



Loathe it or love it, The Shard is the headline for now, but a trip to the top is expensive, especially as you have to book far ahead and might find the allocated day is a foggy one. In truth, the best views aren't necessarily from the tallest buildings and some of them won't cost you a penny.

Skycarden (525') *Fenchurch Street, City*

An appointment is also needed to visit this spectacular triple-height glasshouse, but there's no charge as it's a quasi-public space. The panoramic 360° view is stupendous, although anyone suffering from even mild vertigo will find peering over the edge of the terrace a deeply disconcerting experience.

Westminster Cathedral (272') *Victoria Street, Westminster*

One of the capital's least-known viewpoints, the campanile or bell tower affords far-reaching views across central and west London for anyone visiting this glorious, richly decorated Roman Catholic corner. No glass in the windows means there's usually a strong breeze even in summer, but it's perfect for photographers hoping to capture a bird's-eye view.

One New Change (112') *New Change, City*

Don't be fooled by the relatively modest height: the terrace on top of this strikingly modern shopping complex provides one of the best views possible of St Paul's Cathedral and a vast panorama of London. Free to visit seven days a week, its size means it's rarely, if ever, crowded





ROMANTIC RUINS

Staggering land values mean ruins do well to survive at all in London, but those that do provide a fascinating glimpse of the past as well as somewhere magical to wander through.

Christ Church Greyfriars, *Newgate Street, City*

This soaring Wren tower survived the Blitz to become an extraordinary eleven-storey private house, but the nave was ruined in December 1940 and now encloses a small public garden. Beneath it are buried the remains of three queens, two of England and one of Scotland, and the heart of a fourth: Henry III's widow, Eleanor of Provence.

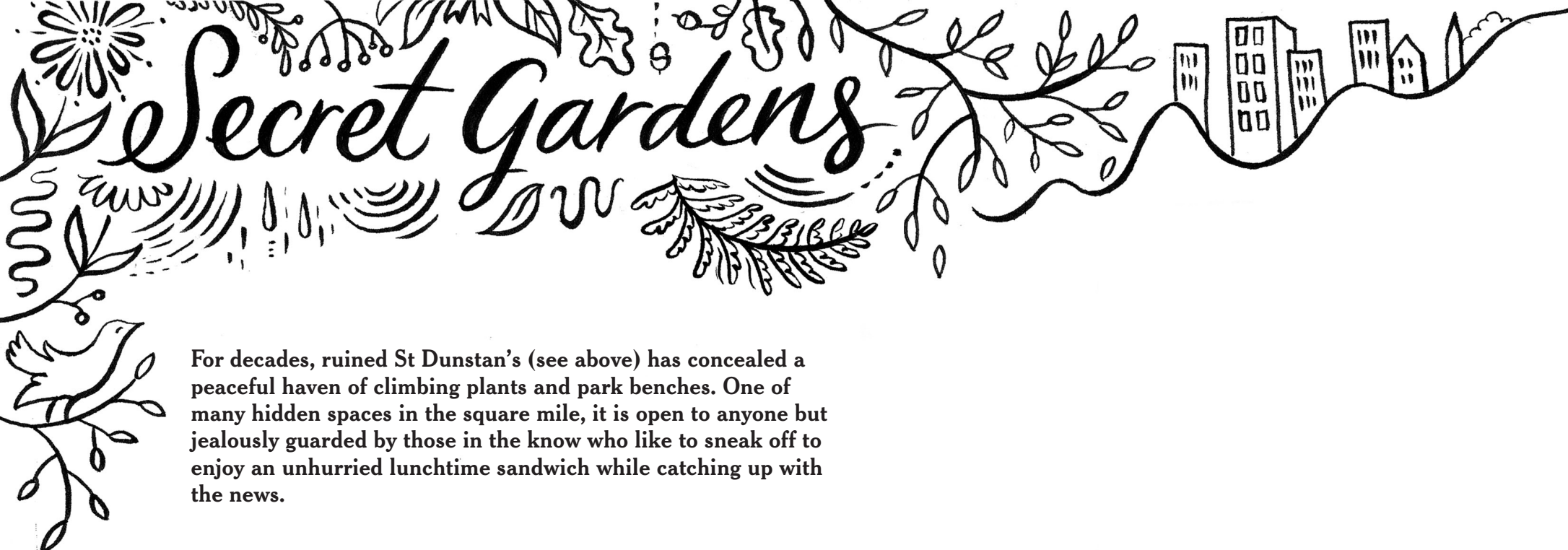
Lesnes Abbey, *Abbey Road, Bexley*

Unique among the religious foundations that once thronged London, it is still possible to discern the outline of this twelfth-century Augustinian abbey, even though the walls rise only a few feet out of the grass. Granted to Cardinal Wolsey following the Dissolution, most of the stone was sold off to fund what became Oxford's Christ Church College.

St Dunstan's-in-the-East, *Idol Lane, City*

The delicate Gothic steeple mounted on medieval St. Dunstan's happily withstood a devastating hurricane that struck London in the early eighteenth century. Unfortunately, the church itself was badly damaged by German bombers, after which the decision was taken to stabilize the ruins rather than rebuild them.





For decades, ruined St Dunstan's (see above) has concealed a peaceful haven of climbing plants and park benches. One of many hidden spaces in the square mile, it is open to anyone but jealously guarded by those in the know who like to sneak off to enjoy an unhurried lunchtime sandwich while catching up with the news.

The Phoenix, *St Giles Passage, Camden*

Situated immediately behind Tottenham Court Road, this award-winning community garden was created in 1984 on the site of an old car park. Formerly the grounds of a long-vanished leper hospital, the combination of lush planting and cool ponds is an extraordinary thing to find so close to the heart of the West End.

Kyoto Garden, *Holland Park, Kensington*

A gift to London from a Japanese business organisation in 1991, the garden displays all the favourite elements of Oriental garden design including tiered waterfalls, maple trees, stone lanterns and a pool teeming with exotic koi carp.

Temple Gardens, *Embankment*

The porters guarding the entrances to London's famous legal enclave seem to be there to put you off, but walk on through. Inside you'll find almost three acres of colourful herbaceous borders and tranquil sweeping lawns, which visitors and the public are free to enjoy on a weekday afternoon.

