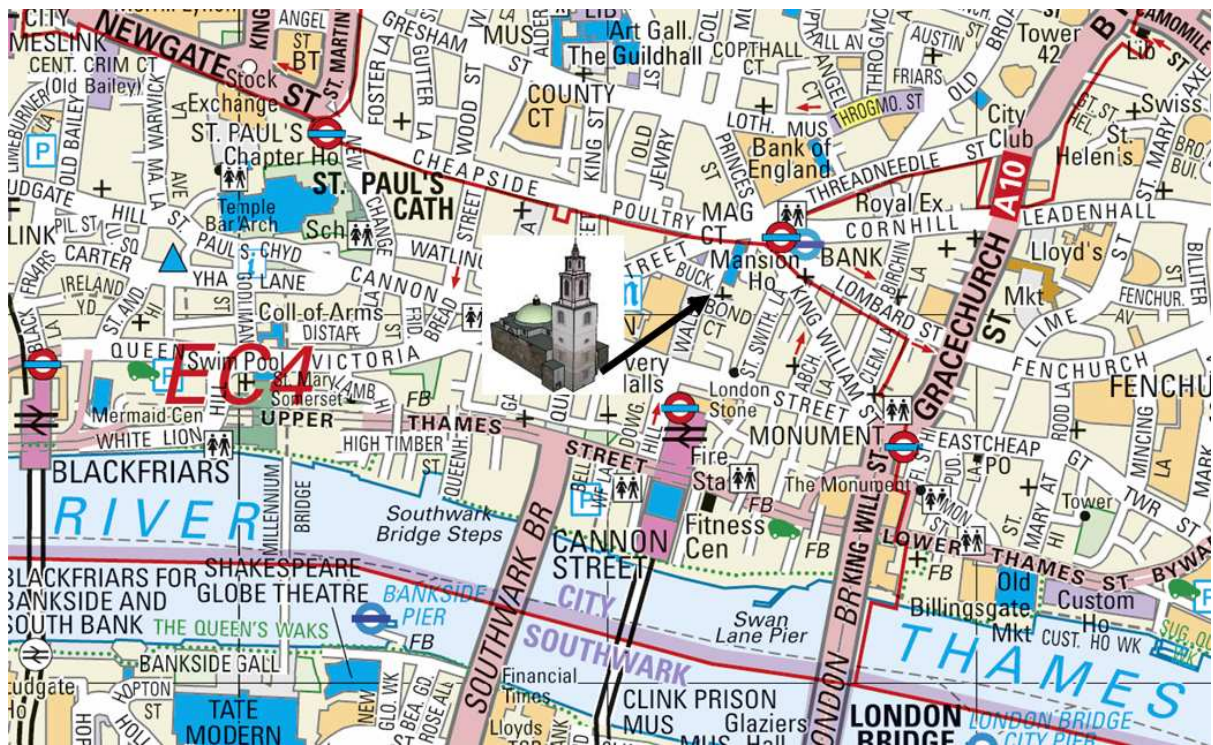




City of London

Church of Stephen Walbrook



Tower in ragstone with Portland stone steeple 1717

A Saxon church was the first church to occupy this site in the 7th century. The church stood on the banks of the now vanished River Walbrook, a tributary of the Thames that now flows underground through the City.

St Stephen Walbrook, the Lord Mayor's parish church, was rebuilt after the Great Fire by Sir Christopher Wren, and the graceful spire was added in 1713 -17. St Stephen was also the parish church of Sir Christopher Wren who lived at No 15 Walbrook.

Dome conceived before that of St Paul's cathedral. The 63 feet high dome is based on Wren's original design for St Paul's, and this is centered over a square of twelve columns.



The circular base of the dome is not carried, in the conventional way, by pendentives formed above the arches of the square, but on a circle formed by eight arches that spring from eight of the twelve columns, cutting across each corner in the manner of the Byzantine squinch which in architecture, is a device by which a square or polygonal room has its upper corners filled in to form a support for a dome: by corbelling out the courses of masonry, each course projecting slightly beyond the one below; by building one or more arches diagonally across the corner; by building in the corner a niche with a half dome at its head; or by filling the corner with a little conical vault that has an arch on its outer diagonal face and its apex in the corner.

This all contributes to create what many consider to be one of Wren's finest church interiors. By the eighteenth century, the building was famous all over Europe. When Lord Burlington went to Rome to see fine buildings, he was met by the Italian sculptor-architect, Canova, who congratulated him on coming from London to which, he said, he would gladly return to feast his eyes once more on St. Paul's Cathedral, Somerset House, and, most of all, St. Stephen Walbrook. Burlington had to admit that he did not know the last, and Canova sent him back to look at it, saying 'we have nothing to touch it in Rome'. Sir John Sommerson has described the Church as 'the pride of English architecture, and one of the few City churches in which the genius of Wren shines in full splendour'. Sir Nikolaus Pevsner lists it as one of the ten most important buildings in England.



Henry Moore's massive white polished travertine altar commissioned by Lord Palumbo and installed in 1987, sits in the centre of the church.



Above the south door is the organ, built in 1906, by William Hill but with a case from 1765. On the north wall hangs 'The Martyrdom of St Stephen' by the American artist Benjamin West, who later became a Royal Academician in 1768. Benjamin West, born in Springfield, Pennsylvania, was the first (and so far the only) American painter to become President of the Royal Academy. He is buried in St. Paul's Cathedral.

Sir John Vanburgh is buried here. dramatist, architect of Blenheim and of Castle Howard, and junior colleague of Wren, whose body lies in the vault beneath the floor. There are memorials to John Dunstable, 'father of English Music', and to rector George Croly, the famous preacher whom the Brontë sisters were taken to hear by Emily's publisher's reader, himself a parishioner. The list of Rectors includes Henry Pendleton, the 'Vicar of Bray'.



Opening Times: The church is normally open on weekdays from **10am until 4pm**. It is usually closed at weekends except for great festivals, please refer to events information for these details.