

Walking on water

A self guided walk from Islington to Blackfriars



Discover how the capital has been shaped by water
See a deep river valley transformed into a major road
Find a sacred well buried deep in the ground
Hear a 'lost' river gushing under your feet

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**the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks**





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Cover image: Grate in Ray Street over the Fleet River © Caroline Millar

Walking on water

Trace London's underground water from Islington to Blackfriars

Water is a vital feature of most settlements and London, built on the banks of the River Thames, is no exception. But this is a waterside stroll with a difference...

On this walk from Islington to the Thames at Blackfriars, you will discover how the unseen water under your feet has shaped London, from the natural springs that rose north of the city to the valley of the mighty River Fleet now reduced to a few drops.



Water fountain at Nautilus House
© Rory Walsh



Fishing monks at The Black Friar pub
© Rory Walsh

Discover how the city has been shaped by water. Find evidence of medieval monasteries and Georgian spas. Visit former breweries, holy wells and dangerous dens of vice and criminality brought to life by Charles Dickens.

Learn to recognise how water is still inscribed in the London's landscape today, from street names to tell-tale dips in the road.

Experience familiar streets and neighbourhoods with fresh eyes as you walk on water without getting your feet wet.

Route map



Stopping points

- Start.** Junction of St John Street and Chadwell Street
- 2.** Gardens of the Nautilus Building, Myddleton Passage
 - 3.** Wells House, Spa Green Estate
 - 4.** Cattle trough, junction of Wynyatt Street and St John Street
 - 5.** Former Cannon's Brewery, Brewhouse Yard
 - 6.** St John's Priory Courtyard, St John's Square
 - 7.** Well Court, 14-16 Farringdon Lane
 - 8.** Outside The Coach and Horses pub, Ray Street
 - 9.** Junction of Saffron Hill and Greville Street
 - 10.** View of Farringdon Street from Holborn Viaduct
 - 11.** Ludgate Circus
 - 12.** St Bride's churchyard, St Bride's Avenue
 - 13.** St Ann Blackfriars churchyard, Ireland Row
- Finish.** Underneath Blackfriars Bridge

Practical information

Location	Farringdon, Greater London
Start point	Junction of St John Street and Chadwell Street, Islington EC1V 4LD
Finish point	Thames Embankment under Blackfriars Bridge EC4V 4DY
Distance	2 ½ miles
Getting there	<p>Underground - The nearest station is Angel on the Northern Line. From the main exit of the station, turn left into Islington High Street. At the major junction, cross Pentonville Road and continue into St John Street. Chadwell Street is on the right after about a hundred metres, marked by a green sign on a lamp post for the New River Path.</p> <p>Train - The nearest mainline stations are Farringdon and Blackfriars. Direct trains run to both from Kings Cross, City Thameslink, Brighton, Bedford, Sutton, Sevenoaks, Luton and St Albans.</p> <p>Bus - The area is served by many London buses including routes 55, 63, 243.</p> <p>Bicycle - Plenty of London Cycle Hire docking stations nearby.</p>
Level	Gentle - A simple urban route though there are several sets of steps and some gentle ascents and descents.
Terrain	The walk is on urban pavements and paths.
Conditions	Parts of this walk pass through areas that can be very busy with people and traffic. Always use pedestrian crossings.
Suitable for	<p>Families - Looking and listening for hidden waterways will appeal to all ages.</p> <p>The flights of steps are unsuitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs.</p>

Refreshments

There are plenty of shops, cafés and restaurants along the route. The courtyard of St John's Priory (Stop 6) makes a nice place for a picnic.

Historic pubs on the route include:

The Blacksmith and Toffee Maker, Wynatt Street (Stop 4)

The Jerusalem Tavern, Britton Street (between Stops 6 and 7)

The Coach and Horses, Ray Street (Stop 8)

The One Tun, Saffron Hill (just past Stop 9)

The Punch Tavern, Fleet Street (just before Stop 12)

The Cock Pit, St Andrew's Hill (between Stops 13 and 14)

The Black Friar, Queen Victoria Street (between Stops 13 and 14)

Toilets

Toilets are available at the museums and for customers in the cafés and pubs.

Places to visit

Islington Museum (between Stops 4 and 5) is open 10am to 5pm. Closed Wednesdays and Sundays. Free entry.

http://www.islington.gov.uk/islington/history-heritage/heritage_museum/Pages/default.aspx

The Museum of the Order of St John (Stop 6) is open 10am to 5pm, Mondays to Saturdays. Free entry but donations encouraged for guided tours. www.museumstjohn.org.uk

St Paul's Cathedral (near Stop 11) is open for sightseeing 8.30am to 4pm, Mondays to Saturdays. Open Sundays for worship only. Weekday closures can occur for special events and ceremonies. Entry charges apply. www.stpauls.co.uk

Visitor information

City Information Centre is located at St Paul's Churchyard between the Cathedral and Millennium Bridge. Open 9.30am to 5pm Mondays to Saturdays, 10am to 4pm on Sundays. Tel: 020 7606 3030 www.visitlondon.com

Directions

These directions are for use with the audio commentary. Listen to each track then read the directions below to get to the next stop.

1. Water, water everywhere...

Junction of St John Street and Chadwell Street

Directions 1

Turn left into Arlington Way and follow it to The Shakespeare's Head pub. Turn right into Myddelton Passage. With a brick wall on your left, go to the end of Myddelton Passage where you will see two black gates on the left hand side. Enter the second gate to read the information boards on the New River. Then enter the first gate and follow the path down to the fountain for the next stop. Listen to Track 2.

2. The New River

Gardens of the Nautilus Building, Myddelton Passage

Directions 2

Leave the garden and retrace your steps along Myddelton Passage. At the end turn right. Cross the road using the pedestrian island and enter Spa Green Gardens through the iron gate. Follow the path right then left to stop outside Wells House. Listen to Track 3.

3. From spas to socialism

Wells House, Spa Green Estate

Directions 3

Continue through the estate. On the right you will pass Hugh Myddelton Primary School (named after the entrepreneur who established the New River). Walk along Lloyd's Row then cross over St John Street to stop by the stone cattle trough outside The Blacksmith and Toffee Maker pub. Listen here to Track 4.

4. This little piggy went to market

Cattle trough, junction of Wynyatt Street and St John Street

Directions 4

With the trough behind you, turn left and continue along St John Street. You will pass Finsbury Library and Islington Museum across the road. If the Museum is open, do pop in to see an elm water pipe used on the New River. From the museum, continue down St John Street and cross Skinner Street. At the next pedestrian crossing, near The Well pub, ensure you are on the left side of St John Street. Continue a short distance to a three storey redbrick building with a wide gateway into a courtyard. Go into the courtyard and stop in front of the building with a clock on top. Listen to Track 5.

5. From ale to apartments

Former Cannon Brewery, Brewhouse Yard

Directions 5

Turn left out of Brewer's Yard and continue along St John Street. At the traffic lights, turn right across the street and go into Clerkenwell Road. After about 50 metres you will come to St John's Square. Turn right and enter the Museum of the Order of St John. Go through into the courtyard and take a seat. Listen to Track 6a.

6a. Medieval monastery

St John's Priory courtyard, St John's Square

Directions 6a

Leave the courtyard and turn left. Carefully cross over Clerkenwell Road and continue into the other side of St John's Square. Stop by the large stone archway and listen to Track 6b.

6b. Medieval monastery

St John's Gate, St John's Square

Directions 6b

With Clerkenwell Road behind you, turn right in front of the archway. Pass The Bear pub on your right and continue into an alleyway. You will emerge through an archway into Britton Street beside the Jerusalem Tavern pub. Turn left and you will see a four-storey building with six grey stone arches on the opposite side of the road. This was Nicholson's gin distillery - look up to the third floor to see five friezes depicting the process of gin production.

Retrace your steps past the Jerusalem Tavern and continue to the junction with Clerkenwell Road. Turn left, passing Fleet House at numbers 59-61. At the junction of Farringdon Lane and Turnmill Street turn right and cross the road into Farringdon Lane. Stop outside Well Court, building number 14-16 on the right hand side. Listen here to Track 7.

7. A lost river and a holy well

Well Court, 14-16 Farringdon Lane

Directions 7

Continue along Farringdon Lane, bearing left across Ray Bridge. Cross over Farringdon Road using the pedestrian crossing to the right. Then turn right into Ray Street and stop outside The Coach and Horses pub. Listen to Track 8.

8. The lowest of the low

Outside The Coach and Horses pub, Ray Street

Directions 8

Cross the road from the pub and go up Back Hill. At the junction with Clerkenwell Road turn left and continue for about 50 metres. Use the next pedestrian crossing to cross over into the narrow road opposite called Saffron Hill. Go along Saffron Hill and stop at the junction with Greville Street. Listen to Track 9.

9. Den of thieves

Junction of Saffron Hill and Greville Street

Directions 9

Continue along the slope to the end of Saffron Hill. At the top of the steps turn left then right along Farringdon Street towards Holborn Viaduct (the red bridge). Just before the bridge enter the white building on your right with three arched doorways. Walk up the steps (passing a large scale image showing the construction of the Metropolitan Railway through the Fleet Valley) to emerge onto Holborn Bridge. Carefully cross over the road to the other side of the bridge. Stand in the middle and look down at the road below. Listen here to Track 10.

10. A river ran through it

View of Farringdon Street from Holborn Viaduct

Directions 10

Turn left and take the set of steps back down to Farringdon Street that are underneath the statue of Thomas Gresham. At the bottom of the steps turn left and continue to Ludgate Circus. Listen to Track 11.

11. City on a hill

Ludgate Circus

Directions 11

To reach the next stop you will need to be on the left hand side of Fleet Street. With St Paul's Cathedral on your left cross over Ludgate Circus then turn right and cross over at the next set of traffic lights. Continue into Fleet Street then take the first left past The Punch Tavern pub, Bride's Lane. Turn right up a small set of steps into St Bride's Avenue then go left to enter the churchyard. Listen to Track 12.

12. Read all about it

St Bride's Churchyard, St Bride's Avenue

Directions 12

Go back down the steps to Bride Lane. Turn right then left past the St Bride's Foundation to reach New Bridge Street. Turn right, cross the road then take the next turn into Apothecary Street. Take the steps over the railway line then turn right at the bottom to pass the Apothecaries Hall. Turn left into Playhouse Yard and go straight ahead into Ireland Yard. After a few yards you will see some black gates and steps up into a churchyard garden on the left. Stop at the top of the steps and listen to Track 13.

13. Monochrome monks

St Ann Blackfriars churchyard, Ireland Yard

Directions 13

Continue to the end of Ireland Yard and turn right down St Andrews Hill to meet Queen Victoria Street. Turn right and continue up to The Blackfriar pub. When you are ready, cross Queen Victoria Street with the pub behind you and head towards Blackfriars station.

Pass the station on your left and continue onto Blackfriars Bridge. Go down the steps to the riverside path and stop directly below the bridge. Look for a metal ladder leading down into the water. At low tide you may be able to see a steel manhole cover to the right. Listen to Track 14.

14. The last drop

Underneath Blackfriars Bridge

Directions 14

To return to Angel and Islington you can take the Underground from Blackfriars station. Take the District or Circle Line eastbound then change at Monument for the Northern Line via Bank. Alternatively take the Circle Line eastbound to King's Cross and change for the Northern Line.



Signs revealing hidden water sources
© Caroline Millar / Rory Walsh

Further information

'London's Lost Rivers: A Walker's Guide' by Tom Bolton

<http://strangeattractor.co.uk/books/londons-lost-rivers-a-walkers-guide>

The Blackfriar pub

www.nicholsonspubs.co.uk/theblackfriarblackfriarslondon

Clerks' Well

http://www.islington.gov.uk/islington/history-heritage/heritage_borough/bor_sites/Pages/clerkswell.aspx

The Museum of the Order of St John

www.museumstjohn.org.uk

New River Action Group

<http://newriver.org.uk>

Sadler's Wells Theatre

www.sadlerswells.com

Smithfield Market

www.smithfieldmarket.com

St Bride's Church

www.stbrides.com

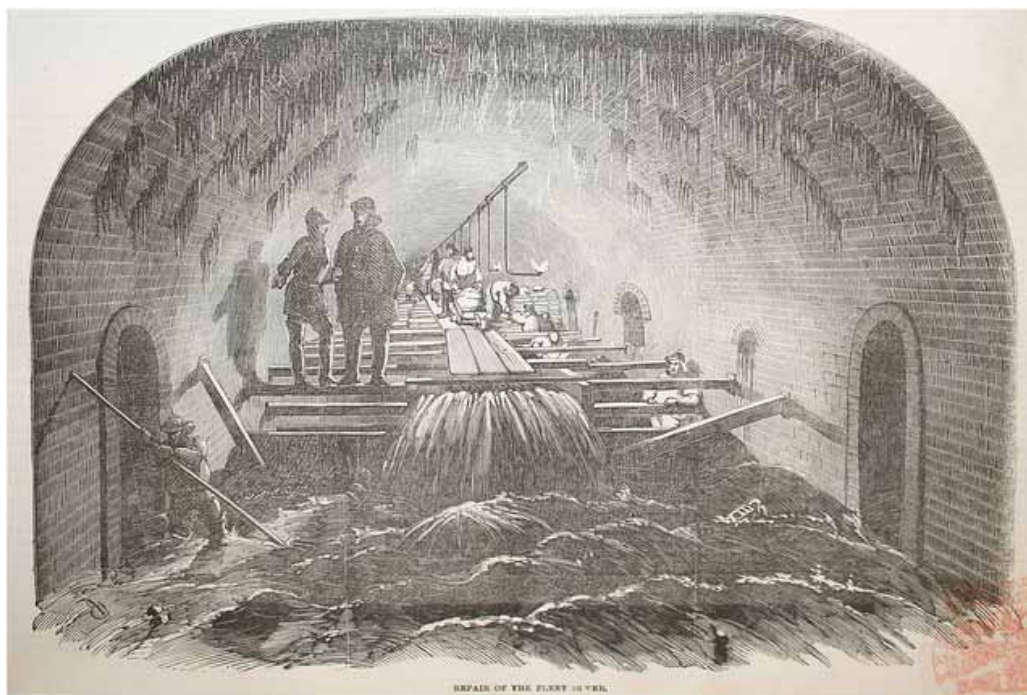
St Paul's Cathedral

www.stpauls.co.uk

Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this Discovering Britain walk:

- **Professor David Green** for suggesting the walk route and theme
- **Caroline Millar** for compiling the walk materials, providing photographs, editing the walk resources and audio files
- **Jenny Lunn** for editing the walk resources and providing photographs
- **Rory Walsh** for providing photographs and testing the route
- **Tom Bolton** for suggestions to the text
- **Carrie von Lieshout** for information on The New River
- **Ted Hatch** for lending an invaluable book and for his interest and enthusiasm
- **British History Online, London Metropolitan Archives, The London Survey, Victorian London, Look and Learn Picture Gallery** and **David Hale/Mapco** for kind permission to include images from their collections



Repairs to the Fleet Sewer
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