

u3a Sidcup - Ramblers 2 – Thames Path and parkland walk from Tower Bridge to Southwark Park – 27 February 2024 – leader Helen Salmon

We met up at London Bridge Station, crossed over the road into the Hays Galleria and onto the Thames Path to Tower Bridge. We continued on under the bridge and along Shad Thames. After turning left into Maggie Blake's Cause alleyway we reached the river again. Turning right we continued walking along the frontage of Butler's Wharf with its imposing Victorian warehouses that have been turned into apartments and restaurants. At St Saviour's Dock we crossed the stainless steel footbridge with its inlet to warehouses. *This dock displayed the bodies of pirates who were captured and hanged here. It is here that Bill Sykes, in Charles Dickens novel Oliver Twist, falls from the roof and dies in the mud.* It is very muddy! This led us to New Concordia Wharf and Jacob's Island Pier. *Apparently Charles Dickens described this part of Bermondsey as, "the filthiest, strangest and most extraordinary of the many localities that are hidden in London".* He would not recognise it now.

We turned away from the river along Bermondsey Wall West, turned right down East Lane and left into Chambers Street where the very large Tideway East Project was hidden by colourful hoarding. We turned left into Loftie Street and followed the road to Fountain Green Square where we were back at the riverside. The walkway widens as it approaches the pier by Bermondsey Beach. Continuing on we arrived at The Angel Pub. Across the road there are the remains of the 14th century moated house of Edward III. He reigned from 1327 to 1377 and built the residence in Rotherhithe. Crossing back over the road there are four statues that depict Dr Alfred and Ada Salter, their daughter Joyce and their cat. They are known as 'Dr Salter's Daydream'. Dr Salter, on seeing the awful living conditions of those around, offered free medical services to those who could not pay. See *photograph of Steve with Dr Salter!* Ada Salter was a social reformer, environmental improver and local politician who in 1922 became Mayor of Bermondsey.

We walked past the The Angel pub and came to the King's stairs Gardens named after the stairs that served Edward III's palace. *On the north bank of the Thames we could see across to Execution Dock where the notorious Captain Kidd was executed in 1701 after he had been convicted of piracy and murder.*

Carrying on we walked through a narrow passage between warehouses linked by overhead bridges into Elephant Lane and Rotherhithe Street until we came to St Mary's Church which provides the burial place for four of the Mayflower's owners including Christopher Jones who captained the ship to the New World. I took the group on a slight detour through the church grounds to see The Rotherhithe Watch House (now a café). It was established as a base for constables of the parish in 1821 to monitor the streets at night as well as guarding the churchyard against body snatchers! It is attached to the former charity school set up by Master Mariner Peter Hills. After the detour we walked past the Mayflower pub and on to the Brunel Museum. This was the engine house that pumped the water out of the Thames Tunnel. We walked down Railway Avenue, turned right into Brunel Road past Rotherhithe Station. This is where the first part of our walk finished and we made our way to Southwark Park.

Considering all the rain we have had, the crocuses were still looking lovely on our way to the Pavilion Café for lunch and a nice cup of tea or coffee. The day was so nice we sat outside to eat. Who would have thought after all the rain and frosty mornings that we could sit outside in February next to the lake?