

See over the page for
Rotherhithe magnified

One of the earliest towpath walks and a favourite.

- Main route 8.2 km
- circular route 9.4 km
- inner loop via Albion Channel 6.4 km
- options
- railway
- ↕ connection with another walk
- 0.5 kilometres
- N

- 1** To exit station follow signs to shopping centre
- 2** After crossing footbridge look for sign right to Nelson Walk
- 3** On reaching Tower Bridge cross the bridge and turn left for Tower Bridge Station or continue the Thames Path for London Bridge station, taking two left turns where signed, shortly before arriving at that bridge

Pubs: Mayflower,

- | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| ① Old Dock Office | ⑤ Greenland Dock/Howland Dock | ⑨ Lavender Pond Pumping Station | ⑬ Brunel Engine House | ⑰ Watch House & Engine House | ⑳ Edward III Manor House remains | ㉔ Finnish Church |
| ② Dockers' shelter (replica) | ⑥ Russia Dock Woodland | ⑩ Grand Surrey Docks entrance | ⑭ Sands Film Studio | ⑱ Old Mortuary | ㉑ Old Police Station | ㉕ Albion Channel |
| ③ Bascule Bridge | ⑦ Stave Hill | ⑪ Pilgrim Statue | ⑮ St Mary's Rotherhithe | ⑲ Thames Tunnel Mills | ㉒ St Peter's | ㉖ Canada Water Library (architect Piers Gough) |
| ④ Grand Surrey Canal | ⑧ Nelson House and Dock | ⑫ Brandram's Wharf | ⑯ Old School House | ㉓ The Thin House | ㉔ Norwegian Church | |

Greenland Dock to Tower Bridge via Rotherhithe

Strolling in Rotherhithe

13. Brunel Museum - there is a small entrance charge, closes at 5.00pm

14. Sands Picture Library - entrance free but don't mistake the workers canteen for a cafe; closes 4.00pm

15. St Mary's Church - the nave is visible through a large window in the vestibule.

17. Watch House - cafe serving strong coffee, paninis and Portugese pastries in the park until 4.00pm

Salter statues - Alfred, Ada, Joyce and the cat - created by Diane Gorvin

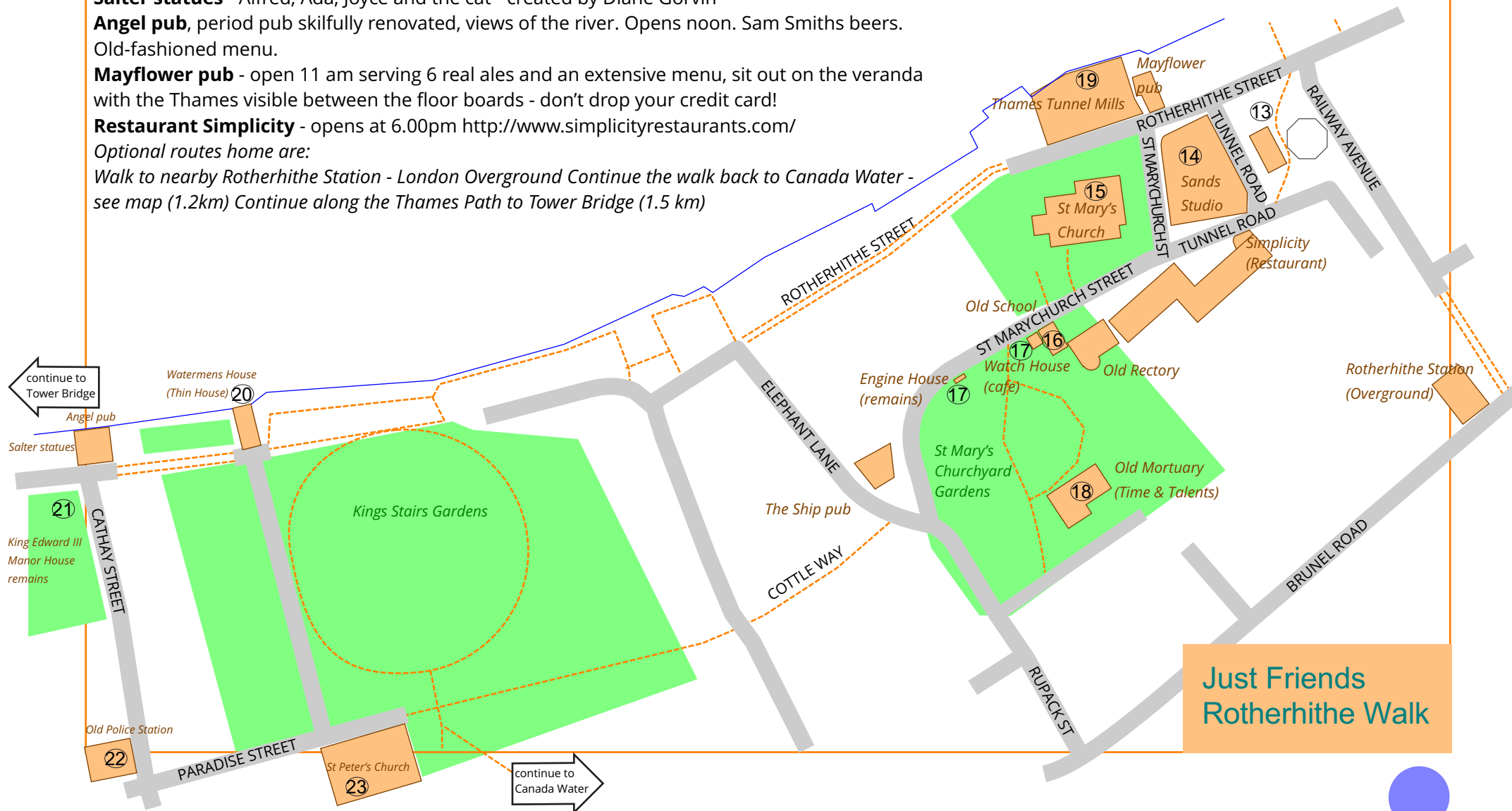
Angel pub, period pub skilfully renovated, views of the river. Opens noon. Sam Smiths beers. Old-fashioned menu.

Mayflower pub - open 11 am serving 6 real ales and an extensive menu, sit out on the veranda with the Thames visible between the floor boards - don't drop your credit card!

Restaurant Simplicity - opens at 6.00pm <http://www.simplicityrestaurants.com/>

Optional routes home are:

Walk to nearby Rotherhithe Station - London Overground Continue the walk back to Canada Water - see map (1.2km) Continue along the Thames Path to Tower Bridge (1.5 km)



Just Friends
Rotherhithe Walk

Rotherhithe

Rotherhithe, originally Redriff, was closely connected to Bermondsey Abbey. It has always been associated with shipbuilding and related trades. Rotherhithe Street housed ship builders, seafarers, doss houses and taverns. A fleet of 40 large ships under the command of Edward III set sail for France from Rotherhithe, many of the ships had been fitted out in Rotherhithe under the orders of the Black Prince.

The first dock was constructed around 1700 and the area eventually became the centre of London's timber trade. Ship production ended in 1870 but repair and breaking continued, one of the most famous being the Temeraire, captured by JMW Turner while being towed upriver to Beaton's yard for breaking in 1838. The docks were taken over by the Port of London Authority in 1938 and were closed in 1970 as containerisation took over.

The Manor of Rotherhithe was part of the royal demesne, the most notable Lord of the Manor being Sir William Gomm.

1. Dock Office and Tower

The former Dock Offices, built in 1892 by the Surrey Commercial Dock Company, are listed as Grade II.

"A grand, well-detailed, purpose-built Victorian dock office, with a particularly striking central clock tower; one of the last surviving features of the former Surrey Commercial Docks. A well-preserved exterior which, through its architectural form and surviving signage, remains clearly legible as a dock office building."

2. Dockers' Shelter (replica)

In the Dockers' shelter is a local history mural painted in 1993 by the Bermondsey Art Group.

It is over two metres high and about ten metres long situated along the back wall. It shows some scenes from the history of the area carefully designed to lead from one scene into the next.

3. Greenland Dock Bascule Bridge

This (Scherzer) bascule bridge is no longer operational. Originally its counterweight was filled with water to facilitate raising the roadway. It sits on tracks, and electric motors wound the bridge with the assistance of cogs and racks to prevent slippage. This one was built in 1949, erected in Deptford to bridge Deptford Creek. In 1959 it was moved to Rotherhithe to replace an ageing swing bridge, which had been installed when the cut between the Greenland and Canada docks was made in 1902/4.

4. Grand Surrey Canal

These 'indentations' show where the canal passed, before the Greenland Dock was lengthened. Now for some history. The peninsula was developed by two main companies. Refer to maps on page 8.

The Grand Surrey Canal Company was the second of these, incorporated in 1801, some ten years before the Regent's Canal. By 1807 the canal started at a lock from the Thames on the north west edge of the peninsula. That led to a basin which acted as a cargo transit area consisting of two wide channels with an island in the middle. This fed into the main channel of the canal, which skirted east of the marsh ponds, southeast then south and eventually west towards Camberwell (by 1811) and Peckham. The canal was not very profitable and the company diversified into docking. In 1811 the company received parliamentary permission to widen the canal

that led inland from the island to create more docking areas and wharfage known as the Grand Surrey Inner Dock, through which the canal and its traffic now passed.

In 1855, to reflect its increasing investment in the creation of docks, the company's name was changed to the Grand Surrey Docks and Canal Company. It set about making substantial changes in order to accommodate the larger and deeper vessels that were being built, and purchased land from the Lord of the Rotherhithe Manor, Sir William Gomm. A larger lock was built upriver of the old one, which was eventually filled in. The new lock, the Surrey Lock, opened into a new basin, the Surrey Basin and by 1860 the new basin was connected not only to the Thames via its new lock, and to the newly modernized docks that flanked the canal channel but also to a new dock to its south west where the marshes had been, named the Main Dock, later renamed Albion Dock.

By 1862 the Grand Surrey Docks and Canal Company had also added four timber ponds, all westwards from the Canal.

During the second half of the 19th century, the canal was used by the South Metropolitan Gas Company to supply coal via its own fleet of tugs and barges to its gas works site on the Old Kent Road. The canal was also heavily used to move timber — Whitten Timber at Eagle Wharf in Peckham Hill Street is a family firm which can trace its associations with the canal back to 1935.

5. Greenland Dock

The second half of our story begins earlier, around 1698, when Wriothesley Russell, the future 2nd Duke of Bedford began the construction of the Howland Great Wet Dock on some of his wife Elizabeth Howland's dowry lands on the south east end of the peninsula. Elizabeth

was granddaughter of Sir Josiah Child - chairman of the East India Company. Designed by local shipwright, John Wells, the dock was intended to refit East India ships that would normally have moored in the main channel of the Thames. From the 1720s, under a lease to the South Sea Company, Greenland whalers also used the dock and substantial blubber boiling houses were built to produce oil on the south side. Extensive usage by the Greenland whaling ships prompted the dock to be renamed Greenland Dock.

(Note: London's first large commercial dock north of the river, the West India Dock, was not constructed until 1802)

In 1806, as whaling declined, the dock was sold to William Richie, a Greenwich timber merchant. He formed the Commercial Dock Company and expanded northwards between canal and river with new ponds to float timber, creating the centre of London's timber trade for well over a century to come. It was lined with warehouses and immense piles of timber or "deal wood", which were maintained by the athletic deal porters. Ponds 2 and 3 opened in 1811 and pond 4 in 1812, followed by pond 5 in 1827 and 6 in 1864. Confined between the canal and Rotherhithe Street this latter pond required the demolition of the King and Queen Ironworks, which had supplied the links for the English Bridge in Budapest and the Menai railway Bridge.

The Commercial Dock Company amalgamated with its neighbour the Grand Surrey Dock Company (see note 4) in 1864 to form the Surrey Commercial Dock Company. The docks were all renamed with rather more memorable names, avoiding the confusion of two sets of numbers.

Between 1895-1904 Greenland Dock was greatly expanded westwards, cutting across the old Grand Surrey Canal, more than doubling in length to 690m and nearly doubling in depth. It was also given a large lock. This renovation enabled the dock to take large cargo ships and ocean-going liners. Cunard Line vessels of as much as 14,000 tons, driven by large steam engines and carrying passengers and cargos, sailed regularly from Greenland Dock to the St. Lawrence River in Canada. They were considered huge ships for so far upstream and they had to be swung round in the river with the help of chains to enter the lock. Two of the capstans you will notice are still there. As we walk around you'll see one or two buildings remaining from that expansion west, all of a style in single storey poly-chromatic brick, such as the gauge house and the lock-keepers office, plus some swing footbridges and some mechanical devices used to power the gates and sluices, explained by plaques.

South Dock

South Dock first appears on maps in the early 19th Century as a long thin, dock named East Country Dock with its own access to the Thames. The East Country Dock Company was formed in 1807 and named for its trading connections with the eastern Baltic. In 1850 the dock was bought out by the Commercial Dock Company, amalgamated and renamed.

6. Russia Dock Woodland

Following the closure of the Rotherhithe docks in the 1970s, the Rotherhithe Peninsula was redeveloped by the London Docklands Development Corporation. In 1980, Russia Dock (originally part of the widened canal

used for importing timber from Norway, Russia and Sweden) was transformed into a native grass area for recreational activities. A series of water channels and ponds provide habitats for kingfishers and herons. The park still contains surviving dock features including the retaining wall capstones and mooring chains.

7. Stave Hill

In 1985, the LDDC added an artificial hill, Stave Hill, to the west edge of the park, using waste material and rubble. A relief map, of the former docks in cast bronze by Michael Rizzello, stands at the top of the hill. Stave Hill Ecological Park is managed by The Conservation Volunteers Urban Ecology as a nature reserve, educational facility, research area and place of recreation. The Park has been designed and managed to form a mosaic of grassland, woodland, scrub and wetland habitats which support the wide variety of wildlife that colonised the area during the years the docks lay derelict and provide a haven for some of the species that lived here before humans developed the land.

8. Nelson Dock and House

The Nelson Dry Dock, its Engine House and a large 18th century detached house, home to prosperous shipbuilders, reflect a time when the village of Rotherhithe was inhabited by masters of ships, sea-faring men, with artificers and tradesmen depending upon navigation.

The Nelson Dock yard did not acquire that name until the early 19th century; before that time it was referred to as being at Cuckold's Point. The dry dock had been constructed at least by 1707 when the warship *Dragon* underwent rebuilding and enlarging there, a

job that would have required a dry dock. The yard was in use from at least 1690 for shipbuilding and repair, possibly much earlier, ownership passing eventually via Randall and Brent to S & D Brent in 1814. Randall & Brent also owned two yards at Greenland Dock and during their ownership of Nelson Dock built 52 warships and 46 East Indiamen and many other ships and repairs that were unrecorded. S&D Brent were taken to court by the government in 1804 for the sub-standard construction of the Ajax, built during their father's ownership of the yard but who had now retired. The company suffered considerable damage as a result of the court case and the yard split into two sections, one of which was taken over by Nelson Wake. It's likely the yard was named after this Nelson rather than Nelson the national hero (perhaps, taking advantage of his illustrious namesake for marketing purposes). The two parts of Nelson Dock were reunited around 1850 when the dock was under the ownership of Bilbe and Perry and reverted once more to ship-building. Bilbe and Perry were one concern in Rotherhithe who embraced the use of iron in ships, sheathed in copper or Muntz metal that did not attract the marine growth that was associated with iron. They produced ships that were fast and at the high end, in demand for opium-running and transporting consignments of tea. Nelson House is a unique survivor from the mid 18th century, the only remaining example of the type of house that prosperous owners of shipyards built for themselves in Rotherhithe. It was probably built for the first John Randall but his son, also called John, who followed him into the business, did not wish to live next to the

yard and lived in a smart house near Hyde Park. The house was Grade II* listed in 1949 when it was used as offices. Bilbe was also responsible for the building of the hydraulic slip in the dry dock whose machinery, replaced in the early 1900s, is housed in the engine house facing on to Rotherhithe Street bearing the painted sign *Mills and Knight*.

9. Lavender Dock and Pumphouse

The Commercial Dock Company had planned for a new lock entrance to this part of their system, as a second access point to the Thames for large ships to avoid having to negotiate Greenland and Norway Docks when entering or leaving. They obtained an Act of Parliament in order to carry out the works in 1860 and the lock opened in 1862. Water-loss was an ongoing problem in the docks. An LDDC document says that as much as 4ft could be lost during neap tides. In order to maintain levels a decision was made to build a pumping station to pump water in from the river. In 1928/29 the Lavender pumping station was built to a design by the Port of London Authority, which had taken over responsibility for all the London docks in 1908. Lavender Lock was closed at the same time, again to reduce water loss, although it was not removed and remains in situ today. Although most of Lavender Dock was eventually filled in, a little of it was left to function as a nature reserve.

10. Grand Surrey Docks entrance

The original entrance lay just downstream but was replaced when the docks were expanded and Surrey Basin was constructed.

11. Pilgrim Statue

In July 1620, the Mayflower sailed from

Rotherhithe for Southampton to begin loading food and supplies for the voyage to New England. The Pilgrim Fathers, however, hired a ship called the Speedwell to take them from Delfthaven in the Netherlands directly to Southampton to meet up with the Mayflower. The ship's captain, Christopher Jones is buried in an unmarked grave at St Mary's Church. The Mayflower sailed from near a public house called the Shippe in Rotherhithe Street, now named the Mayflower. The building however dates from the 1950s. Only the ship herself, the captain and the first mate John Clarke and one other John Moore came from Rotherhithe with any certainty.

The statue of the pilgrim fathers erected in 1991 is by Peter McLean.

12. Brandram's Wharf

Brandram Brothers were manufacturers of paint pigments, including some fairly noxious chemicals, like white lead, saltpetre and oil of vitriol (sulphuric acid). Their factory was first established before the docks started occupying the entire peninsula. Stephen Humphrey states that in 1800 Samuel Brandram "redeemed the land tax on no fewer than five acres," and that by 1882 it had around 90 employees. The Brandram company also had properties and interests elsewhere in London. The factory closed in 1958 and was demolished for the construction of the Canada Estate in 1962.

Brandram's Wharf dates to the mid to late 1800s and was converted to apartments in the mid 1980s, when it was known for a time as Brandram's Court. It is one of the more consciously engaging buildings, with its attractive coloured brickwork and arched windows.

13. Brunel Engine House

The Brunel Engine House (now a museum) sits above the shaft at the south end of the Thames

Tunnel. Brunel built a circular brick tower above ground, reinforced with cement and rubble, and allowed it to sink into the soft river-bank by the downward force of its own weight to form the shaft. The steam-engine drove the tunnel's water pumps and also brought up the earth in buckets. The tunnel connecting Rotherhithe and Wapping is 35 feet wide, 20 feet high and 1,300 feet long. It was the first tunnel known to have been constructed successfully underneath a navigable river and was built between 1825 and 1843 using Marc Isambard Brunel's and Thomas Cochrane's newly invented tunnelling shield technology. It was originally designed for, but never used by, horse-drawn carriages.

Railway Avenue recognises the fact that the East London Railway line was opened in 1869 to exploit the tunnel 26 years later, connecting the London Docks to the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway.

14. Sands Film Studio

The grade II listed building that Sands Films occupies since 1975 was a former granary. As an independent film production studio, it has its own soundproof stage, workshops, costume department, set construction workshop, cutting room, cinema and other services needed to make films. It is a self-sufficient and fully integrated production facility.

The Rotherhithe Picture Research Library was established in 1975 as a reference collection, freely available to anyone wishing to do picture research. Whereas most other picture libraries are of a commercial nature, this one is a non-profit-making educational trust.

15. St Mary's Rotherhithe

St. Mary's Church is at the centre of the old Rotherhithe village. Christians have

worshipped on this site for at least 1000 years. The present parish church, replacing a 12th century building, was completed in 1716. Designed by John James, an associate of Sir Christopher Wren, it has a homely grandeur with deep roots in the maritime history of Britain. The links with the 'Mayflower', with the Pilgrim Fathers, and with Prince Lee Boo of Pelau, are particularly treasured.

The organ, built and installed by John Byfield in 1764, is a superb example of 18th century English organ building. Its tonal qualities have been retained to the present day, so that its sound is much as Handel would have heard and appreciated.

16. Old School House

At number 70 St Marychurch Street, the former Peter Hills School in Rotherhithe village is one of the few 18th Century buildings left standing in Rotherhithe. Now converted for use as offices, it was established in 1742 as a charity school, having moved here from nearby. The school itself was established in 1614, founded by its benefactors Peter Hills and Robert Bell. Peter Hills was a seafarer, Master Mariner and Brother of Trinity House. When he died he left a sum of money to enable the establishment and ongoing maintenance of a school education for 8 sons of impoverished seamen.

17. Watch House and Engine House

The tiny Rotherhithe watch house was established as a base for constables of St Mary's Parish in 1821. A rectangular stone plaque above the door confirms both the function and the date of the building. As well as being a base for monitoring the streets at night, it was in a very useful position on the

edge of the churchyard, for guarding against body snatchers. Body snatching was a very lucrative and commonplace 19th Century activity, although illegal, because fresh bodies were always in demand by anatomists at Guys Hospital for dissection and teaching purposes.

The watch house was provided with a beadle (a parish constable associated with the church), a constable and 14 watchmen, operating in shifts during the day and night. There is a cell in the basement beneath the building, where suspects could be held. Characteristic of its period, and a good fit with contemporary Rotherhithe village buildings, it is built of yellow stock brick.

The Engine house, of which little remains, was its twin and was home to a hand-operated fire pump on wheels.

[For a fascinating article on London stock bricks visit <http://russiadock.blogspot.co.uk/2013/10/the-wonderful-world-of-london-stock-and.html>]

18. Old Mortuary

The Old Mortuary, now the home of Time and Talents, was built in 1895 to deal with bodies found in the Thames. Many washed up in Rotherhithe, and fees were paid to the finder, with more money if an inquest was held, and perhaps a reward from the family of the deceased. Rotherhithe paid more than some neighbouring areas such as Deptford. There was therefore a steady supply of bodies arriving here from the river!

Time and Talents Association was founded in 1887 by women who wanted to address both the waste of protected young ladies' time and talents and the conditions of young working women in this area. Their programme of

education and social work has evolved over the following century or so, and today they run the premises as a community centre. It runs many activities, with a particular focus on young children and the over-fifties, and moved to the former mortuary in 1980.

19. Thames Tunnel Mills

Thames Tunnel Mills were built in the 1860s and consisted of warehouses and flour mills. Latterly the mills produced flaked rice and tapioca made by White, Tomkins and Courage until they closed the mills in 1972. A listed building, complete with detached chimney, it was one of the first warehouses to be converted to residential use in the early 1980s

20. The Lightermens House

built on a medieval foundation, was one of several buildings in the area owned by Braithwaite & Dean, a barge company. They were a lighterage firm – lighters being flat-bottomed barges – and their lightermen moved goods between ships and quays (not to be confused with watermen, who carried passengers). This building was their office – already tilting back in those days – where lightermen would pull up in their boats to collect their wages. Braithwaite & Dean stayed on in the leaning tower until the early 1990s, and it is now a (very) private residence.

21. Edward III Manor House

The remains of a small royal residence at Rotherhithe in South East London, built by Edward III. When the residence was constructed around 1350, Rotherhithe was a small hamlet set in low lying marshland. The manor house itself was built upon a small island directly next to the River Thames and consisted of a range of stone buildings around a central courtyard.

For the walk to Tower Bridge go to 27

22. Old Police Station

The Metropolitan Police were formed in 1829 and by 1839 the watch house was closed and replaced by a police station in 23 Paradise Street. Built in 1814, this recently renovated Regency house is now known as William Gaitskell House, after its first owner. As well as being a really handsome building, it has a slightly ghoulish, story associated with it. Gaitskell was a surgeon and a local story says that a tunnel led from the house down to the Thames, where local children were paid to retrieve corpses from the river for him to work on. Examination of corpses was a standard way of learning and teaching about human anatomy at that period, and hospitals paid for bodies to be delivered to them, leading to the criminal activity of body snatching (one of the reasons that the 1821 watch house was established). There actually was a tunnel, now blocked off, but there is no way of telling whether the story is true.

The interior retains some traditionally Georgian features, including pilasters supporting a groin-vaulted ceiling in the hall, fluted and carved timber door architraves, carved doors and decorative friezes in the main rooms. The house, together with the railings, handrail and the lampholder are all Grade II listed.

23. St Peter's

The church was built in memory of Sir Peter le Page Renouf, a Catholic convert who finished his career as an Egyptologist but had previously been one of Her Majesty's Inspectors for Schools. In this role he had visited St Joseph's school frequently, and his wife, Ludovica de Brentano, Lady Renouf,

helped to fund the church in memory of her husband because of that connection.

The church is distinctive and was built in a style reminiscent of the Romanesque by architect Francis William Tasker (1848-1904). It is built of London stock brick with six tall round-headed windows and an inset arched and gabled entrance formed of good quality yellow stock brick and decorative white and dark grey bricks. It has a timber roof supported on hammer beams. A large round window was set into its western end, a feature particularly favoured by Tasker

24. Norwegian Church

The ships that sailed from the Baltic countries to the Surrey Commercial Docks in the 19th century brought not just the sought after timber and deal but also the men who sailed and worked on the boats. While the boats were in dock, which could be for several weeks, the seamen spent time on shore, and to cater for their needs, primarily with regard to their religious and moral welfare, the churches in the Scandinavian countries established seamen's missions. The first Baltic Church founded in London was in Wapping at the very end of the 17th century for Danish seamen but as the Surrey Commercial Docks grew in prominence, especially with regard to the import of timber, the Baltic churches opened Missions in Rotherhithe.

The Norwegian Mission Society opened a mission in Rotherhithe in 1868, originally in a temporary church until a permanent building, called the Ebenezer Church, was opened in July 1871. By the 1920s it was felt the Ebenezer Church was a bit remote. A plot of land was purchased near the entrance to the

Rotherhithe Tunnel. The foundation stone was laid by Norwegian Crown Prince Olav in 1926 and the new church consecrated in June 1927. There is a Norse longboat on top of the weather vane mounted on the steeple, perhaps to represent the longboat of St Olav.

Norwegian king Olav II Haraldsson was born in 1895. He helped king Ethelred the Unready in a conflict with king Svein of Denmark. He tore down London Bridge, using his "longships", helping King Ethelred to get back his country and was richly rewarded.

25. Finnish Church

In 1875 the Finnish Government sanctioned the foundation of the Finnish Mission in the UK to meet the spiritual and practical needs of Finnish Seamen there. The first mission was set up in Grimsby and in 1882 the first Finnish pastor arrived in Rotherhithe. Initially the Finnish Mission shared premises with the Norwegian church until in 1894 the Mission was offered a site by the Surrey Commercial Docks Company. The present, third, church was completed in 1958; architect Cyril Mardell (Sjöström) had already designed the new church building before the war broke out. Large renovations were carried out in 2005 and the church was then reopened in 2006.

The Finnish Church

remains a religious, cultural and social meeting place for all the Finns who live in Great Britain and Ireland and their friends and offering hostel style accommodation to all travellers.

26. Albion Channel

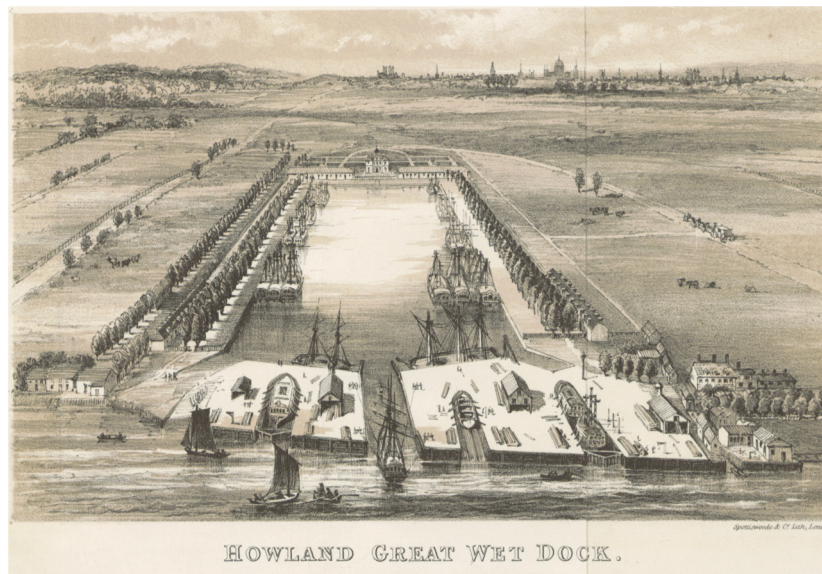
Following the closure of the docks, Russia Dock was filled in, along with most of the Surrey Docks, while the GLC and local borough debated what should become of the area. In the 1980s the London Docklands Development Corporation controversially took over the task of regeneration, and set about creating some new open spaces around which residential development could take place.

They realised that infilling the waterways almost in their entirety left the centre of the peninsula with little character, so a new canal – the Albion Channel – was dug, from Surrey

Dock (now Surrey Water), through the former site of Albion Dock to the remaining part of Canada Dock, now Canada Water (the rest of the dock lying underneath Surrey Quays shopping centre and part of its car park). The spoil from Albion Channel was used to create Stave Hill.

On to Tower Bridge

After following Bermondsey wall the walk crosses St Saviour's Dock on the mouth of the River Neckinger, built originally by the monks of Bermondsey Abbey. The public hanging of pirates would often take place there. The inlet river took on the name 'Neckinger', after the 'Devil's Neckinger' – London slang for the noose used to hang the pirates. On the east side of the Neckinger was the notorious slum of Jacob's Island. The walk finishes along the old warehouses of Shad Thames, often used as a film set.



Development of the docks at Rotherhithe

