

Institute of Physics

LONDON AND SOUTH EASTERN BRANCH REMS SECTION Clocking Clerkenwell, Thursday 24 February 2005

This visit has been organised by Kate and Mike Quinton

The Clerks' Well, which gave its name to Clerkenwell, was where the Company of Parish Clerks used to meet to perform mystery plays. The parish concerned was St James; both will be seen on this guided walk.

People have lived and worked in this area on the eastern side of the River Fleet, since Roman times. In 1140, land around St John's Square, was granted to the Knights of St John and the higher ground north of Clerkenwell Green to Augustinian nuns. After the Dissolution of the monasteries, their precincts became town houses for the aristocracy. Then from the late 17th century artisans and craftsmen moved in making watches, clocks (Thomas Tompion was here), scientific instruments, furniture and jewellery. Some of these trades and buildings have disappeared, but the old skills survive.

We shall see some of the architecture through the ages and cultures and remind ourselves of some history.

The programme will be:

10.30 – 11.00 Meet at "Costa Coffee", 46 Cowcross St, which is a few yards to the right out of Farringdon Station and opposite Macdonalds.

In case you miss the start, we will be going back past the station, turning left into Turnmill St, right into Benjamin St, left into Britton St, then crossing Clerkenwell Rd into Farringdon Lane, where we will view the Clerks' Well on the right. After that we will retrace our steps a little and turn left and up into Clerkenwell Green. Almost overlooking the Green is St James's Church, which we expect to visit at about 11.45.

~ 12.00 Leave St James's Church and view as we walk past several rather different buildings: a Board School and Print Works in Bowling Green Lane, the Finsbury Health Centre, an Italian Renaissance church in Exmouth market, Finsbury Town Hall, the Family Records Centre, a bank and housing in Sekforde St, shops in St John's Square, the gateway in St John's St, Smithfield Market and many other items of interest.

~ 1.30pm Lunch in one of the establishments off Peter's Lane, which runs between St John's St and Cowcross St. The Hogs Head could accommodate quite a large party, but within a few yards are the Punchbowl, Pizza Express and Starbucks.

Afternoon: Museum of London 10 minutes away via Little Britain and Montague St.