

Fleet Street

Fleet Street is an interesting street with an interesting history. It was the main road between Westminster and the City of London until the Holborn Viaduct was built. It was a very, very busy street, because it was the only way to cross the River Fleet into the City.

Slowly, the River Fleet became dirty and full of rubbish and people built houses on top of it. Now it is under Farringdon Street, but you can still see where it come out into the River Thames at Blackfriars Station.

Fleet Street was been a centre of book and newspaper printing from 1500 until 2016, when the last two journalists left. Most national newspapers had their main offices on this street, and the very impressive 1930's Daily Express Building is one of the most important. You can usually visit it on one weekend a year: London Open House Weekend.

There are some interesting churches on Fleet Street too. Like St. Brides, with a tower that was the model for the first wedding cake. St Dunstan in the West is on the corner of Cock and Hen Lane, where Sweeney Todd's barber shop was. He was famous for killing his customers so his lady friend could make them into pies. St Dunstan also has the only outside statue of Elizabeth the First in the City.

Dr Johnson lived near Fleet Street, in a house at 17 Gough Square. There is a statue of his cat, Hodge, outside his house, with the oysters he used to buy for Hodge to eat. He is famous for writing an important dictionary of English.

On the other side of the street, in the Inner Temple is Temple Church. The oldest part was built in the thirteenth century and medieval knights are buried there. It was used in the film "The Da Vinci Code". Oliver Goldsmith, a famous playwright, is buried outside the church.

1. Why was Fleet Street such an important street?
2. Where can you see the River Fleet today?
3. How long was Fleet Street important for the printing industry?
4. When were the Daily Express offices built?
5. When can you visit them?
6. Why is St Brides Church interesting?
7. What can you see outside St Dunstan's in the West Church?
8. Why is Dr Johnson famous?
9. What did his cat eat?
10. Who is buried outside Temple Church?