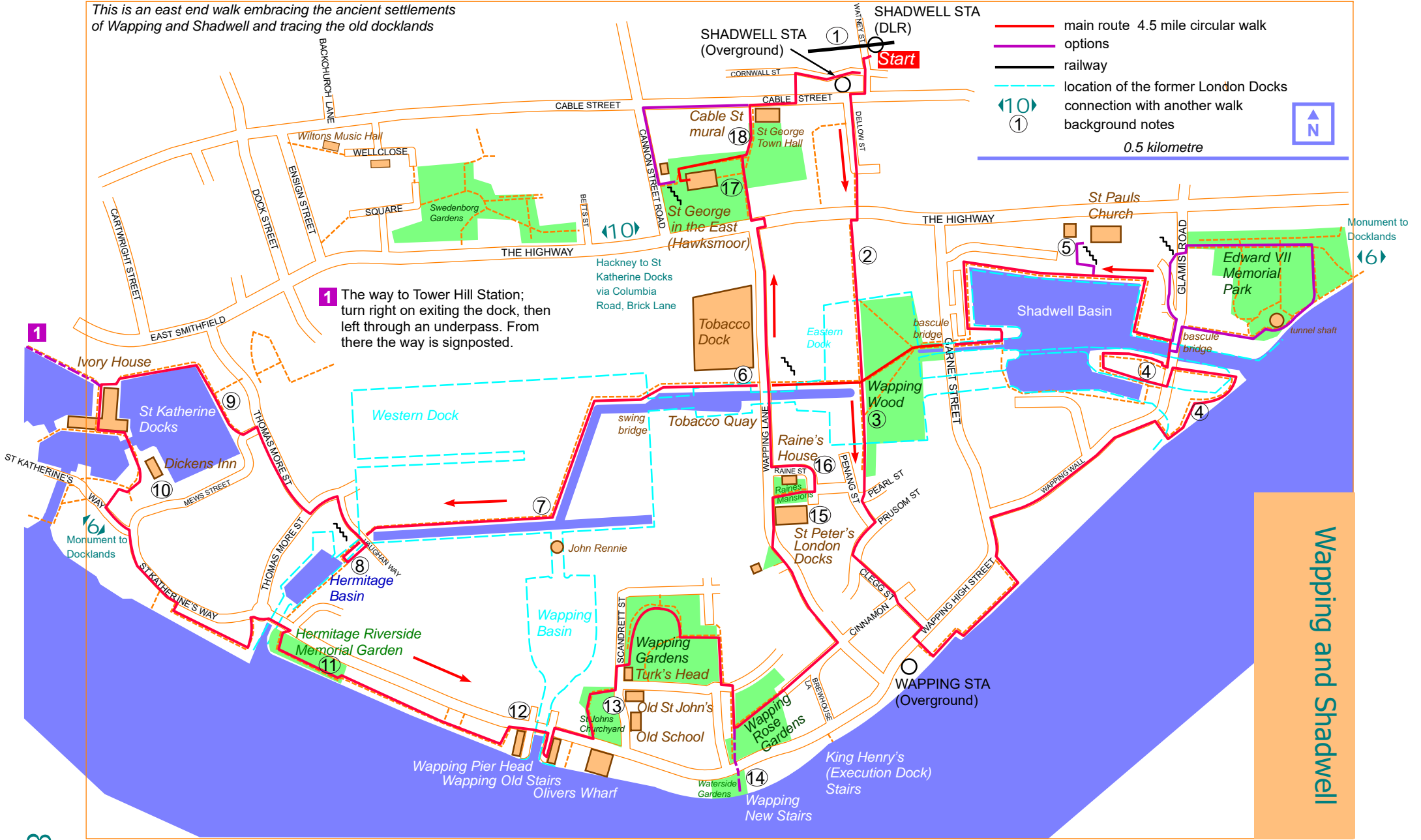


This is an east end walk embracing the ancient settlements of Wapping and Shadwell and tracing the old docklands



1 The way to Tower Hill Station; turn right on exiting the dock, then left through an underpass. From there the way is signposted.

— main route 4.5 mile circular walk
— options
— railway
- - - location of the former London Docks connection with another walk
10 background notes

0.5 kilometre

N

Wapping and Shadwell

1. The Commercial Railway

Spare a thought before we set off, for the Commercial Railway. This 5ft gauge rope-hauled railway opened between Minories and Blackwall in 1840 - London's earliest north of the Thames. It was rope hauled because of the fear that sparks from an engine might set fire to the stores of inflammable materials along the way. At each end of the line were a pair of winding engines. Two hemp ropes, each about 7 miles long uncoiled from drums at each end, hauling a single car from each station, followed by a complete train which left a car at each station. The reverse procedure was then carried out. The ropes were soon replaced by steel ones and in 1849 for the purposes of integration with other lines the rails were reduced to standard gauge and steam engines were introduced. Note the cantilevers of the current station.

2. East London Railway

We follow the route of another railway to the river, as marked by a number of ventilation shafts. Originally called the East London Railway, the line was opened in 1869 to exploit Brunel's Thames Tunnel, (opened some 20 years earlier), connecting the London Docks to the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway. It was extended north under the dock in 1876 to connect to Liverpool Street. Taken over by the Metropolitan in 1913 and electrified, it became part of the Overground in 2010; the colour orange originally used on the tube map was adopted by the whole Overground network.

3. Wapping Wood

The wood covers much of the area reclaimed from the Eastern Dock - more of that later. The East London Railway passed underneath.

4. London Docks, a digression

The expanding British Empire and improving

manufacturing techniques created an immense amount of commerce during the 17th and 18th centuries such that congestion in the Port of London reached a new peak. The solution was to create tide-free docks downstream.

Robert Milligan, whose family owned a sugar plantation in Jamaica, brought together a group of investors at the Royal Exchange to form the West India Dock Company. Their intention was to create new facilities on the Isle of Dogs where merchants trading with the Caribbean could land their cargoes and store them in secure warehouses. Parliament passed the West India Dock Act in 1799.

The success of the West India merchants prompted other general merchants to instigate their own dock system. A year after passing the West India Dock Act, Parliament approved the raising of finance for the creation of a second group of docks. These were to be at Wapping, a short distance east of the Tower. Named the London Docks, they were designed by John Rennie and constructed between 1799 and 1815, at a cost exceeding £5½ million. The Act gave the company a twenty-one year monopoly on the importation to London of tobacco, brandy, wine and rice, except from the East and West Indies. Two thousand houses, businesses, Shadwell Waterworks, and part of the churchyard of St. John's Wapping, were to be replaced by the new dock complex. According to later reports twenty-four streets, thirty-three courts, alleys, lanes and rows were cleared.

When completed, ships entered the London Docks through a lock that lead into Wapping basin thence to what was subsequently known as Western Dock A second lock onto the river at the western end – the former Hermitage Dock – gave access to lighters.

The London Docks expanded eastward in the 1830s with the opening of the Eastern Dock and Shadwell Basin (built 1828–32). To provide these new docks with access to the river, a new entrance at Shadwell was built. Opened in 1832, it was named Shadwell Entrance (the main entrance to the London Dock was through Wapping Entrance).

By the 1850s, the entrances at both Wapping and Shadwell were too small to accommodate the newer and larger ships coming into service so in 1854-58 the company built a new larger entrance (45 feet wide) and a new basin at Shadwell linked to the west part of the docks by Eastern Dock and the short Tobacco Dock. The original entrance is on our left.

5. Shadwell and St Pauls

Until the 17th century, the area that would become Shadwell was bleak marshland in the ownership of the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's and for 300 years it had fallen to St Paul's to maintain the river walls and ditches. That changed with an Act of Parliament in the 1660s that authorised the reclamation of 130 acres of Wapping Marsh. Until then, the sole function of the wasteland had been to flood with the rising of the Thames, and then drain water back to power the mills at Ratcliff. And as late as 1615, the riverside from Ratcliff up to Wapping was undeveloped, save for a few houses to the north (one of which, on the site of King Edward VII Memorial Park, was obviously of some importance, having a brewhouse and an orchard attached).

In 1669, Thomas Neale (responsible also for Seven Dials and Neal Street) became a local landowner, buying some land reclaimed from the river, and gaining Shadwell parish status. In addition, Neale built 289 homes, a mill, and a

market, and also established a waterworks on large ponds, left by the draining of the marsh and in doing so provided fresh water for Shadwell and Wapping. He developed the waterfront, with houses behind as a speculation. Shadwell's new houses were built in an orderly fashion, so that the streets ran between Ratcliff Highway and Wapping Wall. This attracted roperies, tanneries, breweries, wharves, smiths, and numerous taverns, built around St Paul's chapel of ease. In 1669 this was rebuilt as the Parish Church of Shadwell and is traditionally known as the Church of Sea Captains. Seventy-five sea captains are buried in its churchyard; Captain James Cook was an active parishioner and had his son baptised there; John Wesley preached there from time to time. It was the last of five parish churches rebuilt after the Restoration. In 1820 it was again rebuilt as a 'Waterloo church'. By the church there used to be Fox's Path, from the Highway down to the Prospect of Whitby, raised on stilts across the marshes that preceded the Docks. There is a stone plaque in the churchyard wall of St Paul's Shadwell, placed after it was shored up when Shadwell Basin was being excavated between 1828-32 and the church began to slide downhill.

6. Tobacco Dock

Tobacco Dock was built in 1811 to handle tobacco and wine, the Grade I Listed warehouse had a £30million make-over in 1990 by architect Terry Farrell but is now empty and used for functions. The two ships outside Tobacco Dock are replicas set up as a pirate attraction. The 'Three Sisters' was a 330-ton ship built at Blackwall Yard in 1788 which traded in tobacco and spices with the East & West Indies. The 'Sea Lark' was an American merchant schooner

captured by the Royal Navy during the Anglo-American War in 1812-4.

The huge tobacco warehouse held twenty-four thousand hogsheads (or five thousand seven hundred cubic metres) of tobacco. Up to twenty-five thousand bales of wool were sold at public sales each week on the 'Great Wool Floor'.

7. Wapping Ornamental Canal

In 1969, the Shadwell Docks, along with the other London docks, were closed and purchased by Tower Hamlets Council before being bought by the London Docklands Development Corporation, who built 169 houses and flats by the basin in 1987. The Wapping Ornamental canal was constructed with materials reclaimed from the docks; the original dock walls can be recognised as they stand much higher than the opposite wall of the canal. The wall of the opposite bank to us is the original wall of the dock and the entrance from Wapping Basin was where the flight of steps is now. Above the steps is a bust of John Rennie, the docks Chief Engineer.

8. Hermitage Dock

This dock was in existence before London Docks development as it appears on the 1746 Roque map but it was extended and gated as an entrance to the docks for lighters.

9. St Katherine Docks

The West India Docks opened on the Isle of Dogs in 1802 and the London Docks at Wapping followed in 1805 and the East India Company opened their own docks at Blackwall in 1806. Others were developed at Rotherhithe. In return for their investment in creating the docks, the owners were each granted by Parliament a twenty-one year monopoly on certain goods to and from particular areas of the

world. Those monopolies were due to expire in the mid-1820s. Tonnage passing through the port had continued to rise and several groups of investors and engineers began to make speculative plans for new sets of docks along the Thames to take advantage of the forthcoming free trade.

The St Katharine Dock Bill was passed by Parliament in June 1825. Thirteen acres of land were acquired by the dock company. The Times reported that 1250 houses and tenements were destroyed – displacing 11,300 inhabitants – as well as the medieval and historic Hospital of St Katherine and its 14th century church. Thomas Telford was commissioned as Chief Engineer. His design with the warehouses close to the dock enabled goods to be offloaded direct to the warehouses. Although the docks were small they were cleverly designed and proximity to the centre of London was a financial advantage. It specialized mostly in tea from India and wool as well as a range of luxury and exotic items from around the world, including ivory, china, ostrich feathers, spices, tortoiseshell, mother of pearl, oriental carpets, raw materials to manufacture perfume and carpets.

However, the increase in competition and vessel size and the lack of railway access, reduced the viability of the relatively small St Katharine Docks. In 1864 the docks amalgamated with the London Dock Company, the first of several amalgamations. As ships progressed from sail to steam and the size of the steam vessels grew, less trade could be handled. The purpose of the docks changed to being a centrally located storage facility for vessels unloading at other docks on the Thames.

Much bomb damage was inflicted by WW2 and

buildings subsequently left derelict. In 1967 the decision was taken by the PLA to close St Katherine and London Docks.

The St Katharine Docks was the first London dockland regeneration project and became an award winning showpiece from the mid-1970s for Taylor Woodrow, the landowners at that time. The Ivory House, built in the 1850s and the only warehouse to survive the blitz, was converted into flats. New build residential properties followed.

10. The Dickens Inn

The Dickens Inn pub was created from the structure of a former warehouse that was moved to Marble Quay. The regeneration drew in tourists attracted by the tranquil setting of this unique part of London, close to Tower Bridge and the Tower of London.

11. Hermitage Riverside Memorial Garden

Hermitage Wharf was destroyed in a firebomb raid in December 1940, and when it came up for redevelopment in the late 1990s, the Town and Country Planning Act was used to make the developers of a nearby block of flats create a Memorial Park, memorial and riverside walkway in memory of the civilians killed in the London blitz between 7 September 1940 and 10 May 1941. London was initially bombed for 57 consecutive nights. 436 Londoners were killed and 1,666 injured on the first night alone, and with total casualties near to 30,000.

12. Wapping Pier Head

Wapping Pierhead was the main entrance to the London Docks. Daniel Alexander built the fine Georgian houses on either side of the entrance in 1813 for dock officials and rich merchants. They were converted into luxury homes in the 1970s after the closure of the London Docks in

1969. The dock entrance and two of the three dock basins were covered over during redevelopment in the 1970s.

13. Wapping

Much of what one might think of as Wapping is in the parish of St George in the East and we consider them together. The Romans built The Highway but it was the Saxons who first settled in Wapping (Waeppe's people). It formed a low strip along the river's bank, hemmed in by the river to the south and the now-drained Wapping Marsh to the north. It was overflowed or marshy until the time of Elizabeth when it was reclaimed, embanked, and converted into meadow and a building site. It still had only one street in the time of Charles II

A chapel to St. John the Baptist was built in 1617 and Wapping was constituted as the parish of St John in 1694. St John's Church in Scandrett Street was built in 1756 but heavily damaged during the Second World War; only the distinctive tower remains. The contrasting stone and dark brick of its tower was deliberately designed by architect Joel Johnson in order to make it distinguishable through river mists.

Town of Ramsgate/Wapping Old Stairs

Judge Jeffreys became Lord Chief Justice in 1683, Lord Chancellor in 1685. His notoriety came from his actions in 1685, after Monmouth's Rebellion. Estimates of those executed were as high as 700, but more probably 170. During the Glorious Revolution, when James II fled the country, Jeffreys stayed in London until the last moment, being the only high legal authority in James's abandoned kingdom to perform political duties. When William III's troops approached London in 1689, Jeffreys tried to follow the King abroad but was captured in the public house now

named The Town of Ramsgate. Reputedly disguised as a sailor he was recognized by a surviving judicial victim, who claimed he could never forget Jeffreys' countenance. Jeffreys begged his captors for protection from the mob, who intended "to show him that same mercy he had ever shown to others" He was dragged to the Lord Mayor and then to prison "for his own safety" and died that year of kidney disease while still in the Tower.

The location of Execution Stairs is disputed. The Roque map of 1746 shows it at what is now King Henry's Stairs. Others believe it to be Wapping Old Stairs right here by the pub.

The dock's position symbolised the jurisdiction of the Admiralty by being located just beyond the low-tide mark in the river. Anybody who had committed crimes on the seas would be brought back to London and tried by the High Court of the Admiralty. Capital punishment was applied to acts of mutiny resulting in death, for murders and specific violations of the Articles of War governing the behaviour of naval sailors, including sodomy. For those convicted of piracy, hanging was done with a shortened rope. This meant a slow death from strangulation on the scaffold as the drop was insufficient to break the prisoner's neck. Unlike hangings on land the bodies of pirates were not immediately cut down but left hanging on the nooses until at least three tides had washed over their heads.

Turks Head Inn

En route to the gallows, the condemned were allowed to stop for a final quart of beer at the Turk's Head Inn, which stood at 30 Wapping High Street until it was destroyed by enemy bombs during the Blitz.

The Turk's Head moved into this building in, or

very soon after, 1940. During World War II it was run by its eccentric landlady, Mog Murphy, and stayed open all hours for service personnel seeking news of their loved ones.

After a vigorous campaign in the 1980s led by Maureen Davies and the wild women of Wapping, the Turk's Head Company, a charity they set up to improve local life, bought the derelict building from the Council and restored it. The income from the rents of the cafe and studios above pays for charitable activities.

14. Waterside Gardens

Waterside Gardens offers a view across the Thames to the location that was Edward III's manor house and to the Leaning House. Built on a medieval floor plan this was the office of Braithwaite and Dean, a lighterage firm until the 1990s

15. St Peter's

St Peter's London Docks was built as a direct result of the Anglo-Catholic revival. It is the parish Church of Wapping and St. Katharine's, from the Tower to the Prospect of Whitby. It was the first Anglican mission to the poor of London. Missionary work was begun in 1856 by The Revd CF Lowder MA and a group of priests, all were members of the Society of the Holy Cross. St Peter's, moved from an iron church to this listed building in 1866. It was designed for them by F. H. Pownall, County Surveyor for Middlesex. The interior reflects the Anglo-Catholic revival style, which turned its back on the austere Georgian decoration for a more decoration that better fitted with the High Church traditions. It was extended before the war, suffered bomb damage, repaired, and was renovated in 1985.

16. Raine House

Henry Raine was a wealthy local brewer and devout churchman, born into a Wapping family of

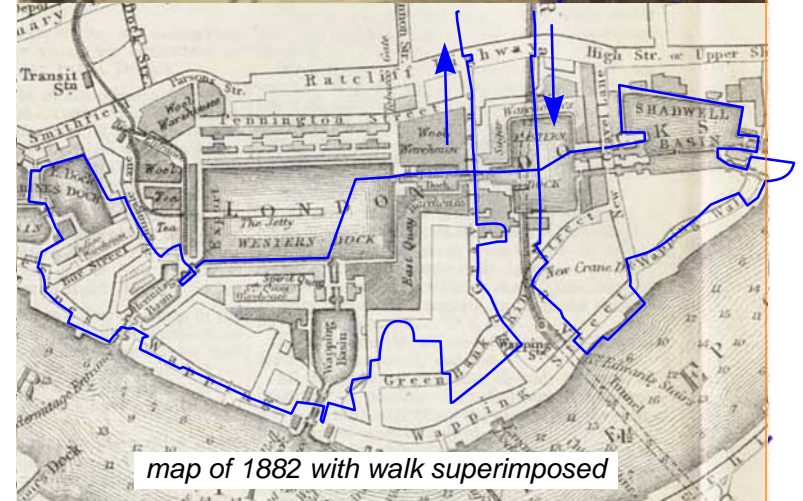
brewers, where he became proprietor of the Star Brewhouse at New Crane Wharf. In 1719 he reorganised a charity school to provide education for 50 boys and 50 girls from the neighbourhood of Wapping-Stepney, with a resident master and mistress, in Charles Street off Old Gravel Lane [now Raine Street, off Wapping Lane] - an area which at that time was within the parish of St George-in-the-East. His money was supplemented by donations and charity sermons. He wrote rules for pupils and staff - of which the parish holds a copy.

17. St George in the East

St George in the East on Cannon Street Road is one of the six Hawksmoor churches in London, built between 1714 and 1729, with funding from the Commission for Building Fifty New Churches. When the church was hit by a bomb during the Blitz the original interior was destroyed by the fire, but the walls and distinctive "pepper-pot" towers stayed up. In 1964 a modern church interior was constructed inside the existing walls and a new flat built under each corner tower.

18. Cable Street Mural

In 1936, residents of Shadwell were involved in the Battle of Cable Street, in which Oswald Mosley's attempted fascist march from Tower Hill to Aldgate via Shadwell (which was predominantly Jewish) was stopped by 250,000 protestors blocking their path by overturning a lorry. In 1982, a mural was created to commemorate this moment, and was restored in 2011.



St Peter's London Docks