



LEGEND

- BARCLAYS CYCLE HIRE DOCKING STATION
- 🚲 BIKE RENTAL COMPANY
- 🚇 LONDON UNDERGROUND
- DLR DOCKLANDS LIGHT RAILWAY
- 🚆 THAMES RIVER SERVICES
- 🚉 NATIONAL RAIL
- 🚊 LONDON OVERGROUND
- 🚻 PUBLIC TOILET FACILITIES
- H HOSPITAL
- 🌅 VIEW POINT
- ➡️ RECOMMENDED DIRECTION
- CULTURAL CYCLING ROUTE
- ⋯ NO CYCLING - WALKING ONLY
- (A) ORIENTATION PHOTO POINT
- 1 SITE OF INTEREST

FAQS

Where can I hire a bike?

There are two Bike Rental Companies along the route (denoted by 🚲 on the map). They charge a daily rate for bicycles and also rent out helmets, panniers, child seats and locks. In the summer months it is advisable to contact them beforehand as they can be busy.

The London Bicycle Company
1a Gabriels Wharf, 56 Upper Ground, London SE1 9PP
<http://www.londonbicycle.com>
Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7928 6838

On Your Bike
52-54 Tooley Street, London Bridge, London SE1 2SZ
<http://www.onyourbike.com>
Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7378 6669

Barclays Cycle Hire scheme is London's self-service bicycle hire scheme. See www.tfl.gov.uk/barclayscyclehire for more details including how to register. Docking stations are denoted by ● on the map.

Please note: Barclays Cycle Hire is designed for shorter journeys and there are currently no Barclays Cycle Hire docking stations east of the Design Museum (13, south of the river) or Tobacco Dock (44, north of the river). If you are planning to cycle the whole route then a bike rental company may be more suitable for you. However, for a shorter journey, e.g. the loop west of Tower Bridge, Barclays Cycle Hire may be better value.

There are also some sections (for example in the Greenwich Foot Tunnel) where cycling is not permitted. These sections of the route are denoted on the map by a dotted line.

Is the tour suitable for children?

Yes, if they are older children who are competent cyclists, and comfortable with riding in traffic on public highways. It is, of course, possible to walk the busy sections. The tour is not recommended for children under 10 years old unless they are carried in a child seat.

Are there public toilet facilities along the route?

Public toilets (denoted by 🚻) are located along the route at:

- Gabriel's Wharf
- Hay's Galleria
- London Bridge Station
- Greenwich (Discover Greenwich)
- Canary Wharf tube station

GREENWICH FOOT TUNNEL

NB Current refurbishment works mean that the tunnel is closed weeknights from 9pm until 6am. Some weekend closures are also planned so check the following website: <http://www.greenwich.gov.uk/Greenwich/Travel/TravelNews/river-crossings-remain.htm>. But all is not lost if the tunnel is closed or the lifts are out of order. In fact, it's a great excuse to take the whooshy Thames Clipper across to Masthouse Terrace Pier on the north bank of the river (£3.20 pp; bikes free).





You can also cycle just part of the route and return to the start by boat or train (see the map and FAQs inside for further details).

If you cycle the whole route without stopping it will take around 3 hours. However, there are many interesting places to stop off and explore so you may wish to take a whole day.

How long does it take? Approximately 18 miles/27 kilometres

back to the South Bank.

The route runs from the South Bank, along the bank of the River Thames to Greenwich, then along the north bank of the river via Canary Wharf, Limehouse and Tower Bridge, and back to the South Bank.

Where does the tour start? The route description and map begin at Gabriel's Wharf.

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A copy of a 330 ton ship built at Blackwall Yard in 1788. *The Sea Lark* is a copy of an 18th century American-built schooner.

Although its small entrance impeded its economic viability (ships can only enter for 3 hours on each high tide), in the 19th century **St Katherine's Dock 45** was the location of one of the greatest concentrations of portable wealth in the world. A hospital, a medieval church (St Katherine's) and more than a thousand houses were demolished to make way for rubber, tea and feathers! From St Katherine's Dock, turn left towards the river just before the entrance canal, and head towards Tower Bridge.

Across the river is Butler's Wharf. Completed in 1873, it is the largest and most densely packed group of Victorian warehouses left in London. The last ship called in 1972, around the same time that a group of artists, including David Hockney and Andrew Logan, had their studios in the area.

Tower Bridge to Gabriel's Wharf 4.5 km

As you head up to the bridge, across from you is the oldest inhabited castle in England. Today home to 23578 precious gems – the Crown Jewels – the **Tower of London 46** is perhaps the most infamous site in London. It was host to vast numbers of celebrity prisoners, the last of whom were the Kray Twins of the East End mafia in the 1950s. The Tower was also the site of the first zoo in London!



We return to the south bank, and head deep into the fastnesses of Southwark, i.e. the 'south work'. You will pass the late Victorian Guinness Trust Buildings – a fine example of the philanthropy of the famous brewing dynasty.

While it might, in former times, have been the recipient of many 'resurrected' bodies snatched illicitly from surrounding cemeteries, **Guy's Hospital 47** is one of the most famous in the world. Among those associated with Guy's are Thomas Hodgkin, discoverer of Hodgkin's lymphoma; Sir Alexander Fleming, discoverer of penicillin and instructor of pathology; Sir Frederick Hopkins, discoverer of vitamins; John Braxton Hicks, discoverer of the Braxton Hicks uterine contractions; and John Keats, the poet.

Among the trendy art galleries and studios are reminders of the area's licentious past such as **Cross Bones Cemetery 48** on Redcross Street. The age of the graveyard is unknown but Tudor historian, John Stow (1525–1605) refers to a burial ground for 'single women' – a euphemism for the prostitutes who worked in the area's legalised brothels or 'stews'. Such women were condemned to be buried in unhallowed ground. Yet many were actually licensed by the church. For some 500 years, the Bishops of Winchester exercised sole authority within the 'Liberty of The Clink', including the right to licence prostitutes under a Royal Ordinance dating back to 1161. By 1769, the graveyard had become a pauper's cemetery. The graveyard was finally closed in 1853, the dead within sleeping peacefully and unmolested until the 1990s. Then, as part of works carried out for an extension of the Jubilee Line, Museum of London archaeologists conducted a partial excavation of the site, removing some 148 skeletons. It is estimated that these represent less than 1% of the total number of burials at this site. Some were displayed at the Museum's 1998 London Bodies exhibition, including: 'a young woman's syphilitic skull with multiple erosive lesions, from Red Cross Way, Southwark, 18th century'. As part of public efforts to preserve the site from development, a ceremony to commemorate 'the outcast dead' is held at the beflowered gate to the cemetery on the 23rd of each month, at 7pm.

Palestra 49 is one of south London's first modern 'landmark' buildings. Designed by Will Alsop, the building won a prestigious British architectural award, and was described as 'a marker building...[that]...through sheer physical presence and scale, brings an unpromising site to the attention of all, making it the subject of debate'.

The Cut is home to no less than two theatres. **The Old Vic 50** was established in 1818 and has provided the backdrop to the acting prowess of many of the world's finest actors - including Sir John Gielgud, Sir Laurence Olivier and Dame Judy Dench. Since 2003, the position of artistic director has been held by the American actor Kevin Spacey.

One last push gets you to Gabriel's Wharf, and back to the river...

36 development was built over part of the old West India docks, on steel supports up to 25 metres deep. Incidentally, the name derives from early 20th century trade in fruit and vegetables from the Canary Islands.

Before heading back to the riverside with its views, wharves and Dickensian pubs, take some time out to experience the bustle of high finance. From the Foster & Partners' designed Canary Wharf station to the marble in Cabot Square, the area once again exudes opulence.

Limehouse to St Katherine's Dock 4.2 km

Limehouse is a real mixture of old and new, colloquial and exotic. The name Limehouse derives from the limekilns that were established here in the 14th century. These were used to produce quick lime for use in building mortar.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries the tea trade brought large numbers of Chinese sailors to settle here. The area became known as 'Chinatown', where the restaurants, gambling and opium dens attracted a sinister reputation.

The area is somewhat more tranquil today, thanks largely to one of the biggest engineering projects of the modern age: Beneath your feet (or wheels), four lanes of traffic are moving through the 1.8km Limehouse Link Tunnel, which cost £293 million to build. This works out at £163,000 per metre, making it the most expensive road in Britain.

Dating from c. 1720, the **Bunch of Grapes** ('The Grapes') **37** is one of the few original riverside pubs on the northbank. Charles Dickens used to visit the area (and pub) regularly as his godfather lived nearby in Newell Street. In his book *Our Mutual Friend*, the pub is loosely disguised as 'The Six Jolly Fellowship Porters'. It is described as having 'a dropsical appearance, with not a straight floor', and with 'red curtains matching the customers' noses'.

At the junction of the **Regent's Canal** with the Thames is the former Dock Master's house **38** (built 1905). It now hosts 'The Narrow' restaurant, run by celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay. The film producer David Lean used to own **Sun Wharf 39**, which is further along Narrow Street.

At the end of Narrow Street the route returns to the Thames, and passes Free Trade Wharf which, in its heyday was so busy it was called 'the Madhouse'. The **King Edward Memorial Park 40** opened in 1922, on the site of the former Shadwell Fish market. Adorning the park is a rotunda with openwork cast iron windows. As you pass it don't breathe too deeply – it is one of two ventilation shafts for the Rotherhithe Road Tunnel, which was completed in 1908.

One of the oldest pubs on the river is **The Prospect of Whitby 41**, on Wapping Wall. In the 17th century it had a reputation as a meeting place for smugglers and villains, and became known as 'The Devil's Tavern'. On the foreshore (via the stairs next to the pub) is a gallows – a reminder that slightly further west was the traditional place of execution for convicted pirates on the north bank. For maximum deterrent effect, the sentence was usually carried out at low tide, and three high tides were allowed to wash over the corpse before it was cut down and buried.



The name Shadwell is believed by some to be derived from 'Schadffleet', meaning shallow river. But it could also relate to an old well that was dedicated to St Chad. **Shadwell Basin 42** was once the eastern entrance to the London Docks (built 1811–21). The rubble and soil excavated in the process were shipped up the river in barges to be laid as the foundations for Pimlico. The church of St Paul's is traditionally known as the church of sea-captains – Captain Cook's daughter was baptised there.

During the next section of the route, you will be forgiven for imagining yourself in Holland... The **Ornamental Canal 43** follows an old ship channel to the London Docks. A monopoly granted to the London Dock Company in 1805 meant that, for 21 years, all vessels (except those from the East and West Indies) entering the Port of London with cargoes of tobacco, wool, rice, wine and brandy had to unload at London Docks. There were six quays in the docks, able to berth 302 sailing vessels. There were 50 acres of warehouse space, whose vaults provided a further eight hectares of cellarage. **Tobacco Dock 44** was one part of this giant scheme: at the time, the tobacco warehouse was celebrated for 'covering more ground, under one roof, than any public building, or undertaking, except the pyramids of Egypt'. Recent ambitious plans to make this 'the Covent Garden' of the East End failed and the site is now in search of a limbo. The ships fronting the complex are replicas of pirate ships: *The Three Sisters* is

it, the Old Brewery has recently been brought back to life, brewing beers made to historical recipes. If you decide to sample how London beer tasted in 1750, have a care though – it is 8% vol.!

Island Gardens to Canary Wharf 4.5 km

The route now heads north, under the Thames through the Greenwich Foot Tunnel into the borough of Tower Hamlets. The name derives from the small villages or hamlets that were near the Tower of London. There is nothing 'hamlet'-like about the area today!

The origin of the name 'Isle of Dogs' has never been satisfactorily explained – it could, simply, be a term of contempt. Some of the placenames on the Isle of Dogs itself are pretty curious. You may well ask what do 'canaries' have to do with docks? What exactly was the 'mudchute'? Well ...

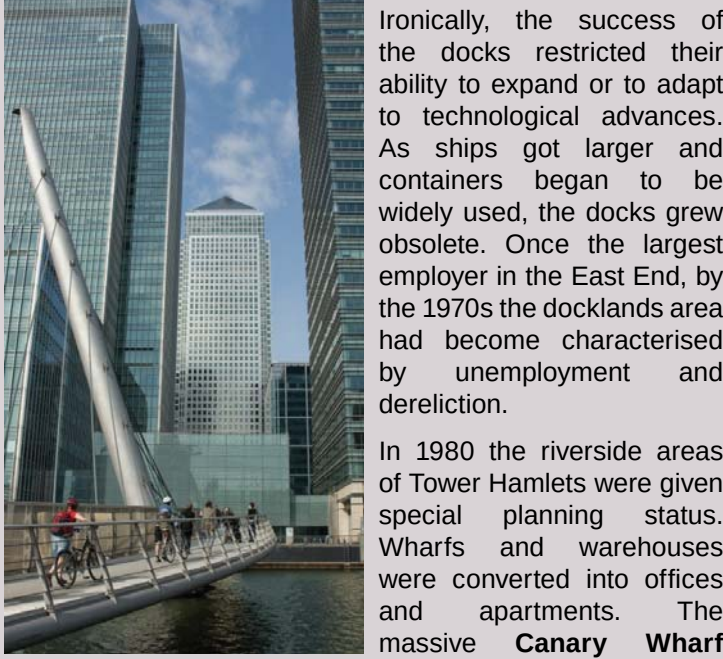


Before you leave **Island Gardens 32**, look back across the river. Even Christopher Wren considered this the best point to view his Royal Hospital. Over to the left you can also see the four-chimneyed power station that provides the back-up electricity supply for London's Underground system.

The rather uninspiring name of Mudchute derived from a new (i.e. late 19th century!) system of dredging the **Millwall Docks 34**. This involved the 'pneumatic transmission' of mud from the bottom of the dock at a rate of 10 cubic metres per minute through a cast-iron pipe out onto the 'outside land'. Once the smelly silt had settled and stopped 'wobbling like a jelly', as some locals recall, the **Mudchute 33** became a fertile allotment site, noted for superb rhubarb. It is now home to an urban farm and park.

During the 18th century, London and its international trade continued to expand. Competing for space in the crowded river were ships carrying goods like sugar and rum from the West Indies; tea and spices from the East Indies; wine from the Mediterranean; furs, timber and hemp for rope from Russia and the Baltic, and tobacco from America. The heavy congestion in the Pool meant damage to goods and ships, theft, and delays. Merchants complained loudly about the effect this had on their costs and profits. In the 1790s the merchants of the highly profitable West Indies' trade campaigned for better port facilities. Their new, off-river docks were followed by other private schemes such as the London Docks in 1802 (**Shadwell Basin 42**), **St Katherine's Dock 45** and, in 1868, **Millwall Dock**.

Over the course of the 19th century, the Isle of Dogs and the surrounding area was transformed completely, starting with the **West India Docks 35** – from marshy pastureland into a conglomeration of almost medieval-style fortresses, replete with guard houses and moats. Hidden behind high walls, accessed only through imposing gateways armed with spikes, were grand avenues of brick warehouses surrounding rectangular, man-made lakes. In between were ironworks, mills and shipyards. The whole area bristled with trade and industry.



Ironically, the success of the docks restricted their ability to expand or to adapt to technological advances. As ships got larger and containers began to be widely used, the docks grew obsolete. Once the largest employer in the East End, by the 1970s the docklands area had become characterised by unemployment and dereliction.

In 1980 the riverside areas of Tower Hamlets were given special planning status. Wharfs and warehouses were converted into offices and apartments. The massive **Canary Wharf**

for lamps, to lubricate machinery and even for use in soap. The bones were used in umbrellas and corsets.

South Dock to Greenwich 3.7 km

The exquisite yachts and cruisers in **South Dock** marina **25** may have you wishing to swap your wheels for sails... But keep pedalling – onto **Deptford Wharf 26** and past a miscellany of bizarre sculptures and features.



Among the faces depicted on the riverside façade of the tall, green tower block on your right are some historical people associated with Deptford, including Oloudah Equiano, the black activist against the slave trade, and the formidable Elizabeth I. Other famous people linked with the area are the playwright Christopher Marlowe, who was murdered locally in a pub brawl; the diarist, Samuel Pepys who worked in Deptford as Secretary to the Royal Navy, as well as that most (in) famous of English monarchs, Henry VIII.

At the end of the wharf is a series of elegant, late Georgian buildings. They, and the imposing riverside gate, are all that's left of the **Victualing** (food and provisions) **Yard of the Royal Navy 27**. As you cycle through the modern Pepys' housing estate, try to imagine sights, sounds and smells that would have emanated from the slaughterhouses, pickling houses, brew-houses, mustard and pepper mills, and bakeries that once stood there.

The route now follows the perimeter of the old **Royal Naval Dockyard 23**, founded by Henry VIII on the site in 1513. It became the base for many famous English expeditions, including those led by Walter Raleigh and Captain Cook. Sir Francis Drake was knighted here in 1581 by Elizabeth I after he had circumnavigated the world in the *Pelican*, renamed *The Golden Hind* during the voyage.

Deptford remained the cradle of the English navy for over 300 years, and developed a reputation as a centre of shipbuilding excellence across Europe. By the time it closed in 1869, some 350 ships had been built here.

At the river end of Watergate Street crane your neck for a view of the Master Shipwright's House, built in 1710. Described as 'one of the half dozen earliest surviving naval dockyard buildings in Britain', it recently featured in the *Times* 'property pages with a price tag of £5 million.

Another of the illustrious people associated with Deptford was the Tsar of Russia, **Peter the Great** (1672-1725) **29**. As a young man, he travelled to Europe in 1697-8 to study new developments in technology, especially the latest techniques of shipbuilding and seamanship. During his visit to London he stayed at Sayes Court in Deptford, the home of another famous diarist John Evelyn (1620-1706). The large house was beautifully furnished and close to the dockyards – so Peter could easily visit ships being built. But Peter and his party were not ideal tenants and wrecked the house and garden. The King's Surveyor, Sir Christopher Wren was ordered to report on the damage. He recommended that Evelyn be paid £350 in compensation – a huge sum in the 17th century.

There were other, more constructive outcomes: When Peter (who was apparently 2 metres tall) returned to Russia, he established a large shipbuilding industry and the precursor to the modern Russian Navy. His association with Deptford is commemorated by a rather bizarre statue further along Deptford waterfront.

The name Deptford – meaning deep ford – is derived from the place where the ancient, Roman Watling Street (now the A2 from London to Dover) crosses the River Ravensbourne at **Deptford Creek 30**. This busy thoroughfare was also part of the pilgrimage route to Canterbury from London, and would have been used by pilgrims such as those depicted in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

Modern Deptford is gaining a reputation for its burgeoning art scene, and was recently dubbed by the *New York Times* a 'boisterous concoction of blue-collar aesthetics and intermittent hipsterism'. Not too far off our route, along the Waterlink Way, is the mural that inspired the title of Dire Straits' album *Love over Gold*. Deptford is also the site of the band's first ever gig!

One of London's four World Heritage Sites, Maritime Greenwich deserves at least a day of its own. The birthplace of Henry VIII, Mary I and Elizabeth I, today Greenwich boasts the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich Park, the Royal Observatory and the Greenwich Meridian. Then there's Greenwich Market and the beautifully restored St Alfege's Church. Also, just opened is the new, free *Discover Greenwich* exhibition in the **Old Royal Hospital 31**. Beside

sufferance) wharfs created to ease congestion on the Legal Quays.



Northeast of the church is The Mayflower pub (rebuilt in 1958). It stands next to the landing stairs from where the Pilgrim Fathers set sail aboard *The Mayflower* on 5 August 1620 for America, where they were the first permanent European settlers.

Just around the corner is the **Brunel Museum 19**. This tells the fascinating, if tragic, story of the first underwater tunnel in the world which lies beside or, rather, under the museum. The tunnel opened in 1843 after taking 18 years (and at least 8 lives) to build. Never short on hyperbole, the Victorian press hailed it as 'the 8th Wonder of the World'. It proved a massive victory sensation, attracting 2 million people in the first year (half the population of London at the time), each paying a penny to walk through. Since 1865, the tunnel has been part of the London rail network, connecting Rotherhithe with Wapping across the river.

Now for a bit of trivia: Did you know that the actor Michael Caine was born in Rotherhithe on 14 March 1933 as Maurice Joseph Micklewhite?

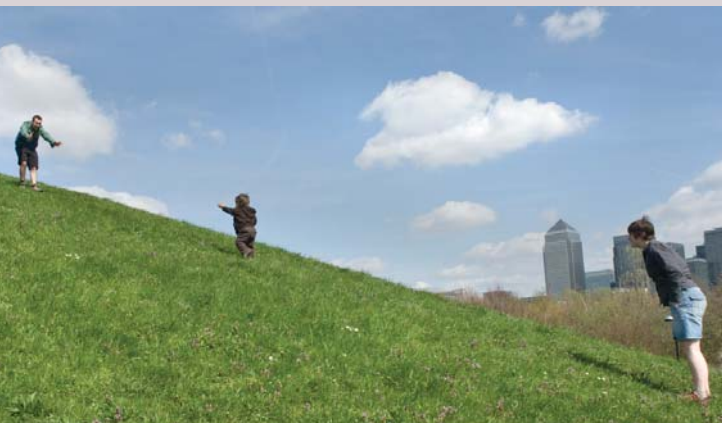
Along the route are several **bascule** bridges **20**. From the French term for seesaw and balance, these bridges are balanced by a counterweight. Essentially, they roll like a rocking chair on a track to raise the span and provide clearance for boat traffic. They are the most common type of movable bridge because they open quickly and require relatively little energy to operate. After the 'Old Salt Quay', the route follows Rotherhithe Street, thought to be the longest street in London.

In the days before buildings in streets were numbered, the only fixed points were local landmarks such as pubs and churches. The stairs leading down to the river where people could go and hail a waterman in his wherry, i.e. taxi, often took their names from a neighbouring hostelry or church. Many of these names survive in the new developments and renovations along Rotherhithe Street e.g. 'King and Queen' Wharf and the beautifully restored **Globe Wharf 21** apartments.

Across the river is Limehouse. See if you can spot 'The Grapes' pub in the row of older terraces. The white steeple is St Anne's Church, built by Nicholas Hawksmoor between 1712-24. The clock tower is the tallest in London after the Westminster Clock Tower (Big Ben) and was a well known landmark in the past for shipping in the Thames.

From Pageant Crescent there's a stunning view of Canary Wharf across the river. Its landmark office tower, at 244m (800 ft), is Britain's tallest building. Completed in 1991 and designed by Cesar Pelli, One Canada Square is more than 50 storeys high and is clad in stainless steel panels. The aircraft warning light on top flashes 40 times a minute.

The route now explores a part of London that even many Londoners don't know about. From the 19th century onwards, the Rotherhithe Docks were largely used for imports of timber from Norway, Russia and Sweden – hence the Scandinavian street names. In 1980, **Russia Dock 22** was filled in and transformed into a woodland park. The water channels and ponds now provide habitats for kingfishers and herons. Surviving dock features include mooring bollards and chains.



Stave Hill 23 was built five years later of local waste material and rubble. At 10 metres high, it is the highest point of the tour. A climb to the top is a must for two reasons - the panoramic view of London, and the cast-bronze map that shows the surrounding area as it was in 1895.

Continue south to Greenland Dock. Take a minute or two to study the metal 'trade compass' set in the ground enroute. If you haven't already realised how important and busy London's docklands once were, you will now!

Greenland Dock 24 is the oldest of all the Rotherhithe docks. It acquired its current name in the 18th century, when many ships sailed from London to Greenland, hunting whales for blubber and whalebone. The blubber was rendered into oil

Called 'An Aladdin's Cave for foodies' by legendary restaurant critic Egon Ronay, **Butler's Wharf 12** comprises a complex of restaurants and specialist food shops. But first, savour the atmosphere of Shad Thames (the name is apparently a corruption of 'St John at Thames', a reference to a settlement of an Order of the Knights Templar). The street is the best surviving example of the dramatic dockland 'canyons' created by the massive warehouses. The metal bridges were once used to transport goods by barrow between warehouses.

Go through the archway at No. 36 to access the riverside. The view – back to Tower Bridge and the City of London behind it – is spectacular. Over two thousand years of architectural splendour! It is amazing that so much has survived. Later on though you will cycle through areas where placenames are often the only remnants of what went on.

On your right is the **Design Museum 13**, whose collection 'is an important record of the key designs which have shaped the modern world'. Around the corner at **St Saviour's Dock 14** is a superb example of architectural renovation, as well as a cosy houseboat village – complete with gardens!

The route now follows Bermondsey Wall, an embankment built to protect this low-lying marshland from flooding. And there have been great floods – in 1090 London Bridge was carried away; in 1236 the waters rose so high that boats could be rowed in the middle of Westminster Hall.

Despite that, this was also a popular place to live and visit – away from the busy, crowded and dirty city. **Cherry Gardens 15** was a resort in the 17th century and was visited by the diarist Samuel Pepys (perhaps best known for his account of the Great Fire of London in 1666). Not much further along are the remains of the moated **Manor House 16** of Edward III (King of England 1327-1377). He led his troops to victory against the French at the Battle of Crécy in 1346 but is perhaps best known for creating the Order of the Garter. Apparently, the chivalrous king picked up a lady's fallen garter and declared "Honi soit qui mal y pense" (Evil to him who evil thinks). Notwithstanding its curious name, the Order of the Garter is the pinnacle of the British honours system.

The (old) **Angel pub 17** was visited by Captain Cook as he prepared for his voyage to Australia. If you also feel inclined to visit, there is no need anymore to observe the public/private distinctions on the doors. The pub, recently refurbished, has a fascinating collection of prints of old Rotherhithe.

Across the river, in Wapping, you can see more evidence of the warehouses and docks that once thrived along the Thames, housing tea, coffee, sugar, rum, spices, silks, furs and tobacco. The fine Georgian houses to the left were built for the officials of the London Dock Company (c. 1811). They mark the main entrance to the London Docks from the river, now filled in to create a garden.

Next door is the HQ of the Thames River Police. This force was originally set up in 1798 to tackle theft and looting from the thousands of merchant ships in the river. It was the first professional police force in England and was initially seen by many as an infringement of 'the liberties of the free men and women of England'!

Continue along Bermondsey Wall East to Rotherhithe. Few areas of London have undergone as much change from war damage, post-war reconstruction, and redevelopment in the 1980s and