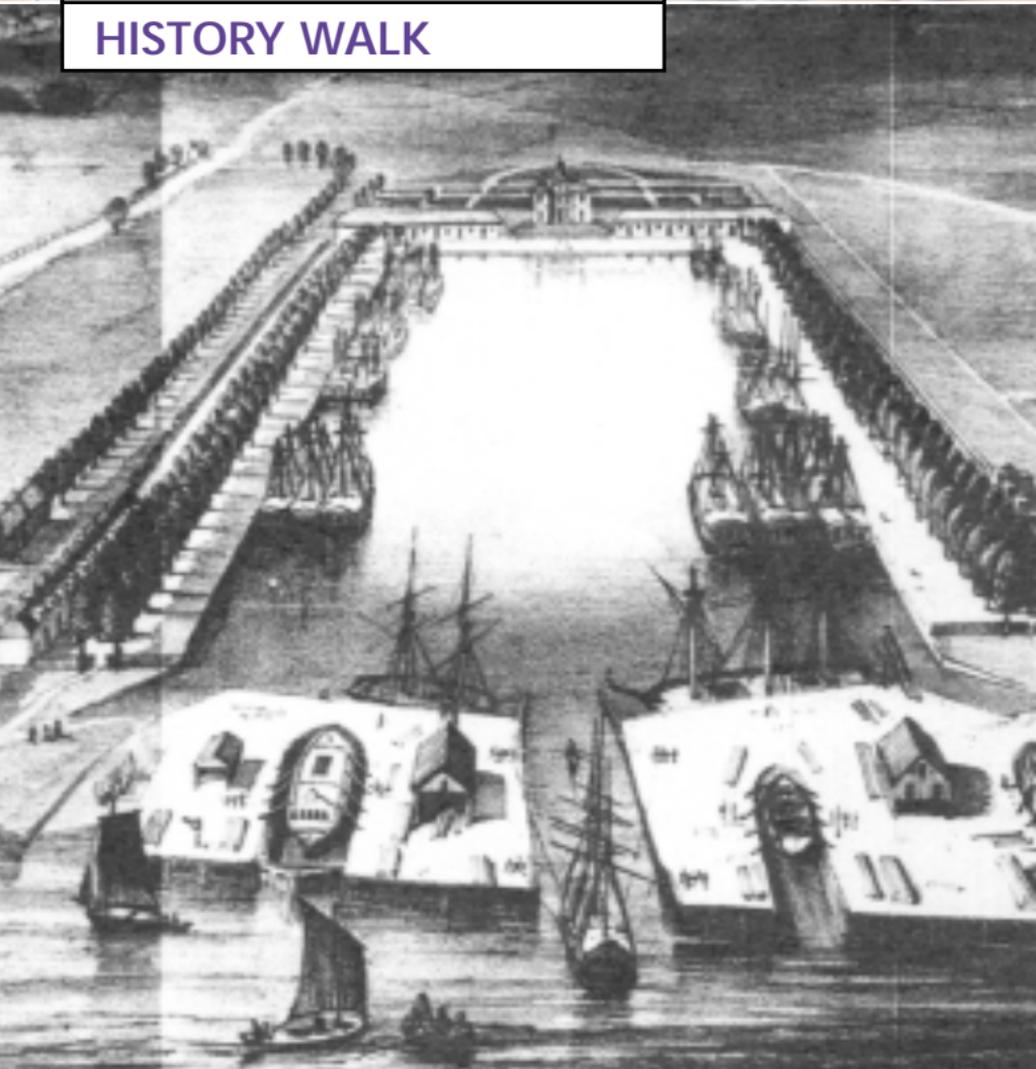


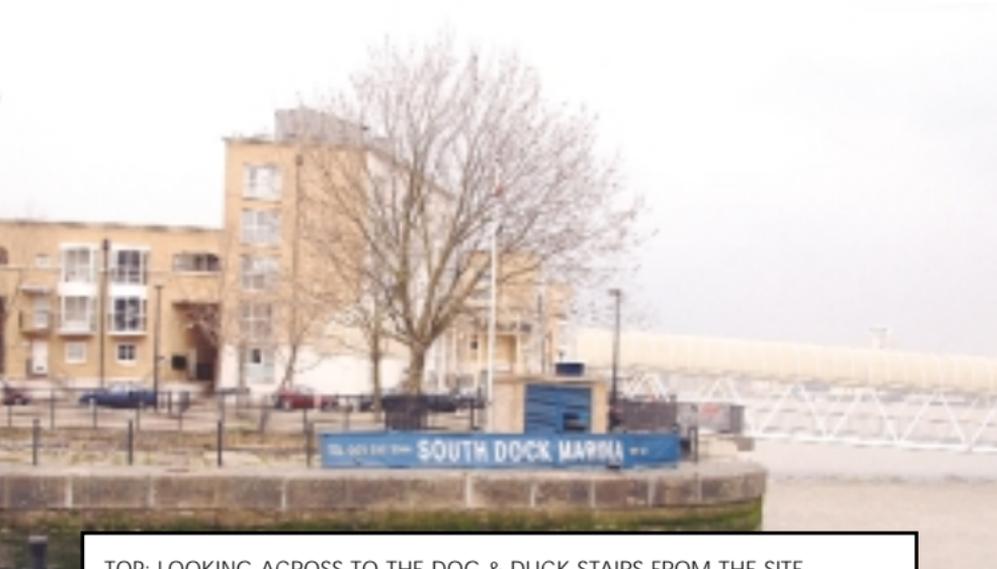


Maritime Rotherhithe

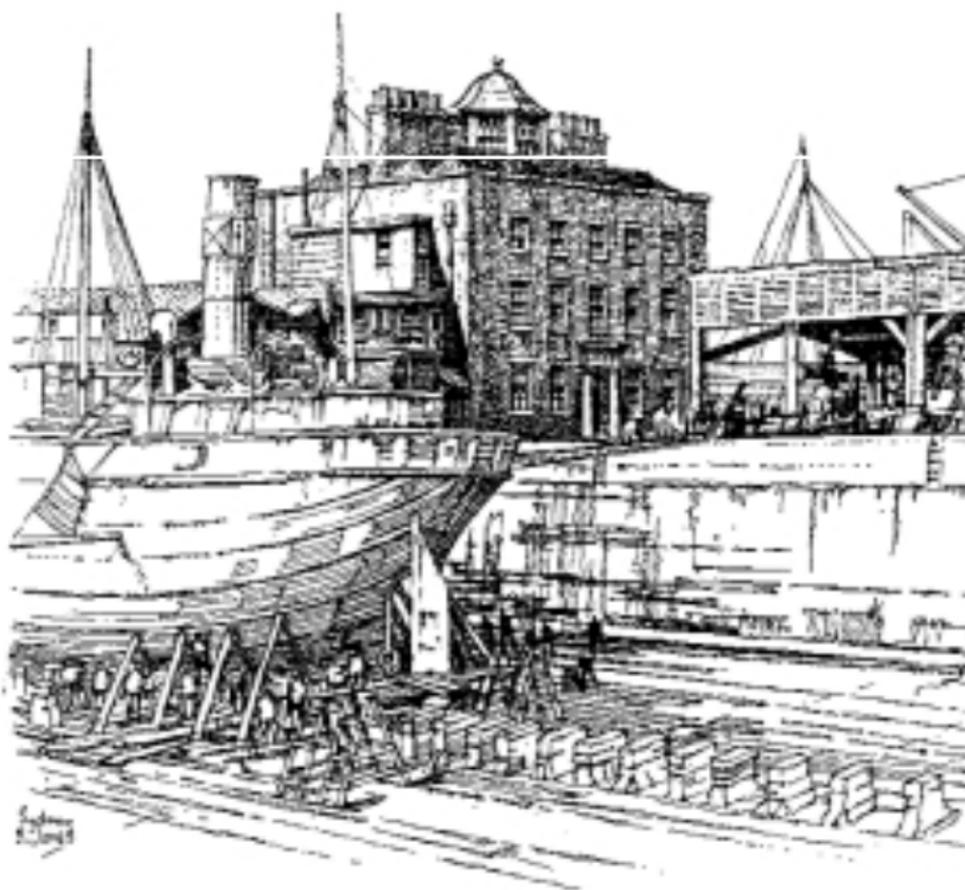
## HISTORY WALK



WALK B: SHIPYARDS, GRANARIES AND WHARVES  
by Stuart Rankin



TOP: LOOKING ACROSS TO THE DOG & DUCK STAIRS FROM THE SITE OF BLIGHT'S YARD. BELOW: SHIP UNDER REPAIR AT MILLS & KNIGHT LTD., NELSON DOCK IN THE 1940S.



COVER IMAGES: TOP: THE MASSIVE FORMER GRAIN WAREHOUSE AT GLOBE WHARF. BOTTOM: THE HOWLAND GREAT WET DOCK C1710, SHOWING THE SHIPYARDS EITHER SIDE OF THE ENTRANCE.

The walk in this booklet is presented as an itinerary exploring the maritime history of Rotherhithe. The theme of Walk "B" is "Shipyards, Granaries and Wharves" ; it begins at Surrey Quays underground station, and follows the south side of Greenland Dock to the River Thames. The route then follows the river upstream, visiting the sites of several shipyards, where vessels of international historic significance were constructed, passing some of the imposing granaries, and the wharves, which eventually were to replace shipbuilding as the main industrial activity on this stretch of the river. It ends at the Surrey Entrance Lock, with the option of a short walk to Rotherhithe Station, or of taking a bus for a quicker return.

Surrey Quays station to Surrey Entrance Lock can be walked in 2½ to 3 hours. Once having left Greenland Dock, this walk offers some flexibility for those who prefer a shorter outing (or discover that the weather is not going to be quite as good as was hoped!). At no point is the later part of the route more than a few minutes walk from a bus stop.

Few areas of London have undergone as much change from war damage, post war reconstruction and redevelopment in the 1980s and 1990s. However, with a little imagination, it is possible to once more fill Rotherhithe Street with throngs of mariners and busy workmen, and the docks with the masts of tall ships and the funnels of steamers.

You will find it helpful to read the following background notes, before setting out.

## Waterman's Stairs

In the days before the buildings in streets were numbered, the only fixed points were pubs and inns, and tradesmen would commonly advertise as being “ ..near The Noah's Ark, Rotherhithe Street” or whatever was appropriate. Similarly, the stairs leading down to the river where one could go and hail a waterman in his wherry – the equivalent of a taxi service from the middle ages to the 19th century – often took their names from a neighbouring hostelry. There were exceptions, where a better landmark was available, as in “ Church Stairs” or “ King's Mill Stairs” , but this is the origin of names like “ King & Queen” or “ Globe” preserved today in modern apartment blocks. Two terms will be used to describe the vessels using the river in these notes. Ships, which were ocean going, and craft (mainly barges and lighters), which were confined to coastal waters and the river respectively.

## Shipbuilding in Rotherhithe

It is difficult to imagine today that Rotherhithe was once a major shipbuilding centre. Vessels built here can be identified back to the middle of the 17th century, but the industry was very much older, and was probably established here in the Middle Ages.

Until the general introduction of wrought iron as a shipbuilding material from the 1840s onwards, vessels had only slowly increased in size from the 17th to the early 19th centuries, there being a limit to the length and breadth of hull, which could be made from wood. The Rotherhithe shipyards specialised in high quality vessels, which could be built on the narrow band of land between Rotherhithe Street and the river. Even so, as time went on, the shipbuilders had to gain a few extra yards of space by encroaching out into the river, and exceptionally, by diversions of Rotherhithe Street inland.

The rapid increase in ship size engendered by the adoption of iron coincided with an expansion of the Rotherhithe docks, thus preventing the shipyards from expanding inland. By the 1860s, Rotherhithe shipyards were no longer able to compete at the quality end of the market for larger ships, and local costs were so high in comparison to Scotland, the Mersey or the Tyne, that the building of small ships was uneconomic.

The last large ship built in Rotherhithe, the fast clipper *Lothair*, was launched in 1870. She was the last in a long line of



TOP: THE PATENT SLIP AT NELSON DOCK,  
WITH THE FORMER FRENCH NAVY VESSEL  
*DAME DE SERK*. 2004.

ABOVE: ON THE REMAINING STRETCHES OF  
WATER IN THE DOCKS, COMMERCIAL BUSTLE  
HAS BEEN REPLACED BY PEACEFUL WILDLIFE,  
LIKE THIS MUTE SWAN AT LAVENDER DOCK.

vessels, including pioneer early steamships, East Indiamen, West Indies traders, 74 gun ships of the line, bomb vessels, frigates – and even the odd Royal Yacht, to be built here from the time of the Commonwealth onwards. Ship repair would continue, on a declining scale, for almost another century, but as the value of prime riverside sites for other purposes rose, by 1914, most of the yards were built over. Many had large granaries erected on them, and some of these survive, converted to apartments. Others found new use as timber wharves, or the sites for oil and metal refineries.

### **The timber trade, shipbuilding and shipbreaking**

These three activities were intimately linked during the wooden shipbuilding era; a timber yard might be converted to a shipyard, by the simple expedient of constructing a building slip. Later, a dry dock for repairs might be added. There were several of these in Rotherhithe, almost all constructed of timber until quite late in the 19th century.

A timber yard could also be used as the base for a ship breaker, particularly during the many wars of the 18th and early 19th centuries. No special facilities were required – the hull to be demolished was merely moored securely on the foreshore, and allowed to rise and fall with the tide, until breaking up reached the point at which it would no longer float. Final stages of the work could then only be carried out at low water. In wartime, timber could be in short supply – particularly the scarce curved “compass timber” used especially for “knees”, the angled brackets used to fasten deck beams to ribs, and to help support the weight of heavy guns. When a wooden ship reached the end of its working life, there was a great deal of material which could be salvaged for further use, either in ship repair, in building a new vessel, or even on land. During one of these walks you will be passing warehouses, whose floors are supported by knees salvaged from some long forgotten ship.

As shipbuilding became less profitable, some shipyards turned over to shipbreaking. Some famous vessels met their end in Rotherhithe, and will be noted during the course of your walk. The peak time for this activity was from around 1830 onwards, when the last survivors of the massive fleet built up during the Napoleonic wars made final journeys to the breakers. With the decline in wooden shipbuilding, the later examples suffered the indignity of being turned into garden furniture, paving blocks, or firewood.

## Ancillary trades

The wooden sailing ship was an immensely complex machine, demanding the products of many skilled trades to function. Several of these were represented in Rotherhithe, including rope and cable manufacturers, some of whose long rope walks survived long enough as open spaces to become allotments early in the last century and to escape being built over in the massive redevelopment of the area after WWII. There were also mast makers, at least one of whom stayed in business supplying wooden scaffolding when few ships required wooden masts any longer. Most glamorous of all were the ships' carvers, who with a mixture of artistry and craft, produced the intricate wooden decoration and figure heads demanded by ship owners (and even the Admiralty) until such things went out of fashion in the middle years of Victoria's reign.

## Acknowledgements

*No one can produce any historical writing about Rotherhithe, without a great deal of help from the staff at Southwark Local Studies Library. I have been fortunate enough to benefit from this since 1991. During these years they have cheerfully dealt with my requests to view material, and given unfailing advice and support. In connection with this present publication, I must particularly mention my good friend Stephen Humphrey, who kindly undertook the historical picture research and selection, in the face of a very challenging deadline. Present day photographs are by the author.*

*While it cannot be doubted that to undertake these walks can be a great pleasure, having to do them several times, in the space of a couple of weeks, to check directions and take photographs, could be something of a trial. I must thank Malcolm Meachen for kindly driving me to various spots, then picking me up elsewhere, thus saving me considerable duplicated mileage on foot.*

*A guide book should not only be an agreeable and informative companion on a walk, but should also be an enjoyable read at home beside the fire, with the walk in prospect, or in retrospect. I hope that this little book meets both requirements.*

*I am also grateful to Carol Enright for her design work, which has turned text, photographs and archive material into such an attractive publication.*

STUART RANKIN, ROTHERHITHE, SPRING 2004

## WALK B

### SHIPYARDS, GRANARIES AND WHARVES

▶ **START AT SURREY QUAYS UNDERGROUND STATION**

SURREY QUAYS STATION opened with the first section of the East London Railway between New Cross (the present New Cross Gate) and Wapping on 7 December 1869. Until 17 July 1911, it was known as "Deptford Road", but was renamed "Surrey Docks". Almost 20 years after the last ship had left the docks, the name SURREY QUAYS was adopted at the behest of property developers on 24 October 1989. I believe that a financial contribution was made towards the cost of resigning and improving the station, but I do regret the loss of the evocative old name.

▶ **LEAVE STATION AT THE LOWER ROAD EXIT AND TURN RIGHT**

Walk to the pedestrian crossing, and go over the road to THE DOCKER'S SHELTER in REDRIFF ROAD and pause. LOWER ROAD gets its name from the fact that it was "the lower road to Deptford" to distinguish it from the "upper" route following the river via Rotherhithe Street. THE DOCKER'S SHELTER may well be familiar, as it has been illustrated in several publications dealing with the history of the docks. However it should be noted that during the course of "restoration" it was demolished, turned round through 180 degrees, and re-erected on the other side of REDRIFF ROAD... REDRIFF or REDRIFFE was a name applied to Rotherhithe until the late 18th century, and before that, had been applied to the whole of the riverside from Bermondsey Wall to GREENLAND DOCK. The origin is obscure, but some maps and charts of the Thames show a reef of red gravel in the river bed along part of the Rotherhithe waterfront, so "Red Reef" is a possible source.

▶ **WALK ALONG REDRIFF ROAD AND TURN RIGHT UP THE STEPS ON TO THE RED LIFTING BRIDGE (THE HISTORY OF THIS BRIDGE IS GIVEN IN WALK A) AND PAUSE AND ADMIRE THE VIEW ALONG GREENLAND DOCK**



TOP: GREENLAND DOCK VIEWED FROM THE RED BRIDGE 2004.  
ABOVE: THE CANADIAN COLD STORE ABLAZE, 1940 (LDDC).

In September 1940, the view would have been very different, following the first weekend of the blitz. Most of the quayside warehouses had been destroyed or badly damaged, and there were a number of sunken vessels in the dock. Commercial traffic would virtually cease until after the war, but the enclosed water spaces of the docks, even given the dangers of continuing air attacks, were too valuable an asset to waste. As was explained in the Introduction, the building of large ships ceased at Rotherhithe in 1870, but ship repair, and the building of other craft continued. By 1940, only one shipyard remained in Rotherhithe, at NELSON DOCK, but under the pressure of necessity, other facilities were brought into use.

▶ GO DOWN THE STEPS AT THE RIGHT HAND END OF THE LIFTING BRIDGE, TURN RIGHT AND WALK ALONG THE END OF GREENLAND DOCK, THEN TURN LEFT AND WALK ALONG GREENLAND QUAY

The Merchant Navy was literally Britain's lifeline during the war and with ships being continually sunk or damaged by enemy action, shipyards were full to capacity. The sheltered waters of the docks provided facilities for carrying out repairs that did not entail the vessel going in to drydock. R. & H. GREEN AND SILLEY WEIR LTD., whose main base was the famous Blackwall Yard had repair facilities on what is now GREENLAND QUAY the pre war berth of the big Cunard-White Star Line Transatlantic steamers, which



THE NARROW STEEL YARD CUT BETWEEN SOUTH DOCK AND GREENLAND DOCK, 2004.

had been devastated during the blitz. However, as has been stated, this was not without danger. For example one badly damaged ship *Empress Tristram*, was hit by a VI flying bomb on 23 June 1944, while under repair at BRUNSWICK YARD, just the other side of GREENLAND DOCK, with the loss of five lives. She was hit by another VI on 12 July and a further six workmen were killed.

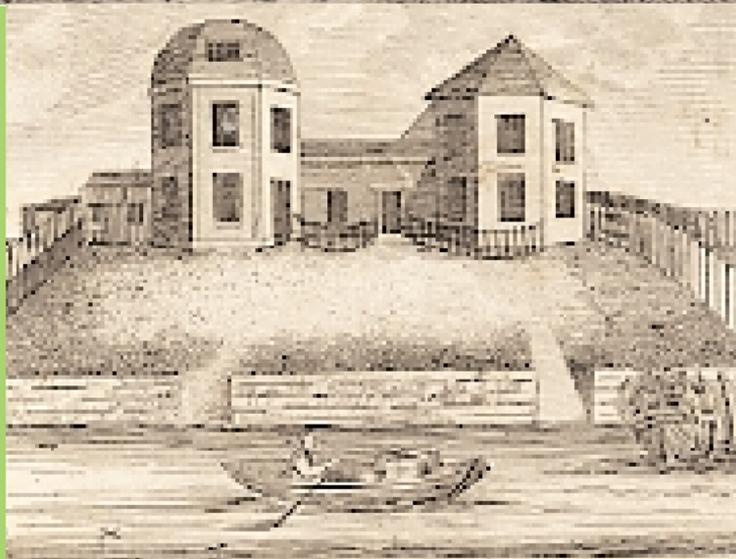
▶ WALK ON TO STEEL YARD CUT, BETWEEN GREENLAND AND SOUTH DOCKS, TURN RIGHT AND THEN LEFT ON TO THE NEW ROAD BRIDGE AND PAUSE

In late 1943, the civil engineering contractors John Mowlem were given a contract to build 12 units for the floating Mulberry Harbours to be used after the D-Day landings. Four of these were to be built in RUSSIA DOCK (see walk "A") and eight in SOUTH DOCK. This had been out of use for some time since the entrance lock was badly damaged by bombing. The entrance lock was sealed off with a concrete dam built by Mowlems and STEELYARD CUT was blocked with a more temporary structure. SOUTH DOCK was therefore converted into a huge temporary dry dock. The floor was spread with rubble (one of the few things not in short supply in wartime London!) to a depth of 6ft. Large "Phoenix B" Units for the Mulberry Harbour were made here, and when the connection to GREENLAND DOCK was reopened, floated out. This was a tricky job, as there were only 9ins of clearance overall. The components, which resembled the hull of a huge Noah's Ark, had to be towed out of the river and along the south coast, so they were provided with a temporary cabin for a small crew, and an anti-aircraft gun for protection. This proved to be a wise precaution, and a German aircraft, swooping low to investigate one of these strange looking vessels, paid dearly for its curiosity...

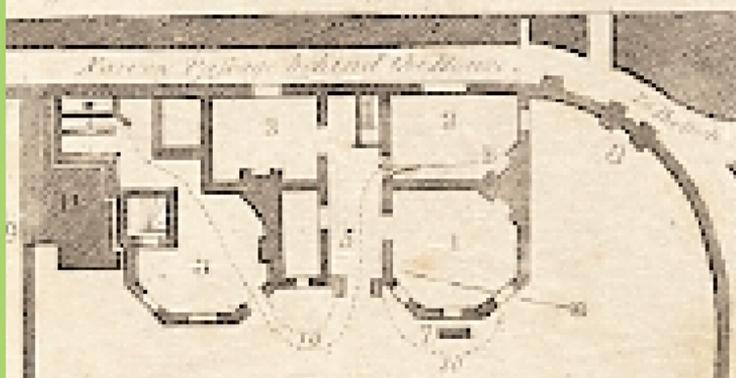
If you look across GREENLAND DOCK at this point, you can see the cut formerly leading to NORWAY DOCK (now "The Lakes" housing development). Here, HARLAND & WOLFF, the famous Belfast based builders of *Titanic*, operated a floating dry dock. This could accommodate vessels of up to 700 tons, and there was also a boat building yard.

Walk on to the SOUTH DOCK ENTRANCE LOCK, cross by the catwalk over the inner lock gate, walk to the riverside, and pause. This was the site of a timber yard and ship breaking wharf belonging to the City of London and leased by Isaac Blight. I doubt if even Charles Dickens could have invented a more doom laden name, than that born by Blight. He entered into an arrangement with a man called William Patch whereby Patch would "take care" of certain assets, concealing them from Blight's creditors. On Monday 23 September 1805, Blight was seated in the back parlour of his house adjacent to the yard, when he was shot by a person standing outside the window. Poor Blight was mortally wounded in the stomach, but was to linger in great pain for many hours before dying. For much of this time he was conscious, and maintained that although he had been facing toward the window, he had not seen the person who shot him.

A local surgeon named Jones was called to minister to Blight, and deposed that Patch claimed to be in the outside privy, at the time the shot was fired. A servant claimed that she had indeed seen him exiting this convenience shortly afterwards. Jones sent for Mr. (later Sir) Astley Cooper from Guy's Hospital, to try and save Blight, thus initiating one of the first cases where that establishment deployed the medico-legal expertise for which it is still renowned today. By this time, Blight was lying on the floor of the back parlour, and Cooper had him taken upstairs to bed. He found what were plainly the entry and exit wounds of a bullet, which had passed into the abdomen, and out through the loin. Cooper could do nothing for him, save ease some of his pain with doses of laudanum, but stayed with him until the following morning. The surgeon's suspicions were aroused, when Patch objected to the Bow Street Runners being summoned, to follow up his suggestion that the murderer was a man named Webster, who had been caught stealing planks from the yard. Examining the scene of the crime, and placing himself in the position where Blight had been shot, Cooper deduced that the only way someone could have shot Blight from the window, without being seen, was if he were left-handed. Patch was left-handed. The "Runners" were indeed sent for,



*Ground Plan of Mr. Blight's House & Premises.*



TOP: IN THIS CONTEMPORARY ENGRAVING, PATCH IS SHOWN SHOOTING BLIGHT. IT IS NOT ONLY MODERN NEWSPAPERS WHICH GET THINGS WRONG; PATCH WAS LEFT-HANDED, AND SHOT BLIGHT FROM THE WINDOW, NOT THE DOOR! BOTTOM: ELEVATION AND PLAN OF BLIGHT'S HOUSE, PUBLISHED AS PART OF AN ACCOUNT OF PATCH'S TRIAL.

and after an exhaustive search of the premises, discovered a recently discharged pistol in the soil pipe of the privy, where Patch claimed to have been at the time of the shot. Patch was duly tried at Horsemonger Lane on Saturday April 5 1806, found guilty, and hanged at Kennington, the following Monday.

Poor Mrs. Blight did not have much luck with her second marriage. This was to a Deptford coal merchant named Long. Together with her son, she established a ship owning, building and repairing business under the name Blight, Long & Blight. For a time this prospered, although they only built a couple of small vessels and eventually ran into financial difficulties. Mr. Long became insane, and Mrs. Blight was left in reduced circumstances.

▶ CROSS OVER THE CATWALK ON THE OUTER LOCK GATE, TURN RIGHT, AND PAUSE BY THE STAIRS LEADING DOWN TO THE RIVER

These are a set of the WATERMEN'S STAIRS, in this case after the nearby DOG & DUCK pub, which dated back at least to 1723. Although said to be rather "basic" inside, with sawdust-strewn floors, there was a small garden with tables and chairs where it was pleasant to sit with a drink on a summer evening. The pub name itself recalls a cruel "sport" in which water fowl had their wings clipped so that they could not fly, and were then released to be chased through the water by dogs. THE DOG & DUCK fell victim to the second V2 to land in Bermondsey in 1944 (October 31) and was totally destroyed.

► WALK UPSTREAM ALONG THE RIVERSIDE TOWARDS GREENLAND DOCK ENTRANCE

This is the site of the GREENLAND DOCK (SOUTH) SHIPYARD, which dated from the construction of GREENLAND DOCK itself, and probably opened circa 1700 when a dry dock was included in the bigger scheme. On the other side of the lock was the GREENLAND DOCK (NORTH) SHIPYARD. The dry dock here is thought to date from circa 1660. The land on which the GREENLAND DOCK complex was built, had been bought by Sir Giles Howland, who had been knighted by Queen Elizabeth, and was an early member of the East India Company. His son, John Howland (1st) who became High Sheriff of Surrey inherited these interests, and it was probably he who embanked the river frontage. It was certainly during his time that the NORTH dry dock was built, and leased to Abraham Wells of Deptford. A successor of his, Richard Wells built the first ship that can be positively identified as having been built here, the *Tonqueen*, an East Indiaman of 1681. The first warship was the 42 gun *Winchester* of 1698. It was part of the betrothal agreement of John Howland (1st's) grand-daughter to the heir of the 1st Duke of Bedford that the estate should be further developed by constructing the HOWLAND GREAT WET DOCK (later known as GREENLAND DOCK). Included in the project was a new dry dock and shipyard down stream of the entrance lock. From the outset, this SOUTH yard was leased to the Burchett family, who built the 60-gun warship *Monck* in 1702.

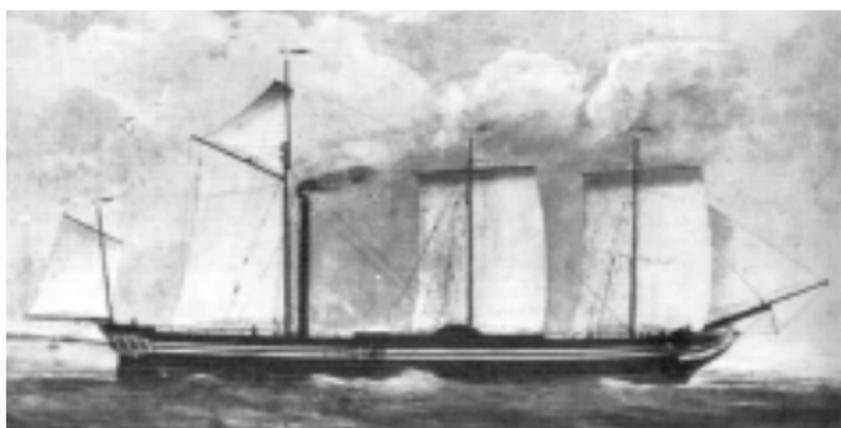
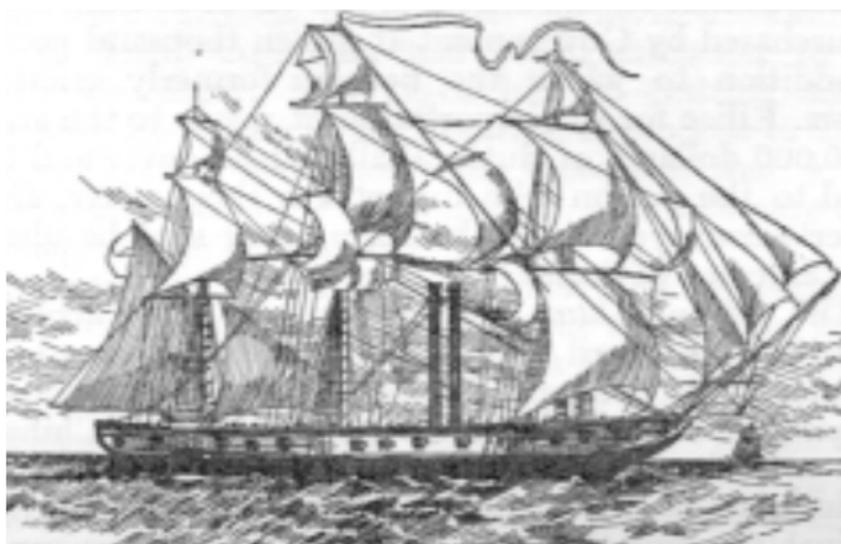
Opinions differ as to who provided the engineering expertise to build the HOWLAND GREAT WET DOCK. A member of the Wells family has been suggested, as has Thomas Steers, who later built the first wet dock in Liverpool. Steers was certainly living and working in Rotherhithe at the time, but I think that the old Earl of Bedford (later 1st Duke) is a possible contender. He stayed out of trouble during the Civil Wars on his Cambridgeshire estates, and occupied himself with extensive drainage and navigation works.

▶ WALK ALONG THE SIDE OF THE GREENLAND ENTRANCE DOCK, CROSS THE FOOTBRIDGE, AND WALK BACK TOWARDS THE RIVER, PAUSING AT THE RIVERSIDE

From 1725 to 1730, the SOUTH SHIPYARD seems to have been included in the lease of GREENLAND DOCK to the South Sea Company (of "Bubble" notoriety) during that concern's ill-fated venture into the whaling trade. In 1760, the Bedford estate, which had acquired the Rotherhithe properties by marriage, leased the two shipyards to John Randall. Three years later the Wells family of shipbuilders bought the GREENLAND DOCK complex from the Bedford Estate, but had to let this lease run its course.

John Randall (I) was already in business at what is now NELSON DOCK, and would shortly take into partnership John Brent. For nearly 70 years, this firm trading as Randall & Brent, S. & D. Brent and Daniel Brent would be at the forefront of shipbuilding on the Thames. For much of this period, it is not possible to say which ships were built at which of the three yards. During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars however their output of warships and East Indiamen was greater than that of the more famous Blackwall Yard. In 1802 the shipwrights on the Thames came out on strike, at a time when yards were hurrying to complete the refitting or building of East Indiamen, in time for them to catch the trade winds in the South Atlantic. Any delay, and they could not leave for another year. The government took the matter so seriously that shipwrights were lent from the Royal Dockyards to complete the work. The GREENLAND DOCK SHIPYARDS were among those affected, and on Saturday 22 August 1802 John Randall (II) came down here to try and negotiate with the strikers. One of his workmen lost his temper, and struck Randall with a piece of wood. Much distressed, Randall returned to his house in Great Cumberland Street and threw himself from an upper window, sustaining fatal injuries.

That ended the involvement of the Randalls, and by 1815, Daniel Brent, running the business on his own, left NELSON DOCK and concentrated his efforts here. He was to produce a remarkable series of early



FROM TOP: *RISING STAR*, *KARTERIA*, AND *DANE* FAMOUS SHIPS BUILT AT GREENLAND DOCK. *RISING STAR* THE WORLD'S FIRST STEAM WARSHIP, BUILT FOR THE CHILEAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AGAINST SPAIN, 1822. *RISING STAR* WAS THE FIRST STEAMSHIP TO CROSS THE ATLANTIC FROM EAST TO WEST AND THE FIRST STEAMSHIP IN THE PACIFIC, BUT BY THE TIME SHE ARRIVED, THE WAR HAD BEEN WON. *KARTERIA* THE WORLD'S FIRST STEAM WARSHIP TO SEE ACTION, IN THE GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AGAINST TURKEY, 1828. *DANE* WAS BUILT AS A COLLIER, BUT REQUISITIONED AS A TRANSPORT DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR. SUBSEQUENTLY, AS PART OF THE UNION STEAMSHIP CO. FLEET, SHE INAUGURATED THE FIRST STEAM MAIL SERVICE TO THE CAPE AND SOUTH AFRICA.

steamships, including *The London Engineer* (Margate service river steamer of 1818). *Rising Star*, the world's first practicable steam warship, built for the Chilean fight for independence from Spain, 1822, and *Karteria*, another warship built for the Greeks in their fight for independence from Turkey in 1826.

GREENLAND DOCK (SOUTH) SHIPYARD saw little shipbuilding activity after this. I have only traced one vessel built here in later years, the paddle tug *Dragon* of 1837 by JOSEPH HORATIO RITCHIE. The yard was then devoted to repairs, until it vanished during the rebuilding of GREENLAND ENTRANCE LOCK early in the 20th century. The NORTH SHIPYARD still had a brief burst of glory to come, being leased by CHARLES LUNGLEY from 1854 to 1869. In 1854, he completed the *Dane* which after service as a transport in the Crimean War, became the first mail steamer to run between Britain and South Africa. This yard was later used solely for repairs, and was swallowed up like the other.

The artefact is called CURLICUE, another meaningless artwork commissioned by the LDDC, this from William Pye, in 1988. What a lost opportunity to commemorate a shipyard once of national importance and some truly remarkable ships.

► WALK ALONGSIDE THE RIVER, PASSING KING FREDERIK IX TOWER ON YOUR LEFT (PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS AREA BY THE DANISH FIRM ISLEF IN 1986-89 - HENCE THE SCANDINAVIAN NAMES) AND TURN LEFT DOWN RANDALLS RENTS

For most of the lifetime of the Rotherhithe shipyards, the majority of workers were casual employees – even if they might be working “casually” for a number of years. However, it was the practice of the more important yards to provide tied housing for key employees. One side of this narrow passage was once lined with a row of these. The building on the other side LOWER ODESSA WHARF was in use as “Mr. Landell’s Granary” for many years. Recent cleaning and restoration as flats, has revealed the date 1810 on a lintel, making it one of the oldest surviving buildings in Rotherhithe. There were several instances of shipyard mould lofts, where full sized templates were set out for

cutting timbers, being turned into granaries when shipbuilding ceased. The presence of this building in RANDALLS RENTS, and its date make it just possible that this was once Daniel Brent's mould loft.

▶ AT THE END OF RANDALL'S RENTS, PAUSE BY THE SHIP & WHALE

The name recalls the whaling connection of GREENLAND DOCK, but according to research by the late Con Delay the pub first appears in the rate records for 1767. The present building is circa 1880. You are now in the area of Rotherhithe known as DOWNTOWN, formerly a self contained community with its own church, chapels, schools, shops and pubs. It was separated from the rest of the civil parish by the great sweep of the docks and the swing bridges giving access to them. It was said in the 1890s that some elderly residents had never travelled as far as LOWER ROAD.



The SHIP & WHALE stands in one corner of THE REDRIFF ESTATE, which still preserves the outline of three parallel streets (York Street, Russell Street – the Bedford family name and Thames Street). The first and last are now ELGAR STREET and ODESSA STREET, Russell Street being represented by the access road through the estate. At one time the Bedford Estate Trustees laid out these three streets, with building plots designed to attract high quality housing. At least one such dwelling was built, because shipbuilder Daniel Brent lived in it for the last years of his active life. The development of "Bloomsbury in Rotherhithe", was frustrated by the boiling of whale blubber and the associated awful smell at GREENLAND DOCK. The plots were split up into smaller sites, and a huddle of small houses, shops and workshops grew up. When these were demolished to make way for the REDRIFF ESTATE in 1930 many proved to have been built using old ship's timbers. The last ship's figurehead carver in Rotherhithe, who just survived working into the 20th century, had his workshop here. There were also blocks of shipyard workers tied cottages, like those in RANDALL'S RENTS bearing the names of SEDGER and CASTLE, the master shipbuilders to whom they belonged.



THE REDRIFF ESTATE IN THE 1950S. NOTE THE SHIP'S DERRICK APPEARING OVER THE DOCK BOUNDARY WALL.

► WALK ALONG GULLIVER STREET AND TURN RIGHT INTO ELGAR STREET

GULLIVER STREET is a reminder that Dean Swift placed his hero's home in "Redriffe", although as one unkind commentator has said, whether that was because it was a fitting home for a ship's surgeon, or because the inhabitants were notorious for telling whopping great lies is not known.

THE REDRIFF ESTATE was begun in 1931, but not completed until 1940. The cost of re-housing the new residents was £183 per head. Surprisingly for this date, the flats were gas lit and had solid fuel cooking ranges. This was probably due to the Bermondsey Borough Council electricity works at Spa Road being already working at full capacity. The estate was badly damaged right at the outset of the blitz, with 126 flats being destroyed or gutted by fire. Despite post war repairs, many flats became empty, squatted and vandalised as people moved away after the docks closed. Under LDDC auspices, the estate was completely refurbished with a mixture of privately owned and social flats.



THE SAME VIEW IN 2004.

▶ ON REACHING THE SHIP YORK, TURN RIGHT AND PAUSE BY THE DOCKLANDS SETTLEMENT

THE SHIP YORK pub is first recorded as THE YORK in 1809, and may have been named after *HMS York* launched by S. & D. BRENT in 1807, although the "SHIP" was not added to the pub title until 1835. By this time the *York* was in use as a convict ship. It seems odd to name a pub after a floating prison, but perhaps the landlord had served aboard in happier times. The present building is of course modern.

THE DOCKLANDS SETTLEMENT, a charity started by Reginald Kennedy Cox, a wealthy playwright, opened its first establishment at Canning Town. The removal of the Norwegian Church to its new building near the mouth of the ROTHERHITHE – LIMEHOUSE ROAD TUNNEL in 1929 left this Scandinavian sailor's church and mission building vacant and for sale. It was purchased and reopened as the fourth Docklands Settlement in London. Despite the Norwegian connection, the foundation stone was laid by a Swedish prince because Norway did not achieve full independence from Sweden until 1905. Because of a restricted site the original design was for a very tall, thin building looking like a castle inhabited by Trolls. Fortunately more land became available and this less alarming structure was built instead.

On the other side of the road is THE FITCHETTS. The proper name of this pub is the SURREY COMMERCIAL DOCK TAVERN, but it became known to mariners from all over the world as THE FITCHETTS after a previous licensee (1909-1936). The pub is first recorded in 1865, the year in which the GRAND SURREY CANAL & DOCK CO and the COMMERCIAL DOCK CO amalgamated to form the SURREY COMMERCIAL DOCK CO. It seems to have been a new establishment, rather than the renaming of an existing pub, but the present building dates from the 1930s. From the outset its address was "1 REDRIFF ROAD" a reminder that before they were diverted, this is where ROTHERHITHE STREET met REDRIFF ROAD, and the street name plate for the latter, can still be seen at first floor level on the right hand side of THE FITCHETTS sign.

► WALK TOWARDS THE RIVER, AND THE PROMINENT RED PAINTED SCOTCH DERRICK, CROSSING THE END OF ODESSA STREET

Look to the right up ODESSA STREET and you will see a typical 1960s building looking like offices, but is in fact a block of flats called CUSTOM HOUSE REACH. In the 18th century the riverside between here and LOWER ODESSA WHARF was occupied by H. M. Customs and Excise, and was known as The CONDEMNED HOLE. By the 20th century activities were concentrated on the smaller site occupied by CUSTOM HOUSE REACH. It was here that "flotsam" (washed overboard) and "jetsam" (thrown overboard) items were collected, until their future could be determined. This was also the collecting point for contraband seized by H. M. Customs, usually prior to destruction in an incinerator on this site. Large quantities of smuggled tobacco were destroyed here and for that reason the tall chimney of the furnace was sometimes known as "The Queen's (or King's) Pipe". The CONDEMNED HOLE closed in 1962.

In the 18th century ODESSA STREET (then called THAMES STREET) continued straight on to your left, but was diverted on at least two occasions further inland. This was because the site eventually became the biggest Rotherhithe shipyard in area, under the successive names of STANTON, WELLS and BARNARD. A better idea of how big it was can be gained by walking up the approach to the old COMMERCIAL DOCK pier.

The SCOTCH DERRICK marks the site of COMMERCIAL WHARF, operated by KEMP, COLLINS & CO, who were in the timber trade. Turn left to walk alongside the river as far as the boundary of the SURREY DOCKS FARM (see later). Looking up the river you will see a very steep flight of concrete steps on the site of the ACORN WATERMEN'S STAIRS. These were named after a pub on ROTHERHITHE STREET dating back at least to 1767, which closed in 1941, as the result of war damage. These marked the boundary of the shipyard on that side.

The site was part of the Bedford Estates and it is known that shipbuilding was taking place here as

early as 1746. The earliest known shipbuilder on this site was THOMAS STANTON, who built the East Indiaman *Royal George* here in partnership with one of the WELLS family in 1747. The first recorded large warship built here, also in partnership with WELLS was the 60 gun *America* launched in 1757. On his own account, STANTON built the bomb vessel *Carcass* in 1759. The young Horatio Nelson served in *Carcass* on a voyage of arctic exploration 1773. He was reprimanded for attacking a Polar Bear with the blunt end of an empty musket, because he had taken a fancy to its pelt for a fur coat...

The WELLS family took over from STANTON in the 1760s and bought the property from the Bedford Estates. They built the 74 gun *Cornwall* here (launched 1760) and the East Indiaman *True Briton* in the same year. At least 77 East Indiamen were built here until 1796, when the WELLS family took a share in the Blackwall shipyard of Perry & Green, and ceased working in Rotherhithe.

The yard was then leased by WILLIAM BARNARD, a Deptford shipbuilder, who had just emerged from a series of legal disputes lasting 20 years, with his partner Henry Adams. He retained his yard at Deptford, as did his heirs, so it is difficult to name the vessels built here as records do not distinguish between the two. WILLIAM BARNARD died in 1805, and was succeeded by his son EDWARD GEORGE BARNARD, who seems to have had little interest in the business and later became M. P. for Deptford. His mother FRANCES BARNARD took a firm grip on affairs in the 1820s, becoming one of the few women to head a Thames shipbuilding firm. The huge site was split into two, each occupied by a different partnership headed by FRANCES BARNARD. The lower and larger section, shipbuilding and repairs, was FRANCES BARNARD, SON & ROBERTS, the upper section, mast and spar making was F. E. & T. BARNARD.

The site was so big, that others leased space for projects that were too big for their own facilities. There is evidence that MARC BRUNEL'S steamer *Regent*, the first built on the Thames, was constructed here by J. B. & THOMAS COURTHOPE in 1816. Their "home" base, a tiny yard at Princes Stairs was only



ABOVE: THE EAST INDIAMAN *TRUE BRITON*, BUILT AT THE ACORN SHIPYARD ROTHERHITHE BY JOHN AND WILLIAM WELLS IN 1760. *TRUE BRITON* MADE FOUR RETURN VOYAGES TO BOMBAY, MADRAS AND CHINA DURING THE FOLLOWING TEN YEARS.

big enough for their usual business of boat building. The fast Admiralty packet *Banshee*, for the Holyhead – Kingstown service was certainly launched here on 1 March 1847, because an engraving of the event was published. She was built by JOHN JENKINS THOMPSON of the HORSEFERRY YARD (see later) and designed by Oliver Lang. *Banshee* was consistently the fastest steamer on the route, and was timed at 16.3 knots on trial.

Shipbuilding ended here soon after. That part of the site which is now occupied by the SURREY DOCKS FARM, was bought by the COMMERCIAL DOCK CO who intended to make a new entrance and lock into their system. The remainder retaining the name BARNARDS WHARF, and going over to the timber trade. Deptford timber merchant Peter Rolt, father in law of Isle of Dogs shipbuilder C. J. Mare was in partnership here. From 1870 it was Thomas Gabriel, and finally Gabriel Wade & English. This last firm operated four steam cranes running on a network of rail tracks and specialised in the treatment of timber with creosote.



► RETRACE YOUR STEPS, PAST THE PROCESSION OF BRONZE ANIMALS (VARIOUS ARTISTS, 1992) MAKING FOR THE SURREY DOCKS FARM, AND TAKE THE FIRST TURN RIGHT

Continue straight on through the housing estate to the T junction with ROTHERHITHE STREET and turn right, at the next corner turn right again, and pause opposite the TRINITY HALLS.

As part of their scheme to make a new entrance lock, the COMMERCIAL DOCK CO also bought land on the other side of ROTHERHITHE STREET (at that time, this section was known as TRINITY STREET). The parish church of St. Mary's was some distance away from what was by now quite a large community in DOWNTOWN. The Rev. Edward Blick, rector of Rotherhithe 1835 – 1867 began raising funds to build a new church and school and the COMMERCIAL DOCK CO responded by donating the site. The schoolrooms (now TRINITY HALLS) opened in 1836 and TRINITY CHURCH, the following year. Blick was a remarkable man, who during his 32 years in Rotherhithe encouraged numerous charities and oversaw the establishment of three new parish churches, a chapel of ease, and five new schools. TRINITY CHURCH, a pleasant building in 19th century gothic style, by Sampson Kempthorne, was destroyed by incendiary bombs on 7 September 1940. The present modern replacement by T. F. Ford was consecrated in 1960.

► WALK ON TO THE GATE OF THE SURREY DOCKS FARM AND PAUSE

In 1881 this part of BARNARDS WHARF was purchased by the Metropolitan Asylums Board, which built a river ambulance station. This was called SOUTH WHARF in partnership with a similar establishment on the other shore, which took the name North Wharf. Infectious patients were collected by road in south London and brought here for transfer to small steamers, which took them to isolation. At first this was in hospital ships, later to a shore establishment at Darenth. London County Council took over this operation but phased it out in the 1930s. For a time, London Fire Brigade floats were moored here, but when war broke out in 1939 the site was in use as a

small hospital. On the night of 7/8 September 1940 the staff and patients here became surrounded by a wall of flame, and they had to be evacuated by river.

▶ AT THIS POINT YOU HAVE THREE CHOICES. YOU MAY LEAVE THE WALK HERE, AND RETURN TO REDRIFF ROAD, WHERE A BUS WILL TAKE YOU BACK TO SURREY QUAYS SHOPPING CENTRE. YOU CAN VISIT THE SURREY DOCKS FARM (NOT INCLUDED IN THE TIMINGS FOR THIS WALK) OR YOU CAN CONTINUE WITH THE REMAINDER OF THE WALK.

Admission to SURREY DOCKS FARM is free. It is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 10am until 5pm and at weekends from 10am until 1pm and from 2pm until 5pm. SURREY DOCKS FARM originated in 1975 with some goats and a couple of donkeys on a patch of land at GREENLAND DOCK ENTRANCE. It moved to this two-acre site in 1986 and is run by a Provident Society drawing down funds from a variety of sources, and selling produce. Goats, pigs, donkeys, ducks, geese and hens can all be visited. A traditional series of herb, physick, vegetable and fruit gardens, funded by the LDDC was laid out by Lingard & Styles Landscape Architects. There is a café, orchards, paddocks and a wild life area with a pond. The shop sells organic honey, goat's milk, yoghurt, soft cheese and eggs.

Running alongside the wall of the SURREY DOCKS FARM is a narrow rather overgrown passage leading to the ACORN STAIRS. These WATERMEN'S STAIRS were established as a "public plying place" as late as 1835.

▶ WALK UP THE RAMP BETWEEN THIS AND THE YELLOW BRICK MODERN BUILDING WITH THE BLUE WINDOW FRAMES ON TO TRINITY WHARF, TURN LEFT AND WALK ALONG THE RIVERSIDE.

So far as can be established TRINITY WHARF never had any connection with Trinity House. This section of ROTHERHITHE STREET was known as TRINITY STREET for at least 100 years before TRINITY CHURCH was built. The main traffic handled here was timber, and there were moorings in the river for large rafts of logs and baulks, discharged from ships in the docks and stapled together, to be moored until they could be landed. Paper, wood-pulp boards and canned goods were also handled here.

The change in the paving marks the boundary with DURANDS WHARF. A timber yard for many years, in the later 19th century it was operated by the civil engineering contractors BURT, BOLTON & HAYWARD. Their speciality was building railways and no doubt the wharf was used for handling sleepers and rails in connection with these projects. DURAND'S WHARF LTD. succeeded them, handling timber and general cargo, and were still operating here as late as 1975. The site was then preserved as an open space, with old anchors and a CANNON. The origin of this is not known. It is very badly corroded – even the trunnions have rusted off, but it appears to be of Georgian date, and is probably a "Long 9-pdr." DURANDS WHARF was used as a construction site for the Jubilee Line extension project and large quantities of spoil excavated from the tunnels were brought up through a shaft here and removed by barges on the river. The modernistic structure over to the left is a ventilation and escape shaft from the Jubilee Line tunnels. Yet another change in the paving marks the boundary with LAWRENCE'S WHARF. From about 1870, there was a large seven-storey warehouse on this site with an ornate tower topped with battlements. At various times cereals and grain were dealt with here, but the warehouse was yet another wartime casualty, after which this was a timber wharf. It was still working as such until 1983. The family resemblance of the new blocks of apartments here to those at GREENLAND DOCK ENTRANCE will be noted. They were by the same Danish developer ISLEF, in 1986-1988. The redevelopment has obliterated all trace of three small wharves at the far end, just prior to the NELSON DOCK SHIPYARD.

SOMERSET WHARF was THOMAS FALDO'S ASPHALT WORKS. FALDO was the son and grandson of ship's figurehead carvers who had worked in Rotherhithe for many years, and were originally called FALDONETTI. ALBION WHARF was an old established barge building and repair yard, and in 1931 H. A. OLIVER & SONS built here the very last wooden Thames sailing barge, *Lady of the Lea*. The reason for such a "retro" vessel was that she was intended to convey gunpowder from Waltham Abbey to Woolwich Arsenal, and had to use the narrow canal at the powder mills, without

being a fire hazard. DANZIG WHARF was also a barge and lighter building yard, run by PERKINS & HOMER. Both OLIVERS and PERKINS & HOMER were still operating into the 1960s.

▶ CONTINUE ALONG THE RIVERSIDE, AND DOWN THE STEPS ONTO THE CAISSON ACROSS THE END OF THE DRY DOCK AND PAUSE

These are the only substantial remains of a Rotherhithe shipyard, and although much altered during conversion for use as part of the hotel complex, they do give a good idea of what some of the sites which you have visited (and are yet to visit) were like in their heyday. The yard was originally described as being "...at CUCKOLD'S POINT" (see later) but became known as NELSON DOCK from the 1820's. At the time a shipwright called NELSON WAKE was leasing part of the yard, and it is possible that the name has nothing to do with the great admiral, but originated simply as "Nelson's Dock".



ABOVE: THE CAISSON AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE OLD NELSON DRY DOCK, FROM THE FORMER DANZIG WHARF 2004.

The CAISSON on which you are standing is now fixed into position. When in use it could be filled with water to sink it into place, closing off the DRY DOCK, or pumped out and floated away to open it. The DRY DOCK itself has been reduced in depth, and is now permanently flooded. The modern crane was intended for raising and lowering boats from and to the river, in an abortive scheme to use the DRY DOCK as a small marina in the 1980s. The DRY DOCK was lengthened and widened in 1880, and the curious shape was common amongst smaller Thames dry docks of the 18th and 19th centuries; it enabled two vessels to be docked at the same time arranged diagonally. The DRY DOCK probably dates from at least 1707, because a large warship *Dragon*, which had been the first ship built by the Royal Dockyard at Chatham in 1647, underwent the second rebuilding of her career at CUCKOLD'S POINT. For this major task, which increased her volume by almost 50%, a dry dock would have been required.

There was an unusual continuity in shipbuilding and repair here from JOHN TAYLOR in 1690 through JAMES TAYLOR, TAYLOR AND RANDALL, JOHN RANDALL, RANDALL & BRENT until S. & D. BRENT, who ceased business here in 1814. In fact, a THOMAS TAYLOR, the location of whose yard is not known, built a ship for the Commonwealth Navy in 1653, so the history may stretch back even further.

► RETRACE YOUR STEPS BACK ONTO THE WHARF, AND TAKE THE FIRST TURN RIGHT. WALK THROUGH THE HOTEL GROUNDS AND TURN RIGHT, TO WALK ON TO THE LAND END OF THE DRY DOCK AND PAUSE

The heyday of the yard was undoubtedly during the RANDALL & BRENT period, involving two generations of each family. No fewer than 52 warships, and 46 East Indiamen were built split between this site and the two yards at GREENLAND DOCK ENTRANCE, in addition to an unknown number of other vessels for clients like the Hudson's Bay Co., and an unknown number of repairs. The extensions to the DRY DOCK belong to a later period when shipbuilding had ceased, and the yard was concentrating on repair work under the ownership of the NELSON DOCK CO

LTD. between 1876 and 1886. As will be seen a little later, the extension nearly had disastrous consequences for local inhabitants.

▶ WALK ACROSS THE CAR PARK AND STAND BY THE BOW OF THE *DAME DE SERK* (A FRENCH NAVY TRAINING BARQUE OF 1952) ON THE PATENT SLIP

NELSON DOCK HOUSE dates from around the time that JOHN RANDALL (1st) took over from the last TAYLOR in 1754. Although it is the last survivor, at one time most of the Rotherhithe shipyards would have had similar dwellings for the master shipbuilder. Shipbuilding was not quite a “clogs to clogs in three generations” business, but being so dependant on government contracts, for which payment was often late, or made with bills maturing at some distant date, which could only be turned into instant cash at a discount, it was far from secure. It was rare for a family to stay in the business for more than two generations, the usual pattern being for the second generation to retire as “gentry” or to go bankrupt. JOHN RANDALL (1st) did well enough to send his son (also JOHN) to Eton. JOHN RANDALL (2nd) had no wish to live “over the shop” and had a handsome house near Hyde Park. Similarly, JOHN BRENT, his partner built an elegant mansion at Blackheath, while one of his sons lived in this house. The Rotherhithe master shipbuilders were men of the Enlightenment, with the educated and elegant tastes of contemporary gentry. Perhaps that is why they built such beautiful ships.

The suicide of JOHN RANDALL (2nd) brought an end to the RANDALL & BRENT partnership, but worse was to follow. In 1804, the firm was taken to court by the government over defects in the construction of *Ajax*, launched in 1798. JOHN BRENT was long retired, so SAMUEL and DANIEL BRENT found themselves in court. While there is no doubt that the prosecution was politically motivated, it is also true that some of the materials and workmanship in *Ajax* were poor, and the case did harm the firm's reputation. SAMUEL died in 1814, and four years later DANIEL concentrated his activities at GREENLAND DOCK ENTRANCE, embarking on a new career as a steamship builder.



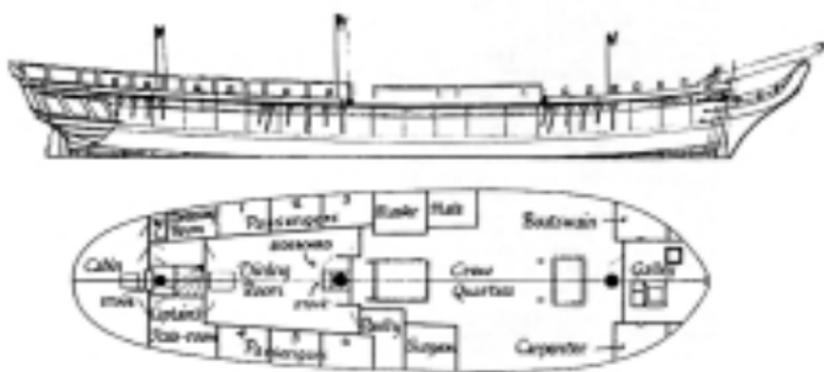
ABOVE: NELSON DOCK HOUSE,  
AS PARTIALLY RESTORED IN THE 1970S.  
NOTE THE THEN SURVIVING SHEDS  
OF MILLS & KNIGHT, SHIP REPAIRERS.  
RIGHT: NELSON DOCK HOUSE IN 2004.



The RANDALLS and the BRENTS built many notable vessels including several class prototypes for the Royal Navy, but one of the most famous was *Serapis* which fought American privateer John Paul Jones in the *Bonhomme Richard*, in 1779.

This yard was split up into two sections, and it was not until around 1850, when they were reunited under the management of THOMAS BILBE & WILLIAM PERRY that some of the former glory returned. THOMAS BILBE installed the PATENT SLIP on which *DAME DE SERK* rests. The slip was hydraulically powered, each stroke of the ram drawing the cradle out of the water until it reached the end of its travel. The carriage holding the vessel was held by a ratchet, while the ram was disconnected, returned to its starting position, reconnected and the process repeated. This device, with its engine house was in use by 1860. The site of the patent slip had in fact been a small shipyard in its own right between 1786 and 1794 when it was run by MARMADUKE STALKARTT, one of the premier naval architects of his day. The first two of the fastest Post Office sailing packets of their era, designed by STALKARTT were built here in 1788, and in 1796 he built an experimental steam vessel, the *Kent*, unfortunately not a success, for the Earl of Stanhope.

THOMAS BILBE specialised in a type of shipbuilding known as composite construction. By combining the strength and lightness of wrought iron frames, with wooden planking which could be copper or Muntz metal sheathed, it was possible to make hulls which were fast, and did not attract marine growths in the way that iron plates did. This was very much the top end of the market, such vessels being used for opium running, and in the intense competition to get the first of the new season's tea back to Britain. From the 1860s to the 1870s these sailing ships were the aristocrats of the merchant marine. BILBE & PERRY built nearly a dozen of the best, starting with *Red Riding Hood* in 1857, and concluding with *Argonaut* the last ship built here in 1866. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1870, coupled with the development of anti-fouling paint for iron hulls, heralded the end for



TOP: *SERAPIS* BUILT BY RANDALL & BRENT IN 1778/9 AND *BONHOMME RICHARD* COMMANDED BY JOHN PAUL JONES, BATTER EACH OTHER INTO WRECKS OFF FLAMBOROUGH HEAD IN SEPTEMBER 1779.

ABOVE: MARMADUKE STALKARTT'S FAST POST OFFICE PACKET DESIGN OF 1788. ONE OF THESE VESSELS, *WESTMORELAND* BUILT ON THE SITE OF WHAT IS NOW THE PATENT SLIP, MADE THE RETURN TRIP BETWEEN ENGLAND AND THE WEST INDIES IN ONLY SEVEN WEEKS.

the sailing composite clipper, although they still showed they had something to offer bringing the new season's wool from Australia.

The NELSON DOCK once again reverted to ship repairs, from 1890 to 1960 under the management of MILLS & KNIGHT LTD. The house became offices. Because there was no dry dock at the General Steam Navigation Co. yard at The Stowage in Deptford, many of the GSN steamers requiring hull repairs came here in the 1940s, and there was also a good business relationship with the Ropner Shipping Line of Teesside. A company called RYE-ARC ran the yard from 1960-1968 and planned a big programme of modernisation, but the writing was already on the wall for ship repairing on the Thames, and it was never carried out. This, one of the oldest Rotherhithe sites concerned with shipbuilding and repair was the last survivor. It is thanks to the Danish developers ISLEF and the LDDC that after some years of dereliction, so much has been preserved as a reminder of a vanished industry.

▶ RETURN TO THE RAMP LEADING DOWN TO ROTHERHITHE STREET, GO DOWN TO STREET LEVEL AND TURN LEFT TO THE END OF THE DRY DOCK AND PAUSE

On 26 January 1881 there was a classic Thames tidal surge and this end of the newly enlarged dry dock burst, pouring tens of thousands of gallons of water out onto ROTHERHITHE STREET. It would appear that fortunately nobody was killed, and the hefty wrought iron plates which strengthen the end of the dock were part of the repair work. On the other side of the street is THE CLIPPER pub, formerly the SHIP TAVERN, built 1934. It would be tempting to think that the name dates from the heyday of BILBE & PERRY. It is not known when the renaming took place, but the pub was certainly still called THE SHIP as late as the 1980s.

▶ CROSS TO THE OTHER SIDE OF ROTHERHITHE STREET AND WALK BACK TOWARDS THE BUILDING LETTERED 'MILLS & KNIGHT LTD. NELSON DOCK'

The machinery for working the PATENT SLIP is housed inside here, and the end of the slide bar on which the

RIGHT: THE STREET ELEVATION OF THE HYDRAULIC ENGINE HOUSE, NELSON DOCK. THE END OF THE SLIDE BAR ON WHICH THE HYDRAULIC RAM MOVED CAN BE SEEN PROJECTING FROM THE CENTRE WINDOW. BELOW: ROTHERHITHE STREET, OPPOSITE GLOBE WHARF IN THE 1920S. THE OLD THREE COMPASSES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF WHAT IS NOW BEATSON STREET, IS TO THE RIGHT OF THE CART AND HORSE.



hydraulic ram moved can be seen built into the brickwork. Next door to it was the garage for the firm's lorry, with a workshop for joiners above. Through the next gateway you can get a glimpse of COLUMBIA WHARF distinguished by the unusual lozenge shaped windows at top floor level. This former granary is also now part of the hotel complex. COLUMBIA WHARF built by the Patent Ventilating Granary Co. in 1864 – 1865 was the first grain silo erected in any British port. The architect was James Edmeston, who also designed CANADA WHARF and the Concert Halls at Blackheath. Originally, the building was far more ornate (see cover illustration The Godfrey Edition Old Ordnance Survey Maps, Rotherhithe 1868), and would not have looked out of place in any city from Casablanca to Calcutta. However a new plainer riverside façade was added sometime before 1914, when the building was converted for use as a conventional warehouse. THE BLACKSMITH'S ARMS pub is recorded in 1767. The present building is possibly from the 1870s, but with a later façade in "Brewer's Tudor" .

That part of CANADA WHARF nearest the river dates from 1870-1871, but the plainer roadside frontage was altered in the 1900s. Until its closure in 1976, COLUMBIA WHARF was used for storing dried fruits, cocoa tea and coffee. CANADA WHARF was run by White, Tomkins & Courage, who were millers, and was converted into flats in 1995-1996.

► WALK TO THE END OF THE CANADA WHARF BUILDING AND TURN RIGHT UP THE PATH AT THE SIDE OF THE BUILDING AND STOP AT THE TOP OF THE STEPS

These are THE HORNS STAIRS, again named after a nearby tavern. The orange pillar carrying a navigation light out in the river is the marker for CUCKOLD'S POINT, the boundary between the Lower Pool and Limehouse Reach. The Tate Gallery has a very fine oil painting "A Morning, with a View of Cuckold's Point" by Samuel Scott, dating from circa 1760. A two-storey clapboard building, presumably the original HORNS TAVERN of 1731, stands where CANADA WHARF is now. The main features of interest in this view looking down stream are the stairs and ferry, and the ducking (or "cucking") stool with a set of horns mounted atop

the post, said to be the origin of the location name. (This is at least a more likely explanation than the story of the Miller of Charlton catching his wife "in flagrante" with King John, and being given a substantial grant of land in compensation, provided that he walk annually to the Point wearing horns on his head!) A popular method of punishment in the Middle Ages which can be traced back to the Saxons, the Ducking Stool was usually reserved for women, primarily "scolds" and adulteresses, but butchers, bakers, apothecaries and brewers who cheated on measures or sold inferior food might also qualify. At low tide, the remains of the jetty for the ancient ferry across to Limehouse Hole can still be seen. From around 1813 THE HORNS TAVERN was located on the left-hand side of the alley leading to the stairs. It closed in 1896.

► TURN LEFT AND WALK UPSTREAM ALONG THE RIVERSIDE

This was LOWER ORDNANCE WHARF running on to UPPER ORDNANCE WHARF. These were so called because during part of the 18th century they were owned or leased by the Board of Ordnance, based at the Tower of London. At one time, there was an outstation of the Royal Carriage Department of Woolwich Arsenal here, making gun carriages. Blank iron castings for cannon were also bored out here by the famous Iron Founder John Wilkinson. He developed a method whereby the cutting tool was stationary, and the piece to be bored was revolved, which made for greater accuracy and he had an early Boulton & Watt steam engine installed for the purpose. LOWER ORDNANCE WHARF was later occupied by Union Oil & Cake Mills Ltd. This company made animal feed and vegetable oils by crushing various types of seed. From 1870 until 1980, UPPER ORDNANCE WHARF was the lead works of H. J. Enthoven, manufacturers of solder, printing type metal, battery components and similar products. I have been told by an old gentleman who worked here, that large quantities of lead alloy went down river from here to remedy body defects from poor workmanship in a certain manufacturer's motor cars before they were painted.

▶ WALK TO THE TOP OF THE PAGEANTS OR PAGEANT STAIRS, AND PAUSE

There is no record of an inn or tavern of this name, which dates back at least to the 17th century. A survey of 1684 shows a "Barge House" nearby, and a carpenter's workshop adjacent to the passage leading to the stairs was, during the 19th century, the premises of a succession of ship's carvers. It seems possible that the name may be associated with the ceremonial barges and the decorated "floats" or "pageants" used in the annual Lord Mayor's Procession which took place on the Thames until the mid 19th century.

▶ TURN AND WALK DOWN TO ROTHERHITHE STREET THEN TURN RIGHT AND PAUSE BY THE RED AND WHITE BUILDING

This is the old FIRE STATION. The completion of the connection between GREENLAND and CANADA DOCKS, meant that at high tide, with the swing bridges open to shipping, DOWNTOWN effectively became an island. The large stocks of timber were a considerable fire hazard and the L. C. C. decided that a fire station should be built to serve the "island" in 1903. A very plain version of the style favoured for L. C. C. fire stations at the time, the appliances were of course horse-drawn. The animals were stabled in loose boxes at the back, and were trained to respond to the sound of the fire bell, by trotting round to the front of the building, and backing themselves into the shafts. Harness, hinged in two halves, was suspended from the ceiling. This could be lowered onto the horses and clipped under their bellies in moments for a quick turn out.

▶ WALK ON TO THE ROAD BRIDGE OVER LAVENDER DOCK AND PAUSE

The COMMERCIAL DOCK CO finally achieved their wish to have a new entrance to their system, when LAVENDER LOCK was opened in 1862. As can be seen from the small dimensions, it was intended for use by river craft. The lock cut the end off a site reaching back as far as PAGEANTS STAIRS, which had been a shipyard in the early 18th century. It was probably the Rotherhithe yard of JOHN BUXTON, who also built at Deptford. He built six vessels for the navy between 1741 and 1744,

after which the site seems to have become a timber yard. From the late 18th century it was a ship breaker's yard operated by PUNNETT & SINDREY. The BEECH family carried on the same kind of business here until 1859, when WILLIAM PHILIP BEECH took over the BEATSON yard at SURREY CANAL WHARF (see later).

▶ CROSS THE ROAD, WITH CARE, TO THE LAVENDER DOCK PUMPING STATION

The SURREY DOCKS had always given trouble over water loss. During the course of a single tide the water level in the system could drop by as much as 2ft by seepage, lockage and evaporation. The Port of London Authority (which had taken over the SURREY COMMERCIAL DOCKS in 1908, together with all the other docks on the Thames) took action in 1928-1929. LAVENDER LOCK was closed off and the PUMPING STATION built to pump water from the river as required to maintain levels in the docks. The building became redundant with the closure of the last of the SURREY DOCKS in 1970, and the machinery was stripped out. One of the pumps from here is preserved outside the THAMES TUNNEL PUMPING ENGINE HOUSE (see walk "A"). In 1981, the building was partly renovated by the London Borough of Southwark, and the pond and nature park established on a small part of what had been LAVENDER DOCK. This was the biggest in surface area of all the docks in Rotherhithe, but was fairly shallow and was used mainly for storing rafts of timber. The building became home to the ROTHERHITHE HERITAGE MUSEUM in 1988.

▶ OPTIONAL DIVERSION (NOT INCLUDED IN TIMING FOR THIS WALK)

Visit the Museum which is open to visitors Monday to Friday 10am- 4pm. Group visits can be at anytime above, but on a Friday, the Museum does not have schools, in order to welcome older people who would prefer to look round in a quieter atmosphere. The ground floor features a collection of artefacts dating from Roman times to the present, the result of many years' "mudlarking" on the Thames foreshore by local man Ron Goode.

The first floor has a permanent hands-on exhibition of everyday artefacts from twentieth century homes and the Victorian era through to the present day. A Blitz Room is another permanent display to show home life during the war years. The 1950's display has a working jukebox with authentic records from that era, household objects and kitchen equipment, documents and ephemera.



► WALK OVER TO LAVENDER POND

In the summer, this is teeming with wildlife, including Coots, Swans, Tufted Duck, Mallard, dragonflies and damselflies, with an occasional visit from a Heron. There is a helpful information panel, illustrating some of the plants that you can see at appropriate seasons, including Marsh Marigolds, Yellow Flags and Purple Loosestrife.

► RETRACE YOUR STEPS TO LAVENDER LOCK TAKING CARE WHEN CROSSING THE ROAD, WALK ALONG THE UPSTREAM SIDE TO THE RIVERSIDE, TURN LEFT AND PAUSE

Recently known as LAVENDER WHARF, this was the site of the LAVENDER DOCK SHIPYARD. Probably established at least as early as 1702, when EDWARD SWALLOW built the 50 gun *Leopard*. Until 1933, there was a pub on the other side of ROTHERHITHE STREET called variously the SWALLOW GALLEY or SWALLOW'S GALLEY. By 1756, the yard was in the hands of ROBERT INWOOD, and the following

year he built *Southampton*, to the designs of Thomas Slade, one of the joint Surveyors of the Navy. The *Southampton* has been described as "...the first true frigate in the Royal Navy" by some historians. Others disagree. INWOOD must have been well thought of however, to be entrusted with building the lead ship of a new class. After INWOOD'S death, LAVENDER DOCK SHIPYARD was always run in conjunction with at least one other Rotherhithe shipyard, and it is seldom possible to say which ships were built where.

Early in the 19th century, the site was split into two, the section nearest PAGEANTS STAIRS, becoming the ship breaking Wharf of JOB COCKSHOT. In 1807 and 1808, RICHARD TREVITHICK was working a few yards away on his doomed attempt to tunnel under the Thames to Limehouse, and at the same time, he was developing his high pressure steam engine. This was applied to a railway locomotive *Catch Me Who Can*, demonstrated on a circular track near Gower Street in July 1808, in the hope of attracting investors. This it failed to do and TREVITHICK entered into some kind of financial arrangement with COCKSHOT to install the boiler and machinery from the locomotive into an old Lord Mayor's State Barge that the latter had recently purchased. What happened precisely is not known, but there are references to "attorney's letters" on COCKSHOT'S behalf, and TREVITHICK had to leave London for Cornwall after becoming seriously ill.



It was 1865 before significant shipbuilding activity began here again, under the auspices of JOHN & WILLIAM WALKER. LAVENDER

DOCK SHIPYARD began building fast composite ships, like those from BILBE & PERRY at NELSON DOCK. The three best known were *Mikado*, 1868, *Ambassador* (above), 1869 and *Lothair*, 1870. *Lothair* turned out to be one of the fastest clippers ever built. Stevenson, in "By Way of Cape Horn" gave a tale about her as related by an old American Captain.

"The fastest ship, I think, that ever left the ways was the *Lothair*. I was second mate of a Newbury Port ship, and we were running our easting down bound out to Canton, and we were somewhere near Tristan d'Acunha when we sighted a vessel astern. It was blowing hard from the nor' west and the next time I looked a couple of hours later, there was the ship close on our quarter, and we doing 12 knots. 'Holly Jiggers' says I to the mate 'there's the *Flying Dutchman!*' [The legendary ghost ship]. 'Naw' says he 'It's the *Thermopylae*'. [A very fast Aberdeen built clipper]. But when she was abeam a little later, she hoisted her name, the *Lothair*, and it's been my opinion ever since that she was making mighty close to 17 knots".

She was launched on 2 July 1870. I wonder how many of those who watched her lovely sleek hull embraced by the Thames realised that this would be the last vessel of any size to be built in Rotherhithe?

You are standing at the place where an industry died...

LAVENDER DOCK SHIPYARD seems to have had no connection even with ship repair after the mid- 1890s. By 1906, the dry dock had been filled in and the premises occupied by W. B. DICK, manufacturers of lubricants. CASTROL, in the same business were the last occupants here in the 1970s.

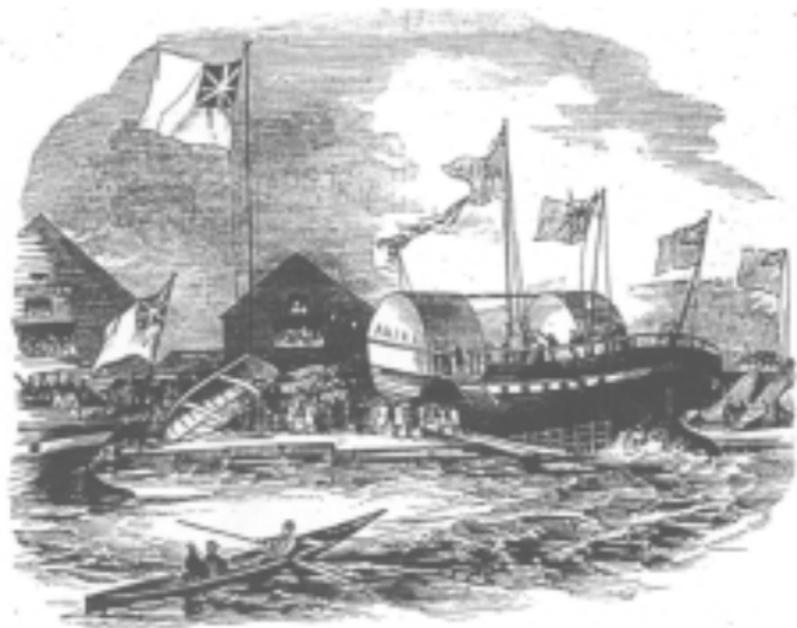
► WALK ON UPSTREAM ALONGSIDE THE RIVER

Redevelopment has completely obliterated all landmarks and clues to the past on this stretch of the walk, but keep an eye on the other bank of the Thames, and when you can just see both words LIMEHOUSE MARINA at the entrance to the old Regents Canal Dock, pause.

This is the site of HORSEFERRY DOCK, named for a ferry capable of carrying horses, carts and carriages between Rotherhithe and Limehouse. The enterprise

was sanctioned by Act of Parliament in 1755, and the approach ramp on the Rotherhithe side obliterated the SHEPHERD & DOG WATERMEN'S STAIRS.

These were named after a local tavern closed in 1820, but I have been unable to find any record of when the HORSEFERRY ceased to operate. SHEPHERD & DOG STAIRS appear in an official list of 1708. The shipyard here appears to have been the last to start work in Rotherhithe. Indeed there was not even a dry dock here, until other people were on the verge of closing theirs down and filling them in.



The shipbuilder here, JOHN JENKINS THOMPSON began business as a boat builder in the small yard at Princes Stairs previously occupied by the COURTHOPE family, mentioned in connection with BARNARD'S WHARF. It may be that as a young man he had been involved in the construction of *Regent* in 1816. He moved here in around 1830, still as a boat builder constructing yachts and lifeboats, but in the following decade he modernised the yard and began building steamers. The *Ariel* was one of the first being launched in 1844 for the Woolwich Steam Packet Co. Her hull was of mahogany, a material more usually employed in

the building of yachts, and high quality small boats. Mention has already been made of *Banshee* but Thompson is known to have built other "short sea route" steamers as well. In 1847 he constructed *Brighton*, *Dieppe*, and *Newhaven*, all of mahogany, for the Brighton & Continental Steam Packet Co. In the following decade, when the war with Russia was going badly, with a British army bogged down in the Crimea, the Royal Navy was active not only in the Black Sea, but also in the Baltic. There was a dire shortage of shallow draught steamers, armed with a couple of heavy guns, for action against coastal defences. Un-powered vessels were also needed, each to carry a single large calibre mortar. The resources of the Thames and other shipbuilding centres were mobilised and 90 steam gunboats were built in 90 days. It is significant of the decline of the Rotherhithe shipbuilding industry that only THOMPSON and LUNGLEY participated in this programme. LUNGLEY built Mortar Floats, but THOMPSON was given a contract for two *Dapper* class gunboats, *Hind* and *Jackdaw*. After 200 years of building vessels for the Royal Navy, the latter was to be the last to come from Rotherhithe.

Around 1862 the landowners built a dry dock and the site was subsequently leased to a succession of ship repairers. JOHN MCDOWALL & CO were here during the 1914-1918 war. They are known to have built special barges, capable of being towed across the Channel, for traffic from Richborough Military Port up the inland waterways of France and Belgium. I believe that ship repair ceased here in the 1930s, and the dock was filled in. The HORSEFERRY WHARF CO operated here until 1971.

► WALK ON ALONGSIDE THE RIVER TO GLOBE STAIRS, NAMED AFTER A LONG-VANISHED PUB, DATING BACK AT LEAST TO 1754, BUT CLOSED IN 1892, AND PAUSE

The area immediately downstream from the stairs was LOW GLOBE DOCK. For several years in the 17th and early 18th centuries, this small yard was run by various members of the SHISH family, all of whom also held official positions in the Royal Dockyards at Deptford, Woolwich, or Sheerness. Various small ships were built here for the navy, including in 1666 the

*Merlin*, which served as a Royal Yacht for a time. Samuel Pepys viewed the launch of Sir William Petty's *Experiment* here on 22 December 1664, noting that "...the King and Duke [of York] being there". Only a handful of ships are known to have been built here during the 18th century, but it is worth noting that ABIGAIL BEARD ran the yard for a couple of years after her husband's death in 1735.

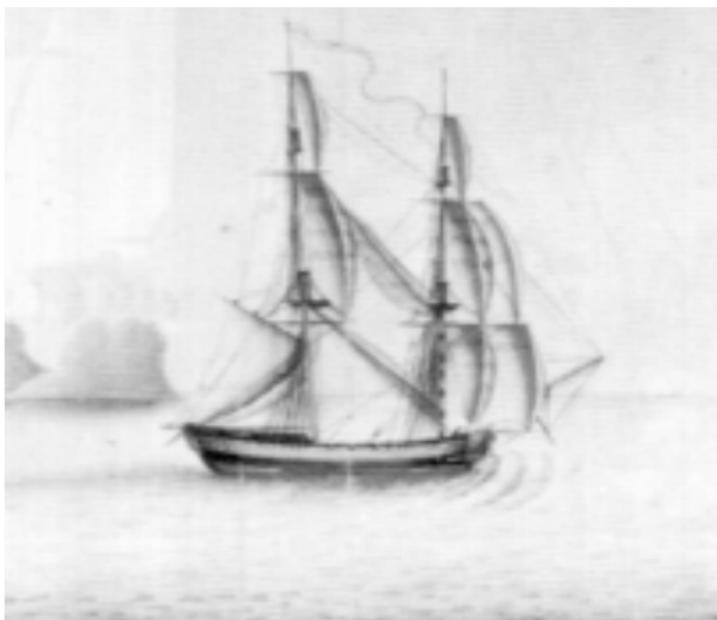
From around 1830 to 1850, JOHN SMALL SEDGER carried on business here principally as a ship breaker, disposing of several small former RN vessels. A number of small scale ship repairers followed SEDGER to the end of the century, but by 1907, the dry dock had been filled in and the site was occupied by GEORGE H. QUIRK, antimony refiners, later QUIRK, BARTON & CO, operating as the CROWN LEAD WORKS.

► TURN AND WALK DOWN TO ROTHERHITHE STREET AND PAUSE

On the other side of the road the white cottages to your left were built, as social housing by the London County Council in 1920, at a time when the call was "homes fit for heroes to live in". To your right is GLOBE WHARF, which is best viewed from the other side of the road by the THREE COMPASSES, another fairly modern building, on the site of a pub with this name dating back at least to 1767. This stands on the corner of what remains of BEATSON STREET, named after a member of the ship breaking family whose work we will encounter later. Facing the THREE COMPASSES on the other side of BEATSON STREET was once another pub THE WHEATSHEAF which closed in 1909, but had a subsequent lease of life as a café.

The massive former warehouse GLOBE WHARF covers the site of the UPPER GLOBE DOCK SHIPYARD. Between 1739 and 1764, HENRY BIRD JR. built nearly a dozen small ships for the Royal Navy, including in 1758 a 28 gun sixth rate *Argo*, whose name was commemorated in a tavern on the other side of ROTHERHITHE STREET from the yard. THE SHIP ARGO closed in 1910. Probably the best-known vessel built by BIRD was launched in 1759. She was *Supply*, a tiny tender whose hull was barely 80ft long. When the time came to assemble a fleet taking the first

involuntary settlers to found the penal colony of Botany Bay in 1786, a parsimonious government saw no reason to waste money on new ships for a bunch of convicts. The then 27 year old *Supply* (below) was converted to act as a tender to the "First Fleet" flagship *Sirius*. (Co-incidentally, *Sirius* was also built in Rotherhithe by a shipbuilder called Watson, whose yard has not yet been identified).



Early in the 19th century, the yard came into the hands of a partnership YOUNG, HAWKS AND MCGHIE, who also had interests in other Rotherhithe yards, but little is known of any shipbuilding activity. EDWARD HAWKS has a memorial tablet in the parish church. For about ten years from 1860 the site was used as a repair and maintenance facility by the GENERAL IRON SCREW COLLIER COMPANY. The GLOBE WHARF WAREHOUSE was built in 1883 by A. P. KEEN & CO, and obliterated all but the dry dock itself, but this had been filled in by 1907, built over, and used as a general merchandise wharf. Latterly, it was used by BRITISH INDUSTRIAL SOLVENTS LTD.

The WAREHOUSE, twenty bays wide and thirteen bays deep was one of the largest brick built grain storage facilities on the river. The building was leased to THAMES RICE MILLING in 1924, who ceased trading in 1982. Conversion to apartments took place in 1998-1999. If you look carefully at the downstream

end of the building you can see that from the second floor upwards the last five bays are of new brickwork. This is because that end of the structure had a sharply sloping roof, which I have been told was to preserve "Ancient Light" rights of buildings opposite.

▶ CROSS THE ROAD AGAIN TO THE GLOBE WHARF SIDE AND TURN RIGHT UP THE PATHWAY LEADING TO THE RIVER, BETWEEN GLOBE WHARF AND KING & QUEEN WHARF. TURN LEFT AND PAUSE BY THE RIVER

Unfortunately developers with little or no interest in history, have made it quite difficult to understand what was where before all the new building took place. The building to your left was one of the first new developments to be completed, so adopted the name KING & QUEEN WHARF. This despite the fact that part of it is on the site of the former UPPER GLOBE DRY DOCK, and the other part is on what was LOWER KING & QUEEN WHARF. This last had been known as THE KING & QUEEN DRY DOCK until being filled in and converted to a wharf by 1894, but was only a small part of what from around 1790 to 1840 was the KING & QUEEN SHIPYARD with two dry docks and several building slips. There was a dry dock belonging to SIR THOMAS GOULD here at least as early as 1663, adjacent to what later became known (by 1754) as the KING AND QUEEN WATERMEN'S STAIRS. These were named after a pub closed in 1942. The sites of both STAIRS and PUB are now lost, but both were some distance upstream from where you are standing now. This will be explained shortly. In the 18th Century this downstream dock and yard was called PITCHER'S POINT. There were various small vessels built here for the Royal Navy by JOHN QUALLETT & JOSHUA SPARROW.

▶ WALK ON ALONG THE RIVERSIDE TO THE BRIDGE OVER THE REMAINS OF THE DOCK INLET AND PAUSE

This is all that remains of the other KING & QUEEN dry dock. The stairs after which it was named were on the other side of this inlet. From 1770 until his death in 1818, the whole complex, including the former PITCHER'S POINT was run by PETER EVERITT MESTAER, a wealthy ship owner and shipbuilder who had a country house at Wanstead and a town house



ABOVE: THE SITE OF KING & QUEEN DOCK IN 2004.

BELOW: THE CONFEDERATE STATES CRUISER *SHENANDOAH*, DESIGNED BY WILLIAM RENNIE AT KING & QUEEN DOCK.



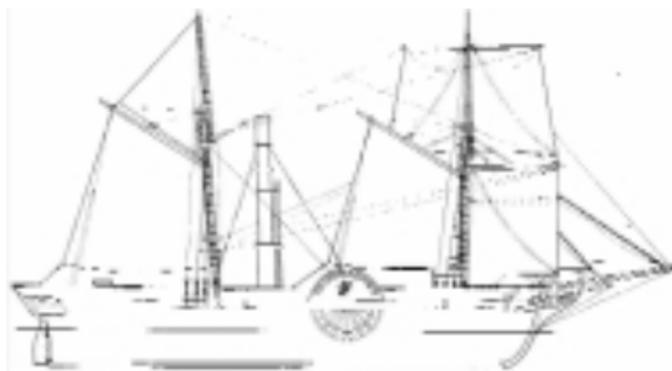
in New Broad Street. As the KING & QUEEN SHIPYARD it gained a very good reputation for high quality work building a handful of vessels for the Royal Navy, eight East Indiamen and ships for other trades including the West Indies.

After MESTAER'S death, this upper part of the yard was taken over by WILLIAM ELIAS EVANS, while the lower part remained empty. As he became more successful, EVANS took on the lower section as well (at one point he had at least five steamers under construction, and was also repairing other vessels). After financial troubles, EVANS had to give up this upper section of the yard, but as the KING & QUEEN name had commercial value, he retained this, so the name "migrated" downstream away from the stairs after which the yard had been named. Under new management as a repair yard, this lower section became known as THE PRINCES DRY DOCK. The reason for this name puzzled me for years, until I realised that it was in effect the "offspring" of the KING & QUEEN, so the name could be hardly more appropriate!

WILLIAM ELIAS EVANS was a pioneer of steamship building, neglected by history, probably because he was a poor businessman, with impaired hearing making him a rather withdrawn and diffident person. Between 1821 and circa 1835 he built many steamships here, including *Lightning* and *Meteor*, the first Post Office Packets based at Holyhead, which proved for the first time that steamships could operate in the open sea all the year round. He also built *Constitutionen* in 1826, the first steamer to operate in the Norwegian fjords.

After EVANS' death, the two halves of the yard continued as separate repair businesses. Nothing of note is known about PRINCES DOCK until it was filled in and absorbed into BELLAMY'S WHARF, before 1914. However, the lower KING & QUEEN DOCK from 1860 until 1867 was the base for WILLIAM RENNIE a noted naval architect and designer of clippers. During his Rotherhithe period he designed the second *Fiery Cross*, *Black Prince* and *Norman*

*Court*, all sadly built elsewhere. He also designed the clipper-steamer *Sea King* a ship destined to become notorious as the Confederate States Armed Cruiser *Shenandoah* during the American Civil War.



*CONSTITUTIONEN* BUILT BY WILIAM EVANS FOR THE NORWEGIAN POST OFFICE, 1826.

Before crossing the bridge, note the massive concrete piers supporting the walkway opposite. These were built to support BELLAMY'S JETTY. Cross over the bridge, and walk upstream alongside the river. Quite large sea going ships could be accommodated on the outside of the JETTY, while barges and lighters could load and unload inside. The BELLAMY'S WHARF WAREHOUSE which once stood on your left, replaced a granary of 1822, burned down in 1894.

At the entrance to BULLHEAD DOCK, pause. This is the former BULLHEAD DRY DOCK, subsequently converted into a wet dock for barges and lighters. It was named either after the GREAT BULL'S HEAD pub, closed 1888 or the HALF MOON & BULL'S HEAD closed circa 1985 by which time it was known as COOPER'S. In the later 18th and early 19th centuries, the shipyard here was run by successive members of the WOOLCOMBE family, sometimes in partnership with others. Some small warships were built here, as were six East Indiamen. From 1810 to around 1814, WILLIAM BEATSON & JOHN BEATSON were in partnership here with the MCGHIE mentioned earlier at UPPER GLOBE, but the BEATSONS were replaced by MCGHIE'S other partners from there. By 1815, DAVID BEATSON was operating as a ship breaker at SURREY CANAL WHARF (see later). The size of the BULLHEAD

DOCKYARD was gradually reduced, a large strip of land adjacent to the DRY DOCK itself being occupied by MR. WILLIAM CAUDERY, Guano Merchant and Manure Manufacturer, which suggests that local working conditions were less than salubrious.

In 1838 BULLHEAD DOCK became a general engineering shop, under the title THAMES BANK IRONWORKS, run first by JOHN HAGUE, later by CHRISTIE, ADAMS & HILL. Under this last partnership, a surprising development was the building of six railway locomotives for the London & South Western Railway, between October 1848 and December 1849. Towards the end of the 19th century, the yard became the BERMONDSEY VESTRY WHARF, and was used for sending refuse away by barge. A more recent development, which meant that BULLHEAD DOCK was the very last Rotherhithe shipyard site to have a commercial use, was the establishment here of SANDS FILM STUDIO. A number of productions were made here in the 1990s including "Little Dorrit" and "The Fool".

► WALK AROUND THE END THE DOCK, ALONG THE OTHER SIDE AND TURN LEFT ONTO DINORWIC WHARF AND SURREY CANAL WHARF

Both of these were part of the BULLHEAD DOCKYARD in the days of the WOOLCOMBES, but were split off during the first quarter of the 19th century. DINORWIC WHARF is named after a vast slate quarry in NORTH Wales, which sent slate by narrow gauge railway down to its own port on the Menai Strait. Here this was loaded into the company's own ships for transport all over Europe. This wharf was for many years their London depot. Well into the 1990s the adjacent SURREY CANAL WHARF was engaged in a similar trade, but by that time the slates came from Wales by road. SURREY CANAL WHARF was thus named because it was adjacent to the original entrance to the GRAND SURREY CANAL opened in 1807. From 1820 to 1858 SURREY CANAL WHARF was a ship breaking and general timber business, run by members of the BEATSON family. Noteworthy ships broken up here including in 1838 the famous *Temeraire*, although Turner's painting depicting the old ship's last journey here must be seen as a work of imagination, and *Bellerophon*. After bringing

Napoleon Bonaparte into exile, this last became a convict hulk called *Captivity*, eventually being broken up here in 1836. After the death of JOHN BEATSON, WILLIAM PHILIP BEECH continued the business. He broke up the three-deck wooden steam battle ship *Queen* here in 1871. In settling the ship on the foreshore she broke her back, destroying much of the value in her bigger timbers. She was the last large wooden warship broken up this far up the Thames, and BEECH gave up the business a couple of years later. The wharf then was used for general cargo.

▶ WALK ON PAST THE SPICE ISLAND PUB TO SURREY ENTRANCE LOCK

You may now follow the riverside part of Walk "A" in the reverse direction to reach ROTHERHITHE UNDERGROUND STATION, or walk alongside the LOCK to SALTER ROAD to catch a bus.

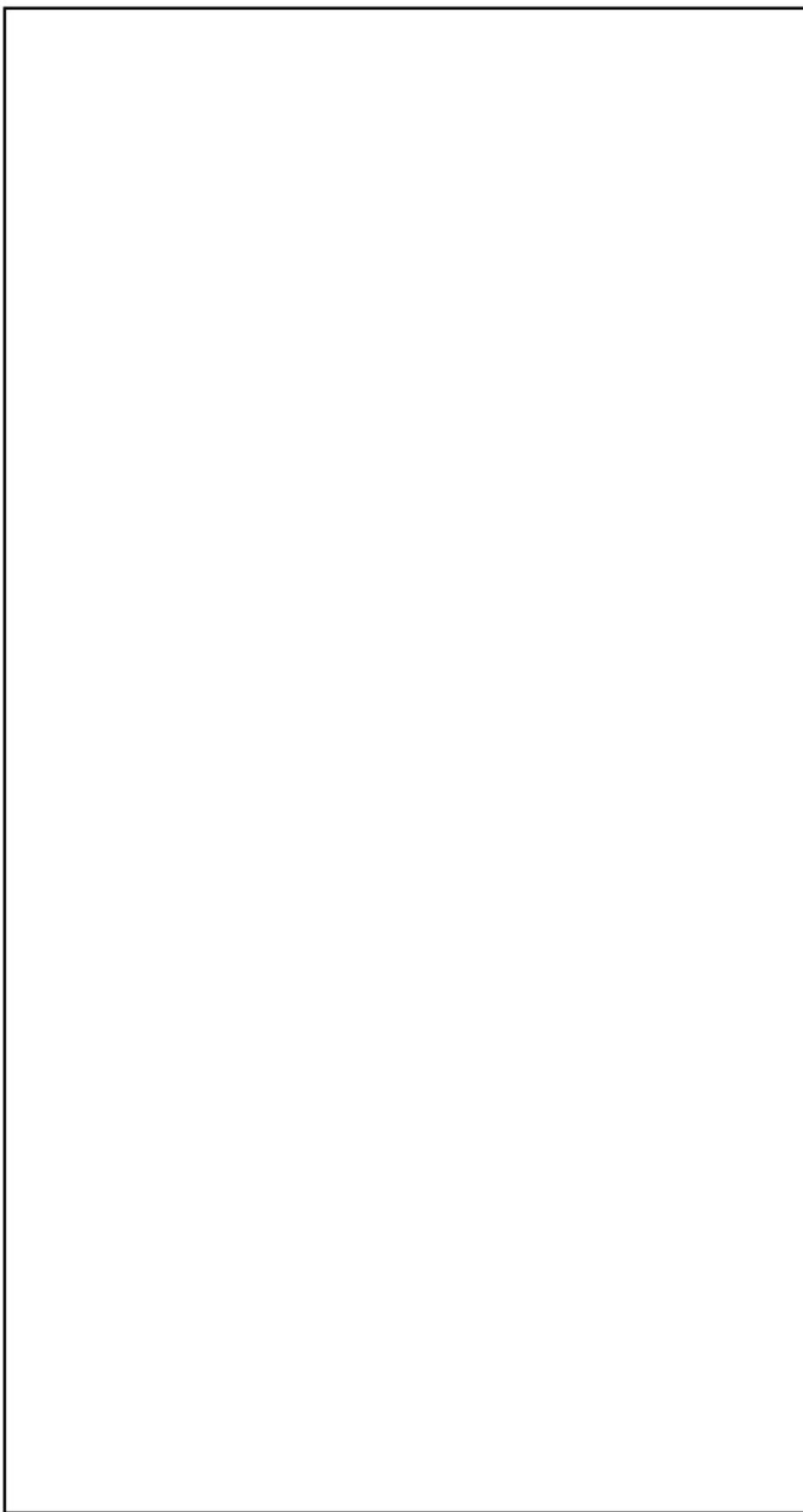
This map indicates the route of the walk, but as it is necessarily reproduced to a small scale, readers are advised to follow the notes carefully.

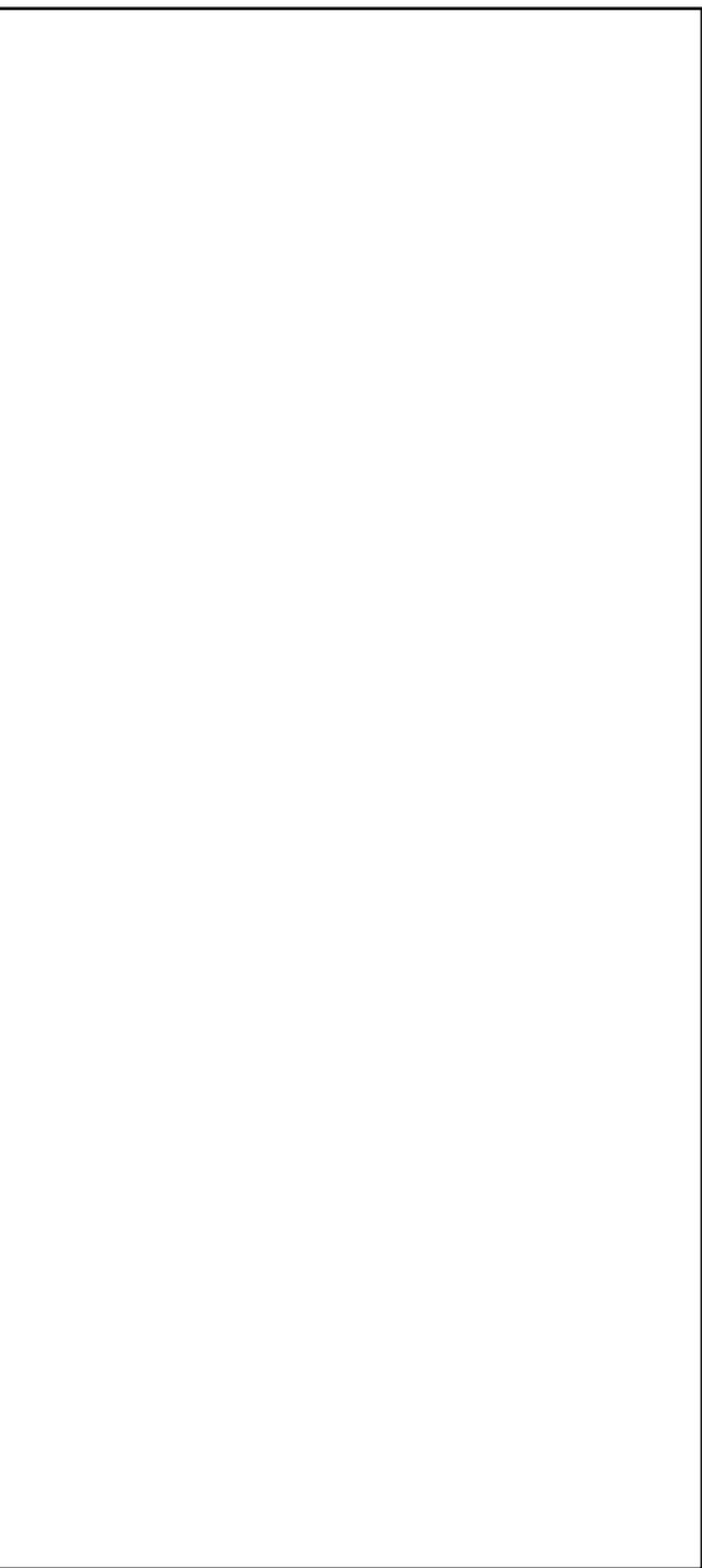
On the reverse of the map opposite is a map of the area in 1894.

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THE LONDON & SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY LOCOMOTIVE *FROME*, ONE OF SIX BUILT FOR THE SAME COMPANY AT BULL HEAD DOCK BETWEEN OCTOBER 1848 AND DECEMBER 1849.

NOT MANY THAMES SHIPYARDS BUILT RAILWAY ENGINES, BUT BULL HEAD WAS CONVERTED TO A GENERAL ENGINEERING WORKS BY JOHN HAGUE IN 1838. BY MAY 1847, THE YARD WAS OCCUPIED BY CHRISTIE, ADAMS AND HILL, TRADING AS THE THAMES BANK IRONWORKS. THIS WAS THE TAIL END OF A PERIOD KNOWN AS "THE RAILWAY MANIA", WHEN SO MANY NEW LINES WERE OPENING THAT THE ESTABLISHED LOCOMOTIVE MANUFACTURERS COULD NOT COPE WITH THE ORDERS ON OFFER. MANY SMALL ENGINEERING WORKS TURNED OUT A HANDFUL OF RAILWAY ENGINES, WITH VARYING DEGREES OF SUCCESS.

THE BULL HEAD DOCK MACHINES WERE AMONGST THE BETTER BARGAINS, LASTING IN SERVICE FOR ABOUT TWENTY YEARS. THERE BEING NO RAIL CONNECTION, *FROME* AND HER SISTERS WOULD HAVE BEEN LOADED ONTO LIGHTERS, AND TAKEN UP RIVER TO THE RAILWAY COMPANY'S WHARF AT NINE ELMS.



Maritime Rotherhithe

**HISTORY WALK**

WALK B: SHIPYARDS, GRANARIES AND WHARVES

Produced by Southwark Council  
Culture & Heritage, Environment & Leisure  
July 2004

ISBN 0905849 37 X