



Know Your London Lecture Topics

Adrian Prockter



Know Your London

Lecture Topics by Adrian Prockter

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All the lectures are fully illustrated (using a computer and the very latest digital projector technology). The illustrations beside each description have been taken from the relevant lecture. The subjects have been fully researched and provide a fascinating insight into London's past as well as showing nostalgic views and old prints of the capital. The **locations** and **persons** that form the titles for the lecture topics are listed below in alphabetical order.

Each lecture can be designed to fit in with the time that your organisation would like. Please feel free to discuss your particular requirements.

In addition to the topics listed below, Adrian Prockter has been leading walks around London over the last 40 years. He can also take your group on a conducted walk related to some of the topics listed below.



Baird, John Logie

Born in Scotland, Baird built the first working prototype television in the world. He started his work in Hastings but spent most of his life in London where he achieved some of his greatest successes, first demonstrating television in Frith Street (**picture**). His life had highs and lows and, at every point, it was packed with interest, especially for those who are interested in London and know the venues in which he worked.



Borough High Street

There is probably more history in this London street than in any other in Greater London. The lecture presents the days of the coaching inns, which lined the street; the story of Southwark Cathedral, which started life as a monastery; the many famous names, including John Harvard, who founded Harvard University in the United States; and, of course, the story of the Borough Market and the Hop Exchange. Adrian Prockter was at school behind the street and has known it all his life.

Walk: Borough High Street

There is an accompanying walk to see the variety of places of interest along the length of the street.



Chaucer & His World

Geoffrey Chaucer is best remembered for writing the 'Canterbury Tales'. He was a keen observer of people as he moved around London, where he lived all his life. He knew Old London Bridge, the Old Kent Road and Eltham Palace (**picture**). This lecture concentrates on his life and times, with pictures of places he knew. It also presents some of the colourful characters he describes in his 'Canterbury Tales'.

Walk: Chaucer & His World

Adrian Prockter also has an accompanying walk to show some of the places of interest related to the subject.



City of London - Outline History

Where do you start when giving a history of the City? It is impossible to mention everything. This 'Outline History' sets out the main places of history, starting with the Romans and the Saxons. It takes you on a historical journey through time, through Tudor London and right up to the present day. Even if you have little interest in history, the pictures themselves are well worth watching. Being a Freeman of the City, Adrian Prockter has more than a passing interest in the subject.



City of London - By Night

(Only suitable where the venue can be totally blacked out). Spectacular pictures of the City of London, including Tower Bridge (**picture**), St Paul's Cathedral, Lloyd's Insurance building, the Bank of England and the Guildhall. There are also many views of the Thames and the bridges leading to the City.



Coffee House to Internet Cafe, From

Have you ever thought of what life was like in the 17th century, when there were no newspapers, no telephones and no Internet. The insurance brokers and merchant adventurers needed news of whether their ships on the high seas would ever come back to port. Coffee Houses provided some of early means of communication and acted like the Internet does today, by providing news from distant parts. This light hearted lecture starts with Coffee Houses in London, working through stage coaches, newspapers and eventually telephones and television, ending with today's technology - the Internet.



Docklands Light Railway

A brief history of London's newest and most innovative railway. The lecture outlines the building of the railway in the 1980s and where the lines run. It concentrates on showing the many interesting locations that can be seen from some of its modern stations.

Walk: Docklands Light Railway

There is an accompanying 'walk' in which your group can meet at one of the DLR stations and take a trip to see some of places of interest along the line. This 'walk' is particularly suited to those who cannot walk very far, since much of the time we use the railway as part of the trip.



Dulwich Village

This is a place where time has stood still for centuries. Although in Inner London, the village has managed to let the metropolis develop around it and still keep a rural atmosphere. You may know Dulwich Park, the Picture Gallery or Dulwich College (**picture**) but there is far more to be seen in this historic part of London. The lecture will take you on a magical mystery tour.

Walk: Dulwich Village

Adrian Prockter also has an accompanying walk to show some of the places of historic interest in London's last remaining village.



Eleanor of Castile

She was the wife of Edward I. When she died, in 1290, the king was heartbroken and went to greater lengths than any other British monarch to honour her memory. She is still remembered by the name of the railway terminus known to all as Charing Cross Station (**picture**). The original cross was set up to commemorate the route of her funeral procession to Westminster Abbey, where she was laid to rest. This lecture will explain the love story of her life and show what remains to remind us of her today.



Festival of Britain

It is now over 50 years since the staging of one of the largest temporary exhibitions in Britain. The lecture looks at the background to the exhibition that was staged on the South Bank in 1951. Many original pictures from that time are shown, including views of the Festival Gardens, at Battersea. Many pictures of the Festival survive and they are included in the talk. One of the Festival plaques is on Blackheath (**picture**).



Forest Hill & Sydenham

Its a small area of south-east London and there are probably many people who have never been there. It started from humble beginnings - a dense forest on a line of hills in SE London. As well as its once famous forest, a canal once wound its way through the area. London's second railway line was later built across the land. In the 1850s the famous Crystal Palace was re-erected at the top of Sydenham Hill. Due to this move, impressive Victorian mansions were erected, many of which remain to be seen today. Oh yes, there's also the Horniman Museum, Asberry Cottage (**picture**) and plenty more!



Georgian London

Some of the most spectacular architecture in London remains from the Georgian era. This lecture presents these wonderful buildings and takes you on an imaginary journey across the capital, showing some of the grand structures, along with some of the humbler ones, but all with an interesting story to tell. The Royal Opera Arcade (**picture**) is just one example.



Jews in London

The Jews originally came to England with William the Conqueror. In the 12th century they were driven out of all the Cities in England where they had been pursuing the lucrative business of early bankers. Today many quarters of London have Jewish connections and, whether you have Jewish roots or not, the story of their lives in London is well worth hearing.

Walk: Jews in London

There is an accompanying walk to show some of the places of interest related to the subject - in the eastern part of the City of London.



London Bridge

Many people have heard of the medieval bridge with the small arches and houses built onto it. It also had its own chapel, a Bridge Master and two rows of shops! It was an institution that lasted for 600 hundred years. Eventually being taken down in the early 1800s and replaced by another bridge, it was again replaced by the present bridge in 1973. Here is its fully illustrated history.



London and Greenwich Railway

The first railway carrying members of the public was the Stockton and Darlington (1835). The first passenger railway in London was the London and Greenwich Railway (opened in 1836). Although only a few miles long, it has a fascinating history with many entertaining facts to relate. Its original four stations are well-known to Londoners and are also described in the lecture. Adrian Prockter was on the planning committee for the 150th anniversary in 1986, which was how he became interested in the subject.



Modern Buildings

You may not be too enthusiastic about modern buildings, preferring ones that look like St Paul's Cathedral. Have you ever stopped to think about the marvels of some of the current buildings going up in London? This lecture is not as boring as you may think. It will probably change your attitude to modern architecture as it takes a brief look at some of more glamorous structures that have been built over the past 50 years. The photography alone, including Canary Wharf (**picture**), will keep you interested.



Palace Built in a Forest, The

This lecture tells the story of Crystal Palace. It starts with why it was built in the first place. It continues with why it was moved to Sydenham and the location in which it was placed. The land was part of the ancient Great North Wood. The lecture elaborates on the extent of that forest and what remains of it today. A subject with something for everyone - including the monsters (**picture**) !



Pub Names

The whole continuity of life in a village was centred around the parish church and the village pub. London, although it looks like a vast urban sprawl, is actually made up of many villages. Once they were surrounded by fields, now they are all joined together in what we call Inner London. Pub names tell us quite a bit about the history of the area because many of them are named after local residents or once-famous buildings. One of the most famous signs in London is the 'Elephant and Castle' (**picture**) which is included in the lecture.



Reflections

This is a collection of unusual views of London providing spectacular images. They all have one thing in common - they show well-known buildings in London, along with their reflections due to their standing beside water, the river Thames or possibly because they stand next to an all-glass modern building. The lecture is well worth seeing for its visual impact and will make you think as you look at familiar sights but from less familiar angles. The floating Chinese restaurant (**picture**) is in the old docks.



Salter, Alfred

This name may not be familiar to many Londoners. He studied medicine at Guy's Hospital and became one of Bermondsey's most famous family doctors. Many older residents still have fond memories of his work and his life. He was dedicated to the medical needs of one of the poorest areas of London, during the 1920s and 1930s. Sadly his daughter died as a young child. He eventually became one of the first Labour Members of Parliament. It is still a story worth hearing even if you have never visited Bermondsey. His statue remains beside the Thames (**picture**) at Rotherhithe.



Soho

The area is centred on Soho Square (**picture**). Although the streets are well-known for their rather raunchy side, there is much more to Soho than that. It has a fine collection of Georgian houses and a good selection of interesting people in history to discuss and see where they lived. A famous name that you may never have heard of is Dr John Snow who was the pioneer of combating epidemics.

Walk: Soho

There is an accompanying walk for the area. It shows the architecture and mentions some of the very famous residents - like Mozart.



Stage Coaches

This is a topic that usually evokes many memories in the mind of coaches passing scenic locations or working their way through the snow. Most of memories today come from Christmas cards but the horse-drawn coaches of the 18th and 19th centuries were just as important to travellers then as railway trains are to those who live in the 21st century. The story is an absorbing one with a whole host of wonderful prints.



Strand - Days of Elegance

Most people probably think of the Strand in terms of Charing Cross Station and walking from there to a theatre, maybe having a meal on the way. There is much more to the Strand's history than that. In medieval times it was all large mansions, lived in by bishops and later by dukes and earls. Its fortunes rose again in the elegant Edwardian times when it was London's 'playground' for the rich. The Savoy Hotel and the Waldorf Hotel still bear witness. You may care to hear the full story.

Walk: Strand

Adrian Prockter also has an accompanying walk to show the many unexpected places of interest to be seen along its length.



Summer Flowers in London

Walking around the streets of London in the spring and summer months, the parks, small squares, even streets and window boxes, all present a most colourful array of plants and flowers. These are not country gardens but a few plants laid out to brighten up city life for the many people who live, work or visit the capital. The pictures of the flowers are set against the background of the famous buildings that surround them and provide an interesting collection of unusual views of London.



Thames - River Trip

This lecture takes the audience on an imaginary trip down the Thames, showing stunning pictures of the buildings and other places of interest along its banks. The whole sequence would take many hours to show, since it extends from Hammersmith, through Westminster and the City of London, all the way to the Thames Barrier. The lecture is divided into sections (each would make a lecture in itself):

- (1) Hammersmith, Putney, Wandsworth and Fulham
- (2) Chelsea, Battersea, Vauxhall and Westminster
- (3) Westminster, Lambeth, Strand and the City of London
- (4) Tower Bridge, St Katharine Docks, Bermondsey, Rotherhithe and Wapping
- (5) Shadwell, Limehouse, Canary Wharf, Isle of Dogs and Surrey Commercial Docks
- (6) Deptford and Greenwich
- (7) West India Docks, Greenwich Peninsula, Charlton and Woolwich.



Thames - The Docks in London

Few people remember much about the docks in London. Do you remember walking over London Bridge and seeing the large ships unloading their cargoes of food near Tower Bridge? Adrian Prockter was involved in a project to photograph the docks in their last days, during the 1970s. This lecture is about showing some of the last images ever taken of the wharves on the river, in the 1960s and 1970s, along with other fascinating pictures taken in the docks themselves.



Unusual London

A look at the really unexpected sights in London, like a fully working windmill (**picture**), a fully working water-mill, the site of a railway that worked using compressed air, the Victorian hotel that had fresh sea-water brought from the coast daily for its guests and dozens of other bizarre facts and little-known locations.



Virginia Settlers

In 1606 three tiny ships set sail for America and founded a colony, named after the Virgin Queen Elizabeth, known as 'Virginia'. In 2006, the descendants brought a replica of one of the ships to London (**picture**) so that everyone could see how small the vessels were. It's an interesting story which includes Princess Pocahontas who dies while visiting England.



Welsh in London, The

If you are not Welsh yourself, you may never have noticed how many Welsh people live in London. They have their own communities and, in many cases, their own churches. A building that was once a Welsh school remains in Clerkenwell (**picture**). Their coming to London goes back several centuries and is all connected mainly with the wool trade and cattle drovers. This talk seeks to explain the relationship of the Welsh communities in London with their rural roots in Wales and how they came to settle in London.



Westminster - Brief History

As with the City of London, the history of Westminster is almost endless. This introductory lecture will at least 'point you in the right direction' and give you a feast of wonderful images taken of the most highly visited area in London today, including Parliament Square, Whitehall and the Strand.



Westminster, Georgian

The streets around Big Ben are seldom visited by Londoners. They are less than five minutes walk away and yet they contain some of the finest Georgian houses anywhere in London. The lecture concentrates on showing off the wonderful architecture in the area, including one of London's finest churches - St John, Smith Square (**picture**).

Walk: Westminster, Georgian

There is an accompanying walk to show the exceptional architecture to be seen in the secluded streets.

This list is constantly being updated. If you have had the list for several months, please ask for the latest version.

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