

A DAY WELL SPENT
IS PASSED AT SELFRI...

Gleam House

the parcel was with...

FRIDGE'S
creation

The Clockwork Sparrow

a London walking tour

25 20 15 10

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of *The Clockwork Sparrow*, you are cordially invited to join me on a tour of Sophie and Lil's London. For me, walking around the city, looking for traces of its Edwardian past — from 'ghost signs' on buildings to blue plaques and 1900s street lamps — was an integral part of the process of imagining their world.

There are many parts of London, from the squares of Bloomsbury to the alleyways of the East End, that appear in the pages of the *Sinclair's Mysteries*. Here, I'm sharing one walking route through central London that you might take in order to explore some key locations. As you wander through the city, you might try imagining what the streets, buildings and even the people around you could have looked like over 100 years ago...

We begin at Green Park Underground Station, on Piccadilly.

1) Take a quick look in at **Green Park**, a proper old-fashioned London park, complete with striped deckchairs. It's easy to imagine Sophie walking through on her way to work at Sinclair's. Perhaps this might even be where our heroes come together for the first time, early in *The Clockwork Sparrow*?

'She found Lil sheltering from the rain in the bandstand where they had agreed to meet in the park not far from Sinclair's. Sitting beside her were Billy and a shabby-looking young man that she guessed must be Joe... All three were tucking into what looked like a bag of buns, and in spite of everything a smile crept onto Sophie's face...'

— The Clockwork Sparrow



2) From here, stroll up **Piccadilly**, in the direction of Piccadilly Circus. If you stay on the right-hand side of the street, you will pass **The Ritz**, which feels like just the sort of place that department store owner Mr Sinclair might be found sipping a glass of champagne. You'll also pass **The Wolseley** — an old-fashioned restaurant which feels straight out of the pages of the *Sinclair's Mysteries*. The building in fact dates from the 1920s and was originally a car show-room. (It's also where I signed the publishing contract for *The Clockwork Sparrow* over a suitably Edwardian breakfast.)

3) A little further up Piccadilly, you will reach **Piccadilly Arcade** and — if you cross the road — **Burlington Arcade** directly opposite. Built in 1818, this early ‘shopping arcade’ has long been home to retailers of luxury goods like jewellery, leather goods, art and antiques. It still has a distinctly old-fashioned atmosphere, enhanced by the beadles who patrol the arcades, dressed in top-hats and frock coats. Visit Ladurée (Burlington Arcade) for dainty pastel-coloured macarons, or Santa Maria Novella (Piccadilly Arcade) for perfumes that would be quite at home in the Sinclair’s beauty department.

Through one archway was a rose-coloured room, in which elegant shop girls offered scent in pretty bottles. A display of coloured parasols dripped down from the ceiling like a waterfall of exotic hot-house flowers.’

— The Clockwork Sparrow



4) Just up from the Burlington Arcade, step into the sheltered courtyard of the **Royal Academy of Arts**, founded in 1768. This is the kind of place we might encounter Lil’s brother Jack and his art-student friend Leo. It’s famous for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, the world’s oldest open submission exhibition – meaning that anyone can enter their work to be considered for inclusion – which has happened every year since 1769.

5) Cross back onto the other side of the road to admire the exquisite window displays of **Fortnum & Mason** — one of London's most iconic department stores, and an important point of inspiration for Sinclair's.

Step inside to admire the fancy boxes of chocolates and biscuits and tins of tea — you can even buy the famous Royal Blend (a mix of Assam and Flowery Pekoe tea) which was designed especially for King Edward VII. Peruse the delectable confectionery counters and look out for the famous Fortnum's clock, with bells from the same foundry as Big Ben. Venture up the elegant staircase to the upper floors, where you will find an ice-cream parlour and the Diamond Jubilee Tea Salon — just the kind of place you could imagine Edwardian debutantes like Veronica Whiteley and friends in *The Jewelled Moth* taking an afternoon tea.

‘
*In another direction lay the Confectionery Department, papered
in violet silk, and powdery with the scent of sugar and cocoa.
Girls in frilled white aprons stood behind glass counters laden
with pyramids of Turkish Delight sprinkled with a snowstorm of
icing sugar, and chocolates scattered with crystallised flower
petals....’*

— The Clockwork Sparrow



6) Beside Fortnum's, you'll find **Hatchard's**, London's oldest bookshop, established in 1797. It's been a Piccadilly landmark since the Georgian era, and is a wonderful place to explore, rich with atmosphere. Wander up to the children's floor, where you will be almost certain to find a copy of *The Clockwork Sparrow* as well as beautiful editions of some of the Edwardian children's classics that helped inspire the series, by authors like Edith Nesbit and Frances Hodgson Burnett.

7) Staying on the same side of the street, walk past St James's Church to **Waterstones Piccadilly**. The largest bookshop in Europe, the building was originally home to Simpson's department store, which opened in 1936. Of course, it's also the location for imaginary Edwardian department store, Sinclair's. With five floors of books to explore, there is a lot to see here, but you must be sure you don't miss the wonderful Children's Department. I have many fond memories of this shop — but most especially the beautiful window display at the front of the shop in June 2015, when *The Clockwork Sparrow* was the Children's Book of the Month.

'... the Book Department [had] dark wooden panelling on the walls, plenty of comfortable armchairs, and most importantly, books everywhere. It was wonderfully peaceful, with no sound but the low, respectful buzz of conversation, the soft hush of pages turning...'

— *The Clockwork Sparrow*

8) At the end of Piccadilly, you will reach busy **Piccadilly Circus**. It's busy, noisy and not very atmospheric today, but I like imagining it back as it would have been in the Edwardian era, with its omnibuses and motor-cars and innovative new advertisements lit by electric light-bulbs.

“Piccadilly Circus!” yelled the conductor, as the omnibus clattered to a halt, and Sophie pushed her thoughts away. She straightened her hat, grasped her umbrella in a neatly-gloved hand and slipped between the clerks, and an elderly lady wearing a pince-nez who said “Dear me!” as if quite scandalised at the sight of a young lady alone, recklessly jumping on and off omnibuses.

— The Clockwork Sparrow



9) Turn left up Regent Street, passing **The Café Royal**. Today it's a five-star hotel, but in the Edwardian era it was a restaurant and meeting-place which attracted the likes of Oscar Wilde, Aleister Crowley, Virginia Woolf, Winston Churchill, Noël Coward, and many more — as well as students like Jack and Leo in *The Painted Dragon*.

10) Continue strolling up **Regent Street**. One of London's most famous streets, it looks its best at Christmas-time when all the lights are twinkling. There are lots of shops to see, including the famous toy-shop **Hamley's**, dating back to 1760.

11) Stop off at perfumery **Penhaligon's**, founded by barber William Henry Penhaligon. It began as a hairdressing and perfumery salon at the Piccadilly Turkish Baths – in fact the first fragrance, Hammam Bouquet, was inspired by the bathhouse. After setting up shop in nearby Jermyn Street, Penhaligon was appointed Royal Barber and Perfumer to Queen Victoria. Later, the business won a Royal Warrant from Queen Alexandra, Queen Consort to Edward VII.

Be sure to take a sniff of the Penhaligon's Bluebell fragrance – you might remember that Sinclair's sells a bluebell-scented perfume, which is my small tribute to the department scene in one of my all-time favourite books, *I Capture the Castle* by Dodie Smith (if you know, you know).

'...for they were, of course, customers already, having been quite unable to resist the allure of a perfect cone of sugared almonds, a bunch of yellow roses, a pair of butter-soft kid gloves, a delicious new scent that smelled like bluebells...'

— The Clockwork Sparrow



12) Turn right down Great Marlborough Street to visit **Liberty's** — another iconic London department store. Originally in a different building on Regent Street, it first opened in 1875. The current building, which was specially designed to incorporate timbers from two ancient battle-ships, opened in 1924. Its ambitious founder Arthur Lasenby Liberty wanted it to be an emporium of luxuries, selling ornaments, fabrics, and objects d'art from around the world. The store had a powerful influence on the interior design and fashion of the Art Nouveau period

It's a lovely place to explore — give yourself some time to wander, and enjoy all manner of idiosyncratic details: carved wooden animals hidden around the store; the famous Liberty Clock depicting St George and the Dragon; the gilded copper weathervane from The Mayflower; and what is supposed to be the longest chandelier in Europe.

*'Stepping on to the shop floor was like stepping inside a chocolate box.
Sophie's feet sank into the thick, soft carpet, and she sucked in a deep breath
of the rich, perfumed air.'*

– The Clockwork Sparrow



13) Back on Regent Street, cross over the road and walk down Hanover Street, before turning right onto **New Bond Street**, looking into the shop windows as you pass by. Walk up New Bond Street to **Oxford Street**, and turn left, passing Bond Street underground station, until you reach **Selfridges** — probably the most important real-life inspiration for Sinclair’s department store.

Like Sinclair’s, Selfridges first opened in 1909, and was the brainchild of an American millionaire — Harry Gordon Selfridge. Selfridge had grand ambitions for his new store, and spent lavishly on advertising for the grand opening. The huge, elegant building sold everything from the latest fashions to sporting equipment to pets — and offered facilities like restaurants, a beauty salon, a post-office, a library, and even a ‘quiet room’ where customers could relax.

Selfridge imagined his department store as something akin to a cultural centre, and it soon became a fashionable place to ‘see and be seen’ for London’s elite. It hosted events like exhibitions and concerts, and even put the first aeroplane to successfully cross the Channel on display for visitors to see – later, in the 1920s, the store also hosted one of the earliest demonstrations of live television.

The famous white building with its pillars and roof-garden is very similar to how I imagine Sinclair's to be. Look out for the original Selfridge's sign on the exterior of the building, which has been there since it first opened in 1909.

I'm not sure how much modern-day Selfridges evokes the atmosphere of Sinclair's. This is very much a contemporary department store: Liberty's, Fortnum's or **Harrods** in Knightsbridge all feel a little bit more old-fashioned. Nevertheless, it is of course a crucial place to stop on a *Clockwork Sparrow* inspired walking tour.

'... she turned and gazed for a moment at the enormous white building that towered above her. Sinclair's department store was so new that as yet, it had not even opened its doors to customers. But already it was the most famous store in London — and therefore, some said, the whole world. With its magnificent columns and ranks of coloured flags, it wasn't like any other shop Sophie had ever seen. It was more like a classical temple that had sprung up, white and immaculate against the smog and dirt of Piccadilly. The huge plate-glass windows were shrouded with royal blue silk curtains, making it look like the stage in a grand theatre before the performance has begun.'

– The Clockwork Sparrow



14) Walk up the side of Selfridges, along Duke Street, to Manchester Square, where you'll find the **Wallace Collection**. This museum in a beautiful old town-house is full of artworks by artists including Rembrandt, Rubens, Reynolds, Gainsborough and Delacroix. It feels exactly the sort of place one might find a Benedetto Casselli dragon painting (from *The Painted Dragon*), and in fact is home to the painting 'The Swing' by Fragonard, which is referenced in *The Midnight Peacock*. It also has a restaurant in a glass-roofed courtyard garden which feels very Edwardian, and serves afternoon tea complete with finger sandwiches and fancy cakes.



[15) Walk from the Wallace Collection up Thayer Street, which turns into **Marylebone High Street**. Here you'll find many other lovely and old-fashioned London shops, but most importantly **Daunt Marylebone**. A bookshop has stood on this site since 1910: today, it is one of my very favourite bookshops, with a beautifully Edwardian ambiance. It was also where we held a party to celebrate the publication of *The Clockwork Sparrow*.

[16) After exploring Marylebone High Street, cut through the St Marylebone Church Gardens, and then turn left along Marylebone Road to the corner of **Baker Street** where you will find the **Sherlock Holmes statue**. Conan Doyle's great detective was not only another point of inspiration for the series, but someone Billy would very much enjoy reading about in his 'Boys of Empire' story-paper.

17) Our final stop is **Baker Street Underground Station** - the world's oldest underground station, which first opened in 1863. Travelling by underground was popular with Londoners in the Edwardian era; we see Leo taking the tube in *The Painted Dragon* (just watch out for mysterious figures lurking in the tunnels!)

I hope you've enjoyed this tour of Sophie and Lil's London – perhaps you've even had some adventures of your own while following their footsteps through the city streets?



'[Sophie] grinned to herself as she gazed out of the window, across the empty streets of London where the first rays of the sun were turning the rooftops to gold and silver, and another day was about to begin.'

– The Clockwork Sparrow



SHOPPING at SELFRIDGE'S

A Pleasure - A Pastime - A Recreation

WE aim to make the shopping at "Selfridge's" something more than merely shopping. We would like to think that everyone who ends an hour or day beneath our roof is better for the experience, has a many "things different," has gathered some new point of knowledge, discovered a way to do something better, or has learned the thought to use.



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