

## Aviva Fellowship – Croydon Area

### London Bridge to Rotherhithe Walk - Wednesday 14 August 2019

On a dark, dismal Wednesday morning, our intrepid crew gathered on Queen's Walk, by City Hall, on the south bank of the Thames. Whilst waiting for our guide to arrive (he was punctual, we were a bit early), the day's weather forecast of heavy rain throughout the day, became the topic of conversation.

When Alan our guide arrived, he gave us a brief itinerary for the walk, starting off by pointing out that by looking eastwards along the river 'through' Tower Bridge, we were seeing our destination, Saint Mary's church Rotherhithe.

As we walked past Tower Bridge, Alan regaled us with the tale of the No 78 bus that in December, 1952, had had to jump the gap over an opening Tower Bridge after a traffic signal failure. Luckily, no passengers were injured, but the bus conductor did suffer a broken leg.

Continuing along on our journey, we came to Shad Thames, an area that included the largest warehouse complex in London during the 19th century.

We passed Le Pont de la Tour, the Terence Conrad restaurant that in 1997, had hosted a meeting between Bill Clinton and Tony Blair; President Clinton's cavalcade however, was delayed by over a quarter of an hour by the bridge having to open for the Thames sailing barge 'Gladys', much to the chagrin of the President's Secret Service.

Unfortunately, at this point, it became evident that the weather forecast had in fact been correct, and the heavens opened!

As we walked on towards our destination, we passed one of the bore holes for the Thames Tideway Tunnel, and across the river we could see Wapping, once the site of Execution Dock where Captain Kidd, amongst others, met his demise.

A short bit further on our walk brought us to the ruins of Edward III's Manor House (built c1350).

We arrived at St Mary's shortly before one o'clock, still in the pouring rain, and Alan then pointed out the memorial to the final resting place of Christopher Jones, captain of the 'Mayflower', which took the Pilgrim Fathers to North America in 1620.

Also buried in the cemetery is Prince Lee Boo, of the Pelew Islands in the Philippines, who was brought to England in 1784, unfortunately succumbing to smallpox after only six months.

A short visit to the site of the Brunel Museum concluded our very wet walk, although thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

A good lunch at the Mayflower pub ensued, ending one of our most interesting walks so far this year.

James O'Neil – 21 August 2019  
Croydon Aviva Fellowship Member