



# Walbrook

## The London Stone: “A Mythological Monolith”

By John Garbutt, Alderman for Walbrook Ward

Where is the centre of the City? Many years ago this was considered by some to be at the precise location of the London Stone which, since time immemorial, has been almost continuously located in what is now Cannon Street. The Stone is an unworked, somewhat irregular oolitic limestone tablet now measuring 53cm high by 43cm wide and 30cm deep, which stood upright supported by iron rods for many hundreds of years in the middle of the street. Its measurements were recorded in 1578 as (equivalent) 90 by 60 by 30; its reduced current size representing the upper part of the original which is thought to have been broken in the Great Fire of 1666. There is some thought that this larger pillar itself originally formed part of an even greater structure (see below).

The name London Stone was first recorded in 1100AD. For many hundreds of years, it was considered London's “talisman”, but to say its origin and purpose is a mystery is a significant understatement! The fact is that no-one knows to this day what its date of origin is or its original purpose, although a huge number of theories regarding these have been advanced over the years. It is thought by modern historians that it was probably a place where oaths were sworn and proclamations



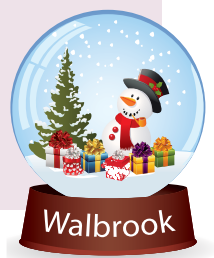
made over the centuries as the symbolic “heart” of London.

On date of origin, the furthest back in time that it has potentially been related to is the New Stone Age. If this were true, it would obviously have been present at the time of the ancient Britons (including the Druids who were said to have worshipped it, being supposedly on several leylines). There is no proof of any of this. It would also have been around at the time of the Roman invasion. There is at least a grain of truth that it dates from the latter period, but only because this type of limestone was commonly used in Roman architecture. A popular take on this provenance, again without archaeological

underpin, is that its purpose was as a “milliarium”, a stone marking the place from which all distances in Roman Britain were measured. Other theories related to this same period, are that it was the marker for the intersection between the main north-south and east-west routes in Londinium or, alternatively, that it was a part of a Temple of Diana or even the gate to the Provincial Governors' palace.

Moving forward to medieval times, some Londoners adopted the surname “at London Stone”. One such was the father of the first Mayor of London, Henry Fitzailwin, who was in office between 1189 and 1212. Later in

*continued on the back page*





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## Who We Are

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**Committee Appointments:**

Court of Aldermen  
Court of Common Council  
Finance Committee  
General Purposes Committee of Aldermen  
Planning and Transportation Committee  
Port Health & Environmental Services Committee

**Deputy James Thomson**

E-mail: james.thomson@cityoflondon.gov.uk

**Committee Appointments:**

Court of Common Council  
Planning and Transportation Committee  
Port Health & Environmental Services Committee  
Board of Governors of the City of London School  
Police Committee

## CONTACT US

To write to any of your Members, to let us know if you wish to receive this newsletter by email in future, or to inform us if you wish to be taken off the distribution list write c/o

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London EC2P 2EJ

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Walbrook

Following the resignation of Lucy Frew as Common Councilman, there will be a Wardmote (Ward meeting) on Wednesday 30 November 2016 at 12.00 noon in the Long Parlour, Mansion House, London EC4N 8BH.

A poll will take place in the SABTAC room, Mansion House on Thursday 1 December 2016.

If you are a registered voter, you should have received information on this from the Town Clerk's Office.

We are always happy to talk to workers and residents within the Ward about any issues you may wish to raise. Please contact us if you would like to arrange a meeting.

## COMMUNICATING WITH THOSE WHO LIVE AND WORK IN THE CITY OF LONDON

*continued from the front page*

1450 Jack Cade, leader of a rebellion against King Henry 6th, purportedly entered the city with his men and struck his sword on the London Stone claiming, as he did so, to be the "Lord of this City". (There is a notch on the top of the stone...!)

In fact it did stand as a somewhat inconvenient stump, being a traffic hazard in the Cannon Street roadway, until 1742 when it was finally removed from this position and set in an alcove beside the door of St Swithin's church on the north side of the street. Amazingly, the church took a direct hit by a bomb in 1941 but the stone survived. Subsequently it was housed in the front of the office building which replaced the church. This year it has been moved temporarily and is now displayed at the Museum of London pending its expected return in 2018 to what will be the new office block at 111, Cannon Street. It will be in approximately the same position as before but hopefully, as a Grade 2 listed structure, with improved signage and illumination.

The artefact is sometimes referred to as the "Stone of Brutus" (Brutus of Troy in legend being the founder of London and Britain as a whole.) This mythical



status, said over the years to embody the city's well-being and protection, has been alluded to by numerous writers throughout history, including Shakespeare, and is encapsulated by one such who stated: "So long as the Stone of Brutus is safe, so long will London flourish". It remains an enigma to this day.