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## A NEW SUNDIAL FOR CENTRAL LONDON

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In December, 12 years of planning, negotiating, and discussing came to an end when the City of London gave planning permission for the Fleet Street Heritage Sundial. The next stage is the serious business of raising the funds and building it. You can follow progress on [www.fleetstreetheritagesundial.uk](http://www.fleetstreetheritagesundial.uk), and it would be much appreciated if you would add your name to the “Please support us” page.

In 2007, my wife and I bought a micro-flat of 170 sq. ft. in Bouverie Street, just off Fleet Street in central London (Fig. 1). We could not help noticing the very large blank wall on the building adjoining our new flat, and we were slightly puzzled that our new address was 62 Fleet Street even though the front door is in Bouverie Street.

It took some years to find out why there were no windows in the large blank wall. The answer was that there had originally been another building alongside the wall, covering about half of what is now the entrance to Bouverie Street. Old maps show Bouverie Street narrowing down to eight feet or so at the junction with Fleet Street (Fig. 2).



*Fig. 1. The junction of Fleet Street and Bouverie Street.*

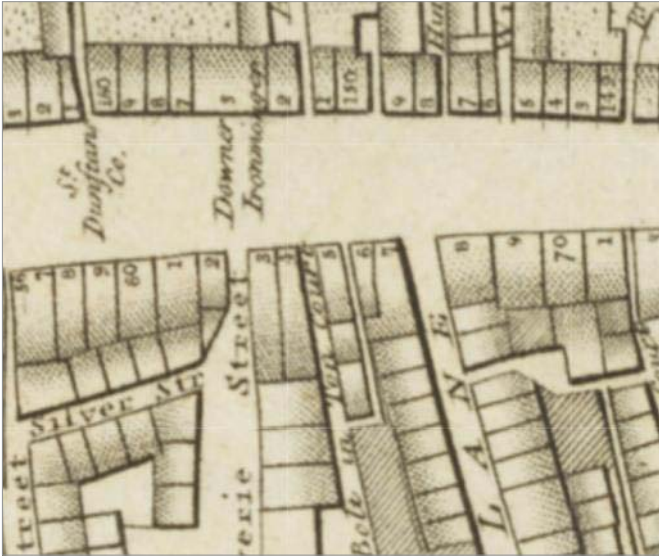


Fig. 2. The corner of Fleet Street and Bouverie Street as shown in Richard Horwood's map of 1799.

Around 150 years ago, the City had one of its periodic campaigns to widen Fleet Street, and, at the same time, decided to widen the access to Bouverie Street by purchasing and demolishing 62 Fleet Street. The current building numbered 62 seems to have been built at the back of no. 61. However, the reason for the absence of windows is that the City did not need the whole site of the original no. 62. There was a strip about a foot wide which was surplus to their requirements. This strip can be seen on the ground as a separate lighter colour against the squares of the pavement. The title deed of the new 62 incorporated this strip, extending all the way to Fleet Street. Thus, the wall is not the exterior wall of no. 61, but the party wall between 61 and 62.



Fig. 3. Fleet Street in the 1930s (Museum of London).

By the 1930s this wall had been put to commercial use, with a  $4 \times 4$  grid of standard-size posters advertising a wide variety of products (Fig. 3). After the war, the City of London adopted a strict policy banning advertisements above ground floor level. The owners of the wall attempted to get around this restriction, but were forced to comply after the City of London took enforcement action.

For 40 years or more, the wall has remained blank. When I first arrived in the flat, I did some research on the original 62, and discovered that it had been the publishing house of Richard Carlile, who had started a newspaper called *The Republican* in 1819. It was not a good time for republicanism then, and the government tried to silence *The Republican* by increasing the newspaper tax from  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 4d. per copy, by prosecuting Richard Carlile for seditious blasphemy, and, in the end, sending him to prison. He was one of the many who campaigned for the freedom of the press, and one of the very few who were imprisoned for it.

I thought it would be a good place for a sundial, since the wall faces a few degrees north of east. In addition, I had also noticed how few reminders of the newspaper industry there are left in Fleet Street. The iconic *Daily Express* building still has its Grade II\* listed Art Deco facade with aluminium lettering for the *Daily* and *Sunday Express*. Further away from Ludgate Circus, mosaics on a wall commemorate the *Dundee Courier* and the *People's Friend*, and high up on a building opposite is the lettering for the London News Agency Ltd at no. 44. And down the hill off Whitefriars Street is Ashentree Court with some metal information panels about the *Daily Mail* which was printed in Northcliffe House nearby. This in turn leads into Magpie Alley which has some ceramic panels showing how the newspapers were printed.

The purpose of the new sundial is to remind the many users of Fleet Street (residents, City workers, and tourists) of the worldwide reputation of Fleet Street in the days when it was the hub of the newspaper industry, and also to provide a permanent memorial to those like Richard Carlile (who lived on this site) and others who fought and suffered for the freedom of the press.

The Fleet Street Heritage Sundial project has four elements:

- The face of the sundial located on the wall which faces a few degrees north of east
- The gnomon projecting out from the top left corner of the sundial face
- The three explanatory panels at head height at the foot of the wall
- The [fleetstreetheritagesundial.uk](http://fleetstreetheritagesundial.uk) website

The sundial face is marked out with the lines where the shadow falls for every hour from 6 to 10 with additional lines below. Between six pairs of these lines appear the

Gnomon to cast shadow  
(stainless steel tube  
almost parallel to the wall)

Hour lines with markers, and  
five newspaper mastheads  
(to be selected)



Fig. 4. A draft design for the sundial at the top half of the wall.

mastheads of five newspapers. The particular newspaper titles to be used have not yet been selected, but three or four of them will be newspapers no longer published (starting with the *Republican* which was printed on this site) and one or two of them may be current newspapers (Fig. 4).

The final selection of newspaper mastheads to be included in the sundial will be decided at a later stage. The hour lines and the newspaper mastheads will be painted on the wall by an experienced signwriter. The painting is expected to take about 3 weeks, and will be done from scaffolding.

The position and size of the gnomon is determined by the mathematics derived from the orientation of the wall relative to due South. The gnomon will be fabricated from stainless steel tubing and will be attached to the wall with suitable anchor bolts.

An occupational hazard for sundials in large cities is that sunlight may be interrupted by neighbouring buildings and trees. This sundial will not have any problem with trees, and the building opposite is quite modern, and is unlikely to be redeveloped. The sun will shine on this sundial the whole year except for a few weeks around the winter solstice. A projecting part of the building opposite also interrupts the sunshine for the very early hours when the sun is low. Apart from these, the sunlight will cover the complete upper part of the wall until around 11:30 GMT.

The provisional text for the three plaques at the base of the wall is given below.

#### Plaque 1 – Freedom of the Press

Number 62 Fleet Street stood on this site until it was pulled down to widen Bouverie Street in the late 1800s. It was the printing office of Richard Carlile who published *The Republican* here from 1819 to 1826. He was present at the Peterloo massacre in 1819, and published the first report of it in London. Carlile also published *The Rights of Man* and other books by Thomas Paine. The Government attempted to shut down *The Republican* on many occasions and Carlile was prosecuted and sent to prison three times.

#### Plaque 2 – Fleet Street Heritage Sundial

Fleet Street was the hub of the British newspaper industry for over 100 years until the late 1980s when the need to adopt new technology, to work in modern buildings, and to modernise labour relations caused the newspapers to move to other parts of London. The sundial on the wall above commemorates some of the newspapers which made the name of Fleet Street famous throughout the world, and the individuals like Richard Carlile who spoke out for the freedom of the press which we enjoy today.

#### Plaque 3 – More about Sundials

Sundials are a very ancient technology, starting in Egypt and Greece over 2000 years ago. Our website, [www.fleetstreetheritagesundial.uk](http://www.fleetstreetheritagesundial.uk), tells you more about this east-facing sundial, which only tells the time in the morning.

It has a link to the Thames sundial trail at [www.sundials.co.uk/trailthames](http://www.sundials.co.uk/trailthames), which will take you to other fine sundials nearby. This website also has a wealth of other information about sundials, including projects for you to do, technical explanations, pictures of sundials worldwide, and other sundial trails.

News of the progress of this project will appear on Twitter @allsundials.

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