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London Lore: The Legends and Traditions of the World's Most Vibrant City

Steve Roud

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London is a city with almost as many ancient legends and deep-rooted customs as it has streets and landmarks, and here a leading folklorist brings together an astonishingly rich selection of them—tales of ghosts and witches; stories about fabled events, heroes, and villains; and accounts of local supersitions and beliefs. Beyond simply retelling these stories it also delves through layers of hearsay and speculation to investigate how and why they arose. In the process, it shows how the story of Dick Whittington and his cat has connections with the ancient Middle East, explains why lions rather than ravens at the Tower of London were once felt to be inextricably bound up with the city's fate, and pinpoints precisely where the story of Sweeney Todd, the demon barber of Fleet Street, was first recorded. Exploring everything from local superstitions, to ghost stories, to annual customs, this is an enchanting guide to the ancient legends and deep-rooted beliefs that can be found the length and breadth of the city.

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