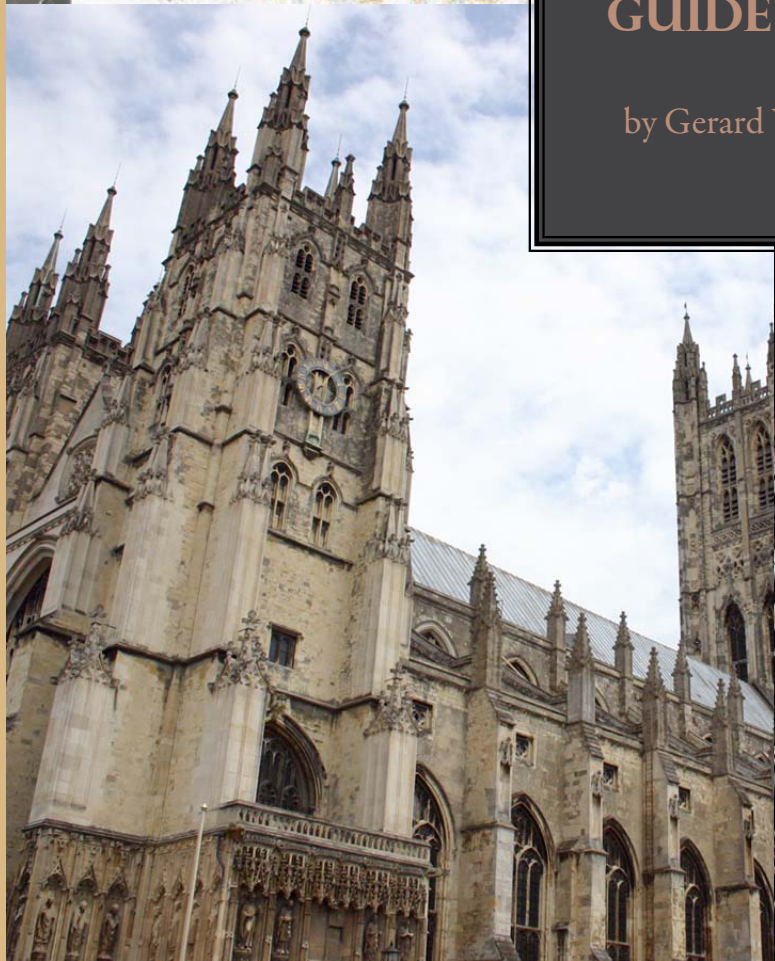


# THOMAS MORE'S ENGLAND: A GUIDE BOOK

by Gerard Wegemer



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## TOURING LONDON



### Milk Street

Walking towards the Guildhall from St. Paul's down Cheapside, Milk Street is the fourth street on the left. A plaque commemorates More's birthplace, although the exact location of the More home is unknown. Milk Street was a prosperous residential area off the busy commercial district of the city. Thomas More's father, Sir John More, lived here much of his life. Thomas was born to John

and Agnes on February 7, 1477, the second of six children.

*Nearest Underground Station: St. Paul's.*



### St. Lawrence Jewry

This was the More family's parish church, where Thomas as a young lawyer lectured on Augustine's *City of God*. His father is buried in the Lady Chapel. There is a stained glass window of More by the pulpit and at the other end of that wall is a window to William Grocyn, the most famous rector of this church and one of More's great teachers. Grocyn was a leader of the English

Renaissance, reputed to be the most learned scholar in England at that time.

The painting in the vestibule shows St. Lawrence being slowly burned on a grid-iron. As deacon and treasurer of the church in Rome in 258, Lawrence was ordered by Emperor Valerian to hand over the Church's riches. Lawrence gathered together the poor and the sick and said, "Here are the treasures of Christ's Church." Since this Church serves the Guildhall which is responsible for the financial well-being of the city of London, St. Lawrence was chosen as an appropriate patron.

"Jewry" refers to the historical situation that the first church built on this site was on the eastern edge of the Jewish trading area.

*Nearest Underground Station: St. Paul's.*



### Guildhall

More served as undersheriff and handled a great deal of city business in this grand municipal center. As undersheriff, he advised the sheriff and the mayor on legal issues that arose from their dealings with the sixty thousand Londoners from all trades and walks of life. More was also a member of the Mercer's Guild, which met regularly in this building. The banners of the various guilds are displayed inside; the Mercer's Guild banner is the first on the left side near the dais. Since the 12<sup>th</sup> century

this has been the seat of London's city government. In the crypt (which is usually not open to the public, except on a tour) is a stained glass window of Thomas More.

*Nearest Underground Station: St. Paul's.*



## Charterhouse

While studying law, roughly from 1499 to 1503, More lived near or at this strict Carthusian monastery to receive spiritual guidance. Henry II, as part of his reparation for the murder of Thomas Beckett in 1170, was the one who originally invited the Carthusians to come to England. Very little of the original building is left, and it is no longer a monastery.

(By guided tour only: 020 7253 9503.)

*Nearest Underground Station: Barbican.*



## Lincoln's Inn

At this inn of court, one of the best and oldest law schools in England, More actively participated (as did his father) throughout his life – as student, lecturer, and governing officer. In acknowledgment of his many contributions, he is honored in the Old Hall's stained glass windows, and a statue of him (c. 1889) by George Sherrin appears over the More Gate entrance of Lincoln's Inn, at the corner of Carey St. and Serle St.

(Old Hall is open only by prior arrangement. 020 7405 1393 or 6360/ [www.lincolnsinn.org.uk](http://www.lincolnsinn.org.uk).)

*Nearest Underground Station: Chancery Lane or Holborn.*



## Westminster Abbey

More served in the Parliament of 1504, which met in the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey. He also made pilgrimages to Our Lady of Pew in this Abbey. (A modern version of that statue is in an alcove towards the upper left-hand side of the Abbey; the 1420 alabaster statue is in Westminster Cathedral.) In 1540, Henry VIII dissolved the Abbey's monastery, demolished many statues, and confiscated much of its wealth. The Abbey had been built by Edward the Confessor in 1065. "Westminster" is dedicated to St. Peter, while "Eastminster" (St. Paul's Cathedral) is dedicated to the other great apostle of the early church. *Nearest Underground Station:*

*Westminster*

Parliament and Westminster Hall



More's coat of arms can be seen in the House of Commons, and in the House of Lords is the woolsack used by the Lord Chancellor. Commemorating his work as Speaker of the House is Vivian Forbe's impressive mural of "More Defending the Liberties of the House of Commons" in the "Building of Britain" series in St. Stephen's Hall. Another mural of More that adorns a corridor off the Central Lobby is one of More and Erasmus visiting Prince Henry.

In Westminster Hall, More and his father both practiced law. More's famous trial took place here on July 1, 1535. A bronze floor-plaque in the middle of the Hall commemorates Sir Thomas More; close by is the plaque commemorating Sir Winston Churchill.

*Nearest Underground Station: Westminster.*



Lambeth Palace

At the age of twelve, More served here as page to Archbishop and Lord Chancellor Morton. In this palace, while waiting on tables and learning what a courier must know, Thomas witnessed the ways and dealings of the greatest leaders of England. It was probably here, at a feast in November 1503, that More delivered a comic poem that he wrote in honor of his father's becoming a serjeant-at-law and his grandfather's becoming sheriff of London.

Later, just prior to his imprisonment, More was interrogated in this palace by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, Thomas Cromwell, Sir Thomas Audley, and Abbot William Benson. Here More was offered the oath and arrested. This building is not open to the general public. *Location: ten-minute walk from the Houses of Parliament, over Lambeth Bridge, on the opposite bank of the river. (Entry by guided tour only: 020 7898 1198).*



Westminster Cathedral

See the relief of More and Fisher in The Chapel of St. George and the English Martyrs, half way up on the left of the Cathedral. The carved statue which More knew as Our Lady of Pew is now also known as Our Lady of Westminster; it is off the main aisle, on the right (in front of the South Transept) just before you get to the main sanctuary. More made pilgrimage to Westminster Abbey when this sculpture was there. *Nearest Underground Station: Victoria Station.*



Chelsea Old Church

Living in Chelsea, More attended this parish church and rebuilt the side chapel in 1528. This church was originally constructed in the thirteenth century, but was rebuilt after it had been bombed in 1941 during World War II. The chapel's capitals are said to have been designed by Holbein – the date 1528 and the family coat-of-arms appear on one.

Soon after he resigned as Chancellor, More wrote this epitaph for himself, which he published in a letter to his friend Erasmus. The body of his first wife, Jane, was re-buried here (as it had been first buried in St. Stephen's Wallbrook), behind the epitaph which More composed. His eldest daughter, Margaret, was also buried here after her death on Christmas 1544.

Bevis's larger-than-life bronze statue, *Thomas More* (1969), is directly in front of the church structure. (Cheyne Walk, 020 7352 5627, [www.domini.org/chelsea-old-church](http://www.domini.org/chelsea-old-church)) *Nearest Underground Station: twenty-minute walk from Sloane Station, at the junction of Cheyne Walk and Church St., right on the river embankment.*





### Crosby Hall

This great hall was built in 1466 as part of a mansion called Crosby Place in the heart of old London by Sir John Crosby, a wealthy wool merchant. Among the later residents of this building was Richard Duke of Gloucester (later to become King Richard III). In 1523, More bought the lease of this grand home but soon let it to his good friend Antonio Bonvisi. In 1910, the great hall was moved from Bishopsgate in London to its present location in Chelsea. It is now owned, and has been magnificently restored, by Christopher Moran. This building is on the site of the garden of Thomas More's Chelsea home. *Location: just down Cheyne Walk, past the Margaret Roper Garden. Crosby Hall is not open to the general public.*



### Chelsea Old Library

On King's Road, which would have been the north boundary of More's Chelsea estate, this library owns two important works of art: "A Portrait of Sir Thomas More with his Family and Household," attributed to Rowland Lockey, c. 1593, and Ludwig Cauer's 1895 bronze statuette of More. (020 7361 4131.) Pictured here is a recreation of the Lockey painting by Gary Chu, 1995, © CTMS. *Location: At the junction of Kings Road and*

*Manor Street.*



### Tower Hill

To find the site of More's execution, walk through Trinity Gardens and past the war memorial. The site of the scaffold is difficult to find but is marked with a small plaque on the

ground. It is in the eastern corner, closest to the Church of All Hallows. More's last words to the public before dying were, "I die the king's good servant, and God's first."

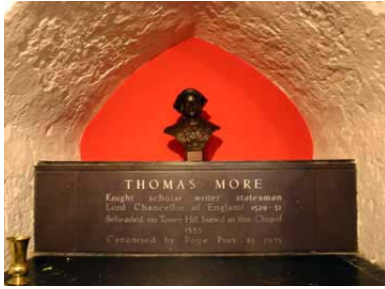
*Nearest Underground Station: Tower Hill.*



### The Tower of London—More's prison cell

More was imprisoned on the ground floor of the Bell Tower, from 17 April 1534 to 6 July 1535. It had no glass in what served as windows and was directly above the Tower's moat, close to the Thames River. You must request to visit this cell since it is not open to the general public.

*(Write to: The Governor, HM Tower of London, London EC3N 4AB. Fax: 020 7480 5543; phone: 020 7488 5642.)*



The Tower of London, St. Peter ad Vincula – More's burial place

More's body is buried in the crypt of St. Peter ad Vincula, along with several thousand other bodies in a common "pit grave." The general spot is marked by a bust of More. Since the crypt is not part of the general tours, you must request to visit the crypt.



All Hallows

More made pilgrimage to the famous Marian shrine at this church. On the north side of the church was a chapel containing an image of the Blessed Virgin erected by Edward I, who supposedly visited it five times a year; it subsequently became a popular place of pilgrimage. It is believed that Margaret Roper prayed here during her father's execution. The first church was built on this spot by the Abbey of Barking in Essex during the seventh century, and some arches in this structure go back to that time. Bishop John Fisher was buried in a ditch grave outside this church after his beheading on Tower Hill on June 22, 1535; later he was buried in the crypt of St. Peter's in Chains, in the Tower of London. *Location: north side of Tower Street, across from the Tower of London.*



Tyburn

At his trial, More was condemned to be executed, and he expected to be hanged, drawn, and quartered here at Tyburn. Today, a bronze plaque in the middle of a busy traffic island marks this infamous place of execution, at the corner of Bayswater and Edgware Road across from and north of the Marble Arch. Down Bayswater Road about two blocks is Tyburn Convent where, in the basement is a display of the Tyburn martyrs including a few pictures and a relic of St. Thomas More. ([www.tyburnconvent.org.uk](http://www.tyburnconvent.org.uk), 020 7723 7262.) *Nearest Underground Station: Marble Arch.*



Windsor Castle, Runnymede

More served at Henry's court in Windsor Castle. Henry VIII finished building St. George's Chapel in 1528 and was later buried there. This castle of what is now 1000 rooms was first built by William the Conqueror, who invaded England in 1066. Although not on display, the famous Holbein sketches of More and of his family members are there.

The large meadow ("mede") close to Windsor Castle is considered by many to be the birthplace of English democracy, where King John signed the Magna Carta in 1215. At his trial, More referred to the first clause of the Magna Carta, a clause which states that "the English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished and its liberties unimpaired."



### Canterbury Cathedral, Canterbury

More would have visited Canterbury Cathedral and the famous shrine to his patron St. Thomas Becket. More considered it quite significant that he would die on the eve of that saint's feast, and it is believed that More was named after that popular English saint. The shrine of Thomas Becket was destroyed by Henry VIII in 1538, three years after More's execution. More's great mentor Lord Chancellor and Archbishop Morton is buried in the crypt of this Cathedral.



### St. Dunstan's, Canterbury

More's head is buried in the Roper family vault, which is under the side chapel of St. Dunstan's. In that side chapel you will find stained glass and other artifacts depicting More and his family. Close by, down St. Dunstan's Street towards the central part of Canterbury, on the opposite side of the street, you will find "Roper's Gate," formerly the entrance to William and Margaret Roper's estates. When Henry II began his penitential pilgrimage in reparation for the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket, he changed his clothing at St. Dunstan's Church and began his pilgrimage to the Cathedral from there on foot. *Location: St. Dunstan's is a ten-minute walk from the Cathedral. (High Street becomes St. Peter's Street; that same street becomes St. Dunstan's Street once through the West Gate of the city, over River Stour.)*



### Hampton Court

More was often in this palace to do business with both Wolsey and then Henry. In the Wolsey Art Gallery, you will find a portrait of Erasmus that Erasmus gave to More as a token of their friendship. Archbishop of York Thomas Wolsey took up residence in this palace in 1514, and King Henry VIII often lived after Wolsey's fall in 1529. It was, however, only one of Henry's sixty estates. The movie *A Man for All Seasons* opens here.



### Oxford

More probably attended Canterbury College, which was suppressed by Henry VIII and incorporated into Christ Church. This stained glass window of More is to the left of the High Table as one approaches from the entrance of the magnificent dining hall of Christ Church. More was also a member of St. Mary's Hall which was later incorporated into Oriel College.





### Our Lady of Willesden

Giles Alington, husband of Alice (More's stepdaughter), owned an estate near Willesdon. In 1525 More's double wedding for two daughters took place in the Alington's private chapel. The shrine of Our Lady of Willesdon (dating back to the 10th century) was the place of More's last pilgrimage in April 1534. From there, on Easter Sunday, 5 April, he wrote his last letter before being taken to the Tower. (<http://www.stmarywillesden.org.uk/Virgin5.html>).



### **National Portrait Gallery**

See the magnificent portraits of the More family, Henry VIII, Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Thomas Cromwell, and Thomas Cranmer. (Open Mon-Sat 10.00-18.00, Sunday 12.00-18.00. Admission free. 020 7306 0055 / [www.npg.org.uk](http://www.npg.org.uk).) *Nearest Underground Station: Charing Cross or Trafalgar Square.*



### **Victoria and Albert Museum**

This museum owns the miniature painting on vellum, *The More Family, Household and Descendants* by Rowland Lockey (1593-4). It is on display in the British Galleries permanent collection Free entrance. *Nearest Underground Station: South Kensington.*

### **Brompton Oratory**

Right around the corner from the Victoria and Albert Museum is the Brompton Oratory. See the painting by Whistler of Sts. Thomas More and John Fisher in the upper right-hand chapel of this beautiful church.

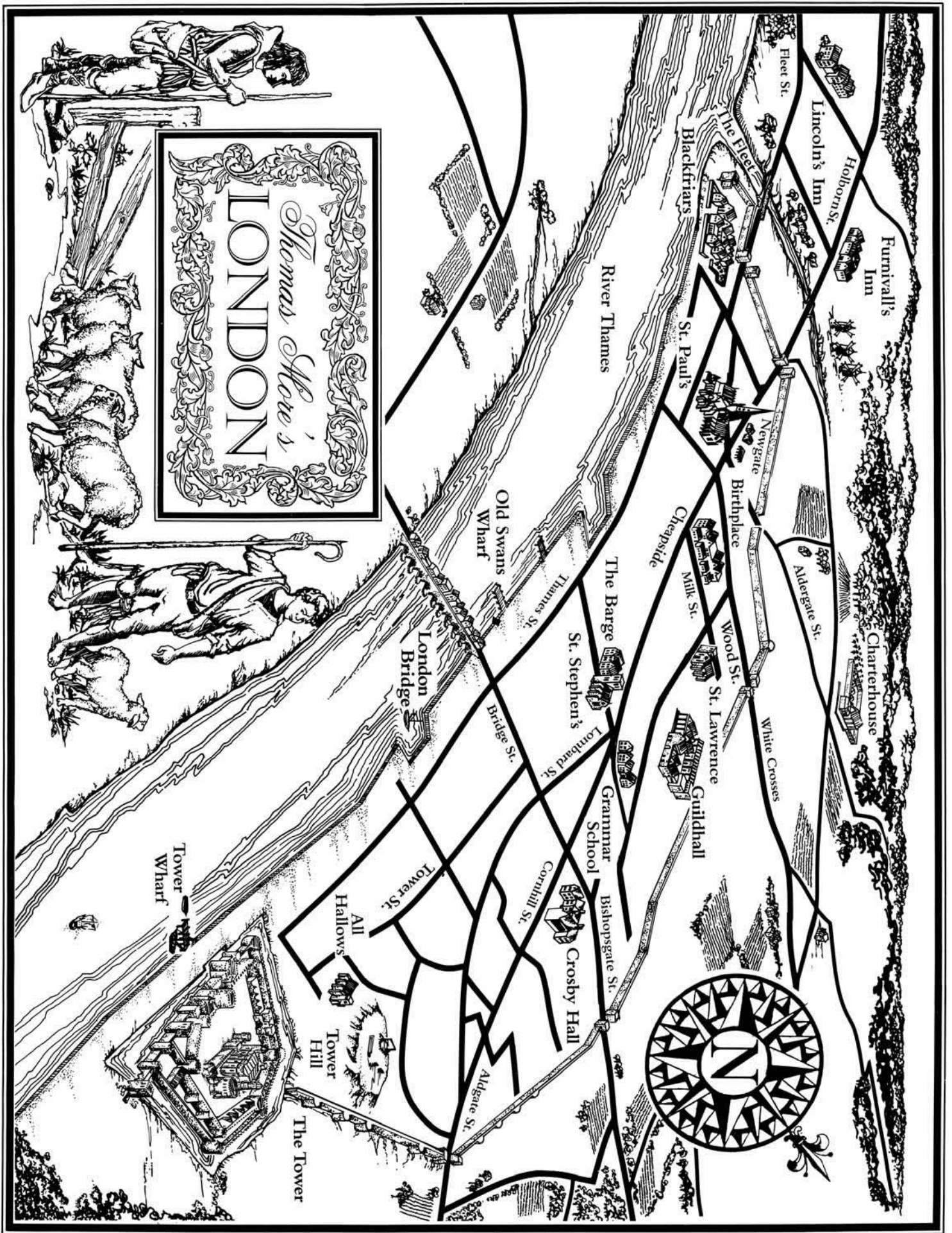
### **British Museum**

In the Museum's 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries display, you can see a set of jewels that belonged to the More family. (Mon-Sat 10.00-17.00 Sunday 12.00-18.00. Admission free. 020 7636 1555 or 020 7580 1788.) *Nearest Underground Station: Russell Square or Goodge St.*

### **St. Etheldreda's, Ely Place**

Ely Place was the London residence of More's mentor John Morton while he as bishop of Ely from 1479 to 1486. Part of the church on this property, St. Etheldreda's, dates to the fourteenth century. The stained glass window in back of this church depicts the hanging, drawing, and quartering of the four monks whom More had seen on May 4, 1535 from his prison window, as they were about to be dragged the five miles from the Tower to Tyburn for execution. Notice that a disguised Henry VIII looks on. St. John Houghton, Prior of the London Charterhouse, is there; a statue of him is also towards the front of the church on the left hand side. The other statues above the nave are of Londoners who were hanged, drawn, and quartered for practicing their faith. *Nearest Underground Station: Farringdon or Chancery Lane*









Photos from top left (clockwise): *Thomas More* by L. Cubitt Bevis (1969), in front of Chelsea Old Church; Windsor Castle; Canterbury Cathedral; stained glass of Thomas More, St. Dunstan's Church, Canterbury.