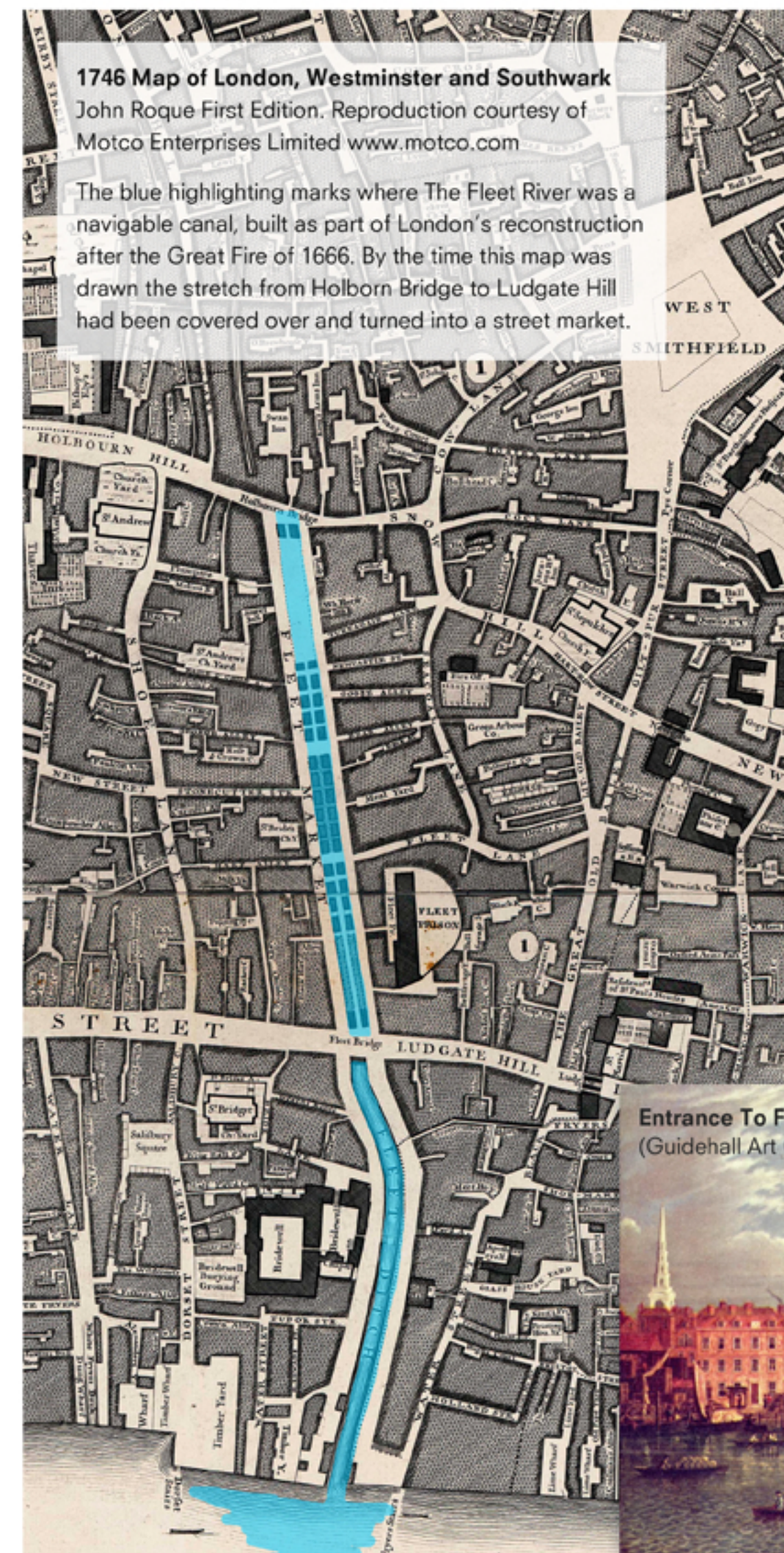


# The Fleet River Channel

Liberating London's  
Lost River as a new  
Low-Line Park

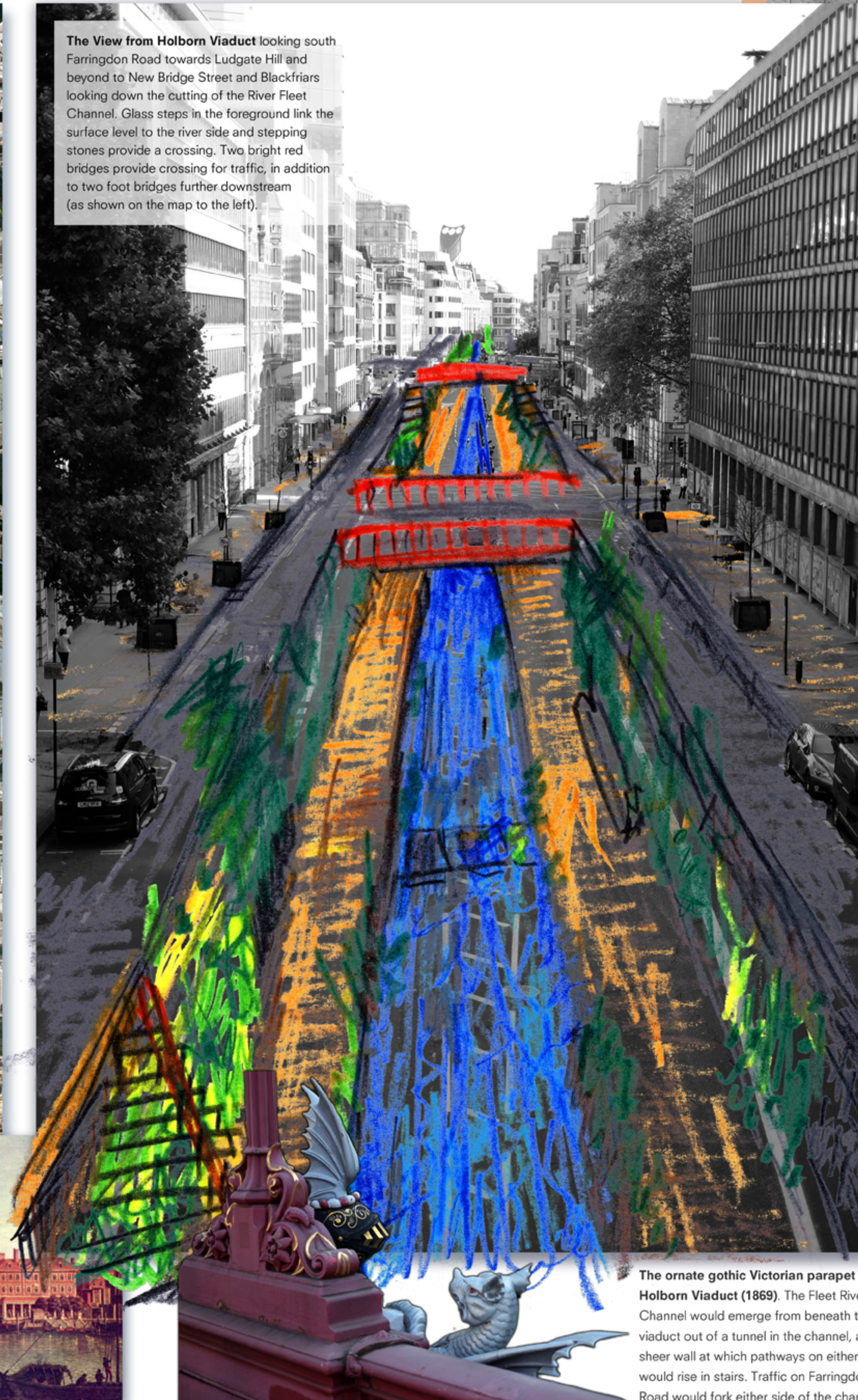
Of all the lost rivers that still flow in subterranean London, the Fleet has left the greatest mark on the cityscape. Its final half-mile is directly under Farringdon Road and New Bridge Street from Smithfield to the newly enlarged Blackfriars Station. The last portion of the river was covered in 1769 before which it was an industrial conduit to wharves. Today the road is bleak, cavernous and rather empty, along which only Ludgate Hill provides a respite of animation. This is where a bridge once crossed linking Fleet Street to St Paul's. The Fleet River Channel would reinstate the shallow stream in a cutting one storey below street level with pedestrian footpaths at either side connected to street level by steps, lifts and to each other by stepping stones and bridges. Traffic would cross on two new bridges. The stone-faced cutting walls would be a canvas for an eclectic sequence of planting and public art that was in intentional contrast to the ordered hard-nosed commerce at street level. The Channel would be a calming, romantic escape inspired by the informal ornamental aesthetic used by guerrilla gardeners and 'pavement pimper' in transport corridors elsewhere in London and beyond. Engravings and soundscapes would bring the river's history to life and lighting both underwater and in the undergrowth would bring the space to life in after dark. Restoring the visible flow of water southwards and creating a park alongside would encourage the great flow of Thames-side pedestrian traffic north to Smithfield.



Entrance To Fleet River by Samuel Scott circa 1750  
(Guidehall Art Gallery)



**The View from Holborn Viaduct** looking south Farringdon Road towards Ludgate Hill and beyond to New Bridge Street and Blackfriars looking down the cutting of the River Fleet Channel. Glass steps in the foreground link the surface level to the river side and stepping stones provide a crossing. Two bright red bridges provide crossing for traffic, in addition to two foot bridges further downstream (as shown on the map to the left).



The ornate gothic Victorian parapet of Holborn Viaduct (1869). The Fleet River Channel would emerge from beneath this viaduct out of a tunnel in the channel, a sheer wall at which pathways on either side would rise in stairs. Traffic on Farringdon Road would fork either side of the channel



Key reference and precedent:  
**Cheonggyecheon Stream, Seoul.**  
Excavated in 2005 to become a 5 mile green and blue corridor with roads at either side and crossings. The walker is immersed in tranquil tropical greenery

