



Docklands to London Bridge

Distance: 5 km=3 miles

very easy walking

Region: Central London

Date written: 5-dec-2010

Author: Thwelder

Last update: 26-aug-2023

Refreshments: everywhere

Map: London A-Z

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

Public rights are restricted to printing, copying or distributing this document exactly as seen here, complete and without any cutting or editing. See *Principles* on main webpage.

Dockland, river, history, parks, churches, museum, riverside pubs

In Brief

This is a stroll through part of London Dockland, along the River Thames with some of the best views, and under Tower Bridge to London Bridge. Along the way you meet many unexpected delights on a route which is always interesting.

For refreshments, there are numerous inns and eateries, some overlooking the river.

This walk can be combined with the South Bank walk to make a memorable 5½-mile walk from Canada Water to Westminster Bridge. At the start, you have a choice for the first leg, to the river, either through Southwark Park or through Rotherhithe.



Any type of clothing and footwear is fine. Dogs are welcome.



The walk begins at **Canada Water Underground / Rail Station**, postcode SE16 7PJ. See a tube or overground map for details.

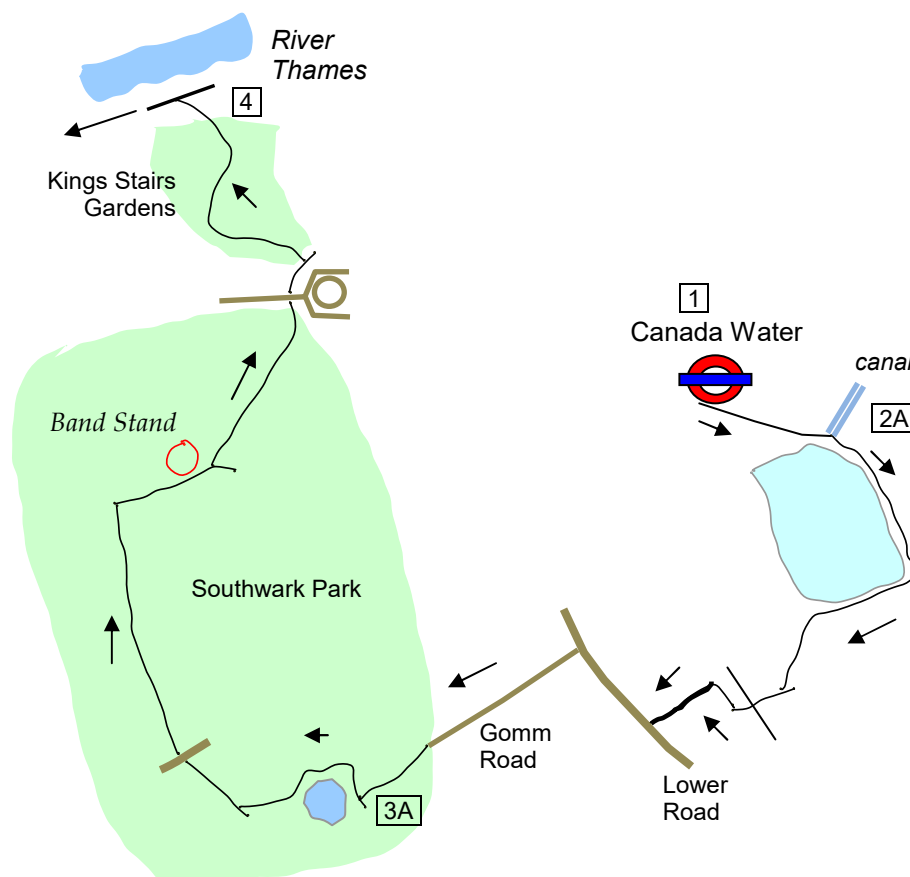
The Walk

- 1 Come out at Canada Water station at the exit marked *Shopping Centre, Lower Road*. This leads you to the waterfront at Canada Water. Turn **left** beside the water for about 50m to a little wooden raisable bridge over a canal on your left.

Canada Water, part of Rotherhithe, sums up the excitement and optimism of the Dockland developments. The lake is fresh and was once part of the old Canada Dock. The new Jubilee Line station (1999) brought this area only two stops from London Bridge and the result has been a huge expansion of commercial and residential developments, many in a radical architectural style. The angular building is the new Library, like an inverted pyramid which juts over the water.

You now have a choice of **two** possible routes at the start to take you to the River Thames. The **Southwark Park** route and the **Rotherhithe Village** route both have historical interest and attractions.

Choice A: to the Thames via Southwark Park



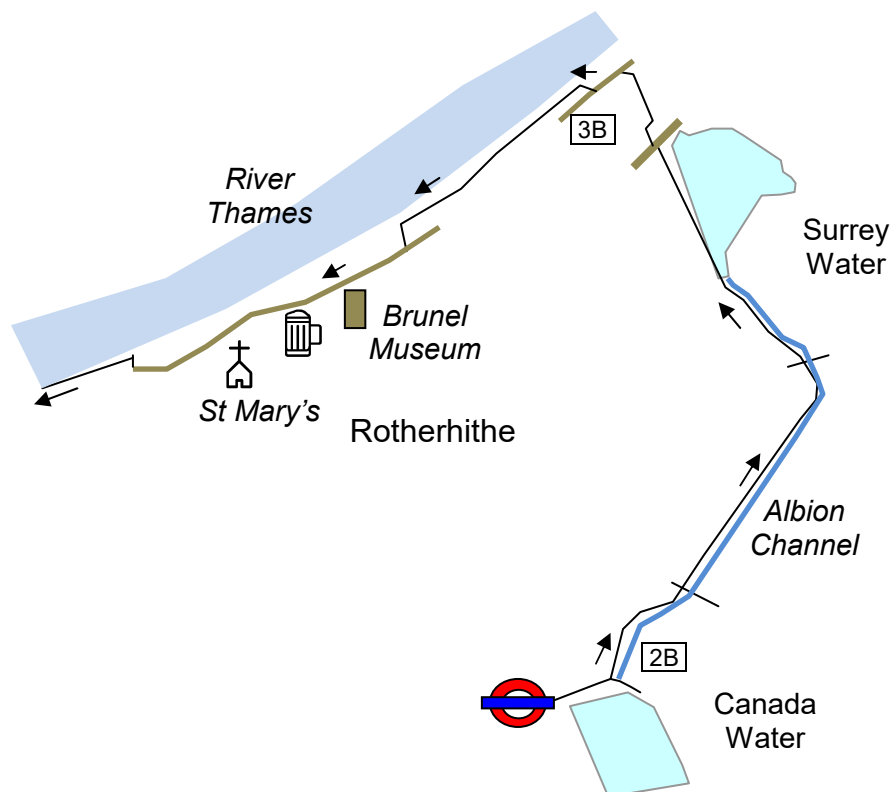
2A Cross the little bridge and stay beside the main water, passing a huge exhibition space, turning **right** in the corner, passing several large retail units [2023: through a narrow boarded-up passageway due to major construction]. Turn **left** at the next corner into a huge open car park area, passing a unit that is the home of *The Range* homeware store and continue ahead soon reaching the first main Surrey Quays shopping centre entrance. Turn **right** here along a tree-lined avenue walkway between two sections of the car park. At the end of the walkway, cross a curving road and a service road to a signed footpath and go **right** down steps, along a passage and **left** on Hothfield Place (unnamed at this point). At the end, turn **right** on Lower Road. In only 100m, turn **left** on Gomm road. *Gomm Road is named after Richard Carr-Gomm, founder of several charities that provide care and housing for underprivileged and lonely people.*

3A At the end of Gomm Road, go through the massive gates of Southwark Park. Turn immediately **left** and, in 70m, **right** past the entrance to the Art Gallery. *The Art Gallery houses worthwhile contemporary exhibitions.* Cross a space to the café (and wc) where you can buy drinks and snacks on a terrace over the lake with coots and swans. There are several routes through this large and varied park: the one described here shows it off well. Turn **right** beside the lake and go **left** around it, through the Ada Salter garden, then **right** and **right** again. Go over a road and continue along an avenue of plane trees. Turn **right** to the magnificent band-stand and wheel **half-left** past it onto a tarmac path that leads to the park gate (Paradise Gate) near a roundabout of roads visible ahead. Exit to the busy main road. *The church over on the other side of the roundabout, next to the Rotherhithe Tunnel approach, with a Viking ship as a weather vane, is St Olav's Norwegian church, one of several*



scandinavian churches in this area. Cross the road and enter King's Stairs Gardens, an attractive riverside park. Fork immediately **left** and turn **right** at the children's play area, circling right around it. The path rises to the King's Steps by the Thames with majestic views of the river. Turn **left** along river walk and skip forward to section 4.

Alternative choice B: to the Thames via Rotherhithe Village



2B Turn **left** along the canalside. This beautifully restored and landscaped canal is called the *Albion Channel*. It is a home to waterfowl, especially moorhens (distinguishable from the white-beaked coots by their red beaks and shy manners). The canal goes under a 3-arch bridge under the main road. It curves left under a minor road and passes another little raisable bridge. On your right now is a large expanse of water known as Surrey Water. Keep straight ahead as far as the main road. Cross straight over the main road and continue on a raised path, leading to the huge Surrey Basin Rolling Bascule bridge, 20m long. Turn left on the road here and, in 30m, go **right** up steps to the riverside.

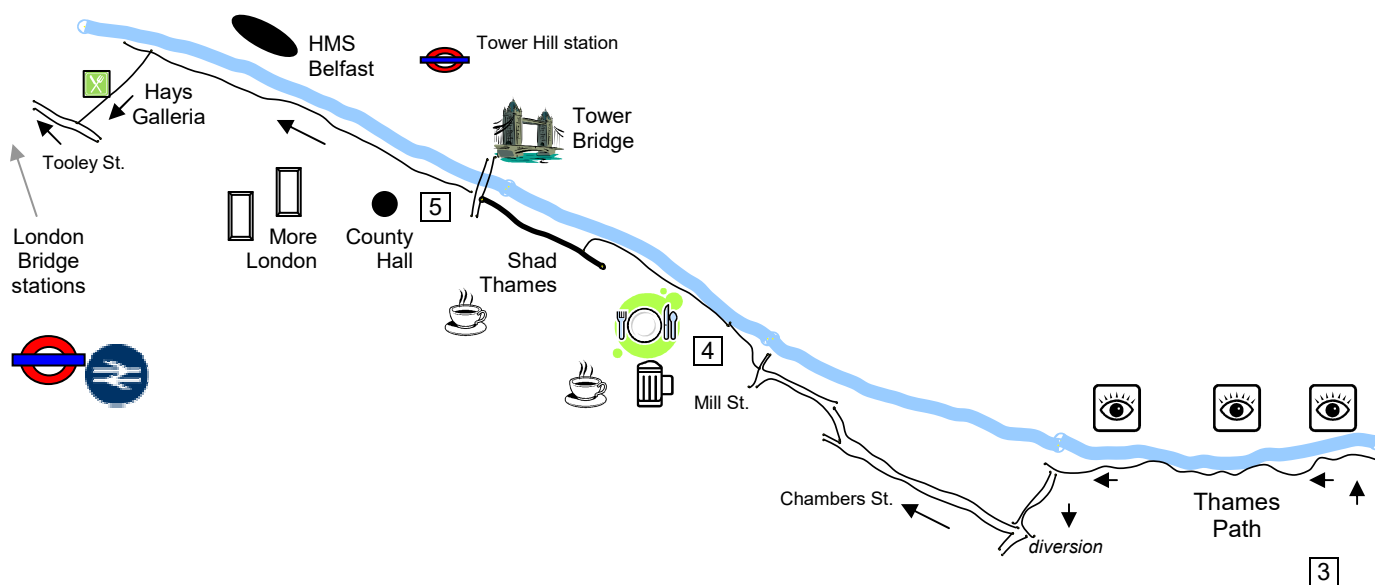
3B Turn **left** along the river path, passing apartments, new and converted, going up and down steps where necessary, passing a sandy beach when the tide is out. Eventually you are forced to turn left away from the river by a statue of a pilgrim William Bradford, governor of the Plymouth Colony, who sailed on the Mayflower from near this point. *The statue shows him peering over the shoulder of a boy from a later century. Notice the A-Z map dated 1620 in his pocket.* Continue along a road parallel to the river. In 100m, on your left is the Brunel Museum.

The museum is situated in the Engine House built by Sir Marc Isambard Brunel (father of Isambard Kingdom Brunel) to pump water out of the Thames Tunnel (where they entertained the Prince of Wales to a banquet and later nearly drowned). The tunnel is still used as part of London Underground. The

museum is run by volunteers and contains a number of exhibits, models and pictures on several levels.

Soon on your right is the *Mayflower* pub (originally called the *Spread Eagle*), dating from the 1500s, at the site where that ship sailed in 1620. On your left is St Mary's Church, designed in 1714-15 by John James. *One of the most "Catholic" of parish churches, it has a large portrait of the Virgin the in east window. It is especially noted for its historic organ. Just across the road is the old Free School with figures of two scholars.* Turn **right** again back to the riverside as soon as you see a sign for the *Thames Path* and continue onwards, heading for Tower bridge.

Along the Thames Path



- 4 You have the best views of Tower Bridge along this path. The "Gherkin" building is on the north side and the "Shard" at London Bridge, the tallest inhabited building in Western Europe, is on the south side. This walk is part of the Jubilee Greenway and has several terraces from where you obtain closer and closer views of the City, separated by quiet roads. Soon you come to the *Angel* pub. The terrace just after this contains an especially poignant piece of sculpture *Dr Salter's Daydream* by Diane Gorvin.

Dr Alfred Salter was a local physician and Labour politician who campaigned for better health services for the people of Bermondsey, especially for the treatment of TB. His daughter Joyce died in 1910 of scarlet fever. The four-piece sculpture shows Salter as an old man dreaming of sunshine days, and his wife, with Joyce grinning mischievously and the cat prowling along the wall.

Continue along the next terrace for around 150m until you reach a *Thames Path* sign. Keep ahead here as directed. You pass some terrace gardens and a large stone water fountain. *The pub on your left, the Old Justice, was used by Paul McCartney for the film "Give My Regards to Broad Street".* Stay next to the riverside until a *Thames Path* sign forces you to turn **left**. In 40m turn **right** on Bermondsey Walk East, rounding the corner in front of a huge construction. *This is the Tideway Super Sewer, due for completion in 2025.* Turn **right** on Chambers Street passing the entrance to the project. Take the first **right**, East Lane. At the end, turn **left** on Bermondsey Wall West, a narrow lane which gives you a feeling of the

great wharves and millhouses of the past. At the end, you reach Mill Street and one of the little secrets of Docklands.

- 5 Go straight over Mill Street towards what looks like an untidy basement car park. On the wall is a red sign indicating *Riverside Walkway*. The rising path curves round and through an arch and goes over an award-winning hydraulic cable stay swing bridge. This shiny bridge takes you into the Pool of London (the ancient port area). This part is New Concordia Wharf and St Saviour's Dock. The murky river here is The Neckinger, supposedly named after the summary treatment meted out to the necks of pirates. *This area was also used in the musical film "Oliver!"*. Continue along the riverside with its large anchors and sculpture, passing many opportunities for nourishment. The ambience will undoubtedly have changed now with hundred of tourists viewing the historic riverside. After *Le Pont de la Tour* (a superior and fairly good restaurant), turn **left** down a passage, passing the Pont's own food shop. You are in historic Shad Thames criss-crossed by metal bridges that used to link the warehouses, once a Victorian mega warehouse, now a smart area with coffee shops and bars. Turn **right** along Shad Thames (after looking back at the bridges). On the left, is a small piazza with cheaper coffee shops. One reason for its popularity for photo shots is the water sculpture by Antony Donaldson called *Waterfall*. No elaboration is needed. Continue along Shad Thames passing under Tower Bridge.

Tower Bridge is a steel raisable bascule bridge with a suspension bridge on each side. (Yes, steel – the stone effect is just a skin.) It was finished in 1894. The bridge is 244m in length and the towers, each standing on a massive pier sunk into the riverbed, are 65m high. There is an exhibition, open daily, on the north west side and visitors can go up to the walkways at the top. On your (south) side there are the engine rooms. You can check on-line for times when the bridge lifts.

- 6 Continue ahead past Potters Field Park, where events often take place, and soon reach a glass building that looks like a motorbike helmet. This is City Hall, home of the Greater London Authority. *City Hall is open all day weekdays. Visitors can climb the rotary staircase and look down on the council chamber, rather like in the Reichstag, Berlin. In fact, both buildings were (re-)designed by Norman Foster. City Hall is also a cultural centre.* Continuing onwards, you are close to an area of (literally) cutting-edge office developments known as More London, with smart bars and cafés and sculpture. The scooped-out area is known as The Scoop. Next comes the ship HMS Belfast. *HMS Belfast is a World-War-II battle cruiser and museum ship operated by the Imperial War Museum. It is open daily to visitors and gives them a vivid experience of life aboard a serving ship.* Immediately after the ship, you reach Hays Galleria, a stylish enclosed shopping area. This used to be Hays Wharf until it fell on hard times and was redeveloped to become a major tourist attraction. Turn **left** through Hays Galleria passing in the centre a large eccentric sculpture *The Navigators* by David Kemp.

Decision point. Would you like to continue further along the riverside towards Westminster Bridge? If so, follow the next walk in the series, **Dazzling South Bank**. Otherwise, exit the Galleria as indicated here.

At the far end, exit into Tooley Street, where London Bridge station (underground and rail) is on the **right**.