

## My Old China

**A circular walk starting and finishing at Spread the Word, No 77.**

You may be doing this walk because you have lived in the neighbourhood for a long time – perhaps all your life. You may think you know this part of Lambeth like the back of your hand. Even if you do, you probably know some parts better than others – places, perhaps, where you had fun and good things happened.

We hope that doing the walk will bring back these memories, and also enable you to share some of the memories of others like you, who have talked to us and helped us create this audio guide.

If, on the other hand, you are a newcomer to Lambeth Walk, or just passing through, we think you'll enjoy this highly personal introduction to its fascinating history.

### 1

We start outside **No 77**, home to **Spread the Word**, the organization responsible for organizing the walk, which is celebrating its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

But first there's that song:

Any time you're Lambeth way  
 Any evening, any day,  
 You'll find us all Doin' the Lambeth walk.  
 Ev'ry little Lambeth gal With her little Lambeth pal,  
 You'll find 'em all Doin' the Lambeth walk.  
 Ev'rything free and easy,  
 Do as darn well pleasey,  
 Why don't you make your way there?  
 Go there, stay there,  
 Once you get down Lambeth way  
 Ev'ry evening, ev'ry day,  
 You'll find yourself Doin' the Lambeth walk.

Very few streets in London have had such well known songs written about them. It's from the musical *Me and My Girl* and became famous after the show was first produced in the Old Vic in 1937. It even caught on in Germany but was denounced by a member of the Nazi party, along with jazz in general, as "Jewish mischief and animalistic hopping".

The street is ancient – you can find it on a map published in 1746 with its earlier name, Three Coney Walk. A ‘coney’ was a rabbit or a hare, a reminder that back then this was open country, though it’s possible the name came from an old pub.

Later it became Lambeth Walk and famous for its market. The social historian Mayhew reported that there were 164 costermonger stalls here in 1861. Costermongers were people who sold fruit, vegetables or other food from barrows, the equivalent of today’s stall holders. People still remember the Lambeth Walk market – ‘it was as busy as East Street Market is today’ says one local resident, ‘with barrows lining the street at week ends.’

## 2

Now let’s start walking. With your back to Spread the Word, turn right. Two doors down, at No 73, is a reminder that not only the Market and old buildings have vanished, the pubs are also going. No 73 was once **The Lambeth Sportsman**, before that it was called The Angel; it was over 220 years old. Now it’s the New London Eye Hostel. You can see the bunk beds lined inside the windows.

Keep walking, past the letter box, and cross the top of Walnut Tree Walk. No 49, on the corner, is the remains of another pub, **The French Horn**, founded around 1750 and rebuilt around 1890. It has recently been converted into flats and there is no sign that it was ever a pub.

## 3

A few doors further on, after Wade Court, you’ll come to an unusual redbrick building: The Henry Moore Sculpture gallery, part of Morley College. It used to be the **Pelham Mission Hall** built in 1910 and initially used by St Mary’s Church which we’ll be visiting later. Perhaps some older residents remember preachers addressing market-goers from the unusual outdoor pulpit. Although the doors are kept firmly shut there’s lots of activity going on inside. Up to 225 students of all ages, backgrounds and experiences, pass through its doors each week, taking various sculpture and metalwork courses.

## 4

At the corner of Lambeth Walk you come to an entrance into the **Old China Walk Estate**. It was built by The London County Council and completed in 1934 and it's considered one of the finest housing estates in Lambeth. A street called China Walk was demolished to make way for it, hence the name with its reference to the local pottery industry. One of the most important historic landmarks coming up later on the walk is the Doulton China works which provided jobs for generations of local residents. The estate architects celebrated the Doulton connection by naming the houses after famous China ware: Wedgwood, Worcester, Minton, Derby, Davonport, Coalport. If you look at the map of the estate, on the board by this entrance, you'll see that the outline of Wedgwood House could be that of a large country mansion surrounding carefully laid out gardens. [*Are there any residents in the estate who remember it in its early days and if so, what did they think of it?*]

One resident, Diana Stiff, has written an account of nearly being killed by a V2 rocket during the war. She lived on the ground floor of Worcester House, beside Kennington Road.

'Worcester House where we lived was sandwiched between the Dairy and Lambeth Municipal Baths and the area bombed was centered around the stairwell. Our living room and back bedroom wall was strengthened by the wall of the Lambeth Baths, so our back bedroom was considered safer than any shelter and until January 1945 it was constantly used as a refuge and haven when needed.

Laughable incidents abounded in the war and one memory was my Dad trying to clear the fire grate in the warden's flat - he dislodged some bricks in the chimney and got knocked out by an extremely large and heavily ornamented brass poker, about 3 foot in length, which must have come down from the chimney of the second or third floor flats! Mum had the poker for years and laughed every time she used it.'

## 5

Walk on round the corner, past the estate entrance, to the Art Deco style building that was built to replace the Baths that Diana Stiff refers to in her account of the bombing. It used to be called the **Lambeth Slipper Baths and Laundry**. Slipper baths were free-standing bathtubs and higher at one end than the other. For a few pence you were provided with a towel, soap and a hot bath. The baths didn't open until 1958 but even then some nearby homes would still not have had piped hot water or bathrooms. In the 1990s the building was converted into the Lambeth Group Practice medical centre. [*Do any residents remember using the baths?*]

## 6

We now have to turn around and walk back down Lambeth Walk to get to the next building on our route. Cross over and come back on the far side of the road – this will give you a better view of the buildings we’ve just looked at. You may be able to see lights and heaters on in the Sculpture studio, if students are working in there.

We’re now going to head for the oldest and best known highlight on the walk – **St Mary Lambeth**, beside Lambeth Palace, home to the archbishop of Canterbury. St Mary’s may have played a part in the lives of many of you or your relatives before 1972 when it was still Lambeth parish church. While you’re walking you might like to hear some more of Lambeth Walk’s history.

By the end of the Second World War, part of the Walk had been bombed. – there are photographs showing No 143 reduced to rubble in 1940 and in 1945 a V2 rocket hit No. 109 killing 42 people. By the 1950s the Government had begun major plans for demolishing old over-crowded properties that had fallen into disrepair and replacing them with the new housing estates, not only here but all over London. If you want to know what Lambeth Walk would have looked like before the last War, look across at No 77 and its neighbours, built around 1910. Imagine continuous terraces of houses like this, looking a bit run down and neglected, with shops and small businesses at street level. In the 1930s No 77 was a Ladies hairdresser, in the 60s it was Sunset Stores, a hardware shop, typical of the sort of small businesses you’d have found along the Walk.

Continue past Juxon Street – where there used to be a windmill – until you reach Old Paradise Street. The Feathers Pub used to stand on the opposite corner until housing either side of the walk was demolished in 1965. [*Memories?*] Turn right into Old Paradise Street. This takes you under the railway. The London and South West Railway company built this part of the railway in the 1850s as an extension of the existing line which previously ended at Nine Elms. This involved the demolition of at least 700 houses: the Times newspaper at the time said: **‘the poor are displaced but they are not removed. They are shovelled out of one side of the parish only to render more overcrowded the stifling apartments of another part.’**

At the end of Old Paradise Street turn right into Lambeth High Street which brings you onto Lambeth Road. Cross over Lambeth Road by the pedestrian crossing on your right. A few metres to

the left there is a gate leading into the garden in front of St Mary's, the Museum of Garden History.

You are now standing on a part of London with a history that goes back over a thousand years. There has been a church here since before the Norman Conquest in 1066. The archbishops of Canterbury moved from Canterbury to Lambeth in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the impressive redbrick entrance to the Palace was built over 100 years later, around 1490. From here you could catch a ferry to Whitehall and Westminster, or take a horse across on the horse ferry. That is how Horseferry Road on the other side of the river got its name. This spot became a major transport hub on the south bank of the Thames as well as being politically important thanks to the presence of the Archbishop.

But let's concentrate on St Mary's. Only the tower dates back to the Middle Ages, the rest of the church was rebuilt in the 1850s. After it ceased to be the Parish Church in 1972 it was used for a few years by the charity Crisis to feed the homeless at Christmas and it looked as if it might be demolished. But in 1979 the Tradescant Trust was formed and St Mary's turned into a Museum of Garden History. This isn't as strange as it might at first seem because Lambeth has played a key part in horticultural history.

The Tradescants, famous gardeners and plant collectors, lived nearby in Vauxhall. The elder John Tradescant became gardener to Charles 1<sup>st</sup> and collected plants and seeds from botanists around the world. His son succeeded his father as gardener to Charles 1<sup>st</sup>.

Unfortunately you have to pay to enter the museum if you want to see the church properly and visit the churchyard. If you don't want to do this, just go inside the door. You'll get a good enough view of the interior to bring back memories and if you are interested you can look round the very small free display space on the left, behind the strange total immersion baptismal font – *[does anyone know someone who was baptised here?]* Behind the font there are cabinets showing local china and pottery and an entertaining video on the history of Lambeth.

Leave St Mary's the way you came in, at the end of the garden and look through the holly hedge immediately to the left of the gate. The tomb to the left is that of the Tradescants, it has dramatic carvings on all sides, on the end facing you, you may be able to make out tumbled down ruins and pyramids. To the right of the Tradescants is the tomb of Captain Bligh, responsible for the

mutiny on the *Bounty*. According to one estimate over 26,000 people have been buried in this small space up until 1853 when burials in churchyards in London were banned. But these are morbid thoughts and any of you who have memories of St Mary's probably came to attend services, or for baptisms, weddings or funerals. [*any memories*]

## 7

We are now going to start heading back in the direction of Lambeth Walk. Cross Lambeth Road by the pedestrian crossing and return to Lambeth High Street and walk along it to the Recreation Ground on the corner of Old Paradise Street. This doesn't look like a High Street now, but even a century ago it would have been a bustling place, lined with grocery shops and ships chandlers serving the river workers. Doulton's Factory opened here in 1815. Archbishop Tenison's School for Girls was at No 18 until the 1960s. [*any memories?*] Very early maps show a Bear Yard – maybe this was one of the many places south of the Thames where the popular sport of bear baiting took place until it was banned in 1835.

Go into the **Recreation Ground**. Back at St Mary's we mentioned the number of burials that had been squeezed into the small graveyard. The overcrowding became so bad that in 1703 the Archbishop of the time, Archbishop Tenison (the same who gave his name to the girls school) bought this land for £120 and gave it to St Mary's as extra burial space. In 1817 the Times reported a 'Daring assault and attempt to steal dead bodies'. According to the writer:

'... it appeared that the burial ground of Lambeth has for a considerable time past been the scene of transactions of the most daring and horrible description. The depositories of the dead have been nightly invaded, and the feelings of surviving relatives exceedingly harrowed, by the depredations upon their deceased friends of that callous gang of wretches known by the name of Body Snatchers, whose industry in their disgusting trade has been particularly exercised in the new burial ground at Lambeth.'

In 1825 a watch house was erected on the High Street for holding 'the drunk and disorderly' – and presumably to deter would-be grave robbers. This has now gone but a large stone, half buried under ivy, marks the site beside the second gateway.

This burial ground would have been at its busiest during the cholera epidemics that occurred during the first half of the

nineteenth century. The 1832-33 epidemic claimed between 4000 to 7000 victims in London. After the ban on London churchyard burials in 1853 this graveyard was neglected and became an eyesore until 1880 when the vestry – the parish council – decided to turn it into a public garden. The gravestones were moved against the walls, you can still see them. In 1929 the space was expanded when the site of a glass bottle factory in Whitgift Street was purchased for £700. Since the 1970s it has been re-landscaped and a water feature and playground has been added [*Any memories?*] The only reminders of the garden's history are the headstones stacked around the sides of the garden.

When you leave the Recreation Ground you'll see The Windmill Pub opposite, no doubt named after one of the three windmills that stood near here in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. You often see Doulton pottery decorated with windmills.

## 8

On the left hand corner at the end of Lambeth High Street is the only building remaining of **Doulton's factory**. It operated here from 1815 to 1956 and was a major local employer, [*memories of anyone who worked there, remember it being closed down?*]

Henry Doulton, the son of the founder, originally made sanitary ware. At one time the factory made 13 miles of drainage pipes a week. Then in 1866 with the start of the Lambeth School of Art, the company started making art pottery with designs by recruits from the school. This pottery was exhibited in the Paris Exhibition of 1867.

The outside of the factory building has a series of tiles which look like a sample book to show what tiles the firm could supply. The scene above the doorway in pottery is by George Tinworth, a well known designer of scenes such as these and of ones with religious themes. This one shows a number of hatted men come to buy pottery and a seated woman decorating a pot on her lap. Cross over Lambeth High Street to get a better view of the turret above this entrance, with curved glass panes and more elaborate decoration.

Turn left on Black Prince Road. The building beyond Doulton's is Southbank House. Do go into the entrance lobby and have a look in the small waiting area immediately on the left. There is a fine tiled panel celebrating 'The Doulton Story' and several amazing photographs showing the factory at different times in its history.

Continuing up Black Prince Road you pass under the railway decorated with ceramic plaques relating to local history. On the corner of Vauxhall Walk you pass **The Queen's Head pub**. In his autobiography Charlie Chaplin, who lived in Lambeth during his childhood, describes waiting outside for his father to come out after a night's drinking. The pub is now closed and there was a bailiff's notice on the door in January.

On the next corner, at Tyers Street, there's another pub, **The Jolly Gardeners** with fine bas relief plaques over the corner doors showing two gardeners with a scythe and shovel. The pub's been here for about 250 years, although the present building is only about 200 years old. For a few years in the 1980s it became the Jolly Cockney but then reverted to its original name. It's now owned by a German company and features on the Internet as 'zeitgeist@the jolly gardeners' catering for largely for tourists. Locals don't drink here as much as they used to and it doesn't feel very welcoming inside. [*Do people remember it as it was?*] Some of the kitchen staff claim that the piano tucked away in a corner was played on by Charlie Chaplin's father. In 2001 the pub featured as The Drowning Trout in 'The Snatch', a film about boxing in which Brad Pitt played an Irish man called Mickey.

The next block after Tyers Street was the site of the old **Lambeth workhouse**. Workhouses were built from the 1600s to cope with the growing number of homeless and unemployed. People had to be desperate to face entering the repugnant living and working conditions of the workhouse. If an able-bodied man entered the workhouse, his whole family had to come with him.

Charles Dickens made his feelings about workhouses clear in his first novel *Oliver Twist*, in the scene in which the nine-year-old Oliver asks for more gruel. 'Please, sir...I want some more.'" Charlie Chaplin and his mother stayed in this workhouse for a few weeks in 1896 when his father fell into debt.

In 1922 the workhouse became a hospital. By 1939 it could accommodate 1,250 patients and was one of the three largest municipal hospitals in London. During the Second World War many air raid casualties were treated at the hospital, from which

elderly, long term patients had been evacuated. Several bombs fell on the hospital killing ten members of staff and destroying two ward blocks, the kitchen, dining rooms and laundry. Three other ward blocks were badly damaged. The hospital closed in 1976.

## 10

Time now to return to Lambeth Walk, heading for Lollard Street. This end of Lambeth Walk was completely redeveloped by The Greater London Council after 1967. The Lambeth Walk street traders protested at Lambeth Town Hall at the time but to no avail. [Memories?] The new building killed off old Lambeth Walk Market. Now there is only a row of shops along the right hand side.

Turn right into Lollard Street, where more 60s redevelopment took place. The **Lilian Baylis Old School** site, is now a community sports hub, created by various organisations and sponsors who came together after the school moved to a new site in 2004. It provides a wide programme of sport, educational, arts and vocational activities to thousands of local residents every year.

The old school opened in 1964 and was originally known as Beaufoy School. It was built at a time when a lot of experimental schools were being built, like Pimlico in Victoria, and must have seemed very modern to the first pupils. [Any memories?] One of these was Jimmy Jukes, 'better known as Pearlykingjim' who has posted an entertaining account of a school pageant day in 1967 on the internet.

*I Attended Beaufoy school in Lollard Street just off the Famous Lambeth walk, in 1967 our school was entered for the pageant and the theme was funnily enough THE LAMBETH WALK the lorry was made to look like the walk, we had pupils all dressed up in old time costumes, and members of the school band played all the old Cockney songs on the float, what a great day and the crowds loved us the cheers we got when we went passed, bent the old ear-drums, and the best thing is that Beaufoy won the 1st prize for best Float. The old London Evening News read on the front cover PEARLY JIMMY LEADS THE FUN, i have still got a copy to this day What a great day for the Pearlies and what a great day for Beaufoy school.*

Later the name changed to Lilian Baylis in honour of the great theatrical producer and manager who gave London many of its

longest established theatre companies and venues, including the Old Vic – where ‘Doing The Lambeth Walk’ was first performed.

## 11

In front of the Old Lilian Baylis there is a row of small two-storey cottages. If you could go back in time to the early 1900s the terrace would have continued the length of Lollard Street, broken by two cross streets, lined with more terraces, linking it to Fitzalan Street. Now there is an adventure playground at one end of the row and at the other end the entrance to a park linking the two streets and providing local children with space that previous generations did not have, instead they played in the streets, like the children in the famous photograph by Bill Brandt showing a young girl ‘Dancing the Lambeth Walk’.

The land behind the houses was cleared at the same time as the north end of Lambeth Walk and left derelict until 2003 when a group called Friends of Lambeth Walk Open Space, with Lambeth Council, started to improve the site. Two years later it was designated a **Doorstep Green**, (Doorstep Greens and Millennium Greens are examples of community improvements made by residents which provide places for people to enjoy the natural environment close to their homes.)

In 2005, Channel 4 filmed a community planting day on the Green, organized by the Friends of Lambeth Walk Open Space and Trees for Cities. All members of the community were invited to come and help out with the planting shrubs and trees and to enjoy a day of special events – there was face painting, music, planting workshops and refreshments for all those taking part. Everyone was welcome. [*Any memories?*]

Let’s cross Doorstep Green to Fitzalan Street. The school ahead of you is Walnut Tree Primary School. This has the traditional three storey red brick design of the many schools built by the School Board for London after the 1870 Education Act, when education first became compulsory.

Turn right on Fitzalan Street and walk down past **The Royal Oak** pub at No. 75. Two doors beyond The Royal Oak is the **Meadow Mound Wildlife Garden**, used for encouraging biodiversity and as a place for education and relaxation. Local school children come here to learn about wildlife and gardening. There’s a notice near

the pavement with information about a typical project, the Cellini orchard, planted here in 2003 to promote the growth of a rare type of apple. An organization called **Roots and Shoots** has played a large part in creating and helping run Meadow Mound. Its offices occupy the timber building you see behind Meadow Mound and that's where we're going next.

## 12

If you are doing this walk between 10 and 4 on a weekday, you will be able to use the gate to the left at the back of the Meadow Mound. This will take you straight in to Roots and Shoots training centre – which is also happens to be the home of the London Bee Keepers Association.

If you are doing the walk outside these hours you will have to give Roots and Shoots garden a miss. Instead, walk on down Fitzallan Street to Kennington Road and turn left, and left again into Walnut Tree Walk. As you go listen to some of the history of Roots and Shoots and a description of what's inside. You need to be at the lane leading to Roots and Shoots off Walnut Tree Walk when we tell you: 'Leave Roots and Shoots'.

Roots and Shoots was set up in 1982 by Linda Phillips, who is still the Director. It provides vocational training for young people from the inner city, mainly from the London boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark and aims to give them the skills and self-confidence that will equip them for work. It also involves local schools and the wider community in day courses and events that teach them about wildlife and biodiversity. The secret wild life garden, at the back of the site behind the sheds and greenhouses (on land formerly occupied by a Meccano factory that made parts for fighter planes during the War), is a magical place, with ponds, beehives, visiting foxes, birds and bugs, and mysterious hiding places guaranteed to enchant very young visitors.

The new building, with its partly planted roofs, photovoltaic cells and solar water heating, was completed in 2005 and acts as the main administration and training centre. You may have come to one of the Apple Days held here, or enjoyed a course on bees or bugs with David Perkins who runs the environmental education and Outreach programmes. David also manages the wild garden and works alongside the London Beekeepers Association. There's a video on YouTube showing a group assembling the amazing

Trellick Tower bees' nest – built to resemble a massive tower block in Paddington, North London.

You may already know Roots and Shoots, but if you don't it's a treat in store – and since we have already celebrated places and people connected with gardening history in the past, it seems right that we can also enjoy an amazing piece of living garden history here at Roots and Shoots.

### 13

Leave Roots and Shoots. If you were not able to get into Roots and Shoots you will rejoin us here. Our walk is now almost over. As you walk up Walnut Tree Walk take a look at the well-preserved houses, Nos 66-52, on the far side of the road. These and some of the houses on the left-hand side date back to around 1820.

On the left you pass **St Olave's House**, handsome social housing built in 1884. This was built by a charitable trust in the days before local councils had a duty to provide council housing. The block has entrance courtyards and balconies. Have a look if you don't already know the buildings. St Olave's was described as having 'Dickensian charm' in the 1998 proposal to make Lambeth Walk a conservation area. At the back of original block a row of new houses has been added, with a neat communal garden in front of them. The houses have the advantage of looking out over the Roots and Shoots wild garden.

At the top of Walnut Tree, before turning left to end where we started, at Spread the Word, check out the plaque on the corner with Lambeth Walk. It's a Parish Boundary stone dating from 1809. It reads: 'The Ground belonging to the Parishes of St Olave and St John Southwark extends –Feet 6 Inches North East of this stone.'

There's history everywhere you turn in this part of London – we hope we have made you feel that it's fun to be part of it, and something to be proud of.