflict in this system, but it also meant that London's government was the most democratic in England.

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing London's government during Chaucer's lifetime was the Black Death of 1348–1349. The Black Death was probably the bubonic plague (*Pasteurella pestis*) that had decimated Europe periodically through ancient times. The disease was spread by the bite of a flea, carried on the back of the black rat, which rode in carts of grain or ships' holds to other cities, where crowded, unhygienic conditions allowed the rats to thrive. Once you were bitten, disease onset was sudden, and your odds of survival were one in four.

Medieval medical science was totally baffled by the disease. London's government was largely ineffective in fighting the plague, apart from attempting to clean up the filth and excrement from London's streets. The plague lasted through the winter, peaking between February and Easter of 1349. The Plague returned in 1361–1362, 1368–1369, and 1407. It took a century for London's population to recover, not least because the unsanitary city also faced outbreaks of tuberculosis, typhus, dysentery, smallpox, diphtheria, and measles.

**Along with Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's is one of two great national churches in London. But St. Paul's is also a great local institution.**

At the west end of Cheapside sits the greatest religious building in London, St. Paul's Cathedral, subsequently known as Old St. Paul's after it burned down in 1666. This was easily the greatest church in England and, as we will recall from seeing it from afar, the dominant building in London's skyline. It was 585 feet long. In 1365, its spire rose nearly 550 feet. Along with Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's is one of two great national churches in London. But St. Paul's is also a great local institution. In the northeast corner of the churchyard was Paul's Cross, a freestanding pulpit from which announcements were made, citizens were summoned three times a year to the "folk-moot," and some of the most notable sermons in London were delivered. Once printing was invented in the 15th century, St. Paul's churchyard would also be home to stationers, printers, and booksellers. The nave of London's greatest building was a public place, and on weekdays scribes, lawyers, and government officials, even tradesmen, set up shop in the aisles.





**Westminster Abbey is the religious heart of Westminster.**

Leaving St. Paul's, we head west down Ludgate Hill, through the Ludgate itself to Fleet Street. Fleet Street is named for the River Fleet. During the Middle Ages, cutlers, butchers, and tanners would dispose of animal carcasses and byproducts of metallurgy and leather working in the River Fleet. The river also served as a convenient open sewer, leading to frequent complaints about the stench. Perhaps because it was only yards from Newgate Prison, within a century or two, this area would develop a series of law schools: the famous Inns of Court. Carrying on down Fleet Street, we pass under Temple Bar, which represents the outermost reaches of the legal City.

To the west of the City lies Westminster. Westminster was not part of the City of London, as it lies outside of the City walls and so the lord mayor's jurisdiction. The principal east-west land route between the City and Westminster is an unpaved dirt track called the Strand. To the left or river side of the street, we view a series of stately bishops' palaces—called inns—stretching along the Thames all the way down to Westminster. These inns represent the power and wealth of the church in London. In the Middle Ages, most bishops spent most of their time in London, serving the king in high office or hanging out at court, hoping for preferment. On the right side of the street we see only a few shops and, just beyond them, open fields: rural London.



**The abbey did not acquire its twin towers until the 18th century.**

We continue down the Strand to the village of Charing. Following the river, we then turn left onto a dirt track later

known as King's Street to Westminster. The religious and emotional heart of the Westminster complex is Westminster Abbey. Every English monarch since William the Conqueror has been crowned here, except Edward V and Edward VIII, who never made it to their coronations. From 1245 to 1272, Henry III pulled down the cruciform Edwardian building and erected the present high gothic masterpiece, though the twin towers known to modern visitors would not be built until the 18th century. The present abbey is heavily influenced by French models like Amiens and Rheims. If St. Paul's is London's parish church, then Westminster Abbey is the nation's.

Near here is the Chapter House, where the House of Commons met until 1547. Just outside this part of the abbey we find shops, beggars, and thieves, in part because this is a place of sanctuary. In December 1476, William Caxton will set up England's first print shop in a rented house near here at the sign of the Red Pale. Westminster Hall to the northeast was built in 1097 by William II as an extension of Edward the Confessor's palace. Westminster Palace, built by Edward the Confessor as his principal London residence, would serve as the home base of the court of England until a fire damaged it in 1512. ■

## Suggested Reading

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap. 4.

Robertson, *Chaucer's London*.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why did St. Paul's Cathedral serve as a community center as well as a church? What was the medieval attitude toward church and state?

**2.** What sorts of tensions might have existed between economic London to the east and governmental London to the west?

# London Embraces the Early Tudors

## Lecture 6

**"I say to you, on the word of a prince, I cannot tell how naturally the mother loveth the child, for I was never the mother of any; but certainly, if a prince and a governor may as naturally and earnestly love her subjects as the mother doth love the child, then assure yourselves that I, being your lady and mistress, do as earnestly and tenderly love and favor you."—Queen Mary I**

It was under the Tudors that London came into its own as a royal city. The house of Tudor used the city as a great stage across which to process for the delight of their subjects—and the enhancement of their power. On August 22, 1485, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, defeated King Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field. On September 3 the new king, now known as Henry VII, entered London, greeted by trumpeters, poems in his honor, and a gift of 1,000 marks from the City.

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**Henry VII, the first Tudor king (1457–1509, r. 1485–1509).**

Thus began London's love affair with the house of Tudor that would last—with occasional tiffs—nearly until the death of Henry VII's granddaughter, Elizabeth I, in 1603. The Tudors would play to London, using it as a stage upon which to act the great drama of their rule. They would intimidate London with power. They would woo London with flattery and public appearances.

Henry VII (r. 1485–1509) was keen to assert his kingship rather than beg it from Parliament. His magnificent coronation procession was designed to emphasize his legitimacy. Subsequent ceremonies during his reign continued to emphasize his power and magnificence. He also set the tone with a vibrant court life. He built the magnificent Henry VII

Chapel at Westminster Abbey. He also sponsored elaborate festivals at court for Christmas, Easter, and Saint George's Day.

Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547) staged a magnificent coronation, but after that there was not much civic pageantry in his reign. He was a restless sort who did not necessarily like to stay very long in London. Rather, he traveled about the country and between his 60 palaces, houses, and hunting lodges. As a young king, Henry preferred outdoor activities like hunting in St. James's Park, tournaments, pageants, and "spontaneous" interactions with Londoners that were really carefully staged, such as his May Day excursion to Greenwich in 1515. But he also renovated Westminster Palace after a disastrous fire in 1512. He built a new palace down by the River Fleet, Bridewell, occupied from 1514 to 1529. In 1529 he abandoned the insalubrious Bridewell, confiscating Whitehall, the former York Place, from Thomas, Cardinal Wolsey. These central London houses were ringed with others, radiating from the center.

Another kind of royal "street theater" took place at the Evil May Day riots of 1517. Following an incendiary Paul's Cross sermon by a Rev. Dr. Bell, there were sporadic attacks on foreigners. Late on the night of April 30, an altercation in Cheapside over enforcement of curfew resulted in a riot involving 1,000 apprentices, who marched on St. Martin le Grand, an area north of St. Paul's where many resident aliens lived. Henry VIII sent royal troops, arresting some 300 rioters. Tradition has it that Catherine of Aragon, supported by Cardinal Wolsey, begged for their pardon on bended knee, with tears in her eyes. As a result, the punishments were limited: Fourteen were hanged for treason, and May Day was suppressed for years to come. Evil May Day illustrates the fragility of order in London: the destabilizing force of thousands of apprentices with little to do; the importance of street theater; the ability of

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**Catherine of Aragon, first wife of King Henry VIII.**

the Tudors to push back with a theater of their own, emphasizing their power and mercy.

Henry VIII had two great effects on London. He spent vast amounts of money on war, which drained his treasury. Also, his recoinage contributed to massive inflation, which plunged the country into an economic depression that affected London severely. Henry also launched the Reformation in England, affecting London in both the short and the long term.

**Henry also launched the Reformation in England, affecting London in both the short and the long term.**

The redistribution of land was the major initiative affecting London during Edward VI's regime (1547–1553). Londoners liked his establishment of a Protestant religious settlement; Protestantism took root in London for several reasons. London was a port, and so it was the first place where Protestant books and travelers alighted. Protestantism emphasized literacy and individual interpretation of scripture, which appealed to a city full of literate merchants. Unfortunately for Protestantism, by late 1552 Edward began a slow death from tuberculosis. Since the next heir—his elder sister Mary, the daughter of Catherine of Aragon—was Catholic, Edward and his ministers tried to divert the succession to a Protestant relative, Lady Jane Gray. At Edward's death on July 9, 1553, the Privy Council in London proclaimed Jane queen, but on July 19 Henry FitzAlan, Earl of Arundel, convinced the Privy Council to proclaim Mary.

Mary I's was the most tragic Tudor reign (1553–1558), in part because she misinterpreted her mandate as coming from God, rather than her people. The decision to marry to Philip of Spain led to Wyatt's rebellion, in which London would, once again, hold the crucial balance. In January 1554, Sir Thomas Wyatt raised a rebellion of 3,000 men in Kent and marched on London. Lacking an army of her own, Mary turned to the citizens of London via an eloquent speech at the Guildhall. She then rallied the royal guards and the citizenry of London, who stopped Wyatt at the Southwark end of London Bridge. Afterward, Wyatt and about 90 of his followers were executed,

along with Lady Jane Grey. Mary's younger sister, the Protestant Princess Elizabeth, also came under suspicion and was lodged in the Tower.

In 1553–1554, Mary persuaded Parliament to repeal the Protestant legislation of Edward VI's reign and restore the power of the pope, the Latin mass, the seven sacraments, and the laws against heresy. Devoted Protestants had two choices: flight to the Continent or martyrdom at the stake. Over the next few years, Mary's regime burnt 237 men and 52 women—many of them adolescents, most of humble background—mostly at Smithfield, then London's meat market. It is little wonder that, at Mary's death and Elizabeth's accession on November 17, 1558, the bells rang in London. ■

## Suggested Reading

Brigden, *London and the Reformation*.

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap. 5.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why did London generally like the Tudors?

**2.** Why did early modern people reject religious toleration?

# Elizabeth I and London as a Stage

## Lecture 7

**In paintings, [Elizabeth] was depicted not as a human being but more as a medieval saintly icon, emerging from out of the map of England as in the Ditchely portrait, or facing the future while her navy defeats the Spanish Armada in the background of the famous Armada portrait. In fact, she regulated that image carefully as any minister of propaganda would do today in a totalitarian state.**

If the early Tudors forged a successful relationship with London, the last Tudor, Elizabeth I, perfected it. Looking back, it is easy to project the successes of Elizabeth's reign on its beginning and assume that everyone was thrilled at the accession of the new monarch. In fact, Elizabeth I came to the throne of a country beset by problems: a losing war with France and trouble on the Scottish border, a wrecked economy and an empty treasury, a nation torn and almost literally bleeding over religion, and a set of cultural norms that said women could not rule effectively—seemingly confirmed by the previous reign.

Fortunately, the new queen had many qualities that enabled her to negotiate tight corners: great native intelligence and a superb humanist education; good looks and a real sense of style; and an ability to play two sides against each other, which would prove especially useful in dealing with various difficulties, including Factions within her privy council, negotiations with France and Spain, an endless array of suitors for her hand in marriage, and conflicting religious factions. (The Anglican Church she established in 1559 mixed Catholic ritual and Protestant theology. This pleased all but die-hard Catholics and the most intense Protestants, who came to be known as Puritans.) Most importantly for our purposes, Elizabeth had the common touch.

We see Elizabeth's self-command and common touch, too, in her own coronation entry into London on January 14, 1559. Elizabeth was seated in a golden chariot and was wearing a blue velvet robe. Accompanied by the nobility and many gentlemen in "rich attire," she passed by pageants,

through elaborate arches, and amid all sorts of demonstrations, many carefully orchestrated by local notables at the instigation of the lord mayor and aldermen, anxious to demonstrate municipal loyalty. On her part, she was careful to recognize civic London and work the crowd. Londoners—who do not much like hierarchy—ate it up, but they also tested her with religious gifts and displays in an attempt to get her to avow that she was a good Protestant. Perhaps not literally pressing the flesh, she allowed the commonest of her subjects—as the "Virgin Queen," she called them her "good husbands"—to approach her, kiss her hand, tell her about their problems, and give her advice. In effect, Elizabeth turned her capital into the great stage on which she acted out the drama of Tudor monarchy, with herself as the star.

Elizabeth needed City support. As she was chronically short of funds, she needed loans from City merchants to pay for the wars at the beginning of her reign with France and Scotland. In return for their loans, she enhanced the power of the Merchant Adventurers, the most important merchants' lobbying group, in 1564 granting them a monopoly on all cloth exports. She also supported raids on the Spanish empire by privateers like Hawkins and Drake that were good for London trade in the short run. But in the end, the Continental wars of religion and conflicts with Spain disrupted trade. In 1568, in retaliation for English raids, Philip II closed the cloth staple at Antwerp. This led to a decline in the wool trade.

**Elizabeth used her court at Whitehall, Greenwich, and Richmond to create the image of the Virgin Queen: a loving bride to her people, a pure virgin to be defended by the gentlemen of England.**

It is a tribute to the queen's popularity that these events did not make London grumble too much, even when they culminated in the attempted invasion by the Spanish Armada in 1588. When the armada was finally defeated, the queen proclaimed a national day of thanksgiving on November 24, 1588, and processed through crowded streets to St. Paul's. Eyewitness testimony gives plenty of evidence of the people's affection for their queen.

Elizabeth used her court at Whitehall, Greenwich, and Richmond to create the image of the Virgin Queen: a loving bride to her people, a pure virgin to be defended by the gentlemen of England. This image eventually evolved by the 1580s into that of "Gloriana," a benevolent goddess above mere mortal desires and certainly above faction. If you were a member of the elite, the way to access her was at court; here, too, she concentrated on display. She sponsored annual Accession Day pageants and tournaments on November 17th at Whitehall. She also made occasional forays into the City.

The court itself was mysterious and impressive, best described by a German tourist, Paul Hentzner, in 1598. Elizabeth gathered at her court artists, poets, and playwrights who were urged to portray her as a semidivine being, no mere woman but a symbol of England. This trickled down into popular entertainments: She was praised as "Sweet Bessy" in ballads, and she was depicted in love songs and hymns as well. Part of this image was that she was unattainable: Courtiers frequently lamented their inability to get to her, especially to obtain places. In fact, Elizabeth was notoriously cheap and so tended to prefer to string artists along with hope rather than reward them with riches. In paintings, she was depicted not as a human but more like a medieval saintly icon. In fact, she regulated her image as carefully as any minister of propaganda in a totalitarian state.

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**James I, the first Stuart monarch (1566–1625, r. 1603–1625).**

As her reign drew to a close, Elizabeth lost some of her hold on London. By 1601 the country had suffered 15 years of war and high taxes. And there were additional complications: the strain of military musters; a sense that they were getting a little sick of her; the worst famine in over a century in the mid-1590s; a wool trade in decline thanks to the war; and demonstrations

in London in the mid-1590s, and again in 1601 at Westminster Palace, over high taxation. Toward the end of her reign, two groups vied for power at court—and to be in power when the next reign started. Most of the levers of government were in the hands of a group of administrators and functionaries led by Sir Robert Cecil, secretary of state. The other group, filled with courtiers, soldiers, and writers, was led by the young and dashing Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex.

By 1601, with the queen's reign drawing to a close, it became clear that Cecil's position was impregnable. In February, Essex tried to raise a rebellion in London, but nobody came. Essex was arrested and executed within the month. The City could still depose a king, but it did not back losers. Elizabeth died at about 3 am on March 23, 1603. James I was proclaimed by Cecil at Whitehall Gates. As for the City, security was paramount.

The great Tudor achievement was not the triumph over the armada but constructing a state and taming a city so well that James VI of Scotland could succeed from a distance of several hundred miles without incident. The Tudors, Queen Elizabeth in particular, had wooed London, mostly successfully, for over a century. She had perfected the art of Tudor public relations, and the City had more often than not stood by her. But by the end of her reign, the strain of high taxes and constant war, combined with people being just a little tired of the old lady at Whitehall, meant that they received the news of her death with mixed emotions. Londoners were ready for a change in 1603, and they greeted James I with cheers. As we will see in subsequent lectures, they ended up regretting some of that enthusiasm. ■

## Suggested Reading

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap. 6.

Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** What was it about Elizabeth that retained London's loyalty?

**2.** Why was it important for Elizabeth's propaganda campaign to portray her as superhuman? How does that fit with her well-known common touch?

# Life in Shakespeare's London—East

## Lecture 8

**[Shakespeare] would probably have noticed a darker pall of smoke than in Chaucer's day from the thousands of chimneys. … Under the pall lay the horizontal spectacle of the river, still a silver green snake stretching from horizon east to horizon west dividing the city in two … far more crowded with ships than in 1365—a testament to London's burgeoning trade. Market gardens grew food and cattle grazed where Whitechapel, Stepney, Hackney, Poplar, and Bethnal Green now stand. But by 1590, the fields east of the Tower were being filled in with houses, with workshops, and with docks.**

In the last lecture, we saw Queen Elizabeth I use London as a stage and cast its citizens as the extras in a drama in which she starred. Appropriately, it was during her reign that the public stage really took off in London. Among those attracted to the new world of the theater was a young man from Warwickshire named William Shakespeare. Sometime between 1585 and 1592, he joined the great wave of migration to London.

Between 1525 and 1600, London grew from 50,000 to 200,000 souls. We know from parish registers that the increase did not come from new births. The city was murderous due to overcrowding, disease, crime, and accidents. Therefore, for London to grow, it needed a net influx of about 6,000 migrants per year. Many were driven out of their villages by overpopulation, land hunger, and a stagnant economy and toward London's economic opportunities. The only thing unusual about Shakespeare's arrival is that he may have come with a company of touring actors.

Shakespeare might have come by water, down the Thames, possibly meeting a barge carrying grain at Oxford. But if he was part of an acting troop, he was far more likely to have come by land on foot, or perhaps on the back of a cart from the northwest. Like Whittington, he might have paused at the top of Highgate Hill and gazed at his new home. He might have noticed a darker pall of smoke than in Chaucer's day from thousands of chimneys. London's air was becoming a problem. Under the pall he could see the

horizontal spectacle of the river dividing the city in two. The City's vertical profile is still dominated by two bookends and a centerpiece: the Tower of London to the east and the Westminster complex to the west, with St. Paul's in the middle. Surrounding it still are the towers and spires of over a hundred medieval churches within the walls. But the city limits have been pushed further east since our last visit, creating the East End.

Shakespeare might have headed down through the Aldersgate into the old walled city in search of an inn. London's great inns were like full-service hotels, providing accommodation, stabling, food, drink, and even occasional plays in their open courtyards. Typically, inns were located at the termini of major stage lines into the countryside. The link between the inn and the region it served was crucial. Often the innkeeper was an expatriate from the same region, and he might employ his fellow countrymen in the inn. Immigrants and businessmen in a strange town could make valuable business and employment contacts and receive mail and news from home.

**James Burbage built London's first purpose-built theater, called simply The Theatre, in 1576. In 1577 another theater, The Curtain, opened.**

If Shakespeare could not afford an inn, he might have headed across the fields just north of the walled city to a little actors' community at Shoreditch. This is where James Burbage built London's first purpose-built theater, called simply The Theatre, in 1576. In 1577 another theater, The Curtain, opened.

Setting off the next day, Shakespeare would walk down to the river, and just east of the Tower he finds the docks. To maximize customs revenue, Queen Elizabeth established 17 legal docks between the bridge and the Tower on the north bank of the Thames. But as London and its trade grew in the 17th century, the docks and their associated trades crept east, to Wapping, Shadwell, Rotherhythe, and beyond. Perhaps from the docks he ascended St. Katherine's Street to St. Katherine's Hospital. The hospital was dissolved at the Reformation, but the land remains a liberty—that is, a place outside of civic jurisdiction. As a result, it attracts marginal characters, prostitutes, and the poor and is ringed with tenements and shanties. The area is still dominated

by the Tower of London. In Shakespeare's day, the Tower was already more famous as a prison than a palace. In general, royal executions (e.g., Anne Boleyn and Jane Grey) took place before a small number of witnesses within the walls on Tower Green, while noble and other traitors were dispatched before large crowds on Tower Hill outside the walls.

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**Anne Boleyn was executed within the Tower's walls.**

Moving west down Tower Street, we would encounter retail London. In 1590 our first notice is not visual but aural, as we hear London's famous street cries. Shopkeepers in particular trades still congregate together. Turning northward, we revisit the financial heart of the City at Cornhill. By Shakespeare's day the bankers of Lombard Street have moved indoors into the Royal Exchange, a colonnaded piazza with shops above. This was so successful that a second exchange, called the New Exchange, would be built in the 17th century along the Strand. Both would become popular gathering places, not unlike shopping malls today.

We descend Cornhill into Cheapside, still lined with magnificent shops, still the backbone of a network of streets named for the professions that inhabit them. The livery companies still control every aspect of their trades, but in 1590 their hold was starting to weaken. The Reformation ended their religious functions. As London grew beyond its walls, it became harder for the guild to watch out for nonliveried businessmen, especially in the suburbs. The livery companies were also losing authority to the great trading lobby of overseas merchants, the Merchant Adventurers.

The west end of Cheapside leads us to St. Paul's Cathedral. This is still the greatest church in England and the most dominant building in London. But by 1590, its decaying fabric was a national scandal. In 1561 the spire had succumbed to lightning, giving the gothic cathedral a much more square and dumpy look. At the Reformation, most of the land owned by the dean and chapter was confiscated; revenue plummeted, and the chapter could no

longer maintain the building's fabric. Moreover, much of St. Paul's statuary and stained glass was destroyed as idolatrous. The nave itself, known as Paul's Walk, had become a common thoroughfare for vendors of food and drink. The rest of the cathedral had become another bourse, where business deals are struck, professionals are consulted, and produce and horses are sold across tombs. The churchyard contained numerous bookstalls owned by the great printers of Fleet Street. The northeast corner of the churchyard still contains Paul's Cross, the freestanding pulpit where public notices are announced and challenging sermons are given by the leading preachers of the day.

Continuing west down Ludgate Hill through the Ludgate itself, we encounter legal London. Just north of us is the Old Bailey, built in 1539, where London's felonies are tried. Next to it is the notorious Newgate Prison, already in a ruinous condition by the end of the 16th century. To our left is Bridewell Prison, originally a royal palace but now a workhouse and hospital for the deserving poor and a short-term prison for minor offenders, vagrants, and sturdy beggars. We cross Fleet Bridge carefully, for this is still a popular staging area for apprentice riots and other youthful gangs. It is very close to the city's most notorious liberty, a thieves' kitchen known as Alsatia. Thanks to the establishment of a press here in 1500 by Wynkyn de Worde, Fleet Street is also the publishing center of England. We are only steps away from London's four great law schools: the Middle Temple and Inner Temple along Fleet Street; Lincoln's Inn to the north at the end of Chancery Lane; and Grey's Inn further north still across Holborn.

We pause in the beautiful riverside gardens of the Middle Temple. In Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part 1*, this is where the Duke of York and the Duke of Somerset pluck a white rose and a red rose, respectively, to signal their enmity, and so the start of the Wars of the Roses. From here, looking east, we see the great city rise before us, capped by the ramshackle stub of St. Paul's. ■

## Suggested Reading

Holmes, *Elizabethan London*.

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap. 6.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** What might Shakespeare have learned about London and human nature walking along London's docks, in Cheapside, or in the nave of St. Paul's?

**2.** Why did so many people come to London if it was so dangerous?

# Life in Shakespeare's London—West

## Lecture 9

**Westminster Palace … was Edward the Confessor's palace, and it had served as the home base of the court of England until a fire damaged it in 1512. Henry VIII abandoned it, first for Bridewell and then permanently for Whitehall. What to do with a half-burnt royal palace on prime real estate? Give it to Parliament.**

Up to this point, the city we have explored was still largely the medieval town Chaucer knew, albeit somewhat more secular thanks to the Reformation. But once we return to Fleet Street and head west through Temple Bar onto the Strand, we begin to see signs of a new, bigger, and more vibrant London. Temple Bar represents the outermost reaches of the legal City of London. The Strand is the principal land connection between the City and Westminster. On its south side, to our left we see the same series of stately palaces stretching down to Westminster that we saw two centuries ago, except now they are named for powerful aristocrats, not bishops. If we look right, we see rows of shops, and beyond them to the north, open fields. But between 1600 and 1750, the West End would all be filled in, moving the center of London's gravity beyond the walls, to the west. That process began in 1627 with the creation of London's first square, Covent Garden, designed by Inigo Jones on properties owned by the Russell family.

Following the river, we turn at Charing Cross onto King's Street, later known as Whitehall Street, and get a good view of Westminster and the complex of buildings that form the heart of English government. Walking toward them, we encounter, straddling the street, the rambling series of buildings that comprise Whitehall Palace. Whitehall sits on the site of the original York Place, the ancient palace of the Archbishop of York. It was confiscated from Thomas, Cardinal Wolsey, by Henry VIII in 1529.

We continue down King's Street to the heart of the capital, the complex of buildings laid out in the Middle Ages as Westminster. As before, the religious and emotional heart of the Westminster complex is Westminster Abbey. Westminster Hall, built in 1097 by William II (William Rufus), had

served as the home base of the court of England until a fire damaged it in 1512. Henry VIII abandoned it, giving it to Parliament. It is now divided into various law courts: King's Bench, Chancery, Exchequer, and Common Pleas. Westminster is also full of lodging houses for members of Parliament and courtiers. As in the Middle Ages, because the rich congregate here, so do the poor, which means that crime and begging remain a local hazard.

At the end of our long hike through London, it is time for a little entertainment. Southwark consists of five manors, three of which were purchased by the City in 1550, forming London's 26th ward, Bridge Ward Without. But because it developed across the river, outside of the jurisdiction of the lord mayor and Court of Aldermen, Southwark was a place where activities slightly disreputable, even dangerous, could flourish. By 1590 Southwark had also developed a theater district, and from our vantage point at Westminster we see a flag flying at the Rose—a sure sign of a play this afternoon.

The obvious way to cross the river is to head back into the City and take London Bridge, the only land route across the river until 1750. The bridge here in 1590 dated back to 1176, a replacement for structures previously burned. Because London real estate was at a premium, the bridge was completely covered by houses and shops. London Bridge was a perennial traffic jam. In part to avoid this traffic, we hail a barge instead.

Both the north and south banks have numerous stairs and water gates leading down to the river. The greatest inhabitants of London—the king, the lord mayor, etc., have their own elaborately decorated barges. Along the riverbank, we find watermen advertizing their trade in time-honored London fashion, by calling out "Oars! Oars!"

We land at Stangate Stairs, Lambeth. Looking to our left, across Lambeth Marsh, we see the former St. Mary Overie—renamed St. Savior's after the dissolution—from the steeple of which we might get a bird's-eye view of London. Having a play to see, we strike off down the riverside path known as Narrow Wall. Heading east, we come to Paris Garden, London's first pleasure garden, a sort of amusement park for grown-ups on the South Bank where the thick foliage covered all sorts of nocturnal activities. We stop here for a preplay drink.

Next we come to the Bankside Bear Garden. From at least 1546, bears and other wild animals were tormented by dogs for the entertainment of jaded Londoners. Two generations later, the Bear Garden was joined by London's first outdoor theaters: the Rose (1577), the Swan (1596), and the Globe (1598). In such theaters, all of London—or at least 3,000 of them—could come together in the afternoon to see the latest play. But even here, hierarchy obtained: The wealthy sat in upper boxes for three pence; the middling orders below them on benches for two pence; and ordinary people stood in the pit for a penny—hence their designation as "groundlings." These were open-air circular theaters of three stories, the galleries roofed with thatch. The stage itself jutted into the pit, giving a ground's-eye view to the groundlings. The stage had a trap door, leading down to "hell." Above the rear of the stage was a platform called "heaven." At the back of the stage were three doors for entrances and exits from the "tiring house," where players costumed and awaited their entrances.

**Theaters like the Globe represented a new form of patronage: that of the paying public.**

Theaters like the Globe represented a new form of patronage: that of the paying public. Still, to be performed at all, that play had to get past the Lord Chamberlain's Office, which might forbid or censor it. The theater companies all gave command performances at court. All still required a royal or noble patron to stay on the good side of the civic authorities.

Though we have walked but three miles, the variety and bustle of London is already such in 1590 that it has been an exhausting day. ■

## Suggested Reading

Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*.

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap 7.

## Questions to Consider

1. How did London's economic growth spur the patronage of new entertainment possibilities?

2. How significant was the social mixing that took place in a London theater?

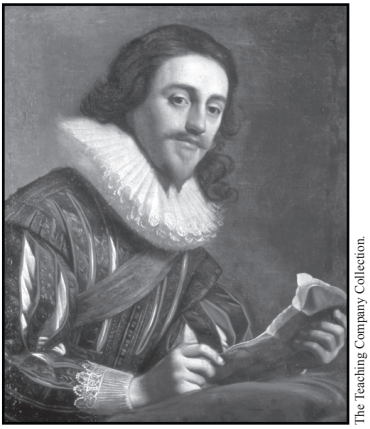
# London Rejects the Early Stuarts

## Lecture 10

**It used to be that historians had no trouble explaining this connection. The British Civil Wars were about the English, Scots, and Irish seeking freedom from Stuart absolutism. London, as the freest place in the British Isles, was bound to spur and support that fight. Unfortunately for this simple interpretation, historians know a lot more now. It turns out that nobody in the British Isles necessarily wanted to rebel against the king, let alone depose him. Rather, they wanted all their kings, Tudor and Stuart, to rule as Protestants and within the laws.**

The Stuarts ruled in England from 1603 to 1714, during which period the most dramatic event in British history—the Civil Wars of the mid-17th century—happened. London played a crucial role in bringing those wars to fruition, ensuring that Parliament won them, and then ensuring that the king won the peace.

Though the lord mayor and aldermen relied on the king for their privileges and supported him with money and troops, they had their issues with the Stuarts. James I and Charles I had a very high notion of their prerogative and occasionally clashed with Parliament. They were spendthrifts on favorites and art. Their foreign policy was pacifist at a time when many Protestants wanted to get involved in the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). In religion, James steered a middle path between Catholics and Puritans, only persecuting those who were disloyal. Charles I embraced a "high church" theology and ritual; he left Catholics alone but persecuted Puritans who did not want high church ritual. Many came to feel that Charles I in particular was flouting the constitution.



The Teaching Company Collection.

**Charles I's reign sparked the English Civil War.**

The City had its own issues at the beginning of the 17th century. By 1600 London had grown to about 200,000 people; by the end of the 17th century, it would reach over half a million. London's phenomenal expansion served as a demographic safety valve, because England's agricultural economy could not otherwise absorb its growing population. In fact, early modern London needed between 6,000 and 8,000 immigrants every year to grow at this rate, since its death rate was higher than its birth rate. According to historian E. A. Wrigley, these facts had a profound effect on England as a whole.

The London experience must have had profound social, cultural, and psychological effects on all immigrants. The last years of Queen Elizabeth had seen a seemingly endless war with Spain, high taxes, bad harvests, high unemployment, and a stagnant wool trade. There was a widespread perception that crime was on the rise.

Puritans were Protestants who thought that the Church of England retained too many Catholic structures (bishops, for example) and ceremonies. Most London parish priests were chosen by the government or church, so they were safely Anglican. But where the vestry or parish could choose its own clergyman, that parish was often Puritan.

Though London's rich City elite, headed by the lord mayor and Court of Aldermen, were closely allied with the Tudor and early Stuart monarchs, both kings and aldermen had to worry about the Common Council and Common Hall—the London liverymen and those free of the guild who voted for members of Parliament. They leaned toward Puritanism and saw the Stuart court as favoring popery and arbitrary government. As national tensions grew more strained between the Stuarts and Parliament in the 1630s, the City's elite and its citizenry began to take sides. One of the first large demonstrations by ordinary Londoners came in 1637 when William Prynne, John Bastwick, and Henry Burton had their ears cropped for writings critical of the bishops and the queen.

In 1640, a rebellion in Scotland forced Charles I to call a Parliament. As the Parliament sat, Londoners of all ages frequently crowded Old Palace Yard, between Westminster Palace and Westminster Hall, demanding abolition

of the bishops and the execution of Charles's right-hand man, the Earl of Strafford. Royal authority over the City was breaking.

By early 1642, City funds for the king dried up, and London began to prepare to defend itself against its own sovereign. From this point, the City authorities threw their weight behind Parliament, and once the war started in August, they threw money as well. The English portion of the British Civil Wars, which began in August 1642, should have been well matched. Most social groups split evenly between the king's supporters (or Cavaliers) and Parliament's supporters (the Roundheads). The crucial difference was London, which supported Parliament:

- London had the apparatus of government, especially taxation.
- London had the wealth to loan Parliament vast sums of money.
- London had most of the country's manufacturing base.
- London had the trained bands, the closest thing to a professional military force in England.

The king failed to capture his capital early in 1643. From this point, it was a war of attrition, which Parliament won. In 1646, after the decisive Battle of Naseby in Oxfordshire, the last Royalist army in England surrendered and the king was taken prisoner. Parliament, the Scots, even the army now negotiated with the king to return as a constitutional monarch. But Charles I never negotiated in good faith. After the king started a second civil war in 1648, the most radical elements in the army, led by General Oliver Cromwell, ordered Parliament purged of all but the most radical members.

The following month, January 1649, the resulting "rump" of a Parliament tried Charles I in Westminster Hall on a charge of high treason against the people of England. The king's execution took place at the Banqueting House at Whitehall on January 30, 1649. Within weeks, the Rump Parliament abolished the monarchy and the House of Lords. England was now, for the first and only time in its history, a republic.

Having abolished the monarchy, the Puritan Rump Parliament also abolished the court, selling off much of the king's artwork, disbanding the royal musicians, etc. But if the Puritan regime was hard on the visual and performing arts, it was terrific for the literary arts, having abolished censorship in 1641.

**The English portion of the British Civil Wars, which began in August 1642, should have been well matched. … The crucial difference was London, which supported Parliament.**

The Commonwealth, as the republic called itself, was never popular, and in 1653 the army shut down the Rump Parliament and named Cromwell Lord Protector of England. His regime was efficient, militarily successful, and expensive, necessitating higher taxes than Charles I had ever demanded. The regime was also intrusive, suppressing drunkenness, adultery, Maypole dancing, and Christmas celebrations as nonbiblical. Once again, Londoners balked at such strong control.

In October 1658, Oliver Cromwell died from overwork. There followed a succession of provisional governments. Finally, at the instigation of, among others, the London apprentices, the Convention Parliament of 1660 invited Charles I's eldest son to return as King Charles II. ■

## Suggested Reading

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap. 8.

Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution*.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why were the Stuarts so ineffective in wooing London in comparison to their Tudor predecessors?

**2.** Why did London tend toward Puritanism and not Royalism?

# Life in Samuel Pepys's 17th-Century London

## Lecture 11

**"In Covent Garden tonight, going to fetch home my wife, I stopped at the great Coffee-house there, where I never was before—where Dryden the poet, I knew at Cambridge, and all the wits of the town, … and had I had time then, or could at other times, it will be good coming thither, for there I perceive is very witty and pleasant discourse."**
**—Samuel Pepys**

The restoration of the monarchy was an opportunity for new men like Samuel Pepys. Pepys was born in London, the son of a tailor, in Salisbury Court off Fleet Street on February 23, 1633. He was educated nearby at St. Paul's School before going up to Magdalene College, Cambridge. Returning to London in 1654, he would have taken a coach down the old northern road and had his first glimpse of the city he had left four years before.

In 1654 central London looked very much like Shakespeare's city, with its three great landmarks, including stubby St. Paul's. But it had spread further east from the Tower as new East End suburbs had been filled in. Looking right, the West End was also beginning to fill in at Covent Garden and Lincoln's Inn Fields. London had by now grown to perhaps 400,000 souls—with the sewage and air quality problems that implies.

Pepys's cousin Edward Montagu got Pepys a job as clerk to the Exchequer (in effect, the state's bank), where he worked from 1659 to 1660. In 1660 Montagu won Pepys a job as Clerk of the Acts of the Navy Board. In 1673 Pepys was named Secretary of the Admiralty and was elected a member of Parliament, serving 1673–1679 and 1685–1688. He was made a fellow of the Royal Society in 1665 and its president from 1684 to 1686. Closely associated with the king's brother—James, Duke of York, who as James II would be overthrown in the revolution of 1688–1689—Pepys fell with his master, resigning from the Admiralty in 1689. He spent the rest of his life as a leisured London gentleman pursuing scientific and artistic hobbies.

The diary Pepys kept from 1660 to 1669 recreates 17th-century London in all of its quirky glory. In this lecture we use his diary to accompany a 17th-century Londoner on a typical day.

Samuel Pepys was an early riser, often at the Navy Office by 6. Servants were expected to arise at least as early to help their master dress and cook him a breakfast. The Navy Office was in Crutched Friars, on Tower Hill, just northwest of the Tower itself. Pepys's tenure there is important, for he helped lay the foundations for the logistical support of the Royal Navy.

Pepys worked hard at his job. He was happy to save the king money but also to make a little for himself—or even take a bribe outright, but always discreetly. Pepys spent a lot of time inspecting the king's various dockyards at Deptford, Chatham, and Portsmouth. The Royal Dockyards were fast becoming the largest single employer of English workers in one place. The historian who follows Pepys closely gets to watch, firsthand, a complex preindustrial process—the building and supplying of a ship of the line.

**The newspapers of the day were distributed at the coffeehouse. … For these reasons, the government tried to shut them down.**

Admittedly, an awful lot of navy business was done at taverns and coffeehouses. Inns, taverns, coffeehouses, and clubs were a crucial part of the social and business scene of Pepys's London. Inns and taverns were old and upscale. Pepys went to the George Inn, which survives today as a pub in Southwark. Taverns, Pepys's favorite haunts, offered drink of all kinds (wine, spirits, beer, cider, and perry), food, and private rooms to rent. Alehouses offered only home-brewed beer and a lower-class clientele. The authorities tried to shut them down as places where stolen goods were fenced, prostitutes solicited, and free (and thus dangerous) speech reigned.

The coffeehouse arose as a result of England's growing Mediterranean trade. Coffee was introduced to England about 1652 when a Turkish émigré, Pasqua Roscee, opened the first coffeehouse in London on Cornhill, in the business district; thus coffeehouses drew clientele from the businesses in

the neighborhood. The coffee was very strong, and Englishmen liked the narcotic effect. They also liked the fact that the newspapers of the day were distributed at the coffeehouse. And they liked the conviviality and social mixing. For these reasons, the government tried to shut them down via a royal proclamation of 1675, but people went anyway and the proclamation was soon withdrawn.

Some aristocrats did not like the social mixing of the coffeehouse, and they preferred the club. The greatest club of all was the court at Whitehall. The king's household was not merely the seat of government but the social and cultural center of England as well. Politicians, writers, painters, composers, and even scientists rose and fell by their access to the sovereign. Even if you lacked ambition yourself, this was the place to go to see the latest plays and art, hear the greatest preachers and musicians, catch the latest news and gossip, and chart the changes in the political world. The alfresco spectacle of the court was readily available to Londoners, though the Stuarts went out a lot less than the Tudors had.

Once inside Whitehall, the gentry could sample a variety of activities. Nearly anyone could attend the regular services in the Chapel Royal. There were frequent balls; Pepys got carried to one on New Year's Eve 1662. Members of the elite could also attend twice- or thrice-weekly informal gatherings called "drawing rooms." Those with more private business to transact with the king could go up the back stairs and converse with him in his private office or closet.

Pepys loved the theater, and fortunately so did his master. At the Restoration, Charles II granted charters for two companies: the King's Company and the Duke's Company. A new theater district was established in the West End in locations like Drury Lane off Covent Garden, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and the Haymarket. The second thing the Merry Monarch did was demand for the first time that actresses appear on stage beginning January 3, 1661.

If that wasn't enough pleasure for Pepys, he could always cross the river into Southwark, and specifically to Vauxhall Pleasure Garden. A pleasure garden was an early modern version of an amusement park—for adults. Patrons meandered down walks behind high hedges. They strolled beautifully

manicured gardens. They retreated to secluded booths where they could order dinner and drinks. They listened to the latest music. Above all, this was a perfect location for amorous intrigue.

"And so home to bed." Few Londoners could have rested with so much content at night as Samuel Pepys. But Pepys's contented dreams would be disturbed in the mid-1660s by a succession of nightmares: the Great Plague and the Great Fire. ■

## Suggested Reading

Pepys, *The Illustrated Pepys*.

Tomalin, *Samuel Pepys*.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why do historians tend to view Samuel Pepys as an essentially "modern" figure? Do you agree with this view?

**2.** Consider the entertainment possibilities of 17th-century London. Why do you suppose so many new possibilities were appearing in Pepys's day?

# Plague and Fire

## Lecture 12

**"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 that kind that to my remembrance I ever saw."—Samuel Pepys**

In the years 1665 and 1666, London was struck by two disasters that threatened its very existence: the Great Plague of 1665 and the Great Fire of 1666. The 1660s were the decade of Restoration, and Londoners celebrated that event with abandon. This period saw an explosion of scientific progress and the beginning of the turnaround of the English economy. But generally, people were optimistic out of nostalgia for the old rather than anticipation of the new. Puritan preachers said that London was ripe for God's punishment.

It is generally agreed, though not without dissent, that from 1347 through the 1720s western Europe was subjected to repeated visitations of the same disease. Though medieval Europeans called it "the Black Death," by the 17th century they referred to it simply as plague. There are two types of plague—bubonic and pneumonic, both enterobacteria. One passes through flea bites, the other through the air, but contemporary Europeans did not understand this pathology. Symptoms appear within 3–7 days of exposure. They include fever, diarrhea, headaches, swelling of the armpits and groin (infected lymph nodes), and rampaging internal bleeding, leading to black blotches on the skin, hence "Black Death." Popular remedies included rosemary, cakes of arsenic under the armpits, charms and amulets, and the maintaining of open fires to "burn" the plague out of the air. The death rate ranged from 30 to 70 percent.

Parish officials and Londoners generally were no strangers to the plague. London's first visitation came in 664 C.E. There was another round in 1265 and then the infamous Black Death of 1348–1349, when 15,000 died out of a total population of perhaps 45,000 (33 percent of London's populace). In 1563, 1603, and 1625, London lost one-fifth to one-quarter of its population.

Sometime after Christmas 1664, the first symptoms of plague appeared once again in London. By the spring of 1665, parish clerks and the compilers of the Bills of Mortality began to notice a spike in burials and that most of those were from plague. The plague's effects on London and Londoners were dramatic. In the long term, demographic effects were few, as London replenished itself rapidly; but the short term was devastating, and by mid-August the city streets were deserted.

Economic London ground to a halt. The political effects varied: Charles II and his court fled to Windsor, then Oxford; following tradition, the lord mayor and aldermen stayed on the job. Community broke down; in fact, the greatest effect of the plague epidemics may have been psychological. Londoners did not get a full reprieve until spring, and nobody knows why the plague went away, but the plague of 1665 was the last major plague epidemic in England.

Once again, the Great Fire, which began on September 2, 1666, was nothing unusual. London was continually subject to fires, beginning in 60 C.E. London burned so readily because it was made of wood, and many industries, like smithies and bakeshops, used open flame. The Great Fire began on the morning of September 2, just after midnight in the house and bakery of Thomas Farriner, the king's baker, in Pudding Lane, just north of the river. Neighbors tried to fight the fire, but Londoners had few tools with which to do so. London's dryness and high winds overwhelmed their efforts. In contrast to the plague, local government ignored the matter at first. By midmorning, people gave up trying to fight the fire and tried to save their belongings. Samuel Pepys went to Whitehall to break the news to the king and the Duke of York.

On Monday, September 3, the flames pushed north, west, and south. Rumors began of foul play on the part of Catholic foreigners; French shops and men were openly attacked in the streets. By this time, the lord mayor had fled. Charles II, hoping to recover from the charge of abandoning his capital to the plague, put the Duke of York in charge of fire-fighting efforts.

Tuesday, September 4, saw the worst destruction. The fire leapt over firebreaks at Fleet Street and Cheapside, heading east, north, and west toward Whitehall

Palace and the Tower of London, with its gunpowder stores. It surrounded and devoured St. Paul's. On Wednesday, September 5, the winds died down and the firebreaks worked to stop the Fire at Pye Corner. By then, the fire had destroyed 13,200 houses, 87 parish churches, St. Paul's Cathedral, and virtually all of the City within the walls. Remarkably, it is thought to have killed fewer than 10 people, though historian Neil Hansen suggests that poor people and vagrants were probably not reported. Hundreds more may have died that winter from poor nutrition and exposure; the fire made homeless 70,000 people out of a population of 460,000 (15 percent), who camped out at Moorfields.

**The fire had destroyed 13,200 houses, 87 parish churches, St. Paul's Cathedral, and virtually all of the City within the walls. Remarkably, it is thought to have killed fewer than 10 people.**

The government immediately blamed Catholics for the fire. This explanation was inscribed on The Monument, erected by Wren and finished in 1677. Puritan preachers thundered that London and the Restoration court were being punished for their sins. But London did not drop to its knees after plague and fire. Instead, it rebuilt. ■

## Suggested Reading

Hansen, *The Great Fire of London*.

Moote and Moote, *The Great Plague*.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why did the government of London perform so well during the plague, so poorly during the fire?

**2.** Which do you suppose had the greater psychological impact on Londoners, plague or fire?

# London Rises Again—As an Imperial Capital

## Lecture 13

**British traders penetrated and began to dominate the lucrative Levant trade to the Mediterranean. That meant Portuguese Madeira and port wine; Spanish oranges, figs, and raisins; Italian olive oils and silks; Middle Eastern coffee to supply London's coffee houses; and the East India trade in silks, spices, tea, and medicines, … thus making London, according to Joseph Addison, a kind of emporium for the whole earth.**

London was rebuilt after the Great Fire, much of it to the designs of the king's architect, Sir Christopher Wren. Wren's churches and public buildings would set the tone for an explosion of aristocratic speculation and development at the turn of the 18th century, resulting not only in the rebuilding—in brick and stone—of the old city but also the creation of the great squares of the West End. It was here that great Whig and Tory aristocrats planned the ouster of James II in 1688, as well as the installation of William and Mary in the Glorious Revolution of that year, and so created a constitutional system designed to benefit themselves. The ensuing wars with France would result in London becoming the capital of a vast colonial empire. But first, in the wake of the Great Fire, Londoners considered the toll and the future.

What was lost? About 463 acres, 13,200 houses, 87 parish churches, 44 livery halls, and St. Paul's Cathedral had been destroyed. The economy, already reeling from the plague and the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1664–1668), ground to a standstill. Within a few weeks, plans for reconstruction were submitted by Sir Christopher Wren, John Evelyn, Richard Newcourt, and Valentine Knight. All of these men saw the fire as a tremendous calamity but also as a great opportunity to "fix" London.

The king established the Commission for Rebuilding, and the Rebuilding Act of 1667 restricted heights for houses and specified that all buildings were to be built of brick or stone. The rebuilding of the City took place at the same time as speculators and builders with court connections more or less laid out the West End: The Russells developed a series of West End squares; Thomas,

Earl of Southampton, developed Bloomsbury; and Nicholas Barbon became London's greatest speculator and house builder.

The man most associated with London's rebuilding is Sir Christopher Wren. He was put in charge of rebuilding the great public buildings necessary to keep London going, starting with the Customs House. In May 1670, Wren was also put in charge of replacing the 87 London churches destroyed in the fire. Wren's greatest achievement was to rebuild St. Paul's Cathedral in a style completely different from its predecessor, yet sufficiently magnificent to resume its place in Londoners' hearts. Other buildings were put up much more quickly than St. Paul's. By 1669, eight livery halls had been rebuilt. By 1672, most of the housing had been rebuilt.

The British experienced a commercial revolution under the later Stuarts. The Navigation Acts, passed in 1651, 1660, and 1663, required goods from the American colonies to be carried in English (from 1707, British) ships through British ports. This froze out foreign competition and built up the British merchant marine. Imports drove the commercial revolution. The American and West Indian colonies began to be profitable suppliers of tobacco, cotton, and sugar in exchange for slaves. Elsewhere, British traders penetrated and began to dominate the lucrative Levant trade to the Mediterranean and the East India trade in silks, spices, tea, and so forth. The result was a trade boom. Most of this trade enriched London merchants: In 1722–1724, London handled 67% of England's exports and 87% of its reexports.

London helped catalyze the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689. With the Restoration, the old tension revived between a Royalist Court of Aldermen and a Puritan, or Parliamentary, Common Council, Common Hall, and citizenry. Those tensions were replicated at the national level. Charles II (1660–1685) was a would-be absolutist who envied France's Louis XIV, favored religious toleration, and was a spendthrift. Because the king had produced no legitimate offspring, the next heir to the throne was his brother, James, Duke of York—a Roman Catholic. These facts and tendencies aggravated Parliament and gave rise, by the 1670s, to an opposition led by Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftsbury. The exclusion crisis was the result.

In 1679, following accusations of a "Popish Plot" to kill the king, Shaftsbury's opposition demanded that Parliament exclude the Catholic James from the throne. But by 1681, a reaction was developing in the City and the country at large. Loyalist citizens founded the Tory party. Thus there never was a single London "mob" but Whig and Tory variations thereof.

A Tory lord mayor was elected in 1682, who steered city loans into royal coffers. Charles II neutralized the Whig London mob by convening his last Parliament, in 1681, in Oxford, the most safely Royalist city in England. Finally, Charles demanded the surrender of the City charter, which allowed him to redraw it to his liking, gerrymandering the new electorate to produce a Tory majority and thus compliant Tory governments in the City. Thus Charles II succeeded where his father had failed, besting the City.

**Charles II succeeded where his father had failed, besting the City.**

Charles II died in 1685 and was succeeded by his politically inept brother James II. James alienated his Tory "base" by trying to secure the toleration of Catholicism, offering toleration to Dissenters as well. When the court announced the birth of a Catholic heir—James, Prince of Wales—on June 10, 1688, the bell ringing was desultory and a few bonfires were lit. Meanwhile, a few weeks earlier when seven Anglican bishops were sent to the Tower, they were supported by massive crowds lining the Thames.

In the wake of these events, a number of nobles invited William, Prince of Orange—the husband of James's Protestant daughter, Mary—to invade. During the "Irish nights" of December 11–15, 1688, Londoners relieved their panic by attacking Catholic houses and government officials. William courted the City administration by promising a restoration of its charter. The lord mayor and aldermen responded by offering £200,000 for "carrying on the government." These events came to be known as the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689. England became a constitutional monarchy, for it was Parliament, not God, who conferred the crown on William and Mary on February 13, 1689. Parliament also instituted toleration for Dissenters, but not for Catholics.

To defend the Revolution against James and his ally Louis XIV—and eventually to decide which country would dominate world affairs—England fought the first of a series of seven wars with France that would last on and off from 1688 to 1815. The cost of these conflicts would necessitate the development of new financial instruments and techniques by London politicians and financiers. The result would be a financial revolution. This made 18th-century London an imperial capital. ■

## Suggested Reading

Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II*.

Inwood, *A History of London*, chaps. 9, 10, 14.

Reddaway, *The Rebuilding of London After the Great Fire*.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why was London able to rebuild so rapidly?

**2.** How crucial was London to the development of English constitutional monarchy?

# Johnson's London—All That Life Can Afford

## Lecture 14

**Newspapers and the stories they printed, the adverts they ran, knit Londoners together. They provided water-cooler talk before there were water coolers. They substituted for the face-to-face contact of the village. … In effect, I might go so far as to argue that the press helps to make immigrants into Londoners.**

By the beginning of the 18th century, London had become both an imperial city and, in some ways, a modern city. It was more or less self-governing. It was not dominated by a court. Its sense of fashion, means of entertainment, and standards of sociability were determined by a wealthy aristocracy but also by an increasingly affluent middle class. Its wealth came from a worldwide trading network and a financial revolution that produced new ways of creating riches.

London's most famous resident, royalty apart, was the compiler of the first comprehensive English dictionary, Samuel Johnson. Johnson was the son of a bookseller from Lichfield, Staffordshire. He moved to London with the actor David Garrick in 1737. Like so many of their predecessors, Johnson and Garrick would have come from the north and west through Hampstead and Highgate. Once again, standing with Garrick and Johnson on Highgate Hill, we note how London has changed: Of the three great landmarks we noticed last time, only the Tower of London remains unchanged. Westminster Abbey has acquired two towers; it now looks like the structure we can see there today. The square Gothic pile of Old St. Paul's has been replaced by the imposing dome of Wren's cathedral. A pall of smoke from perhaps a million chimneys hangs over the city.

Johnson was a writer, so he settled in the printers' row area off of Fleet Street. Johnson's first job in London was writing for *The Gentleman's Magazine*, founded in 1731. Johnson's London was the home of a free press. The Licensing Act, requiring government approval of publications, had lapsed in 1695. Suddenly a bevy of newspapers appeared, most publishing once every three days. *The Daily Courant*, started on Fleet Street in March 1702, was the

world's first daily. One could argue that the press helped make immigrants into Londoners; this is seen most dramatically in the rise of another London invention, the literary magazine. The first of its type was *The Tatler*, but the greatest was *The Spectator*.

Even if you could not read, you could be read to in the convivial atmosphere of a tavern or a coffeehouse. We have already noted the arrival of coffeehouses in the mid-17th century and how they combined strong coffee, conviviality, and print. Individual coffeehouses became associated with particular neighborhoods, and in early modern London that meant professions and interests. Taverns could, like inns, be very long lived and, like coffeehouses, provided a degree of connection and conviviality in an otherwise vast and anonymous city. You could always get a "dirty dinner" (Pepys's phrase) in a tavern, but sometimes Londoners wanted a more elaborate meal—hence ordinaries and chophouses. Alehouses provided beer and ale to a lower-class clientele and were associated in the upper-class mind with prostitution, fencing goods, and rebellious speech. Even worse were gin shops and doss-houses. The result was the gin craze of the 1730s, satirized in William Hogarth's *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street*.

**The arts in London were no longer dominated by the court. … Aristocrats took up much of the slack, both politically and culturally.**

The arts in London were no longer dominated by the court. After about 1700, court life grew moribund thanks to royal illness, shyness, and the diversion of royal revenue to war with France. At the turn of the 18th century, aristocrats took up much of the slack, both politically and culturally. They built luxurious townhouses in the West End such as Devonshire House, Marlborough House, Montagu House, etc. Great court aristocrats developed this part of London—most famously the Russells, who developed Bedford Square, Tavistock Square, Russell Square, etc.

Aristocrats patronized old institutions like the public theater and taverns as well as relatively new ones like the first concert halls, pleasure gardens, coffeehouses, and private clubs. The most famous club of all was the Kit-Cat, which operated like a little kingless court, commissioning art and Whig

political propaganda. Individual aristocrats became great patrons of the arts, often in exchange for favorable political propaganda. But the big story in 18th-century London was the new wealth and rising fortunes of middling merchants and professionals, which made possible, for the first time, widespread patronage of the arts by the general public.

The London theater was already a "public" art form in 1660, albeit a far more expensive and elitist one than in Shakespeare's day. Concert life moved out of the church and court. By 1714 there were a number of regular London concert halls (York Buildings), and secular music was also available at the pleasure gardens. Painters increasingly worked for middle-class patrons. Prosperous merchants, lawyers, and doctors now wanted to be immortalized in portraits. The literary world also freed itself from subordination to the tastes of the church and court, but despite the lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695, it was still dangerous to be a writer. The great city itself was often the subject of art, much of it satirical. ■

## Suggested Reading

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap. 11.

Marshal, *Dr. Johnson's London*.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** What conditions made possible a free press in 18th--century London?

**2.** How democratic was the new urban culture of London? How aristocratic?

# The Underside of 18th-Century London

## Lecture 15

**Prepare for Death, if here at Night you roam, / And sign your Will before you sup from Home. / Some fiery Fop, with new Commission vain, / Who sleeps on Brambles till he kills his Man; / Some frolick Drunkard, reeling from a Feast, / Provokes a Broil, and stabs you for a Jest. —Samuel Johnson**

Eighteenth-century London could be a dark and brutal place. London retained or invented many of the more positive features of modern urban life: a (relatively) free press; a vibrant theater life; the conviviality of inns, taverns, coffeehouses, and clubs; the refined entertainment of the concert hall and pleasure garden; and the urbane sophistication of the new West End squares. However, it also faced massive problems both old and new. Among the old were overcrowding, disease, poverty, and crime; the new included sewage and waste disposal, air quality, street paving and lighting, street gangs, and the gin craze.

During the 17th century, London grew from 200,000 to half a million people; during the 18th, it grew to nearly a million. This did not happen because Londoners were making babies. They *were* making babies, of course, but at a rate of only about 34 per 1,000 inhabitants per year before 1750. The trouble was that they were dying at a rate of about 40 a year between 1700 and 1800. So if London managed to grow in population, it had to be from immigration.

Historians estimate that something like 9,000 new people arrived in London per year in the 18th century. They included European refugees, poor Irish, wealthy aristocrats serving in government or attracted by the delights of "the season," sons (and some daughters) of gentry or merchants taking up London apprenticeships, and above all poor laborers of both genders looking for work. If you were lucky or had a local connection at an inn, you found work, possibly in London's ever-expanding building trade or as a barmaid. If not, you joined the ranks of London's burgeoning urban poor.

As a poor woman arriving from, say, Lincolnshire on the back of a cart, you could possibly find work. You might take up service to a family. This provided room and board, low wages, and the possibility of being abused or sexually assaulted by the master. You could work in London's thriving hospitality industry as a barmaid for room, board, and wages; low reputation; and the sexual advances of customers. Or you might be taken up by a "mother midnight" to work in a brothel in Covent Garden or walk the streets or St. James's Park.

Failing gainful employment, you could go onto the Poor Law, England's social safety net. The first Poor Law had been passed in 1536; by 1700, all parishes in England were required to collect poor rates and distribute them to the "deserving poor," but not to "sturdy beggars," who would be put to work. In London, the parish system was soon overwhelmed by the growing population. Parishes tried to solve their poverty problem by combining resources. You were better off on the parish, but the parish had an interest in keeping you off its rolls—and thus keeping its taxes down.

**Eighteenth-century London was especially hard on children.**

Eighteenth-century London was especially hard on children. If you were a poor, single woman with children, the parish did not want you. Infanticide or abandonment was a common response to an unwanted child. In response, Thomas Coram founded the Foundling Hospital. Keep in mind that the word "hospital" applied to a variety of institutions in 18th-century London, all dedicated to the care of the poor. At the Reformation, the monasteries and charitable institutions of London had been confiscated by the Crown; in the 1540s and 1550s, the city persuaded the Crown to give some of them back, resulting in a network of such hospitals, owned and run by the city, including the infamous Bedlam.

Crime was perhaps the urban problem for which 18th-century London was most infamous. Though we have no reliable statistics on the crime rate, contemporary Londoners were convinced that it was rising. Crime had long been a staple of the London stage. Bookstores were flooded with popular accounts of famous London criminals like the thief and escape artist Jack Sheppard or the thief-taker Jonathan Wild. As "boss" of the London

criminal underworld in the first quarter of the 18th century, Wild was later immortalized in a novel by Henry Fielding in 1743 and as Peachum in John Gay's fabulously popular *The Beggar's Opera* of 1728. Wild himself took advantage of the regular newspaper to advertise his services in recovering stolen goods—filched by his own gang! But in 1725, in response to public pressure, Wild was arrested, convicted, and hanged.

Why were public hangings such a prominent feature of London life? Remember that there was no standing army or London police force, just an assemblage of volunteer constables. So Parliament attempted rule by intimidation: The number of crimes for which one could be hanged rose from around 50 in 1688 to more than 200 by 1800. In fact, the number of hangings fluctuated, starting at 281 during the whole period 1701–1750 but rising to 246 in the 1760s and 501 in the 1780s. And yet this is still a small proportion of the total number of indictments: This was clearly selective punishment, meant to intimidate by the threat of terror. One group of historians, led by Douglas Hay, believes that it was all an attempt by a tiny elite to intimidate the masses with the threat of death via an elaborate theater of the law.

Eighteenth-century London could be a brutal place. And yet, the overall effect of contemporary writing on London is one of wry celebration. ■

## Suggested Reading

Inwood, *A History of London*, chaps. 10, 13.

Rudé, *Hanoverian London, 1714–1808*.

## Questions to Consider

1. Which was a more modern solution to social problems: the Foundling Hospital or the system of city hospitals?

2. Why did Londoners not want a police force despite their fear of crime?

# London Confronts Its Problems

## Lecture 16

**"Wanted: a hundred thousand men for London watchmen. None need apply for this lucrative position without being the age of sixty, seventy, eighty, or ninety years; blind with one eye and seeing very little with the other; crippled in one or both leg; deaf as a post, with an asthmatical cough that tears them to pieces, whose speed will keep pace with a snail, and the strength of whose arm would not be able to arrest an old washerwoman of fourscore returned from a hard day's fag at the washtub."—A mock advertisement, 1821**

As London moved into the 19th century, it faced massive problems of transportation, poverty, crime, alcoholism, bad air, and bad water quality. By 1850 these problems had nearly overwhelmed the city. Their scale was unprecedented because, at nearly 1 million people by 1800, London was the largest city in the Western world; by 1850 it was significantly more than 2 million. The administration and infrastructure trying to cope with these problems were, basically, the same that Chaucer knew. This would all change between 1750 and 1890 as government was forced by public opinion, and sometimes by disasters, to step in. The administrative result would be the establishment of a series of London-wide boards to assume responsibility for the whole enterprise. The infrastructural result would be a series of engineering marvels that would last to the present day.

London traffic was already notorious in the 17th century. It got worse at the beginning of the 19th century with the rise of the horse-drawn omnibus. Proposals for more bridges were opposed by interest groups like the London Watermen. In 1721 Parliament approved a new bridge; Westminster Bridge finally opened in 1750. The railroads came to London, beginning with London Bridge Station in 1836. Huge swaths of slums were cleared to make way for the lines and the stations. By the mid-19th century, underground "tube" lines were being laid to connect the competing railway stations. These were electrified and amalgamated into London Transport only in the early 20th century.

By 1800 London contained not only nearly a million people but also untold horses, dogs, cats, etc. All needed water—but perhaps not to drink. During the medieval and Tudor periods, London's water supply came from springs and wells on the city's outskirts. By the 17th century, many natural springs had been built over and water companies began pumping the Thames into the new West End. The point was to get water to the customer; there was no attempt to purify it until the introduction of sand filtration around 1829.

A million people, plus animals, produced a prodigious amount of waste. Most houses had cisterns in their cellars; these had to be cleaned out periodically by "night-soil men." Untreated sewage was dumped into the Thames. At first, the solvent properties of the Thames were enough to dilute the effects of this "system." But by the early 19th century, clumps of raw sewage were visible in the Thames. Worse, merchant ships anchoring in the Thames brought cholera, a water-borne bacteria that attacks the gut. Outbreaks took place in October 1831, killing 6,000, and in 1848–1849, killing 14,000. In the 1866 outbreak, 5,000 died within six weeks.



**The Thames River served as a thoroughfare, water source, and sewage dump to London from the city's founding to the 19th century.**

In the hot, dry summer of 1858, the sewage backed up near Westminster, resulting in the Great Stink and the Thames Purification Act. In 1859 Joseph Bazealgatte, chief engineer of the Metropolitan Board of Works (founded in 1855), was given the go-ahead to build the world's most advanced sewer system. After its completion in 1875, cholera in London became a thing of the past.

In the early modern period, paving was generally left to individual inhabitants for the street in front of their house. A series of paving acts, giving local authorities this power, was only extended to every part of London in 1862. In the medieval period, light was provided by the moon and candles in windows. In 1416 Parliament required lights to be hung by householders on dark nights between certain hours. Real change did not come until gaslights were introduced at the beginning of the 19th century. Electric lighting superseded gas toward the end of the 19th century.

**The novelist … established a group of volunteer thief-takers that evolved into the Bow Street Runners, a protoprofessional police force.**

The old problems of crime and riot remained. London law enforcement in the 18th century was an ad hoc, amateur affair. Englishmen saw a professional police force as a feature of Continental tyranny. Instead, London's policing was in the hands of its citizens. By the late 17th century, London increasingly employed a rewards system whereby private operators like Jonathan Wild received rewards for apprehending criminals.

In the mid-18th century, the novelist Henry Fielding, a part-time justice of the peace, wrote against the rewards system. He established a group of volunteer thief-takers that evolved into the Bow Street Runners, a protoprofessional police force. At his death Fielding was succeeded by his brother John, who established foot patrols on main roads in and out of the capital. London continued to tinker with this system until 1829. In 1829 Sir Robert Peel, Conservative member of Parliament and home secretary, managed to get the Metropolitan Police Act passed. This created a salaried police force of 1,011

men, soon expanded to 3,000. The force's headquarters was at 4 Whitehall Place, Scotland Yard. Acceptance of the new force took a long time.

But what happened when the whole city erupted? Rebellion was a thing of the past after 1689. Still, the assumed right of Londoners to demonstrate, sometimes violently and en masse (i.e., to riot), left such actions as a resort for the masses and a problem for authorities.

Historians love riots because they are dramatic events, but also because they provide clues as to what great numbers of ordinary people thought important. In the late 1950s and 1960s, a group of Marxist historians, led by George Rudé and E. P. Thompson, argued that rioters were far more rational—even reasonable—than had previously been assumed.

Riots may be classified by cause; the most common type of riot in London's history was the economic riot. Calendar riots occurred as well; before 1670, apprentices would attack bawdy houses around Shrove Tuesday (the beginning of Lent) annually. Political riots were, at first, more or less tolerated, but less so as the 18th century wore on.

The trend toward greater centralization and government involvement in public health issues and law enforcement continued with the London County Council, established in 1888. ■

## Suggested Reading

Davis, *Reforming London*.

Inwood, *A History of London*, chaps. 14–15, 18–19.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why was the 19th century the great age of reform in London?

**2.** Why do cities tend to embrace "big government" solutions?

# Life in Dickens's London

## Lecture 17

**The phrase "Dickens's London" contains a paradox. For many of us, particularly fans of the movies or popular culture, the phrase conjures up images of incomparable charm. Christmas Eve snow in *A Christmas Carol*, the hustle and bustle of London's streets in *A Tale of Two Cities*, the quaintness of the Old Curiosity Shop. … And yet, this is not at all how British readers, Dickens's contemporaries or Charles Dickens himself, would have thought of his London.**

When Americans think of Charles Dickens's London, they may think of it as charming, but most of his London-based novels portray a dark underworld of poverty and crime. Dickens knew London intimately. In this lecture we trace Dickens's career, from his arrival in Cheapside as a poor boy to his ascent to a fashionable West End life as a world-famous writer. The transition from Augustan London through Regency London to Victorian London was observed by many writers, but by none so memorably as by Charles Dickens. As every intelligent reader knows, Dickens's novels were not just meant to entertain or charm; he was bent on reform.

Following Wellington's victory over Napoleon at Waterloo, Britain was the greatest military power in Europe. The wealth of the empire had flowed into Britain, mainly through London, for two centuries. Imports landed at places like the gigantic East End docks on the Isle of Dogs, Deptford. Goods were stored in huge warehouses like those of the East India Company at Blackwall. Profits flowed through London mercantile counting houses in the City. Huge lots of goods were bought and sold at the 'Change (the Royal Exchange). Ships were insured at Lloyd's. Stocks rose and fell at the stock exchange on Threadneedle Street.

For a century now, Britain had been undergoing an industrial revolution: the gradual rise of mass manufacturing by people working in factories. At first glance, London played a peripheral role in the industrial revolution, as the great factories were built in the industrial boom towns of the midlands and

the north: Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds, etc. But London played a crucial role in fostering the revolution as the great consumer of goods, by providing crucial financing for the investment needed to found factories, and by acting as the great port from which English manufactured goods were distributed to the rest of the world. In 1851 Britain's wealth was put on display in London at the first world's fair, the Crystal Palace Exhibition.

Like so many Londoners, Dickens was not born there. Born at Portsmouth in 1812, son of John Dickens, a clerk in the Navy Office, young Charles arrived in London in 1822 from Kent in the east, probably via the Old Kent Road, through Deptford, then up Southwark High Street and across London Bridge. He probably first saw London from the flat, open fields south of the city, containing market gardens to feed it. Dickens's coach would then have crossed London Bridge, by now bereft of houses, and made its way up Cornhill onto Cheapside, where he was dumped out at the Crossed Keys.

**It is just about possible to trace Dickens's rising fortunes geographically as he moved to ever more fashionable areas to the west as his work prospered.**

The next few years of Dickens's life were spent shuttling back and forth between lower middle-class suburbs like Camden Town in the north, where Bob Cratchit would live, and Southwark. Dickens's father, a spendthrift, would fall into debt, sending the family to Marshalsea Prison in Southwark, the eventual setting of much of *Little Dorritt*. Young Charles was put to work in Warren's Blacking Factory, on the present site of Charing Cross Station. From this point, it is just about possible to trace Dickens's rising fortunes geographically as he moved to ever more fashionable areas to the west as his work prospered.

As a young man, Dickens used his free time to train himself to be a novelist. He obtained a reader's card to the British Museum at 18. He wandered the streets of London. Much of this period was spent in the old square mile of the financial and shopping district: the City. By now the City's walls had been completely taken down; otherwise it looked much as it did in the 18th century.

Heading west from the City, we reach London's main axial road along the river: Fleet Street and the Strand. Fleet Street, still the center of the print trade, mattered to young Dickens in countless ways. As a youth, he was an office boy to a company of attorneys near Lincoln's Inn Fields to the north. Dickens came to know the legal district around Fleet Street (Old Bailey, Inns of Court, Fleet Prison) very well. Further east, near Thames Street, is Doctors' Commons, where he had an office as a reporter. In 1834–1837, Dickens lived near here at Furnival's Inn, where he wrote *The Pickwick Papers*, which brought him his first big success. Further west along the Strand and extending north through Covent Garden and Drury Lane to Shaftsbury Avenue is the theater district, where many of his stories were adapted for the stage.

Further west in the Strand, we find St. Mary le Strand, where Dickens's parents wed. To our right is Covent Garden, which, by the mid-19th century, had reverted to a fruit market. If we divert north, up Drury Lane, we encounter gin shops, pawnbrokers, prostitutes, and lowlife generally. Returning to the Strand, we turn left at Charing Cross, down Whitehall Street, past 10 Downing Street. We reach old Westminster Palace, home of the Houses of Parliament, where Dickens worked as a reporter from 1831 to 1836. This is not the Palace of Westminster we know today from so many tourist postcards. Finally we come to Westminster Abbey, where by the 19th century the tradition was finally established that Britain's greatest statesmen, scientists, and artists were buried here. Dickens would join them in June 1870.

In the meantime, like the city itself, as Dickens prospered he moved west, eventually settling in the arty district of Bloomsbury. Bloomsbury lies north of Covent Garden. It was first acquired by the church, then confiscated by the Crown. In the mid-16th century, its open fields were awarded to Thomas Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. It was his descendant, the fourth earl, who began the development of the manor into Bloomsbury Square, which eventually became home to the British Museum.

Continuing west along Oxford Street, we encounter a series of regular squares named for the great aristocratic families that developed them. During the 17th century, the Wriothesleys united in marriage with the Russells, already the greatest landowners in London, creating a vast estate and an unstoppable

development combination. During the late 18th century, the Russell property in Bloomsbury filled up with fashionable squares, often named for Russell titles. Moving very roughly east-west, we also encounter Soho Square, Leicester Square, St. James's Square, Cavendish Square, etc. Between 1839 and his death in 1870, Dickens and his family moved around these West End squares. In other words, through sheer dint of genius and hard work, Charles Dickens had arrived.

But here in the heart of fashionable London, we are not very far from its worst slum, the infamous Seven Dials, seven streets converging on the perennially and infamously poor parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields at the north end of St. Martin's Lane. During the 19th century, it was inhabited by poor Irish immigrants, known as Teagues, who did London's dirtiest jobs. Yet a few steps west takes us to the elegant splendors of Grosvenor Square and Belgravia.

By the late 19th century, thanks in some part to Dickens's calls for reform, London was a magnificent and well-run imperial capital, but its extremes of poverty and wealth persisted. ■

## Suggested Reading

Ackroyd, *Dickens's London*.

Paterson, *Voices from Dickens's London*.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why were rich and poor areas so close together in Dickens's London?

**2.** Why are the American and British conceptions of Dickens so different?

# Two Windows into Victorian London

## Lecture 18

**HORRIBLE MURDER IN BUCK'S ROW, WHITECHAPEL … Constable John Neil was walking down Bucks-row, Thomas-street, Whitechapel, about a quarter to four o'clock this morning, when he discovered a woman between 35 and 40 years of age lying at the side of the street with her throat cut open from ear to ear. She was discovered to be lying in a pool of blood.—The *London Evening News* report on the murder of Mary Ann Nicholls, Jack the Ripper's first victim**

London—like all cities—is a place of stark contrasts. At the end of the 19th century, London was the most populous city on earth, a grand imperial capital giving direction to possessions around the globe. But it was also a city of squalid slums. This lecture concentrates on two very different spectacles to which Londoners were subject between 1887 and 1888. Queen Victoria's revival of old public ceremonies and invention of new ones, which delighted the London crowd, and the Whitechapel Murders, which reveal a great deal about London: its underworld, its very poorest citizens, their nightlife, and the difficulties they had in keeping body and soul together.



**Queen Victoria (1819–1901, r. 1837–1901).**

Londoners celebrated Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee on June 21, 1887. The Golden Jubilee was a revival of royal ceremony that had not taken place for many years. The later Stuarts and early Hanoverians tended to avoid public appearances. George II and George III appeared more frequently. But after George III went more or less permanently insane in 1811, the public appearances stopped. His unpopular son, George IV, mounted a magnificent



**Victoria was the first English ruler to live in Buckingham Palace, which is still the English monarch's London home.**

coronation in 1820. But thereafter, the king's poor health and parliamentary hostility to expensive ceremonies curtailed them. Neither William IV nor Victoria early in her reign were much given to shows. The monarchy had actually begun to mount a comeback with the building of Buckingham Palace in the 1820s.

The queen's Golden Jubilee of 1887 was devised by the Prince of Wales (the future Edward VII) and the government to show the people their queen again after a generation of solitude. This was her first public appearance in 25 years. The trouble was that a good deal of knowledge about how to do this sort of thing was lost. A number of historians, led by David Cannadine, have argued that the court more or less invented a series of traditions that looked ancient: jubilees, public royal weddings, coronations, funerals, and the state opening of Parliament.

A key feature of the Jubilee procession was the presence of petty princelings and nobles, many from India, all come to the imperial capital to pay homage

to the queen-empress. The queen herself rode in an open landau surrounded by royal equerries on horseback. These events were commemorated with all sorts of souvenirs like cups and plates, pictures, and even special brews of Jubilee ale. Thus the ceremonies contributed to the national and London economy. London became once again a royal city, which, in turn, contributed to an unending boom in tourism.

**A number of historians … have argued that the court more or less invented a series of traditions that looked ancient: jubilees, public royal weddings, coronations, funerals, and the state opening of Parliament.**

About five miles from Buckingham Palace in the East End, on the evening of August 31, 1888, the city met the first in a series of less-fortunate women. Between August 31 and November 9, 1888, at least five women—and possibly, if we expand the dates, as many as eight—were murdered in a square-mile area of Whitechapel in the East End of London:

- Mary Ann Nicholls on August 31.
- Annie Chapman on September 8.
- Elizabeth Stride on September 30.
- Catherine Eddowes, also on September 30.
- Mary Kelly on November 9.

The police called them the Whitechapel Murders, but we know them as the knifework of Jack the Ripper. This much is agreed upon: The victims were all poor women, mostly prostitutes. They were badly mutilated by someone with some surgical skill. Despite the efforts of the Metropolitan Police, the Ripper was never caught.

Instead of focusing on the question of who did it, we can learn a lot more about Victorian London by focusing in on the victims, the accused groups,

and the general social and cultural environment. The victims were all women, nearly all in their 40s, single after broken marriages, fallen into prostitution, and heavy drinkers. These women were also victims of the culture that developed around the working class in London. What about Jack? The Metropolitan Police launched immediate house-to-house searches, drew up lists of suspects, collected forensic evidence, and commissioned the first profile of a mass murderer. But there were difficulties with the chain of command and a succession of chief investigators.

London's thriving newspaper culture suggested that the murderer was probably an immigrant: a Jew named John Pizer, nicknamed "Leather Apron"; Severin Antonovich Klosowski, alias George Chapman; or Aaron Kosminski, a Polish Jew. Much of the speculation took place in the London press, a crucial part of the Ripper saga. By the late 1880s, London was blanketed with scores of morning and evening papers, some costing as little as a half penny. The "if it bleeds it leads" philosophy was long established on Fleet Street. Newspapers also acted as a public soapbox on which any semiliterate Londoner could voice an opinion on the murders. What was relatively new about the Ripper murders was the series of letters claiming to be from the murderer himself. The Ripper Industry has thrived on sensational theories ever since. But barring some new, incontrovertible revelation, the Whitechapel Murders will remain unsolved.

What do the two halves of this lecture have to do with each other? Victorian London was a city of contrasts: The Mall and Whitechapel were just across town from each other. Victorian London was an imperial city where visiting Indian princes were welcomed but immigrants from central Europe were suspected of degeneracy. Victorian mass media were capable of creating feelings of pride and fear. Victorian women were idealized as wives, mothers, and queens, but the reality for poor women could be fatal. ■

## Suggested Reading

Hiley, *Victorian Working Women*.

Inwood, *A History of London*, chaps. 16, 17, 21.

Seaman, *Life in Victorian London*.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why did Londoners, so suspicious of authority, respond so enthusiastically to royal pageantry?

**2.** Is it significant that Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories achieved their initial popularity just as the Ripper murders hit the newsstands?

# Questions Postponed and the Great War

## Lecture 19

**"There were large crowds perambulating the streets and cheering the king at Buckingham Palace, and one could hear the distant roaring as late as 1 or 1:30 in the morning. War or anything that seems likely to lead to war is always popular with the London mob."—H. H. Asquith**

London before the Great War was a city of political and social tensions and demonstrations. The afternoon of Friday, March 1, 1912, witnessed one of the most remarkable political demonstrations in London history as militant suffragettes broke store windows in the Haymarket, the Strand, Regent Street, and Bond Street and attacked the Prime Minister's residence in Downing Street. The event caused £4 million in damage. The police arrested 148 members of the Women's Social and Political Union, organized in 1903 by Emmeline, Christobel, and Sylvia Pankhurst. What the protesters wanted was for Herbert Asquith's Liberal government to sponsor a bill granting women the vote.

Suffrage was not the only issue facing Britain, and therefore London, at the beginning of the 20th century. Even in London, capital of the world's greatest empire, poverty was ubiquitous and stifling. Despite the legalization of union protest and even strikes, working and living conditions for the working class remained poor. Workers' parties were gaining seats. By the 1910 election, the Labour Party had 42 members in Parliament. In 1911, after a constitutional crisis, the majority British Liberal Party passed the People's Budget, designed to provide the National Insurance benefit for workers. The nation was also gripped by a debate over the granting of self-government to Ireland. Not all the news was serious. London was hit by a ragtime craze in the 1910s, and roller-skating was also popular.

The tensions and anxieties noted above would be relieved on August 3, 1914. All day, crowds stood outside the War Office in Whitehall waiting for the declaration of war against Germany. At the announcement of war, a vast crowd gathered in Trafalgar Square. Once again women marched, but this

time to encourage men to enlist. Thousands did so because many were motivated by feelings of nationalism.

World War I would be a total war. The poor would be caught up in enlistment and, after 1916, the draft: Twenty percent of London's workforce went to war. Women would be enlisted in the war effort as nurses and factory workers. But when the war was over, they would have all the more reason to feel entitled to better living conditions or the vote.

London was not, of course, on the front lines of the British war, but London was its British headquarters. Londoners noted some changes almost immediately. The British Museum and the Tate were closed. Hotels became hospitals. Pubs now closed at 10 pm. But at first, most Londoners felt themselves insulated from the war. All that changed with the Zeppelin raids of 1915.

The first Zeppelin attacks occurred over coastal ports like Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn. The first attack on London took place on May 31, 1915. Bombs were dropped on the East End docks and near Guildhall. Still, some people had trouble taking the Zeppelin raids seriously or simply did not realize how dangerous they were. The Zeppelins also suffered losses because airships had to be fueled with hydrogen. At first gun technology was inadequate, and the usual method to bring down a Zeppelin was to bomb it from above. Eventually the British figured out that incendiary bullets could down a Zeppelin in a spectacular, fiery crash. But the best method was to use a fighter plane, especially an S.E.5. By 1917 the Germans were trying long-range Gotha bombers with greater success.

**The war brought women a different kind of "liberation" from that envisioned by the Pankhursts.**

The war came home to London in other ways. There were violent demonstrations in May 1915 at the sinking of the *Lusitania*, especially in the East End, where shops with German names were wrecked. Commuters were greeted with the constant sight of the wounded being unloaded at London stations for hospitals at Millbank and Roehampton. Since the Western Front was less than 30 miles from the home front, soldiers on leave filled the streets

and theaters. The war brought women a different kind of "liberation" from that envisioned by the Pankhursts. They worked as nurses and in munitions factories—indeed, in some ways the front in London was a women's war. By the summer of 1917, German U-boat attacks had reduced British food stocks to six weeks' worth.

When the war ended, Londoners celebrated twice: once on Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, and again on July 19–20, 1919. But they also mourned the deaths of 1 million Britons and 124,000 Londoners, 10 percent of the 20- to 30-year-old male population of the city. The war brought women into the workforce, and in 1919 women over 30 were granted the vote. But Britain suffered terrible economic hardship and would, in fact, never quite recover from the Great War. Still, Britain's irrepressible imperial capital survived the loss of its empire. ■

## Suggested Reading

Castle and Hook, *London 1914–17*.

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap. 22.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why did Londoners celebrate the coming of war in 1914 so enthusiastically?

**2.** What was different and what was the same in how Londoners coped with Zeppelin raids from their previous experience of plague and fire?

# London's Interwar Expansion and Diversions

## Lecture 20

**"I suddenly saw London at last, a long, smoky skyline hazed by the morning sun and filling the whole of the eastern horizon, emitting a faint, metallic roar. No architectural glories, no towers or palaces, just a creeping insidious presence, its vast horizontal broken here and there by a gasholder or factory chimney. Even so, I could already feel its intense radiation, an electric charge in the sky that rose from a million roofs in a quivering mirage, magnetically, almost visibly dilating. Cleo, my girlfriend, was somewhere out there. Also mystery, promise, chance, fortune, all I had come to this city to find."—Laurie Lee**

By the 1920s, London was a modern city with high-rise office buildings, rapid transit, telephones, cinemas—and postwar problems. At more than 8 million people, London was still the world's largest city, but Britain had barely survived the war. The empire was restive. Women and workers had undertaken new roles and would not be so willing to go back to the old ways. The economy was in tatters; Britain had entered the war the greatest manufacturing and trading nation on earth, but it emerged from the war with one-third of its shipping destroyed and its resources and investments diverted from growth industries toward war production. Market share had been lost to America. Britain's huge war debt of $4 billion to the United States weakened the City's room for international maneuver.

It would take a long time to repair and redirect this economy back to peacetime pursuits. Vast armies and navies had to be demobilized, which meant large numbers of unemployed men roaming the streets of London. Even civilian London experienced high prices as well as food and fuel shortages. The economy got worse in 1920–1921 before it got better. The British government had to begin to build a welfare state to provide for returning soldiers. For example, much of London's housing was inadequate. As late as 1931, 63 percent of London families shared a dwelling with another family.

The London County Council engaged in slum clearance, but where could it house those so displaced? As it happened, the issue of housing was intimately related to that of transport. If you moved people out to live, you had to get them in to work. Still, this allowed for the building of new "cottage estate" suburbs. The council subsidized 34,000 homes between the wars. At the same time, private industry put up many new office buildings. This was also a great age for the expansion of chain stores, like Marks & Spencer and Woolworth's.

As all this implies, new technologies and expectations were changing the culture, as had the war. It is common to speak of the "Lost Generation" of writers who rejected the old pieties. Although Paris was their headquarters, many were based in London, including T. S. Eliot, Evelyn Waugh, and Virginia Woolf. All of these writers seemed to be searching for something to replace the old certainties that had reigned before the war.

**It is common to speak of the "Lost Generation" of writers who rejected the old pieties. … All of these writers seemed to be searching for something to replace the old certainties that had reigned before the war.**

Women's war work was rewarded with the vote and with new freedom. They continued to work outside the home. In the 1920s, they began cutting their hair as well as wearing trousers and less elaborate dresses. They smoked and fraternized more easily with men. No longer did respectable young people have to go to court or an aristocratic ball to meet a potential spouse. As this implies, London nightlife changed. The great aristocratic mansions, the usual venue for formal dinner parties, were increasingly abandoned as too expensive to keep up. Instead the elite went to smart clubs, where they drank martinis and danced the Charleston or foxtrot or Lambeth Walk to 1920s and 1930s dance bands. For the lower classes, shop girls, and delivery boys, there were big dance halls and football. Arsenal was the team of the 1930s. The more adventurous discovered jazz, imported from America in the 1920s, which flourished in dingy clubs in Soho. For everybody, there were radio and films.

The British economy was precarious throughout the interwar period. The period 1920–1921 was followed by a shaky prosperity that did nothing to help heavy industry. In the mid-1920s, one of the industries having trouble recovering was coal. In 1926 the government broke off negotiations with the Trades Union Council, which represented coal miners. Workers in transport, print, iron, steel, electricity, and services walked off the job in solidarity. The result was the General Strike, an attempt to paralyze the country, especially the capital; but instead there was a revival of the wartime spirit of pitching in together. The General Strike failed, but the problems of heavy industry did not go away.

As the 1920s shaded into the 1930s, Britain experienced the Great Depression. London itself suffered relatively little. London unemployment stood at 13.7 percent in 1932, compared to 28 percent for Scotland and 33 percent for Germany and the United States. By 1935 it fell to just 6.5 percent. Still, conditions for the unemployed were bleak. The Royal Jubilee of 1935 and Abdication Crisis of 1936 were diversions.

In a decade of economic and political dislocation, the old verities smashed by the previous war, Londoners debated new approaches: communism, fascism, etc. Many Britons in the 1930s flirted with both. Intellectuals were attracted by Marx and Communism. In London's poor working-class neighborhoods, the appeal to king, country, church, and family of Sir Oswald Mosely's Blackshirts got most of the attention, starting in 1932. Hyde Park saw dueling rallies of Communists and Blackshirts, with the Metropolitan Police caught in the middle.

The instability this implies helps to explain "appeasement," the policy of Britain's Tory government in the late 1930s to make concessions to Hitler in order to avoid war. After the horrors of World War I, everyone wanted to avoid war; Londoners in particular remembered the trauma of the Zeppelin raids. Given the economic malaise, the government took a long time to gear up for rearmament. Given the high rate of unemployment and social unrest, the government could not count on a united country. Given the threat of Communist Soviet Russia, some members of the elite argued that a strong Germany was a good bulwark. Given American isolationism, the British and French knew that they might have to go it alone against not only Germany but

also Italy and Japan. No wonder Londoners turned out in droves at Croyden Airport in the summer of 1938 to welcome Prime Minister Chamberlain home from Munich as he promised "peace in our time." But that promise was a sham.

When, in the spring of 1939, the Germans took the rest of Czechoslovakia, the Chamberlain government realized they had been had. They worked out alliances with Poland and France. When Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, Chamberlain gave the Germans an ultimatum and a deadline. At 11:15 am on September 3, 1939, he went on the BBC to declare Britain at war again. ■

## Suggested Reading

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap. 23.

Weightman and Humphries, *The Making of Modern London*.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Why did London suffer relatively little during the General Strike and Great Depression?

**2.** To what extent was London a cultural leader and to what extent a follower of international trends between the wars?

# The Blitz—The Greatest Target in the World

## Lecture 21

**"Suddenly we were gaping upwards. The brilliant sky was criss-crossed from horizon to horizon by innumerable vapour trails. The sight was a completely novel one. We watched, fascinated, and all work stopped. The little silver stars sparkling at the heads of the vapour trails turned east. This display looked so insubstantial and harmless; even beautiful. Then, with a dull roar which made the ground across London shake as one stood upon it, the first sticks of bombs hit the docks." —Desmond Flower**

The start of the Second World War was very different from the start of the first. Unlike in 1914, there were no cheering crowds in any of the great capitals of Europe. Government planners estimated 66,000 dead within the war's first week and came up with a plan to evacuate 3.5 million people from London. No wonder Londoners panicked a bit at first: Within a half hour of the declaration of war, the first false alarm was registered. Still, it took a while for the war to become real. After the conquest of Poland, there ensued a period of "phony war" from late September to early April. Nevertheless, the city prepared for the worst.

The phony war ended on April 9, 1940, when Hitler invaded Norway. The failure of the Royal Navy to prevent the invasion led to the resignation of Prime Minister Chamberlain and the appointment of Winston Churchill to head a coalition government on May 10. That same day, Hitler invaded France, which fell by the end of June.

The Blitz began in the summer of 1940. Operation Sea Lion, Hitler's plan to invade Britain, called for an

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-107479.

**Winston Churchill (1874–1965) in a photograph from about 1919.**

amphibious assault by the German army, which required control of the air over the English Channel. So before Sea Lion could become operational, the Luftwaffe would have to wrest air superiority from the Royal Air Force (RAF) in what came to be known as the Battle of Britain. At first there was no reason for the battle to be fought directly over London. Beginning on July 10, the Luftwaffe launched a series of raids against airfields surrounding London, munitions factories, and radar installations to destroy the British air defense network. By September 1, the Germans had destroyed 338 British planes and the RAF was losing 10 percent of its pilots a week. The British air network was on the verge of collapse. At this point, the British got a break, which gave them an idea. The Germans' midnight raid of August 24, 1940, got lost and ended up bombing the East End. This gave Churchill the justification to order the bombing of Berlin for the night of August 25–26.

**It was perhaps during this ordeal that Londoners cemented their reputation for facing a crisis with quiet toughness, carrying on in the face of overwhelming fear and pain.**

On September 7, the Luftwaffe attacked the London docks with 320 bombers escorted by 600 fighters, to devastating effect. This was the turning point, but from early September to the spring of 1941, the people of London were still subjected to the Blitz. Many were forced to spend night after night in air-raid shelters and Tube stations, only to find that their houses, even whole neighborhoods, had been destroyed overnight. It was perhaps during this ordeal that Londoners cemented their reputation for facing a crisis with quiet toughness, carrying on in the face of overwhelming fear and pain.

The single-minded regularity of German attacks on London meant that the RAF could muster large formations in response. Because the airfields and factories were spared, new pilots and planes came online. The RAF was winning the Battle of Britain, but Londoners were taking it on the chin. By October 1940, operation Sea Lion was called off. Hitler turned his attentions to other projects, like the invasion of the Soviet Union. But he was not done with London. The Blitz continued until May 11, 1941.

After the Blitz, Londoners settled into a wartime routine not unfamiliar to those who had lived through the First World War. Food, metals, etc. were rationed. Through it all, Londoners carried on, refusing to concede their daily business to the war.

As the tide of war turned, Londoners might be forgiven for resuming old routines and letting their guards down. Beginning in June 1944, London was subjected to the first V-1 raids. The V-1 was part of a series of experimental weapons programs developed by Nazi Germany toward the end of the war. A V-1 was an unmanned plane with a pulsating jet engine. The jet's pulsing—50 times a minute—gave it its characteristic sound, hence the English nickname "doodle-bug" or "buzz-bomb." Some 10,000 were fired on England; 2,419 reached London. Altogether 6,184 people were killed and more than 17,000 injured by V-1s.

The V-2, the first really successful long-range ballistic missile, was part of the weapons program Germany developed at the end of the war. Unlike the V-1, mainly directed at southeastern Britain, V-2s were deployed against several European cities. Only 1,358, 40 percent of the total deployed, were fired at London, and 518 hit. There was no defense. Unlike V-1s, V-2s were fast and silent. In the end, 2,754 Londoners were killed by V-2s and 6,523 were injured—a ratio of two dead per rocket. In the end, the V-2's greatest significance, like all the German attempts to destroy London, was psychological. But as we have seen time and time again, under threat from plague and fire, poverty and crime, Londoners did not break.

The final toll on Britain was astounding: 29,890 killed; 50,000 wounded; 116,000 houses destroyed; 164 acres in London devastated; 18 churches (including 14 by Wren) destroyed or damaged; and 17 livery halls lost. Corresponding to the trials Londoners had been through, the victory celebrations on May 8, 1945, were, if anything, more unrestrained than those in 1918 and 1919. At perhaps the climax of the festivities, Winston Churchill appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace with the Royal Family, a rare honor for a commoner. But he would lose the premiership, because Britain would emerge from the war in worse shape than from the first one, and the soldiers returned wanting change. The going would be rough. The economy would take years to recover. Rationing would continue well into the 1950s.

Britain would lose its empire within about a decade and a half, and London would have to figure out how to remain a world city, an imperial capital without an empire. Its inhabitants had survived the war. Could they endure a hard peace? ■

## Suggested Reading

Harrison, *Living Through the Blitz*.

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap. 24.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** To what extent was London sacrificed to win the Battle of Britain and the battle for American support?

**2.** Why would some Londoners look back fondly on the Blitz?

# Postwar London Returns to Life

## Lecture 22

**"London is in the grip of a smog attack … breathing is like burying your head in a smokestack … everybody here has a pinched, gray look, but it's probably a combination of weather and the grisly food. … It's all teashops, with dainty little sandwiches of Spam, cream gateaux, and savories—nothing to put your teeth into. Not because of rationing, either; plenty of food, apparently, but I suspect the English have got out of the habit of eating after all the years of austerity. … Fortunately, there is no danger of my getting scurvy, as I have to consume at least two gin and limes every evening to keep the cold out."—S. J. Perelman**

London slowly came back to life after the war, but postwar Londoners faced a bleak situation. As after the First World War, the economy was devastated by several situations, such as the long-time diversion of heavy industry to war production; shipping losses and the London docks in ruins; and bomb damage, especially in the City and East End. The immediate result was a housing shortage and disrupted business.

As after the First World War, hundreds of thousands of "demobbed" troops returned to face bleak prospects and the apparent restoration of the hierarchical prewar social system. But in the general election of July 1945, the British "Tommy" rejected all this and tossed out the great war leader Winston Churchill in favor of a Labour government headed by Clement Attlee. Why? The war had added new sacrifices but also a sense of corporate action. British propaganda especially emphasized the idea of all being in this together. The experience of shared danger and hardship in Tube bomb shelters during the Blitz seemed to promise change. Soldiers coming home from the war were not about to tolerate the reimposition of old class privileges. Therefore, they voted overwhelmingly in 1945 to return a Labour government that promised to plan the economy, nationalize industry, and expand the welfare state.

Expanding the welfare state was made difficult by the fact that goods were in short supply: Rationing continued. Shops lacked goods. Fuel and labor shortages as well as strikes made the hard winter of 1946–1947 harder. It was

not until March 1949 that the blackout was fully lifted and London became a city of lights again. There was a general sense in the late 1940s and 1950s that London was a shabby, down-at-heel place.

As if to symbolize the depressing state of postwar London society, Londoners faced another challenge, in form of smog. London had long and famously been subject to fog—since at least the early modern period. Its legendary pea-soup fogs were not entirely natural; they depended on the coal smoke that had become an increasing nuisance since Tudor times. Devastating fogs were increasingly common in the industrialized 19th century. Fog became intimately associated with London, enshrined in music-hall songs; Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories; and the second movement of Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony*, which depicts a pea-souper.

Pea-soupers continued in the 20th century, but the greatest of them all was the Big Smoke of December 5–9, 1952. Early in December, a cold fog descended on London. Because of the cold, Londoners began to burn more low-quality coal. The resultant smoke was trapped by an inversion layer. There was little panic at first, but those with weak lungs suffered bronchitis, which led to hypoxia (poorly oxygenated blood). It was only really after the fact that medical personnel noticed a spike in mortality. The Big Smoke killed 4,000 people, mostly the elderly and those already suffering from lung disease. A further 8,000 died over the next few months. This disaster led to the Clean Air Act of 1956. This legislation, combined with the decline or relocation of London industry, led to the end of pea-soup fogs by the early 1960s.

In the meantime, Britain's and London's economy gradually recovered in the 1950s. The Marshall Plan and rearmament helped; even London's docks boomed in the 1950s and early 1960s. Much of the new prosperity could be seen in London's rebuilding: After the war, 250 million square feet had to be rebuilt. Because thousands had lost their homes to the Blitz, houses were the priority. In a major feat of government intervention, the London County Council replaced 103,000 homes by 1947. The council also attempted to shift the population from East End and South London slums, cleared by bombs or bulldozers, to outlying towns, including new ones like Stevenage and Hemel Hempstead. Still, by 1960 only one-third of the area slated for redevelopment was rebuilt and 180,000 people were still on a waiting list for homes.

The postwar economy also created an office boom, especially in the City. Twenty-four million square feet of new office space was added in the 1950s. This was spurred in 1956 when the government lifted a ban on buildings more than 100 feet tall in London.

Londoners recovering from the war and the Big Smoke needed some fun. They got a harbinger with the 1948 Olympics, mainly situated at Wembley Stadium. The Labour government designed the Festival of Britain of 1951 to recall the glories of the Great Exhibition of 1851, cheer up the nation, and boost its economy after over a decade of austerity in war and peace. Twenty-seven pavilions told the story of Britain. The most famous, the Dome of Discovery, displayed such British (or disputedly British) inventions as radar, jet engines, penicillin, and a model nuclear power plant. There was a new concert hall—the Royal Festival Hall—and lots of abstract sculpture. Overall, the Festival of Britain was a success, attracting 8.5 million visitors.

**As in America, in London the 1950s really seemed to end sometime in the early 1960s, and there was a palpable sense of change in the air.**

But the event that is usually taken as marking a welcome turning point in postwar British fortune was the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in June 1953. Preparations lasted for more than a year. On the day itself, it rained; still, and despite being televised, London turned out to the tune of an estimated 3 million people. Turning to other forms of entertainment, the 1950s were a sort of golden age for the London film industry. Ealing Studios, West London, had their great heyday in the 1940s–1950s. There were lots of high-class productions and comedies with timely themes.

As in America, in London the 1950s really seemed to end sometime in the early 1960s, and there was a palpable sense of change in the air. London's population was becoming far more diverse. London had always been welcoming of immigrants and refugees. The Irish had long trekked to London for economic opportunity. The war gave rise to a large Polish refugee community. London also became home to 150,000 Greek Cypriots driven from their home by violence and warfare. In 1948 the British Nationality

Act confirmed that citizens of the empire and Commonwealth had a right to settle in Britain. This led to a wave of postempire immigration.

By 1991 there were 980,911 West Indians and 633,000 Indians and Pakistanis in Greater London. Most of these groups took a long time to assimilate, for various reasons, such as their own desire to preserve cultural and family ties, but also because of prejudice—mostly low grade, although ads saying "no blacks allowed" still appeared in London newspapers in the 1960s, and race riots, instigated by "Teddy Boys," took place in Notting Hill at the end of the 1950s. No wonder these groups tended to huddle in suburban communities (i.e., ghettos). West Indians settled in the West End, Notting Hill, and south of the river in Brixton. Punjabis and Sikhs went west to Southall. Bengalis went to the old East End: Spitalfields and Whitechapel. Africans and Asians went to Harrow. They tended to be shunted into hard, menial, and low-paying jobs like domestic service and hotel staff. Jobs at Heathrow, for example, went to Indians and Pakistanis, while jobs with London Transport, which actually sent recruiters overseas, went to West Indian blacks. Nevertheless, the new immigrants were beginning to change London life. Indian restaurants sprang up on the Uxbridge Road, and then central London. They brought their tastes in art, music, and dress. The changing era was also symbolized by the arrival of rock and roll from America.

Tory rule ended with the election of Harold Wilson's government in 1964, but perhaps the final milestone of the era was the death of Sir Winston Churchill in 1965.

No longer the capital of the greatest power on earth, could London remain a great city? No longer the hub of an empire, could it remain at the center of things? In fact, London would remain a world capital of finance and culture, not least because it was about to experience yet another transformation. ■

## Suggested Reading

Humphries and Taylor, *The Making of Modern London*.

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap. 25.

## Questions to Consider

1. What was the connection between the postwar experience of London in politics and economics and the culture of the 1950s?

2. How has the arrival of massive numbers of Asian, African, and Caribbean peoples changed London culture and, perhaps, what it means to be a Londoner?

# The Varied Winds of Change

## Lecture 23

**London became one of the world capitals of '60s culture, and to some extent, counterculture…For a while, London was the world capital of youth, optimism, and hedonism. … According to Joseph Booker, founder of the satirical magazine *Private Eye*, "There seemed to be no one standing outside the bubble, and observing just how odd and shallow and egocentric and rather horrible it was."**

London was ready for change and excitement in the 1960s. Britain had been ruled by the Conservative (Tory) party for most of the 1950s. From 1951 to 1955, the prime minister was Sir Winston Churchill, then Anthony Eden to 1957, and finally the distinguished veteran Harold MacMillan, popularly known as "Super Mac." Tory governments presided over an expanding economy and welfare state. Tory foreign policy was very supportive of the United States in the Cold War. But by 1963 the economy was in decline. British goods were doing poorly versus Japanese and American competition. Britain bungled in refusing to join what became the Common Market.

The 1964 general election was a referendum on change. Labour under Harold Wilson portrayed the Conservatives as elitists and "yesterday's men." Labour won the 1964 election in a landslide. This was important for London because Labour was committed to more social programs and establishing a stronger London-wide authority, the Greater London Council (GLC). The Labour government also loosened restrictions on the theater, pornography, and personal behavior. Finally, the Wilson government made a conscious effort to portray itself as youthful and tap into a revolution in popular culture. That is important for our course, because London was the headquarters of that culture.

John Osborne's 1956 play *Look Back in Anger*, which premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in London, is often credited with initiating the antiestablishment pop revolution in Britain. At the same time, American blues, country music, rhythm and blues, and rock and roll had a tremendous

influence on British bands. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Teddy Boys were passé; instead the two great factions of youth were the mods and the rockers. In 1962–1964, a series of important bands rose in or came to London: The Beatles, The Dave Clark Five, The Rolling Stones, The Who, The Kinks, and The Yardbirds.

British rock was not just about a sound; it was also about a look, a style of dress. The Beatles, Stones, and other bands pushed the fashion envelope. The result was a boom in fashion in London centered around the King's Road, Chelsea, and then Carnaby Street. The style was characterized by bright colors and lots of stripes; stylized, psychedelic floral patterns; trim, body-fitting lines; shiny, often polyester fabrics; and long hair, with huge mustaches for men. This look featured in contemporary film, much of it set in London, including *A Hard Day's Night* (1964), *Help*! (1965), *Blow Up!* (1966), *Alfie* (1966), *Georgy Girl* (1966), even *Casino Royale* (1967) and other Bond films. On television a similar fashion sense was displayed in *The Avengers* and *The Prisoner*.

"Swinging London" came to characterize this whole set of cultural trends; London became one of the world capitals of 1960s culture and counterculture, along with New York and San Francisco. The Wilson Government, anxious to look relevant and "with it" in the midst of the British retreat from the world stage, requested the Queen to award Member of the British Empire (MBE) to the Beatles and an Order of the British Empire (OBE) to fashion designer Mary Quant in 1966.

During the 1960s a number of protest movements, led by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), staged massive rallies in London to demand disarmament, oppose the Vietnam War, and challenge Britain's alignment with the United States in the Cold War. If the 1960s was a time of optimism and innovation, the 1970s was one of malaise. No government seemed capable of restraining inflation or a union movement prone to industrial action (i.e., strikes). This did not affect London as severely as other places in Britain. London's office, service, and tourist economy continued to flourish. But manufacturing declined, as did population. In particular, the London docks withered away. At the same time, social scientists and commentators

increasingly realized that the demolition of slums for tower blocks had been a mistake, wrecking old communities, creating anomie and crime.

In 1970 the Wilson government was defeated and replaced by a Tory government under Edward Heath. In 1974 Heath's government fell in favor of the return of Wilson, who was succeeded as Labour Party leader and prime minister by James Callaghan in 1976. None of these governments was terribly popular, in part because they failed to tame inflation. They were also perceived as far too much at the mercy of the unions. London continued to be paralyzed by "industrial action," especially in transport. These governments were also increasingly perceived as being far too indulgent of London.

**Thatcher's party was elected to do something about the economic malaise gripping Britain at the end of the '70s.**

The winter of 1979 was cold and was made worse by rising fuel prices and a series of strikes. Finally the British voter had had enough. In May 1979 everything changed with the election of a Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher's party was elected to do something about the economic malaise gripping Britain at the end of the '70s. She sought to roll back the welfare state by cutting subsidies to failing industries like coal, cutting funding for education and housing, reducing taxes, encouraging entrepreneurship, and breaking the power of the unions. She also allied Britain more closely with President Reagan's America in the Cold War and refused to concede the Falkland Islands to an Argentine invasion in 1982.

Like many conservative rulers before her (Charles I comes to mind), Thatcher had no reason to love London. The social welfare programs necessary to keep the London poor afloat were a big drain on the treasury. London itself consistently voted Labour. London's hodgepodge governmental authority, the Greater London Council, was a nest of Labourites and left-wingers led by "Red Ken" Livingstone. The 1985 Local Government Act abolished the GLC, devolving power to individual boroughs.

The early Thatcher years seemed bleak. The country made many sacrifices in social services, and unemployment ran at 25% or higher in parts of the

north and Scotland. But by 1985–1986, London was starting to benefit from the beginning of the information technology boom, Britain's greater integration into the European economic union, and the steady growth of the tourism and service sectors. But not everyone in London benefitted, because London manufacturing, hampered by outdated factories and high rents, did not recover; London's housing prices doubled between 1985 and 1989; and the decline in available public housing raised London's homeless population. As the stringency measures of the Thatcher years took hold, West Indian and African blacks suffered disproportionate unemployment and precious few opportunities to change their situation. The immediate result was the Brixton riot of 1981.

The period 1973–1996 also saw British and Irish tensions spill over into a series of bombing attacks on London. Londoners became used to periodic bomb scares, evacuations, bag searches, suspicious police, and a sense of vulnerability to attack at any moment. But of course they carried on. They could not have known in the middle of these grey years that in the 1990s, buoyed by the end of the Cold War and a bustling world economy, London would enter another golden period. ■

## Suggested Reading

Hewison, *Too Much*.

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap. 26.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** What factors rendered London the perfect launching pad for the pop culture revolution of the 1960s?

**2.** How did the Thatcher years contribute to the notion of "two Londons"?

# Millennial London—How Do You Like It?

## Lecture 24

**We might retitle this lecture "Our London," for with this final lecture we reach the city that many of you know and that I first visited in the early 1980s. On my first visit to London, I traveled along the route of the old Great Western Railway from Oxford. Unlike the spectacular vision from the top of Hampstead Heath to the north, when you approach London by rail from the west, it sort of creeps up on you. Very gradually, rural towns like Twyford and Maidenhead, satellites of London, began to join together and give way to industrial suburbs like Slough and Hayes. Finally, the train makes its way to the Victorian magnificence of Paddington Station.**

Coming from Paddington, we walk west to east. Paddington Station was built between 1850 and 1854 by the architect of the Great Western Railway, Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Striking off south, through a maze of souvenir shops, restaurants, and currency exchanges, we reach Bayswater Road, the northern boundary of Hyde Park. Taking a turn in the park, we note that parallel to Bayswater Road is the Ring, where 17th-century aristocrats cruised in their coaches. Their modern counterparts still ride on Rotten Row (Le Route du Roi) to the south. Free speech still reigns nearly absolutely—but probably to a tiny crowd—at the northeastern end of the park at Speaker's Corner.

From here we can head east, toward the heart of London, through the smartest areas of the West End. We emerge onto London's greatest shopping street, Oxford Street, containing nearly all the major department stores except Harrods. Crossing Oxford Street, we find more smart shopping at Bond Street and Regent Street. Finally, we turn south, toward the river, onto Charing Cross Road to reach Trafalgar Square. Alternatively, we could have struck off west through Hyde Park, reaching Kensington Palace and Gardens, the former residence of Diana, Princess of Wales. Then, turning east along Kensington High Street back toward the city center, we pass a complex of magnificent buildings housing museums, schools, etc.—an area known as Kensington Gore. Continuing east, we might march along Piccadilly Street

to Piccadilly Circus, famous for its gigantic lighted billboards and the statue of Eros in the middle. Or we could double back and head down Constitution Hill through Green Park to reach, on our right, Buckingham Palace, where I once stood in the Center Room looking out past the balcony at the crowds below on the night before Princess Diana's funeral.

Princess Diana's funeral was the last great 20th-century manifestation of Royal London and in particular of the strange dance that Londoners engage in with their rulers. In late August 1997, as a guest of Her Majesty at Windsor Castle for a conference put on by the Royal Collection, the curators of the royal artwork and furnishings, I witnessed much of that remarkable week. The first day of the conference coincided with the death of the Princess and her companions. Over the course of the next few days, I observed the servants of the household in mourning and saw the Union Flag go up, go down, and finally settle at half staff as the controversy raged over how to honor the princess. But the crowds at the gates of Windsor, Kensington, and Buckingham Palace demanded more, as they had of their monarchs so often before. I sensed a tremendous feeling of sadness among the crowds, but also unity and resolve.



**St. Paul's Cathedral still stands in the heart of the City of London.**

Resuming our tour, from here we retrace the route of a happier occasion, the royal wedding of 1981 between Charles and Diana: down the Mall, through St. James's Park, and under the Admiralty Arch to meet our other selves at Trafalgar Square. Here we might spend the afternoon exploring the treasures of the National Gallery or the National Portrait Gallery. Outside in the square, looking south to the river, we get a magnificent view of monumental Westminster.

But for real, living London, we carry on west, down the Strand. Turning left at Wellington Street, we encounter Covent Garden, now a high-class tourist

trap. Back to the Strand, we head past the Temple and Chancery Lane, up Fleet Street to Ludgate Hill. Rising before us like the sail of a majestic ship, we see the great dome of St. Paul's. From St. Paul's we strike off into the City. The 1980s saw another office-building boom, and for the first time true skyscrapers dwarf St. Paul's, to the chagrin of many, including Prince Charles. After the war, the City lost ground to New York and Tokyo as an international financial center. But beginning in the late 1980s it began to recover, not least because of the deregulatory "Big Bang" of October 1986.

From the City we walk into Whitechapel and the old East End. During the war, the East End had been plastered by German bombs. Thousands of residents moved away to suburban council flats, never to return.

The Docklands collapsed as a port in the 1970s and 1980s. Beginning in the early 1980s, the Thatcher and Major governments poured in £1,098 million to redevelop the area, with mixed success. We might take the Docklands Light Railway as far as the Blackwall Tunnel, finished in 1897, and cross under the Thames to Greenwich. Originally, this was the site of a Tudor



**The Palace of Westminster is still home to Parliament and to British democracy.**

and Stuart palace. It now houses the National Maritime Museum and the *Cutty Sark*, the only surviving 19th-century tea clipper. On the peninsula, we encounter the Millennium Dome, a project of Tony Blair's Tory government. The Blair government's more lasting impact on London was to reverse devolutionary Tory policy by creating the Greater London Authority in 2000.

We climb the hill to Greenwich Observatory and gain one of the most splendid views of London: the Thames snaking before us, and to the west the Dome of St. Paul's gleaming in the evening twilight. We are nearing the end of our London journey. As the sun sets, we follow it, taking a riverboat back, the same way Tudor and Stuart kings and queens entered London. The river is mostly clear of shipping now, the docks turned into waterside pubs and restaurants. We pass familiar landmarks like the Tower of London, Somerset House, and various ministries to our right. To our left, almost on the original site, is the reconstructed Globe Theatre.

**Docking at and then climbing onto Westminster Bridge, we can see all of London's history come together. There is the famous statue of Boudicca, riding a war chariot. There is the clock tower housing Big Ben and, underneath it, the Parliament building on the site where so many rights were forged.**

Docking at and then climbing onto Westminster Bridge, we can see all of London's history come together. There is the famous statue of Boudicca, riding a war chariot. There is the clock tower housing Big Ben and, underneath it, the Parliament building on the site where so many rights were forged. Across the river is the London Eye, the world's largest Ferris wheel, from which we can get a bird's-eye view of the whole city. The Eye indicates that Londoners at the beginning of the millennium were not just looking back but also forward. It seems that whenever the best values of Western civilization—freedom, equality, individuality—come under attack, their enemies strike at the place where so many of those values took so many giant steps: London. ■

## Suggested Reading

Inwood, *A History of London*, chap. 26.

Wilson, *The Norton Book of London*.

## Questions to Consider

**1.** Is there a "London spirit," or do the inhabitants of cities generally display similar qualities of practicality, determination, and resilience?

**2.** Why has London become such a powerful symbol for people around the world? What does it symbolize?

# Timeline

**B.C.E.**

800–200 ..... Celts migrate into Britain.

55 ..... Julius Caesar invades Britain.

43 ..... Aulus Plautius invades and establishes a permanent base in Britain.

**C.E.**

c. 50 ..... Londinium founded.

60 ..... Revolt of the Iceni; London sacked, resulting in 60,000 casualties.

c. 129 ..... Londinium suffers a devastating fire.

409–410 ..... Roman garrison abandons London.

c. 604 ..... First St. Paul's Cathedral built.

839 ..... Vikings sack London.

851–886 ..... Vikings rule London.

1045–1065 ..... Westminster complex built.

1066 ..... William the Conqueror burns Southwark, and London capitulates.

1078 ..... Tower of London begun.

1087 ..... Much of London destroyed by fire.

c. 1130 ..... London granted its charter.

1176–1209 ..... Old London Bridge built.

1212 ..... Major fire in Southwark kills about 3,000 people.

1245–1272 ..... Rebuilding of Westminster Abbey.

1265 ..... First parliament is held in Westminster Hall.

1326 ..... London mob attacks royal officials.

1348–1349 ..... Black Death kills at least 30,000 Londoners.

1361–1362 ..... Plague returns to London; it returns again in 1368–1369, 1407, 1499, 1563, 1581, 1593–1594, 1603, and 1625.

1381 ..... The Peasants' Revolt is put down when the Lord Mayor kills the rebel leader, Wat Tyler.

1407 ..... Merchant Adventurers founded.

1411 ..... Guildhall built.

1423 ..... Death of Dick Whittington.

1450 ..... Jack Cade's rebellion.

1517 ..... Evil May Day riots.

1529..... Henry VIII confiscates Whitehall and makes it his principal palace.

1536–1547..... Dissolution of the monasteries, chantries, hospitals, almshouses, and so forth.

1553..... Bridewell is donated to London.

1554..... Wyatt's rebellion.

1555–1558..... Protestant martyrs burned in Smithfield.

1566..... The Royal Exchange founded; opened 1571.

1576..... London's first purpose-built theater, The Theatre, opens in Shoreditch.

1587..... Rose Theatre opens in Southwark.

c. 1590..... Shakespeare arrives in London.

1598..... John Stow's *Survey of London* published; Globe Theatre opens.

1600..... East India Company founded.

1601..... Essex rebellion.

1605..... Gunpowder Plot to blow up James I and the House of Lords.

1627–1631..... Covent Garden built.

1641–1642 ..... Mass demonstrations in London against bishops, the Earl of Strafford, and the king.

1642–1643 ..... London resists Royalist attack during the Civil Wars.

1649 ..... Execution of Charles I.

1652 ..... London's first coffeehouse opens.

1660–1669 ..... Samuel Pepys keeps his *Diary*.

1665 ..... Great Plague of London; possibly 70,000–100,000 die.

1666 ..... Great Fire of London; 13,200 houses and 87 churches destroyed.

1667 ..... Dutch sail up the Thames and destroy shipping.

1672 ..... John Banister organizes England's first public concerts.

1675–1710 ..... Rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral.

1678–1682 ..... Exclusion crisis.

1688–1689 ..... Glorious Revolution.

1694 ..... Bank of England established.

1695 ..... Lapse of the Licensing Act; beginnings of a free press.

1698 ..... Whitehall Palace destroyed by fire.

1702..... *The Daily Courant* (the world's first daily newspaper) premiers.

1710..... Sacheverell riots.

1719–1720..... Calico riots.

1720..... South Sea Bubble stock market crash.

1720s–1740s ..... Gin craze.

1741..... Founding Hospital opens.

1750..... Westminster Bridge opens.

1759..... British Museum opens.

1773..... London Stock Exchange established.

1780..... Gordon riots.

1785..... *Times of London* founded as the *Daily Universal Register*.

1807..... First public demonstration of gaslight.

1825..... First music hall opens.

1828..... University College London founded.

1829..... Metropolitan Police Department founded.

1831..... New London Bridge opens.

1831–1832..... Cholera epidemic; returns 1848–1849 and 1866.

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| 1834 | Westminster Palace burns down; replacement built 1837–1860. |
| 1836 | First railway train runs in London. |
| 1837 | Royal family moves into Buckingham Palace. |
| 1851 | Great Exhibition. |
| 1855 | Metropolitan Board of Works created. |
| 1856 | Big Ben installed. |
| 1858 | The Great Stink. |
| 1863 | Metropolitan Line (the first Tube line) opens. |
| 1875 | London's underground sewer system completed. |
| 1888 | Whitechapel murders. |
| 1889 | Establishment of the London County Council. |
| 1891–1903 | Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People of London* published. |
| 1912–1913 | Suffragette demonstrations in London. |
| 1915 | Zeppelin raids begin. |
| 1923 | Wembley Stadium opened. |
| 1926 | General Strike. |

1933..... London Passenger Transportation Board established.

1936..... Battle of Cable Street.

1940–1941..... The Blitz.

1944–1945..... V-1 and V-2 missile attacks.

1951..... The Festival of Britain.

1952..... The Big Smoke; 12,000 die.

1956..... John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* premieres at the Royal Court Theatre.

1958..... Notting Hill riots.

1964..... The Beatles appear on *Ready, Steady, Go!*

1965..... Funeral of Sir Winston Churchill; London County Council dissolved in favor of Greater London Council.

1974..... IRA bombing campaign begins; resumed in 1981–83, 1991–1993, and 1996.

1981..... Brixton riots; occur again in 1985 and 1995.

1986..... Greater London Council abolished; "Big Bang" deregulation of financial markets.

1996..... New Globe Theatre opens.

1997..... Princess Diana's funeral.

2000..... Ken Livingstone becomes the first elected mayor for the whole of London; millennium celebrations.

2005..... The 7/7 Bombings kill 52; London carries on.

# Glossary

**alderman**: Title originating in the 12th century; from 1377, the elected head of one of the City of London's wards. The Court of Aldermen (established in 1200) had the power to veto legislation passed by the Common Council and, with the lord mayor, to pass decrees for London regarding public health, traffic, regulation of alehouses, and so forth.

**alehouses**: The ad hoc counterparts to taverns, they served only beer and were associated by the authorities with lowlifes. Various attempts to suppress or regulate them usually failed. *See also* **taverns**.

**apprentices**: Young people, usually men aged 14–21, whose parents had bought them a place with a merchant or tradesman to learn his craft. In theory, after seven years' instruction, the apprentice became a journeyman worker and could then apply to become "free of the guild." In practice, they seem to have spent far too much time engaged in riot and other idle pursuits.

**Bank of England**: Established by parliamentary statute in 1694 and funded by subscription to loan money to the government, it soon became the Crown's biggest creditor and the regulator of its money supply. Always located in the City, the building and institution are popularly known as "the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street."

**Big Bang**: Deregulation of London's financial markets, which took place on October 27, 1986. Among the changes was the end of the distinction between stock traders and jobbers, the abolition of fixed commission charges, and the rise of on-screen trading. These measures were successful, leading to a reassertion of City dominance of world financial markets.

**Big Smoke of 1952, the**: A particularly deadly pea-soup fog caused by a combination of an inversion layer and the burning of large quantities of poor-quality coal in early December. Perhaps 12,000 people died.

**Black Death, the**: Plague that arrived in London via trade routes in 1348 and reached its deadly peak in 1349. Some 15,000 died in a city of 45,000.

**Blitz, the**: A campaign of Luftwaffe attacks around and on London between July 1940 and May 1941, with London particularly targeted from September 7. This campaign killed 43,000 civilians and made thousands more homeless, but Luftwaffe losses were such as to lead Hitler to abandon his plans to invade Britain.

**Bow Street Runners**: A protoprofessional police force established by Henry Fielding in 1749; eventually incorporated into the Metropolitan Police after 1829.

**Brixton riots**: Riots in 1981, 1985, and 1995 in a poor, largely Afro-Caribbean suburb of London that exposed the tensions between police and minority youth.

**burnings at Smithfield**: In an attempt to purge the nation of Protestants, Mary I ordered the burning at the stake for heresy of 286 men, women, and teenagers, most of them at Smithfield market. Their stories would be enshrined in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of These Later and Perilous Days* (better known as *The Book of Martyrs*).

**Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)**: An organization formed in 1958 to protest the proliferation of nuclear weapons and Britain's support for the United States in the Cold War. Its membership included many luminaries in politics, the arts, and the sciences. It launched a series of massive protest marches in London during the 1960s.

**Carnaby Street**: Street just off Regent Street that became synonymous with high and mod fashion in the 1960s.

**charter**: Document granted by the Crown under the Great Seal of England that, in London's case, lays out its rights and privileges vis-à-vis the national government.

**City, the**: The square mile of London within the walls, plus parts of Southwark (Bridge Ward Without) and the area west of the wall up to Temple Bar (Farringdon Ward Without). Only this area is governed by the lord mayor, Court of Aldermen, Common Council, and Common Hall from the Guildhall. In modern parlance, tends to mean the financial district and its institutions.

**coffeehouse**: First established in the City in the 1650s, coffeehouses became popular rendezvous for Londoners because of the strong coffee, newspapers, and egalitarian conviviality. Particular coffeehouses tended to attract individuals from similar professions. An attempt to suppress them by royal proclamation in 1675 failed completely.

**commercial revolution**: Spurred by the Navigation Acts, the increasing dominance of overseas trade (in particular, sugar, spices, tobacco, and slaves) by mainly London merchants between 1660 and 1720.

**Common Council, the**: Council consisting of the lord mayor, 25 aldermen, and 210 councilors elected annually by the City of London's ratepayers (taxpayers) on a ward-by-ward basis. The Common Council regulated markets, street lighting, paving, and other day-to-day business that kept the city running, and it oversaw City finances. During the early modern period, it tended to be more Puritan and radical than the lord mayor and aldermen.

**Common Hall**: Body consisting of all the freemen of the City, about three-quarters of the male population. It was Common Hall that elected London's four members of Parliament.

**constable**: Unpaid, volunteer, and reputedly unreliable law-enforcement officer during the Middle Ages and early modern period.

**Cornhill**: The highest point in the city, site of a fortress in Roman times; site of the Royal Exchange and the heart of the financial district from early modern times onward.

**dissolution of the monasteries, convents, and chantries**: A series of legislative acts between 1536 and 1547 that dissolved and confiscated

most of the church-owned land in London. Though the city was eventually allowed to take over a number of hospitals (Bridewell, Bedlam, Christ's, St. Bartholomew's, and St. Thomas's) to look after the poor and the sick, most of the land was eventually purchased or given to wealthy aristocrats like the Russells, who would build a new London.

**doss-house**: A low-class lodging house, often associated in the 18th century with the sale of gin.

**Essex rebellion**: Abortive rebellion against Elizabeth I of February 1601, led by Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex, which failed when London did not support him.

**exclusion crisis**: The crisis over the succession that occurred in 1678–1681 over whether James, Duke of York (a Catholic) should be allowed to succeed his brother Charles II. The crisis, which was borne of the supposed discovery of the Popish Plot to kill the king, precipitated three elections and led to the rise of the first two political parties in England. Whigs opposed the Duke's succession, proposing that Parliament name a Protestant instead; Tories favored it. *See also* **Tories** and **Whigs**.

**Festival of Britain of 1951**: Held on the South Bank, a government-sponsored fair designed to recall the Great Exhibition of 1851 and cheer the nation up after World War II. A great success, it attracted 8.5 million visitors.

**financial revolution**: Term for the development of modern government deficit finance, a funded national debt, and the rise of public stock trading, all based in the City, in the 1690s. The financial revolution enabled the British Crown to field vast armies and navies in its wars with France.

**freeman (a.k.a. free of the guild)**: Tradesmen who paid a fee called quarterage (paid four times a year) to their livery company were freemen or "free of the guild." This made them citizens and gave them the right to vote for municipal offices and members of Parliament.

**General Strike of 1926**: A series of sympathy strikes with the coal miners, the point of which was to paralyze London and, with it, the country. In the

end, government preparations and the unwillingness of Londoners to put up with the paralysis scuttled the strike.

**gin craze**: Born of the fact that gin was easy to make and largely untaxed, the gin craze reached its peak in the 1730s and 1740s and was thought to have led to thousands of deaths. Satirized in Hogarth's *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street*, the craze faded with the regulatory Gin Act of 1751 and a subsequent rise in the price of grain.

**Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689**: A series of events, including the invasion of William of Orange, the abandonment of London by James II, and the naming of William and his wife Mary to the Crown by Parliament as William III and Mary II, which established constitutional monarchy in England and precipitated the Nine Years' War with France.

**Gordon riots**: A series of anti-Catholic riots inspired by the incendiary speechmaking of Lord George Gordon in early June of 1780. Newgate, the Fleet Prison, and the Bank of England were attacked by mobs numbering as high as 60,000. About two dozen rioters were executed, marking an end to tolerance of large public demonstrations in London.

**Great Exhibition of 1851**: The first world's fair. It originated with Prince Albert as a way to show off the goods of the world, but it was dominated by British manufacturers. It was held in a glass and iron building in Hyde Park: Sir Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace.

**Great Fire, the**: On September 2–5, 1666, this fire burned 13,200 houses, 87 parish churches, St. Paul's Cathedral, and virtually all of the City within the walls. The official death toll was less than a dozen, but this is in dispute.

**Great Plague, the**: Epidemic of (probably) bubonic plague that raged in London from the spring of 1665 into 1666, peaking that summer. Mortality estimates range from 70,000 to 100,000.

**Great Stink, the**: In the hot, dry summer of 1858, the sewage system backed up near Westminster, river traffic stopped, and the windows of the Houses of Parliament had to be draped with curtains soaked in chloride of lime to mask

the smell. Tons of chloride of lime and carbolic acid were dumped into the Thames, but to little effect. The result was the Thames Purification Act and the beginning of a proper underground sewer system.

**Grub Street**: Early modern street near Moorfields where hack writers and journalists worked in the early 18th century. The term applied to them and their work on newspapers, essays, almanacs, political broadsides, advice books, travel books, true crime narratives, and so forth.

**Gunpowder Plot**: Catholic plot organized in 1605 by Robert Catesby to blow up King James I and both Houses of Parliament at the state opening on November 5 by detonating barrels of gunpowder stored in the basement of the House of Lords. The plot was uncovered, and one of the conspirators, Guy Fawkes, was caught red-handed with the explosives the night before. The conspirators were executed, and anti-Catholic legislation was toughened.

**inn**: Originally simply a large house, more particularly a large full-service hostelry usually located at the London end of a major road and coaching line, providing accommodation, stabling, food, drink, and the occasional play in its open courtyard.

**Licensing Act**: A statute passed in 1662 that limited the number of master printers in Britain to 20, with a few additional journeyman printers. All publications were required to carry the name of the author and printer and to be approved by a Licensor of the Press, who was empowered to search out unauthorized presses and publications. Expired 1679; renewed 1685–1695.

**livery company**: An organization of London tradesmen granted privileges by a royal charter as well as by the lord mayor and aldermen to set prices, wages, and standards of quality for all its merchants and tradesmen. Only its members could trade within the walls and vote in municipal elections for all sorts of local officials, including London's members of Parliament. Livery companies also distributed charity to sick or unemployed members, widows, and orphans and, before the Reformation, often endowed hospitals, schools, and almshouses.

**London Bridge**: There has been a bridge linking Southwark to London since Roman times. Most famous was the bridge built from 1172 to 1209,

which lasted into the 19th century. It was the only bridge linking London's two banks until 1750.

**London County Council**: Established in 1889, the overarching government authority for maintaining public works, health, housing, and so on, in London until its replacement by the Greater London Council in 1965.

**London Wall**: First built by the Romans, the wall demarcated and protected the City into the 17th century. Punctuated by eight gates that often incorporated prisons and atop which the heads of executed malefactors were often placed. Most of the wall was subsequently torn down to make way for development.

**Long Parliament**: The Parliament summoned in the autumn of 1640, which sat in one form or another from the spring of 1641 to December 1648, at which point its more moderate members were purged to form the Rump Parliament, which in turn governed the Commonwealth until 1653. First the Rump and then the whole of the Long Parliament was recalled during the period of instability prior to the Restoration, 1659–1660. *See also* **Rump Parliament**.

**lord mayor**: The old walled City of London was granted the right to elect annually a mayor (soon called the lord mayor) under King John. By the early modern period, he was usually simply the senior alderman. Only in 2000 were the inhabitants of Greater London granted the right to elect a mayor for the whole of the city.

**Merchant Adventurers**: A lobbying group for overseas wool merchants founded in 1407. For much of the 16th century, one had to be a Merchant Adventurer to have the right to participate in the wool trade.

**Metropolitan Board of Works**: Established in 1855, the first overarching authority for Greater London. It built London's sewer system, created new roads, and bought Hampstead Heath to provide additional green space for London. It was superseded by the London County Council in 1889.

**Metropolitan Police Act**: Proposed by Sir Robert Peel, this act established London's first professional police force in 1829.

**mods**: A 1960s youth group who wore tailored Italian clothes and well-coiffed hair and rode motor scooters. They tended to embrace modern jazz and existentialist philosophy. *See also* **rockers**.

**music hall**: Entertainment venue combining theater and drink, patronized by the working class in the early 19th century. They put on comedy acts, animal acts, and singers, with the audience joining in on the chorus.

**Navigation Acts**: Parliamentary legislation that passed in 1651, 1660, and 1663 that required goods shipped to and from the English colonies in America to be transported in English vessels through English ports. This legislation ensured England's commercial supremacy. After 1707, it was applied to Britain as a whole.

**ordinary**: The early modern word for a restaurant.

**pleasure garden**: An early modern version of an amusement park—for adults (e.g., Vauxhall, or later Ranelagh). Patrons could saunter along meandering walks behind high hedges, stroll beautifully manicured gardens, retreat to secluded booths where they could order dinner and drinks, listen to the latest music, and delight to the fires of numerous small lamps as the twilight descended.

**poor laws**: Series of parliamentary statutes (1536, 1563, 1598, 1601, and 1662) designed to provide relief for the "deserving" poor (i.e., those who could not work because of gender, age, or illness) out of taxes called the poor rate, collected and distributed on a parish-by-parish basis. Some of these laws also had punitive provisions for "sturdy beggars," (i.e., those who would not work). In London, both groups were often sent to Bridewell Prison. The law of 1662 allowed parishes to send itinerant poor back to their parishes of origin.

**Puritans**: Protestants who sought the continued reform of the Church of England after its establishment in 1559–1563. Puritans tended to be

Calvinists, favoring plain church ritual consistent with scriptural injunction. Many, though not all, favored a Presbyterian form of church government. After a brief moment in the sun following the Civil Wars, they were driven out of the Church of England by parliamentary legislation and so are properly known after the Restoration as Dissenters.

**Rebuilding Act of 1667**: This post–Great Fire law mandated that, in London, houses built in by-lanes could not exceed two stories, houses built along the river could not exceed three, and houses built along high streets "for citizens of extraordinary quality" could not exceed four. Also mandated construction of wider streets; that the docks were to be kept clear of houses; and, above all, that London was to be rebuilt in brick and stone.

**Riot Act of 1715**: Defined a riot as any assemblage of 12 people "unlawfully, riotously, and tumultuously assembled together." It became a felony to cause damage to places of worship, houses, barns, or stables. Most famous was the requirement that it actually be read before rioters.

**rockers**: A 1960s youth group associated with riding motorcycles, wearing leather jackets, and a penchant for American rock and roll (Elvis, Eddie Cochran, Bo Diddley). Compared to the mods, they were angrier, more macho, and more violent. *See also* **mods**.

**Rump Parliament**: Popular nickname for the radical remnant of the Long Parliament that continued to sit after Pride's Purge in December 1648. The Rump was the effective legislature of the Commonwealth. It was dissolved by Oliver Cromwell in 1653 but was briefly revived in 1659–1660 during the chaos leading to the Restoration. *See also* **Long Parliament**.

**Sacheverell riots**: After the High Anglican preacher Henry Sacheverell was found guilty of a charge of seditious libel, Tory mobs attacked Dissenting meeting houses in March 1710.

**Southwark**: Area south of London Bridge, established by the Romans but mostly unincorporated with the City until 1550. Because it was outside City authority, it became notorious as the home of brothels; bear rings; and, from the late 16th century, theaters. In 1951, it was the site of the Festival of

Britain. Today it is home to the National and New Globe Theatres and the Royal Festival Hall for music.

***Spectator*, *The***: Along with *The Tatler*, London's first literary magazine, in which the anonymous-yet-omnipresent "Mr. Spectator" would offer his witty, often caustic, opinions on London life, drawn from its very streets.

**suffragettes**: Active in the 19th and early 20th centuries, suffragettes wanted a parliamentary statute granting women the vote. Militant suffragettes like the Pankhursts engaged in civil and violent disobedience before World War I.

**sweated labor**: Unskilled labor, divided up into easy-to-learn tasks, performed in attics and basements by newly arrived immigrants for starvation wages. Its emergence in the 19th century was cause and consequence of the demise of guild regulations.

**taverns**: Large and well-established facilities serving wine, spirits, beer, and food and providing rooms for meeting and even overnight accommodation. *See also* **alehouses**.

**Teddy Boys**: Working-class white teenagers of the 1950s who liked exaggerated Edwardian dress (velvet collared jackets, bootlace ties, tapered trousers, suede shoes), Brylcreamed hair, and hanging out at cafés ("caffs").

**Tories**: English political party that arose in response to the exclusion crisis of the 1680s. The Tories began as a court party defending the hereditary succession in the person of James, Duke of York. They favored the rights of the monarch, the Church of England, and the interests of landowners. During the 1690s, as they became associated with Jacobitism and lost power, the Tories became more of a country party. Their name derives from a cant term for Catholic-Irish brigands. *See also* **exclusion crisis**.

**trading companies**: Generally (with the exception of the East India Company) not investment opportunities but lobbying groups that achieved monopolies on overseas trade to particular areas (Spain, the Baltic, and so forth). Most of these monopolies were granted in the second half of the 16th century; most were broken by 1700.

**trained bands**: London's militia, often deployed in royal military campaigns; arguably, the best-trained fighting force in Britain until the advent of the New Model Army in the 1640s.

**Tube, the**: London's underground railway system, begun in the 19th century and electrified at the beginning of the 20th century.

**Westminster**: The borough of Greater London just west of the City. Edward the Confessor began to lay it out in 1045, establishing an abbey and a palace there. The Normans made it England's capital. Westminster Hall was added by William II; the abbey was rebuilt by Henry III. The palace was given for Parliament's use by Henry VIII; it burned down in 1834 and was replaced by the present Palace of Westminster designed by Charles Berry and Augustus Pugin. The area was for many years governed by the Abbey Chapter. It was finally incorporated into Greater London in the 19th century.

**Whigs**: English political party that arose in response to the exclusion crisis of the 1680s. The Whigs began as a country party demanding the exclusion of the Catholic James, Duke of York from the throne, emphasizing the rights of Parliament and of Dissenters, and championing a Protestant (pro-Dutch) foreign policy. In the 1690s they became a party of government and grew less radical. *See also* **exclusion crisis**.

**Wyatt's rebellion**: Insurrection led in 1554 by Sir Thomas Wyatt against Mary's intended marriage to Phillip, King of Naples. Mary rallied the palace guards and remnants of Northumberland's army and beat back the rebels, many of whom were executed.

**Zeppelin**: Invented by Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, an airship borne aloft by helium. The Germans used these to rain bombs on London from May 1915 to August 1918, with greater psychological effect than economic or military consequences.

*Note*: With one exception, monarchs designated with the Roman numeral "I" bore no such designation in life: Charles I was "King Charles," Elizabeth I was "Queen Elizabeth," and so forth. They only acquired their distinguishing Roman numerals posthumously, when a second of that name succeeded. The exception was King James I, who was actually so designated in his proclamation of accession to distinguish his English title from his Scottish, as James VI.

**Alfred the Great** (849–899): King of the West Saxons from 871 to 899 who united England and spent most of his reign trying to unite the country against the invading Danes. He is often credited with establishing the first English navy, reforming the militia, and initiating or perfecting many of the institutions of Anglo-Saxon government. Captured London in 886 and established a street plan and an early taxation infrastructure.

**Anne** (1664–1714): Queen of England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1702 to 1714, successfully pursued the War of the Spanish Succession against France. Her attempt to maintain her freedom of action in the face of party partisanship was less successful, but her reign saw the Act of Union between England and Scotland, creating the state of Great Britain; maintenance of religious toleration for Dissenters; unprecedented British military success; and the expansion of the British territorial and commercial empire as a result of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713).

**Bazealgatte, Sir Joseph** (1819–1891): Civil engineer who was chief engineer to the Metropolitan Board of Works (1855–1889). Carried out the design and construction of London's sewer system (1858–1875) and the Thames Embankment (1862–1874). Knighted 1874.

**Booth, Charles** (1840–1916): English ship owner and social reformer; author of *Life and Labour of the People of London* (1891–1903), a systematic and

comprehensive study of its subject. Played a major role in securing passage of the Old Age Pensions Act (1908).

**Boudicca** (d. 61): Queen of the Iceni who, after she was flogged and her daughters were raped by the Romans, sacked London, killing perhaps 70,000 people. Eventually defeated and took poison. Some 80,000 of her people were slain by the Roman commander Suetonius Paulus.

**Charles I** (1600–1649): King of England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1625 to 1649. His support for the Duke of Buckingham's failed foreign policy early in his reign, combined with his High Church religious policies and suspected Catholic sympathies, poisoned his relationship with Parliament. His attempt to rule without it, the Personal Rule of 1629–1640, saw a much-needed reform of the royal administration, but his financial exactions, never approved by Parliament, were very unpopular. His attempt to impose an Anglican-style liturgy on Presbyterian Scotland in 1637 provoked the Bishops' Wars, which provoked, in turn, the Long Parliament, which sought to limit his power. After neither king nor Parliament could agree on how to deal with the Irish Rebellion of 1641, civil war broke out. After some opening successes, the king lost the conflict by 1646. When, after much negotiation, it became clear that he would never agree to a limitation of his powers, he was tried by order of the Rump Parliament and executed in January 1649.

**Charles II** (1630–1685): King of England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1660 to 1685, though committed Royalists dated his reign to the death of his father in 1649. Prince Charles fought in the Civil Wars on the Royalist side, escaping to Europe in 1646, but he returned in 1650 to accept the Scots' acclamation as king. Defeated by Cromwell at the Battle of Worcester in 1651, he was forced to hide in a tree—"the royal oak"—and make his way incognito back to European exile. Restored in 1660, Charles II initially attempted to pursue a combination of absolutism, religious toleration, and friendship with France, culminating in the Treaty of Dover of 1670. But after the disaster of the Third Anglo-Dutch War, he employed the Earl of Danby to repair his relationship with the ruling elite by working to manage Parliament, embracing an Anglican religious policy, and pursuing, albeit fitfully, a Protestant (pro-Dutch) foreign policy. The climax of his reign was the Popish Plot and the exclusion crisis, in which he coolly refused to accept

that there was such a plot and, after some hesitation, continued to back his brother, James, Duke of York, as his heir until a Tory reaction set in.

**Chaucer, Geoffrey** (c. 1340–1400): English poet, government official, and native Londoner. He served abroad in the Hundred Years' War (1359–1360) and on several continental diplomatic missions thereafter. He was Comptroller of the Customs in London (1374), a member of Parliament (1386), Clerk of the Works (1389–1391), and the author of *Troylus and Cryseyde* and *The Canterbury Tales*, among other works.

**Churchill, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer** (1874–1965): British statesman and author; served abroad in India, the Sudan, and the Boer War (the last as a correspondent) from 1897 to 1899. Became a member of Parliament in 1900; president of the Board of Trade in 1908; and First Lord of the Admiralty from 1911 to 1915, from which post he fell as a result of the disaster at Gallipoli. He held various cabinet positions in the 1920s, was reappointed First Lord in 1939, and became prime minister in May 1940. Famously rallied London, the nation, and then the alliance that defeated Hitler. Voted out of office July 1945; returned as prime minister from 1951 to 1955. The author of numerous works of history, including histories of both world wars and a four-volume biography of his ancestor John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature and was knighted in 1953. Refused the title of Duke of London.

**Cromwell, Oliver** (1599–1658): Lord Protector of England from 1653 to 1658, Cromwell began life as an obscure gentleman from Huntingdonshire. Educated at the strongly Puritan Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, he proved himself a brilliant general of horse during the Civil Wars. By their end, he was the commander of the New Model Army and, arguably, the most important man in England. In 1649 he recaptured Ireland, gloating over the massacres at Drogheda and Wexford. In 1650–1651 he defeated the Covenanting and Royalist Scots, securing the control of the Commonwealth over the whole of the British Isles. However, he soon became disillusioned with the Rump Parliament and used the army to send them home in 1653. Named lord protector by the Instrument of Government later that same year, he gave England good government and an aggressive and successful foreign policy but also a more intrusive state and higher taxes than it had ever known

previously. Though he was succeeded by his son, Richard, after his sudden death in 1658, his regime collapsed soon after.

**Dickens, Charles** (1812–1870): English author. Born in Portsmouth, he arrived in London in 1822 and spent his youth in sweated labor and in getting to know the city. After spending time as a reporter, he wrote over a dozen novels, plus short stories and essays, nearly all of which advocate social reform.

**Edward I** (1239–1307): Warlike medieval English king who reigned from 1272 to 1307, he fought in the Seventh Crusade in 1270 and was responsible for the conquest of Wales in 1282–1284, as well as repeated wars to secure the submission of Scotland from 1290 onward. Domestically, he reformed government and called what became known as the Model Parliament in 1295. He expelled the Jews from England in 1290. He did not get along with the City of London and, as a consequence, strengthened the fortifications of the Tower.

**Edward VI** (1537–1553): King of England and Ireland from 1547 to 1553, he was too young to direct policy on a day-to-day basis. The first part of his reign was dominated by his uncle, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, was named Lord Protector within days of Edward's accession. Somerset pursued Protestantism at home and an aggressive foreign policy against Scotland but fell in 1549 over his failure to deal effectively with the Western Rising and Kett's rebellion. He was replaced as leading minister by John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, who pursued Protestantism more aggressively. Since this would make his position untenable if the Catholic Mary succeeded, he persuaded Edward to divert the succession to the Protestant Lady Jane Grey as Edward's health failed in the spring of 1553. The king died that July.

**Edward the Confessor** (c. 1002–1066): King of England from 1042 to 1066. He was deeply religious, taking a vow of celibacy, though he was forced to marry in 1045. Refounded a monastery at Westminster soon after his accession and built a great abbey and palace there, thus laying the foundation for the transfer of the capital to London.

**Elizabeth I** (1533–1603): Queen of England and Ireland from 1558 to 1603. As a princess, Elizabeth had a checkered career, sometimes in royal favor, sometimes—especially under her Catholic sister Mary I—well out of it and in some danger of her life. She preserved herself by avoiding all plots to put her on the throne prematurely. As queen, she inherited a great many problems from Mary. She solved them by pursuing extreme frugality and a moderately Protestant compromise on religion (the Settlement of 1559–1563) and by placating the great Catholic powers of Europe (Spain, France, the Holy Roman Empire) for as long as possible. This last was difficult, as Elizabeth found it in her interest to offer support to Scottish Presbyterian rebels against Mary, Queen of Scots, and (covertly) Dutch Calvinist rebels and English privateers against Phillip II of Spain. Spain only retaliated after Elizabeth sent an army to the Netherlands in 1585 and executed her cousin Mary in 1587. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 was only the beginning of a long war, the climax of which was the English suppression of the O'Neill rebellion in Ireland in 1603. By then, Elizabeth's well-cultivated aura as Gloriana, the Virgin Queen wedded to her adoring people, was wearing thin due to high taxes, poor harvests, and a sense that the reign had run its course.

**Fielding, Henry** (1707–1754): English novelist and playwright. Born in Somersetshire, he became a barrister in 1740 and was named justice of the peace for Westminster in 1748. Author of, among other works, *Joseph Andrews*, *Tom Jones*, and the *History of Jonathan Wild the Great*, he was also a reformist who established the Bow Street Runners.

**George I** (1660–1727): King of Great Britain and Ireland and Elector of Hanover from 1714 to 1727. His family was placed in the succession to the British throne by the Act of Settlement of 1701. The Hanoverian claim having received the wholehearted support of the Whigs prior to his accession, George I employed the Whigs in office exclusively. In particular, he placed his affairs so fully into the hands of Sir Robert Walpole that the latter is considered the first real prime minister in British history.

**Henry III** (1207–1272): King of England from 1216 to 1272, though the realm was governed by a regency until 1232. He clashed frequently with his barons, led by Simon de Montfort, and with London in the 1250s and 1260s

especially. After his son, Edward, defeated the barons at Evesham in 1265, he retreated from active participation in government. He rebuilt Westminster Abbey in a high gothic style.

**Henry VII** (1457–1509): King of England from 1485 to 1509. As Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, he inherited a claim to the English throne from his mother, Margaret Beaufort. Acting on that claim in 1485, he defeated Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field and seized the throne. He kept it by wooing London; reducing the power of the greatest nobles; promoting trade; building alliances with France, Scotland, and Spain through threats of war or diplomatic marriage; and reforming the administration and finances of the Crown to a point where he no longer had to trouble Parliament for funds. This, in turn, meant that they would not trouble him.

**Henry VIII** (1491–1547): King of England from 1509 to 1547 and Ireland from 1541 to 1547, he deployed his considerable intelligence and energy during the first 20 years of his reign on pleasure and wars with France, leaving the administration of the country to Thomas, Cardinal Wolsey. Wolsey fell in 1529, after failing to secure for Henry a papal divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, necessitated in Henry's eyes by her failure to give him a male heir. Wolsey's replacement, Thomas Cromwell, made possible the divorce by making Henry supreme head of the Church of England through a series of acts passed in 1533–1536. These acts initiated the English Reformation and a virtual revolution in the Crown's relationship to its subjects. Henry was a popular monarch, despite the fact that he exploited, exhausted, or liquidated a series of wives, ministers, and courtiers and the contents of the royal treasury. His wars wrecked the economy, and his dissolution of the monasteries initiated a major shift of land ownership in London away from the church and toward the nobility. Although a political and religious conservative, his constitutional and religious changes did much to propel England down the path of parliamentary sovereignty and Protestantism.

**Hogarth, William** (1697–1764): English painter and engraver and a native Londoner. Though a painter of great accomplishment, his fame rests on his prints and print series (*The Rake's Progress*, *Marriage à la Mode*, *Industry*

*and Idleness*), many of them satirical of London life. His artistic support for the London Foundling Hospital was important in its survival.

**James I** (1566–1625): King of England and Ireland from 1603 to 1625 and, as James VI, of Scotland from 1567 to 1625. James succeeded his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, as ruler of Scotland after she was deposed by the Presbyterian nobility. Raised a somewhat reluctant Presbyterian, James grew up to be an effective ruler of Scotland, particularly good at balancing its various factions. He was also something of a scholar, writing in support of divine-right kingship. He succeeded Elizabeth I on the strength of his Tudor great-grandmother, Margaret. As king of England, he forged peace with Spain and pursued a moderate religious policy, avoiding persecution of either Catholic or Puritan extremes when possible. He had more difficulty balancing English political factions and never quite figured out how to manage Parliament so as to supply the extravagance of his court. Nor did he make any attempt to woo London. Increasingly lazy as he grew older, he turned his affairs over to his principal favorite, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. This explains the ill-advised resumption of hostilities with Spain begun in his last year on the throne.

**James II** (1633–1701): King of England and Ireland and (as James VII) of Scotland from 1685 to 1688. As a young man following the Civil Wars, James, Duke of York, escaped to the Continent. There, in the service of the French king, and after the Restoration as Lord High Admiral (1660–1673), he distinguished himself by his bravery. In 1678, after allegations of a "Popish Plot" to kill Charles II and place James on the throne, the Whigs organized, unsuccessfully, to try to ban him from it. As king, he proved a far-sighted administrator, but his major policy initiative—to grant both Catholics and Dissenters a toleration—was widely unpopular. In 1688 he was deposed by William of Orange and fled once more to France. The following year he attempted to launch a second Restoration from Ireland, but following his defeat at the Battle of the Boyne in July 1690, he left his former kingdoms for good. He lived out his days on the hospitality of Louis XIV.

**John** (c. 1167–1216): Weak medieval king of England from 1199 to 1216 as well as Duke of Normandy, Anjou, Maine, and Tourraine until he lost them by 1205. His refusal to recognize the papal nominee, Stephen Langton,

as archbishop of Canterbury in 1206 led to an interdict against England in 1208 and his deposition by the Pope in 1212 before he submitted, receiving England back as a feudal fief in 1213. He granted many of London's privileges, including the right of the City to govern itself and elect a mayor, in order to secure loans and City support. This did him little good as, following his return from the disastrous French military campaign of 1214–1215, the city opened its gates to the rebels who forced the Magna Carta on him.

**Johnson, Samuel** (1709–1784): English lexicographer, writer, and raconteur. Born in Lichfield, he moved permanently to London in 1737 and began to work on *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Over the next half century or so he produced an astonishing amount of work, including a literary magazine (*The Rambler*), poetry, plays, an edition of Shakespeare, and the first comprehensive dictionary of the English language (1749–1755). In 1763 he met James Boswell, who became his biographer. His Literary Club included Garrick, Burke, Reynolds, Goldsmith, and others.

**Jones, Inigo** (1573–1652): Architect and scenic designer to James I and Charles I and a native Londoner, he is credited with designing the neo-Palladian Banqueting House at Whitehall, the portico to Old St. Paul's, and London's first square, Covent Garden.

**Livingstone, Ken** (b. 1945): Labour politician who was head of the Greater London Council in 1981–1986 and became London's first elected mayor in 2000. Known to the press as "Red Ken" for his left-wing policies, he was defeated for reelection in 2008.

**Mary I** (1516–1558): Queen of England and Ireland from 1553 to 1558. Educated to be a consort, not a queen; delegitimized by her father, Henry VIII, in 1533; and taken out of the succession by her brother, Edward VI, in 1553; Mary survived the attempted coup of Lady Jane Grey to succeed in July 1553. She precipitated another crisis, Wyatt's rebellion, in 1554 by choosing to marry Phillip, King of Naples, the future Phillip II of Spain. The rebellion failed, but the marriage proved unhappy: It never produced the heir that Mary so desperately wanted, but it did land her in a disastrous war with France that saw the loss of Calais. The major policy initiative of her reign, the restoration of Catholicism as the state church, failed, not so

much because of the burnings at Smithfield, which earned her the sobriquet "Bloody Mary," but because she had neither time on the throne nor an heir to continue her policies. In their absence, hers is generally considered the only failed Tudor reign.

**Mary II** (1662–1694): Queen of England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1689 to 1694. The daughter of James, Duke of York (James II), Mary was raised a Protestant at the Restoration court. She was matched in a diplomatic marriage with William of Orange, Stadholder of the Netherlands, in 1677. In the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689, she was offered the throne with William as king, in whom administrative power was vested. Serving as regent when he was out of the country on campaign, Mary was frequently urged by the Tories to exercise her power, but she remained loyally subordinate to her husband. Her importance to the regime was in giving it a face that was English, Anglican, charitable, fun-loving, and attractive. She was also important as a patron of the arts and was much lamented at her sudden death from smallpox in December 1694.

**Mayhew, Henry** (1812–1887): English journalist, humorist, and playwright who cofounded *Punch* in 1841. Best remembered for his inquiry into *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851–1864).

**Pankhurst, Emmeline** (1858–1928): Militant English suffragette. With her eldest daughter, Christabel, founded the Womens' Social and Political Union in 1903. From 1905 she advocated radical, even violent methods to obtain votes for women, including window smashing, arson, and hunger strikes.

**Pepys, Samuel** (1633–1703): English government official and diarist, a native Londoner. After his education at Cambridge, he was appointed clerk of the acts of the Navy Board in 1660, then was appointed secretary of the Admiralty and was elected to Parliament in 1673. He was made a fellow of the Royal Society in 1665 and became its president from 1684 to 1686. Closely associated with the king's brother—James, Duke of York, who as James II was overthrown in the Glorious Revolution—Pepys fell with his master, resigning from the Admiralty in 1689. He spent the rest of his life as a leisured London gentleman, pursuing scientific and artistic hobbies. The

shorthand diary he kept in the years 1660–1669 recreates his own life and 17th-century London in amazing, fascinating detail.

**Plautius, Aulus**: Roman general designated by Claudiuis to invade Britain and establish a Roman presence there in 43 C.E.

**Shakespeare, William** (1564–1616): English playwright, born at Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire; moved to London by 1592. He became an actor-playwright in the Lord Chamberlain's Men and a shareholder in the Globe Theatre, built in 1598. He produced 37 plays (including histories, tragedies, and comedies), plus poems and sonnets, before retiring to Stratford around 1611.

**Stow, John** (c. 1525–1605): English historian and antiquary, a native Londoner whose greatest work is *A Survey of London* (1605).

**William I** (the Conqueror; 1027–1087): Duke of Normandy from 1035 to 1087; King of England from 1066 to 1087. As Duke of Normandy, he defeated King Harold II at the Battle of Hastings on October 14, 1066. When London refused to capitulate, he marched on and burned Southwark, leading to London's reversal of course. Crowned at Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day 1066, he built the Tower of London to keep an eye on his new capital. This was one of many castles he established to safeguard his rule. He also established the feudal system in England and commissioned a thorough survey of his realm, entitled Domesday Book (1085).

**William III** (1650–1702): King of England, Ireland, and (as William II), Scotland from 1689 to 1702; Prince of Orange from 1650 to 1702; and Stadholder of the Netherlands from 1672 to 1702. William was the only child of William II, Prince of Orange, and Mary, the daughter of Charles I. Chronically unhealthy but of exceptional intelligence, William was kept from power in the Netherlands by a republican faction during his youth. He was catapulted to the leadership of the Dutch Republic by Louis XIV's attempt to wipe it off the map in 1672. For the remainder of his life, he worked to build a Grand Alliance to stop the Sun King, an important stage in that project being his marriage to Princess Mary of England in 1677. His great opportunity to take advantage of this match came in 1688 when he was

invited to invade England. After extensive preparations, the invasion was a success, and on February 13, 1689, William was offered the English crown, jointly with Mary II but with administrative power to be vested in him. The Glorious Revolution precipitated the Nine Years' War, in which he secured first Ireland by 1692, then a favorable peace with Louis via the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697. As William's reign ended, he was preparing a second war to stop Louis XIV from placing his grandson, Philippe, Duke of Anjou, on the Spanish throne, and James II's son, Prince James, on the British throne.

**Wren, Sir Christopher** (1632–1723): English architect, Professor of Astronomy at Oxford from 1666 to 1673, Surveyor of the King's Works from 1668 to 1718, charter member of the Royal Society, and its president from 1680 to 1682. After the Great Fire of London, his designs resulted in the rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral in 1675–1716, 52 churches, and the Customs House. Among other notable buildings in London, he was responsible for work at Whitehall Palace, St. James's, Greenwich, Chelsea, Temple Bar, and the Monument. Knighted 1673.

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