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# *The regeneration of London's Docklands: New riverside Renaissance or catalyst for social conflict?*

Relatrice  
Prof. Tania Rossetto

Laureando  
Marianna Feriotto  
1046538/ LMLLA

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Marianna Feriotto



## INTRODUCTION

In the last decades London's skyline and riverscape have changed quite significantly. Although new buildings, bridges and skyscrapers have been located in the City or in the centre of London, there is another area in the eastern part of this city which has seen deep transformations: the Docklands.

Situated along the river Thames, the Docklands area, which covers 2000 hectares of riverfront land and centres on the boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Newham, Southwark, Lewisham, Southwark and Greenwich. Vital part of London's port, the Docklands have always been the centre of London's trade and economy since their Roman foundation, in 43 AD. At the beginning of their history, the docks expanded rapidly and saw periods of growth, success and prosperity. Attracting merchants from all over the world, trade increased and thousands of ships and vessels arrived at the harbour with a huge selection of cargo, from fur to timber, from spices to wine.

Thanks to their strategic position, the Docklands helped to establish England as a world power. However, this long period of affluence and prosperity was interrupted in the 1960s, when the Docklands saw years of steep decline caused by deteriorating labour relations and the introduction of containerisation: new container ships replacing smaller vessels could not be safely accommodated in the port of London. Indeed, the river Thames was not deep enough to allow their navigation and trade switched to ports better able to cope – such as Tilbury, downstream<sup>1</sup>. This situation led to the gradual abandonment of the docks and more than ten thousand workers lost their job with the dismissing of the area, which became a derelict wasteland.

In 1981 a new chapter of the story of the Docklands began and the key words became regeneration and redevelopment. Thanks to the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), an agency created by the UK Government, the area became the site of the largest

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<sup>1</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London's Docklands*, Oxford, Shire Publications, 2011, p. 10

regeneration project in Europe<sup>2</sup> and saw a huge process of re-urbanization and requalification. Through the work of the LDDC, 8½ square miles of east and south London were regenerated, leading to the creation of houses, buildings, offices, infrastructures, such as the Docklands Light Railway or The London City Airport, as well as university branches and seats of multinational companies.

Internationally renowned architects have worked in this area. Richard Rogers worked to create the Millennium Dome, an exhibition space which housed the Millennium Experience, and designed the Riverside South skyscraper department in Canary Wharf, London's new business centre. In addition, many Docklands' buildings were drawn by other great and famous names of international architecture, such as Cesar Pelli, Terry Farrell and Norman Foster.

Thriving port, desolate wasteland, centre of London's business, it is clear that the look and feel of this part of East London have been transformed. However, even though these changes have been quite extreme, they have led to the creation of a new vital centre in London's heart and have helped to establish London as a leading global city.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/docklands/whats-on/permanent-galleries/new-port-new-city-1945-present/#sthash.bzli1hou.dpuf>



# CHAPTER ONE: THE HISTORY OF LONDON'S DOCKLANDS

## Introduction

When we think about London, the first things that come to our mind are traditional and internationally famous iconic buildings. Big Ben, Buckingham Palace, the Tower of London or St Paul's Cathedral, to mention only some of them, are often associated with London<sup>3</sup>. But in the last years new landmarks, such as Canary Wharf and its skyscrapers (for example UK's second tallest building, One Canada Square) or the O2 (formerly known as the Millennium Dome), have been added to the list of London's symbols and have become icons of this city. While the former traditional buildings are located in Westminster or in the City (the core of London), the latter are situated in the Docklands, an area lying along the river Thames in the Eastern part of the city. This 2000 hectare riverfront land is a thrilling combination of water and new architecture, as well as a setting for business, housing and culture.

But this 'Wall Street on water'<sup>4</sup> was a really different area just thirty years ago. Indeed, after being part of the world's largest port<sup>5</sup>, 'containerization and relocation of port facilities'<sup>6</sup> led to the decline of the Docklands. Only after a project of the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), this derelict riverside was regenerated, 'involving the improvement of the infrastructure and the creation of new jobs and homes'<sup>7</sup>.

Before analyzing the transformation and rebirth of the Docklands during the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is important to focus on the history of this area to better understand the key role

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.londondrum.com/planner/10-best-landmarks.php>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/sep/06/canary-wharf-recession-london-history>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.portcities.org.uk/london/server/show/ConNarrative.46/The-19thcentury-port.html>

<sup>6</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, Penguin Books, 1998, p.19

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*

that this part of London has played for its country and the entire world, from the Roman period to the present day.

## **The origins and the Roman Period**

London's docks, these 'enclosed bodies of water'<sup>8</sup> that lie on both sides of the River Thames, 'are as old as the city itself'<sup>9</sup>. However, even though 'their story belongs to the story of the growth of trade on the Thames'<sup>10</sup>, there is no precise information about the foundation of Britain's capital and the beginning of its story is mythical.

The first accounts about the origins of Britain appear in two medieval sources, the *Historia Britonum* (The History of the Britons), a collection of historical stories commonly attributed to the ninth-century Welsh monk Nennius, and the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (the History of the Kings of Britain), written by Geoffrey of Monmouth. Both these texts describe the settlement of Britain by Brutus, a Roman consul and descendant of the legendary hero Aeneas, who had been banished from his homeland for having accidentally killed his father<sup>11</sup>. After travelling across the Mediterranean with a crew of Trojan ex-slaves, Brutus arrived in Albion – the ancient name for Britain – an island populated by a race of giants<sup>12</sup>. During the supposed foundation, he declared himself king, renamed the island, coining the name 'Britain', and established his headquarters in Troia Nova or New Troy, the area he had chosen and which corresponded to today's City of London<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London's Docklands*, p.7

<sup>9</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, Ian Allan Publishing, 2012, p. 11

<sup>10</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p.20

<sup>11</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 17

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>13</sup> *Ivi*, p.18

However, there are neither historical documents nor archeological findings that confirm or support that Brutus truly existed. What is undoubted is that ‘if Brutus’s New Troy ever did exist, all evidence of it had been lost by the time the great Roman Emperor Claudius arrived on British shores in AD 43’<sup>14</sup>. Indeed, the Roman gradual, but successful, invasion of Britain was a turning point for the history not only of London but also of the entire island.

According to Cassius Dio’s account about the Roman conquest of Britain<sup>15</sup>, written in A.D. 175, when the Romans arrived in this area in 43 A.D., they found sparsely populated banks and a watery wasteland. After subduing the native Britons, they ‘immediately set about creating an infrastructure across the wild landscape of south-eastern Britain and began to construct commercial and military routes through the area’<sup>16</sup>. They transformed what had been a small hamlet into a prosperous town, called Londinium, the ancient name for London. The colons started building the first London Bridge to link the northern and southern banks, as well as a fort and a dock along the Thames.

Soon, the new town established itself as a convenient port and its trade flourished thanks to a desirable and strategic position. Indeed, being situated in the south-eastern part of Britain, the site of Londinium’s harbour offered sufficient deep water for a port serving the continent of Europe<sup>17</sup>. So, even though ‘the Thames was much broader and shallower, the comparatively small boats of the time could be readily beached or moored along London’s fortified riverbank’<sup>18</sup>. Another advantage was that the harbour was both sufficiently inland to discourage sea pirates’ raids and easily accessible from the Rheine, the Elbe and the Seine – the three major rivers on the Continent<sup>19</sup>.

The port saw a period of wealth and prosperity also because trade was vital to the Roman Empire. The Romans had ‘the intention of using the site as a distribution centre for goods from

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<sup>14</sup> Ivi, p. 19

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>17</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 20

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/347049/London-Docklands>

<sup>19</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 23

other parts of the empire<sup>20</sup> and, as a consequence, the port saw the arrival of a variety of ships and vessels with a huge selection of cargos. A great number of non-perishable goods arrived in Londinium to be re-distributed to the rest of the island: high-quality pottery, such as Samian ware, imported from Rome and Gaul, textiles (silk damask and fine linen), or building materials to satisfy the constant development of Londinium were only some of the many items imported into the dock. Among this abundant merchandise there were also goods that left the port: ships sailing to the Continent were loaded with Celtic slaves, corn, large hunting dogs and woolen cloth, which was particularly efficient in the rain<sup>21</sup>.

Back inside the dock complex there were large warehouses, which stored imported supplies for Londinium, and a small market area, where perishable goods were sold as quickly as possible. Along the riverbank there were also the houses which hosted the merchants arriving in the town and the homes of the dock employees. Indeed, Londinium attracted not only Roman families, merchants and ship owners from various parts of the empire, but also many people looking for a job in the port. Thus, the harbour saw the beginning of a tradition that was to continue for nearly 2,000 years: men queuing at the docks to be selected for work<sup>22</sup>.

Londinium rapidly expanded, becoming a cosmopolitan centre, and its harbor and the dock area increased in size and importance, becoming the core of the local economy. In addition, after the division of Britain into two parts – Superior and Inferior – this town became the capital of the former and gained more prestige.

However, after this long period of prosperity, the fortunes of Londinium's port began to decline. Indeed, the situation was changing because of the presence of a huge threat against this thriving port: the raids of Saxon pirates. Coming from the northern part of Germany, these tribes had been attracted by the luxury goods exchanged in the port of Londinium and which were destined to the inhabitants of the town. These pirates wanted to put their hands on them before the

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p.11

<sup>21</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 29

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 31

precious cargo was re-distributed and they initially attacked the ships whilst at sea. But, soon, they invaded the hinterland, venturing up the Thames.

In this way, the Saxons put the island under attack and the officials of the local government were forced to build a wall to defend the town, but especially the docks and its surrounds, from the invaders. Even though a wall had already been built before, it had not protected the town, since the pirates had entered Londinium via the north bank of the river. So, another wall was created, 'this time around the perimeter of the docks in an attempt to stop the Saxons from venturing further into the city'<sup>23</sup>. Nonetheless, this solution was a disaster for the docklands' community, because it isolated this population from the rest of the town.

In addition to the Saxon menace, there was another serious problem: the level of the Thames was decreasing. The situation created serious difficulties to larger ships and vessels to reach the port and worsened the problems of Londinium. However, the main reason for the decline of the town proved to be the end of the Western Roman Empire. In AD 410 the Roman occupation of the island officially ended and when the Roman army of Emperor Constantine left Britain, Londinium was cut off from the rest of the Empire. The docklands area experienced a period of steep, inexorable decline, and became even more vulnerable to external attacks from new invaders.

## **The Middle Ages**

The Middle Ages saw a period of colonization of South-East England and the Midlands by a group of Germanic tribes, which are collectively known as the Anglo-Saxons. They included three groups: the Jutes, coming from northern Germany and Denmark; the Saxons, from Lower Saxony, in Germany; and the Angles, who originated from Angeln, in Germany<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 38

<sup>24</sup> *Ivi*, p. 43

Left with no military protection after the departure of the Romans, Londinium and its port were soon conquered by the new invaders. They moved their port further west, ‘away from the city walls to an area of the riverbank that had an open foreshore and a shelved beach that was more suited to their craft’<sup>25</sup>. London was thus divided into two areas: Lundenwich, in the western part, which became the economic centre, and Lundenburth, which corresponded to the walled city of Londinium. As a consequence, after an initial period of decline for the docks, trade flourished again and ‘the new Anglo-Saxon dock proved to be as successful as its Roman predecessor’<sup>26</sup>.

However, because of a series of increasing attacks by another population coming from the Continent, the Danish Vikings, the inhabitants of Lundenwich were forced to find shelter behind the city walls, rebuilding the old and ruinous roman harbour. Nevertheless, the reign of King Alfred led to a huge regeneration project, moving the king’s headquarters to Lundenburth, drawing new plans for improvement, reinforcing the old fortifications and encouraging international trade. A new fort was built opposite the port to protect ferries across the river from attack by invaders. The original name of this settlement, ‘suth weorc’, corrupted into Southwark, the name by which the area is known today<sup>27</sup>.

In order to create a modern and efficient harbour, the successor of King Alfred, Ethelred, made a new complex built in a site west of the old Roman dock. This contributed to the revival of the Lundenburth docks, which sent wool to various Saxons kingdoms across the North Sea. Indeed, wool was the main export of Lundenburth, but various goods were also imported from abroad, such as pottery from France, or silk garments from Byzantium and the Levant. Trade was also conducted with the Frisians and the tribes living along the coast of Scandinavia.

With the reign of the new Danish king Cnut, who had taken control of this area and had proclaimed himself monarch of the West Saxons in 1016<sup>28</sup>, the town and its docklands experienced

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<sup>25</sup> *Ivi*, p.44

<sup>26</sup> *Ivi*, p. 45

<sup>27</sup> *Ivi*, p. 46

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.royal.gov.uk/HistoryoftheMonarchy/KingsandQueensofEngland/TheAnglo-Saxonkings/CanutetheGreat.aspx>

a period of unprecedented prosperity. The harbour, which had been moved east to Billingsgate at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>29</sup>, flourished and the docks expanded even further, including ‘sizeable shipyards where all manner of craft, from small lighters to large seagoing ships, were built’<sup>30</sup>.

However, one of the main events that characterized the English Middle Ages was another invasion: the conquest of Britain by William, the Duke of Normandy. He claimed to be the legitimate king of England, since Cnut’s last successor, king Edward the Confessor, had promised the throne to him. However, when the Royal Council decided to pass the crown to another pretender, Harold Godwinson, Edward’s brother in law<sup>31</sup>, William invaded Britain with a fleet of 700 ships on September 28<sup>th</sup> 1066. After defeating Harold during the battle of Hastings on October 14<sup>th</sup> 1066<sup>32</sup>, William entered London triumphantly and was crowned king. He confiscated and redistributed many Anglo-Saxon lands but rewarded London’s inhabitants granting them a particular privilege. Since the population of London had surrendered peacefully to the Normans, the invaders allowed them to continue running their city as before the conquest, giving them the incentive to expand their businesses. In this way, king William inaugurated a new chapter of the English history, which was characterized by a long period of prosperity and trade expansion.

‘After the Norman Conquest the port’s external trade increased. Embankment of the river east of London Bridge was carried out from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, reclaiming more than 42 square miles (110 square km) of marshland at Rotherhithe, Deptford, and the Isle of Dogs’<sup>33</sup>. As a consequence, the Docklands experienced a new expansion program that transformed them: new quays were created along the Thames to receive even larger ships, the old Roman walls around the docks were demolished to allow an easier expansion of the port and new masonry warehouses were created as ‘a functional backdrop’<sup>34</sup> to the spacious timber quays.

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<sup>29</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p.52

<sup>30</sup> *Ivi*, p.54

<sup>31</sup> *Ivi*, p. 55

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/normans/1066\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/normans/1066_01.shtml)

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/347049/London-Docklands>

<sup>34</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p.60

Since London saw the affluence of a huge number of people – not only Norman families, but also merchants from abroad – new houses, inns, shops and offices were built, and a powerful commercial alliance, known as the Hanseatic League, was created to protect the merchants' investments. In addition, the city was divided into wards and the docks comprised seven of these new areas, leading to the specialization of each dock ward in handling specific commodities.

However, even though 'by the mid- 14<sup>th</sup> century the London docks had established themselves as the kingdom's premier port'<sup>35</sup>, the following years brought a disastrous event: the arrival of the Black Plague from the Continent, in November 1348. The advent of the terrible disease led to a series of negative consequences. First of all, there was widespread panic in the port because the plague 'was carried by fleas that lived on the rats on board ships' and, 'once a ship had docked at port, the rats swarmed into the town looking for food'<sup>36</sup> and transferring the plague to human beings. Working in the port and living in overpopulated tenements at a short distance from it, the first victims of this disease were poor dock labourers, which were decimated and let the plague spread to the whole town. In only twelve months, 20,000 people had died in London (over an initial population of 40,000-60,000 inhabitants<sup>37</sup>) and merchants and quay owners had lost up 30% of their work force. Chronic labour shortage and competition from foreign merchants, tension and isolation of foreigners, considered the responsible for the spreading of the disease, and a long period of inflation were the immediate consequences.

However, by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the Docklands, and the entire city of London, saw the beginning of a new phase of improvement, cooperation and organization. Including the activities of two merchants' companies, the Mercers and Merchant Staplers, a new organization was created, known as the Merchant Adventurers, and trade started to expand and flourish again.

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<sup>35</sup> *Ivi*, p.87

<sup>36</sup> *Ivi*, p.88

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*



## The Renaissance and the Early Modern Period

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century a new phase of prosperity and expansion began with the reign of one of the most famous monarchs of the English history: Henry VIII. Apart from court intrigues, six marriages and the separation from the Roman Catholic Church, the sovereign is remembered for playing a fundamental role in the development of the Royal Navy, which was to become the finest fleet in the world<sup>38</sup>. Furthermore, realizing that England would require protection during the hostilities with France, the king commissioned the first great English warships.

The area the king chose for their building was the Port of London because of its proximity to the royal palace at Greenwich and because in this way Henry could control their proceedings. Thus, the Docklands area was further expanded, including two Kentish villages, Woolwich and Deptford. The former became the location to build the *Great Harry*, ‘the most impressive and formidable ship in Europe’<sup>39</sup>, while the latter saw the creation of the *Peter Pomegranate*. Another warship, the *Mary Rose*, although built in Portsmouth, ‘sailed to London where she was fitted with huge bronze and iron guns at the Deptford yard’<sup>40</sup>. In this way, Deptford, locally known as the King’s Yard, became a shipbuilding centre and a place where existing ships could be repaired.

During the reign of Mary, the Catholic daughter of Henry VIII, the Thames was not only a place where trade and shipbuilding flourished, but also ‘the river down which the first explorers sailed’<sup>41</sup>. This age of discovery was inaugurated in 1553, when Deptford saw the departure of two voyagers: Hugh Willoughby and Richard Chancellor. Searching a new north-west passage, they landed on the Russian coasts and established trade relations with the merchants of Moscow. Even though they had failed to discover a new passage to China, they had granted exclusive trading

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<sup>38</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p.97

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>40</sup> *Ivi*, p.98

<sup>41</sup> Ackroyd P., *Thames: Sacred River*, Vintage, London, 2007, p. 105

privileges to the Merchants Adventurers and, when they came back to England, they were received as heroes<sup>42</sup>.

With the last Tudor monarch, Elizabeth I, Henry VIII's Protestant successor who ascended to the throne in 1558, trade constantly flourished, with goods imported from Italy, Constantinople, Damascus or the Low countries into the port of London. During this period, which is known as the English Renaissance, "Legal Quays", 'trading wharves between London Bridge and the Tower'<sup>43</sup>, were established to create 'a monopoly on the landing or loading of dutiable goods – goods on which taxes had to be paid'<sup>44</sup>.

In 1599, the Queen 'signed a charter for the establishment of the English East India Company'<sup>45</sup>, which was granted the monopoly on all trade east of the Cape of Good Hope. The success and growth in power and influence of this company of merchants led to the building of its headquarters: the village of Blackwall and a marshy depression known as Limehouse Hole were chosen as its ideal location. In the former area a shipyard was created to build large vessels, while the latter became a repair centre for ships<sup>46</sup>. Workshops and offices were built and the area on both sides of the Isle of Dogs peninsula was deeply transformed by the presence of the East India Company's dockyard and complex. This massive development was to continue until 1619, accompanied by a rise in population .

The flourishing of trade was not the only element that characterized Elizabeth's reign. Indeed, explorations and voyages of discovery were undertaken in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the same period saw the adventures of captain Francis Drake. Apart from being the valiant captain who had defeated the Spanish Invincible Armada in 1588 during one of the most remarkable English sea battles, he was the explorer who carried out the second circumnavigation of the globe during a three-year voyage aboard the *Pelican*, from 1577 to 1580. When he returned to England, the Queen

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<sup>42</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p.111

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.portcities.org.uk/london/server/show/ConNarrative.66/chapterId/1582/The-riverside-wharves.html>

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>45</sup> Ackroyd P., *Thames: Sacred River*, p.105

<sup>46</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p.24

‘bestowed a knighthood on Drake and decided to put his ship, the newly renamed *Golden Hind*, on permanent display at the royal dockyard in Deptford’<sup>47</sup>.

However, this period is to be remembered also for the inauguration of a despicable form of trade: black gold. In 1562 James Hawkins left London with three ships to Sierra Leone, in Africa, where he seized 300 Africans and, after crossing the Atlantic, sold them into slavery in Hispaniola (Haiti), in the Spanish West Indies. Then, he returned to England with ‘tropical produce such as ginger, sugar, pearls and hides, which he then sold to City merchants’<sup>48</sup>, making a fortune in the process. In this way Hawkins inaugurated the slave triangle: English ships left London, reached the Western Coasts of Africa, especially the Gulf of Guinea, where slave traders kidnapped thousands of people or bought them from local chiefs in exchange for cloth, guns, ironware and drink<sup>49</sup>. Then, captives were brought to the West Indies, after a terrible transatlantic voyage, densely packed in the English slave ships. Once in America, they were sold to the highest bidder to work in cotton or sugar plantation, while the English merchants came back to London’s docks with their ships’ holds full of riches. This inhumane practice went on for more than 250 years, until the *Slave Trade Act* was passed on August 1<sup>st</sup> 1834, outlawing the trafficking of human beings throughout the British Empire<sup>50</sup>.

With the reign of Elizabeth’s successor, James IV, new exploring expeditions were organized, as the voyage to Virginia of John Smith, in 1607. After leaving Blackwall, the captain set sail to North America, establishing the colony of Jamestown – in honour of his king – which ‘was destined to become the first permanent British settlement in North America’<sup>51</sup>. Some years later, in 1620, another ship was to cross the Atlantic Ocean: the *Mayflower*. Sailing from Rotherhithe with a group of Puritan dissenters, the pilgrim Fathers, the *Mayflower* reached Cape

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<sup>47</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter* p. 122

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.portcities.org.uk/london/server/show/ConNarrative.103/chapterId/2247/London-and-the-transatlantic-slave-trade.html>

<sup>49</sup> [http://abolition.e2bn.org/slavery\\_43.html](http://abolition.e2bn.org/slavery_43.html)

<sup>50</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 141

<sup>51</sup> *Ivi*, p. 132

Cod on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1620. Soon after, the Plymouth Colony, in today's Massachusetts, was created.

Trade, shipbuilding and explorations were not the only activities linked to the port of London. Indeed, by the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the area behind the docks 'had grown into a centre for all manner of noxious industry including dyeing, rope making, soap making, brewing and salt boiling'<sup>52</sup> and the air had become polluted because of the extensive use of coal by most of these workplaces.

In the same period two events devastated London: the Great Plague, which took place in 1665, and the Great Fire, the following year. If the docks escaped the worst of the plague outbreak, which had caused the death of 100,000 Londoners, the latter catastrophe completely transformed the landscape of the area and of the entire city. Caused by a fire out of control which had originated in Thomas Farriner's shop, a biscuit bakery on Padding Lane, on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1666, the flames spread to the rest of the city and the fire was extinguished only three days later, after 'having destroyed 373 acres of the City – from the Tower in the East to Fleet Street and Fetter Lane in the West – and [having burnt] around 13,200 houses, 84 churches and 44 company halls'<sup>53</sup>. After the Great Fire, 65,000 Londoners had lost their houses and, westwards from Tower Wharf, the entire dock complex had been destroyed<sup>54</sup>: it was necessary to rebuild the city and its port.

The reconstruction 'greatly changed the prospect of the city from the Thames'<sup>55</sup> and the docks transformed their image. They were not moved and 'proved to be a decisive factor in keeping the centre of the city within the area surrounded by the old Roman wall'<sup>56</sup>. During the Docklands' rebuilding, new regulations, plans and guidelines were drawn up to avoid another devastating fire and, at the same time, to provide a solution to the question of congestion, due to the presence of a huge number of ships and vessels (which caused severe delays and problems of security). The

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<sup>52</sup> Ivi, p. 142

<sup>53</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/civil\\_war\\_revolution/great\\_fire\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/civil_war_revolution/great_fire_01.shtml)

<sup>54</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p.150

<sup>55</sup> Ackroyd P., *Thames: Sacred River*, p.108

<sup>56</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p.153

appearance of the riverbanks was altered, prohibiting the construction of narrow alleyways wherever possible and the creation of houses on the quayside. The Port of London started to flourish again and, 'by the end of the seventeenth century, the London quays were handling 80 per cent of the country exports, and 69 per cent of its imports'<sup>57</sup>.

Not all the projects to rebuild London and its harbour were approved, for example the ambitious plan of a sea captain, Valentine Knight, was not taken into practice. He proposed to create a canal linking the docks with the city centre through a semi-circle across the city from the Fleet River to Billingsgate. King Charles II rejected Knight's plan but part of the project was undertaken. The Fleet River was canalized from Holborn Bridge to the Thames, allowing barges and lighters to navigate the Fleet. However, it resulted in a failure because of much less traffic than expected: in the following centuries the river was enclosed, running underground, where it remains to this day.

Some decades after the Great Fire, in 1696-9<sup>58</sup>, a new large dock was created at Rotherhithe: the Great Howland Welt Dock. Commissioned by John and Richard Wells and named after the land's previous owner, John Howland, this wet dock covered an area of 12½ acres and included a huge rectangular basin (1,000 ft long by 500ft wide, with a depth of 17ft<sup>59</sup>) that could accommodate the largest ships. The Great Howland Welt Dock became a ship repair centre and, thanks to a dense line of trees along its perimeter, a safe waiting place for vessels bound for the legal quays. This barrier acted as a wind-break against storms and bad weather and protected the ships moored there<sup>60</sup>.

At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Great Howland Welt Dock gave rise to an important industry: the extraction of oil from whale blubber. Indeed, two types of trade had flourished in the docklands' area: fur, due to the demand from fashion and furnishing industries, and whaling. The latter was not a new form of trade, since it had appeared during the late 1500s, but in the 17<sup>th</sup> and

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<sup>57</sup> Ackroyd P., *Thames: Sacred River*, p.188.

<sup>58</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p.25.

<sup>59</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 167

<sup>60</sup> *Ivi*, p. 167-168

18<sup>th</sup> centuries it reached its peak, with a huge number of whaling ships leaving the Docklands to reach the whaling territories off the coasts of Greenland and Norway. Whales' meat provided food, their oil offered domestic and municipal lightning, and their baleen was used in the manufacture of upholstery, corsets and fishing rods. The Great Howland Welt Dock became not only a place where whaling ships unloaded their cargo but also an oil extracting centre, and the complex was soon renamed 'Greenland Dock'<sup>61</sup>.

In the meantime, another element contributed to the flourishing of trade in London's Port: coffee. Introduced in England in the previous decades, coffee had become very popular and had led to the opening of many coffeehouses, which attracted people to drink coffee, meet and do business. As concerns the Docklands' area, the most popular and strategic coffeehouse became Mr. Edward Lloyd's shop, near the Tower of London. In this place new contacts were created and useful information was provided to merchants and ship owners about expeditions, the emergence of new markets, and the acquisition, capture, auction or sale of ships. As a consequence, this coffee shop became the heart of London's shipping business<sup>62</sup>.

## **The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> – but especially 19<sup>th</sup> – century, the Docklands saw a period of unprecedented growth, thanks to the Industrial Revolution, which was accompanied by an increased demand for industrial goods produced in the northern regions of the country and the need for a new distribution network. The area experienced a deep transformation, with the creation of canals, new dock complexes, wharves and warehouses. In addition, the projects of a new consortium, the London

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<sup>61</sup> *Ivi*, p.170

<sup>62</sup> *Ivi*, p.163

Docks Company, led to the development of the Isle of Dogs and helped to expand the Docklands further east, including the boroughs of Limehouse, Poplar and Blackwall.

The introduction of the canal system had transformed trade and transport in England and had favoured London's rival ports, such as Bristol, Liverpool or Hull. The need to create a series of canals in the capital became evident, also because horse-drawn carts could not cope with the massive increase of trade any more. Therefore, in 1789, London was connected to the port of Bristol through the Kennet and Avon Canal. (This project had led to a collaboration between the two harbours through bulk transportation).

As we have seen in the last section (p.21), the Thames was not the only river than ran through the city. However, apart from the Fleet, another natural water-way was present: the River Lea, which was navigable from the Isle of Dogs up to Hertford. In 1766 fifteen short cuts were created along its course as well as additional locks. The locks' building 'comprised a watertight chamber – large enough to accommodate a vessel – with gates at either end. The chamber acted as a lift that either raised or lowered craft to the water level on the side of the gate'<sup>63</sup>. Finally, a canal was created at the mouth of the Thames, the Limehouse Cut: the River Lea Navigation was ready and proved to be a success.

Its creation was so useful, that the city's merchants asked for a waterway that could at last link London with the northern canal network. London was then connected to the rest of the UK's canal system<sup>64</sup> and the new work, the Grand Junction Canal, 'provided the transport infrastructure to bring goods from the industrial conurbations of the north and midlands to the capital'<sup>65</sup>. William Jessop and William Praed were in charge for its creation as, respectively, chief engineer and chairman, and, after eight years of work, the last branch of the Grand Junction Canal opened on July 10<sup>th</sup> 1801.

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<sup>63</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 187

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.canalmuseum.org.uk/history/grandjun.htm>

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*

Since the new canal stopped in Paddington, in the western part of the capital, the waterway was extended to the Port of London. Named after the Prince Regent, who was a great friend of the canal's responsible, the architect John Nash, the Regent's Canal was built, linking the Paddington basin to Limehouse. In addition, new loading facilities were provided in Limehouse, such as the Regent's Canal Dock, otherwise known as the Limehouse Basin<sup>66</sup>.

The creation of man-made waterways increased and a series of canals were built through the city. However, not all these projects resulted in a success: the Grand Surrey Canal, the Croydon Canal, the Kensington Canal – for example – were either never completed or closed some decades after their opening. Supposed to be the south London equivalent of the Grand Junction spur in Paddington<sup>67</sup>, the Grand Surrey Canal failed because of diversions of funds to other developments<sup>68</sup>, while the other canals succumbed to the superior service offered by the railways<sup>69</sup>.

Apart from the building of canals, this period, especially the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is remembered for having been the era of the great docks. Several complexes were built along the river Thames and the most flourishing of them became the West India Docks. The building of 'the first and finest of the new docks'<sup>70</sup> started on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1800 and its foundation stone 'was inscribed with the motto 'An Undertaking which, under the Favour of God, shall contribute Stability, Increase and Ornament, to British Commerce''<sup>71</sup>. The West India Dock complex opened for trade two years later, in 1802.

The West India Dock Company was a successful corporation that provided moorings, dock facilities and warehousing for ships that traded with the American plantations<sup>72</sup>. It commissioned its complex to William Jessop, which built it on land acquired by the company on the Isle of Dogs, near the High Street at Poplar<sup>73</sup>. It was made up of two docks, one for imports, in the northern area, which covered 30 acres, and the other, in the south part, for exports, expanding over 24 acres of

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<sup>66</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 189

<sup>67</sup> Ivi, p.192

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>69</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 193-194

<sup>70</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 28

<sup>71</sup> Ackroyd P., *Thames: Sacred River*, p.108

<sup>72</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p.183

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*



land. High standard security was assured to avoid any form of illicit entry: workers, and even ships' captains, had to respect a series of strict rules during the unloading process and 'the entire complex was surrounded by a high wall surmounted by iron railings and bordered by a water-filled ditch'<sup>74</sup>. A series of tall warehouses surrounded the basin and the West India Docks were linked to Whitechapel through a new route, the Grand Commercial Road, which allowed the transportation of goods to other parts of the country.

The West India Docks were a success and provided a model for the building of future docks. Indeed, another powerful company decided to draw up plans to rebuild its own complex, the East India Company. After having expanded its trade routes to India and China, the corporation wanted to redevelop its docks at Blackwall and commissioned the work to engineers John Rennie and Ralph Walker. After a massive investment of 322,608 and three years of work<sup>75</sup>, the East India Docks opened for trade on August 4<sup>th</sup> 1806. They covered an area of 30 acres and were made up of an entrance lock and two docks – import and export – which could accommodate up to 250 ships at any time<sup>76</sup>. The complex's redevelopment was accompanied by the building of 'spacious quays that stretched 240ft away from the waterside but (...) very little warehousing was built'<sup>77</sup> and in the following years (1806-12) a new road, the East India Dock Road, was laid out as a branch of the Grand Commercial Road<sup>78</sup>, an highway that had been built to connect the docks with the City of London<sup>79</sup>.

In the meantime, a new consortium, the London Dock Company, had submitted its proposals to the government's Select Committee for the Improvement of the Port of London. Attracted by the industries in Wapping, to the north of the river, the company wanted to improve the area through the opening of three large wet docks: Eastern, Tobacco and Western. Despite the opposition of Wapping's inhabitants, the project was approved and the former residents were forced to move to

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>75</sup> <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=46535>

<sup>76</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p.200.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>78</sup> <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=46478>

<sup>79</sup> Ackroyd P., *Thames: Sacred River*, p.195

Limehouse, Poplar and Blackwall, three districts in the eastern part of London in rapid expansion. The new complex, the London Docks, opened in 1805 and specialized ‘in the handling of wine, brandy, tobacco and rice, for which they had been granted exclusive unloading privileges for a period of 20 years’<sup>80</sup>.

The following year, in 1806, William Richie, a timber merchant, decided to purchase the Greenland Dock, which in that period had fallen into disuse because of the decline of whaling trade. Richie founded the Commercial Dock Company and the old dock was expanded and redeveloped, specializing in the trade of timber and grain and leading to the opening of the Baltic Docks, ‘in deference to the region from whence much of the timber came’<sup>81</sup>. Covering an area of 49 acres and being capable of accommodating 350 ships, the Baltic Docks were later renamed the Commercial Docks and expanded on the Rotherhithe peninsula. In 1865, Richie’s company merged the Surrey Dock company, combining their nearby dock complexes and creating the Surrey Commercial Dock Company. By 1869 the area was directly served by a railway line which run from New Cross to Wapping and had been created thanks to the renovation of the already existing Thames Tunnel – running under the river between Wapping and Rotherhithe<sup>82</sup> – by the East London Railway Company.

The St Katharine Docks were the last dock complex built in the first half of the century and the work for their construction began in 1827. The area chosen for their building was dominated by St Katharine church and hospital, which were erased, and the former was relocated near Regent’s Park. Covering an area just under 25 acres of land, the complex included two wet docks – Eastern and Western – connected through a central basin and which could accommodate up to 120 vessels. Surrounded by six storey buildings directly facing the street, the complex did not need a security

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<sup>80</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 196

<sup>81</sup> *Ivi*, p. 201

<sup>82</sup> *Ivi*, p. 202-3

wall around its perimeter<sup>83</sup>. It opened the following year, specializing in handling wool, tea and luxury items as shells, ostrich feathers, spices and ivory.

By the middle of the century, the arrival of a new type of vessels transformed the Port of London and its Docklands. Indeed, wind-propelled vessels were gradually substituted by steamships. The main benefit of the new invention over traditional vessels was speed, with an extraordinary reduction in travelling time<sup>84</sup>. Soon, ship owners started to purchase their own steamships in the capital and the Thames Ironworks and Shipbuilding Company (later renamed the Thames Ironworks & Shipbuilding & Engineering Company<sup>85</sup>) carried out the construction of new large vessels. The world's largest passenger ship, the *SS Himalaya*, was built in 1853 in the company's yard, at Leamouth, near the East India Docks<sup>86</sup>. The size of the company's commissions increased, gaining an international reputation for quality work and receiving orders even from abroad. It continued building steamships until 1912<sup>87</sup>.

The new invention, however, proved to be a problem for many docks, since the quays could not accommodate steamships of large dimensions. It was necessary to build custom-built basins in the Port of London and the Victoria London Dock Company, a consortium of interested parties, drew up 'plans to create a vast new dock on Plaistow Marsh specifically engineered to receive steamships and connect with London's railway network which was stretching across the capital with extraordinary speed'<sup>88</sup>. In 1853, after the approval of the government, the company started to build the Victoria Dock, which at that time became 'the largest man-made body of water in London'<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 204-5

<sup>84</sup> *Ivi*, p. 209

<sup>85</sup> *Ivi*, p. 211

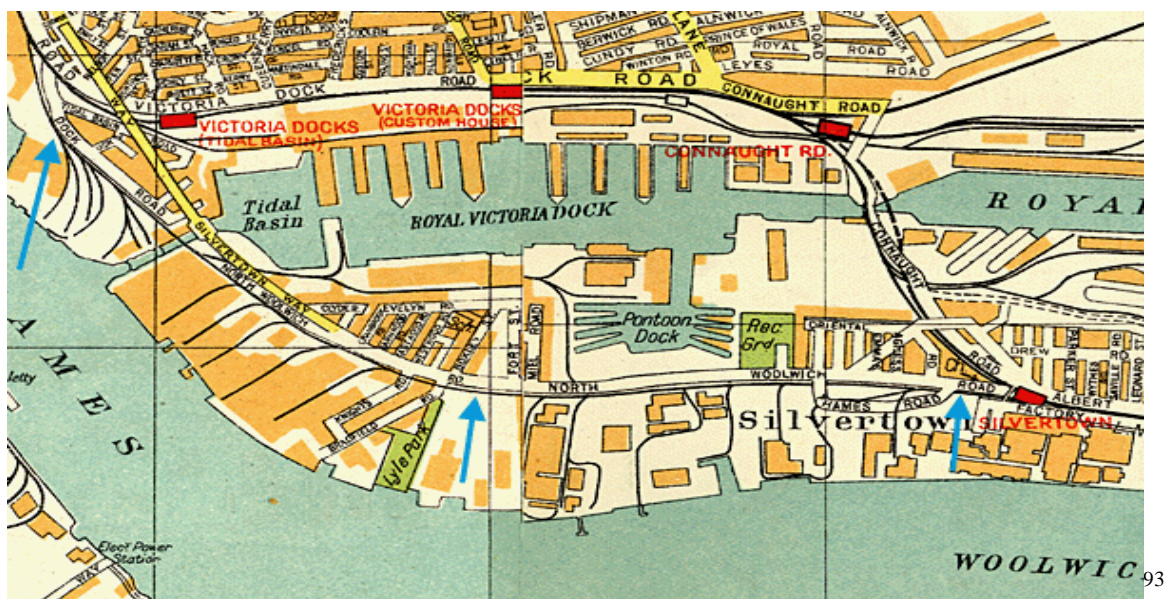
<sup>86</sup> *Ivi*, p. 210-11

<sup>87</sup> *Ivi*, p. 211.

<sup>88</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 213

<sup>89</sup> *Ibidem*

The Victoria Dock, which included a deep tidal basin and a main dock, opened for trade in 1855 and was accessible from the river through enormous deep-water locks which ‘ran underneath a section of the East Counties & Thames Junction Railway’<sup>90</sup>. A swing bridge was added ‘to allow tall ship pass through the docks’<sup>91</sup> and the complex was linked to a new station, Custom House. New facilities also included hydraulically powered equipment and railway tracks, which were built along ‘four long piers interspersed with smaller jetties that extended out into the basin’<sup>92</sup>.



By 1870, the second Industrial Revolution brought a new phase of development and expansion to the Docklands. The main factors were an increased demand for consumer goods and a trade revolution between Europe and Asia, due to the opening of the Suez Canal. However, the advancement in steamships engineering proved to be a problem for the harbour. Indeed, the new vessels were ‘limited in size by the places at which they docked’<sup>94</sup> and the Thames saw various steamships collisions – for example that in 1878 between the *Princess Alice* and the *Bywell Castle*, which caused the death of 550 people – especially in Woolwich Reach. It was evident that the safety of the Thames had become a priority and a possible solution was to moor large steamers east of the Woolwich stretch of the Thames. The land next to the Victoria Dock proved to be a suitable

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem*

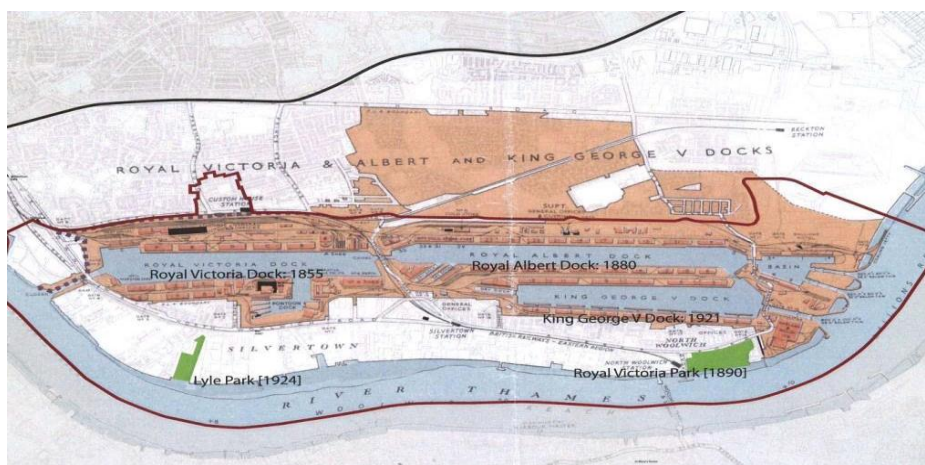
<sup>92</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 213-14

<sup>93</sup> <http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/s/silvertown/index50.shtml>

<sup>94</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 220-221

location and the London and St Katharine companies decided to build there a new dock complex. (In 1864-65 the Victoria Dock had merged with the docks of the former companies after a trade war<sup>95</sup>).

The construction began in 1874 and combined 'vast size with the latest technology'<sup>96</sup>. Indeed, the complex was made up of a central dock (490ft of width and 1¾ miles of length) surrounded by a wood-planked quay laid with railway lines, two dry docks and a lock on the complex's eastern edge, through which ships could enter, without travelling down Woolwich Reach. In this way, part of the congestion problem could be solved. In addition, the new dock was innovative because of the presence of 'a passenger terminal at the entrance basin, complete with a hotel and railway station (to be named Manor Road), providing connections to central London'<sup>97</sup>, and electric lamps, which illuminated the complex and the quayside. The new dock was inaugurated on June 24<sup>th</sup> 1880 and was named the Royal Albert Dock, in honour of Queen Victoria's husband, who had died in 1861. Even the nearby complex, the Victoria Dock, was renamed after the monarch's consent, becoming the Royal Victoria, and was connected to the new building through a water link, the Connaught Passage. The first two complexes of the Royal Docks were completed, while the last one, the King George V Dock, was to be opened only after the First World War, on July 8<sup>th</sup> 1921.



The Royal Docks

<sup>95</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 29

<sup>96</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 222

<sup>97</sup> *Ibidem*

In the meanwhile, the East India and West India companies had merged, creating a unique company, and had opened a site further east at Tilbury (42 miles from London), in Essex, in response to the competition with the Royal Albert Dock. However, the new docks, which covered 450 acres of marshland<sup>98</sup>, were not an immediate success but experienced a financial disaster.

Apart from the Royal Victoria and Royal Albert Docks, several large complexes developed and expanded, such as the Poplar and Millwall Docks, and there were additions to the Surrey Docks, in Rotherhithe<sup>99</sup>. As concerns the Millwall Docks, they were created at Millwall, an area to the south-west of the Isle of Dogs. If Millwall took its name from its windmills<sup>100</sup>, the origin of the name 'Isle of Dogs' derived from the fact that 'the area was once used as kennels for hunting dogs when the monarch resided in Greenwich'<sup>101</sup>. The Millwall Docks opened on March 14<sup>th</sup> 1868 and the new complex was made up of two long docks which 'laid out in a reversed 'L' shape'<sup>102</sup> and a large dry dock, as well as two channels and new deep-water basins. The Millwall Docks flourished, developing a solid reputation for handling wool and timber, but especially grain.

However, not all the docks were flourishing. In the meantime, the demand for warships had come to an abrupt halt and the areas of Deptford and Woolwich experienced a period of decline. The introduction of steamships worsened the docks' situation since the ships' increased dimensions caused serious difficulties to sail across the Thames, as well as 'the relatively shallow waters surrounding the yards'<sup>103</sup>. By 1860, Deptford and Woolwich had become a constant drain on the resources of the Admiralty, which had begun 'to open more accessible dockyards at Portsmouth, Plymouth and the Kentish town of Chatham'<sup>104</sup>. The two London shipyards finally closed on September 18<sup>th</sup> 1869, after 300 years of shipbuilding tradition.

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<sup>98</sup> <http://www.portcities.org.uk/london/server/show/ConFactFile.82/Tilbury-Dock.html>

<sup>99</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 22

<sup>100</sup> *Ivi*, p. 37

<sup>101</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 214. According to other sources, the name of this peninsula derived from its unattractive aspects. See Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 90

<sup>102</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 218

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibidem*

During the second half of the century there was a boom also for the wharves, which offered lower rates compared to the docks' prices. Owned either privately by wharfingers [wharf managers], 'who unloaded a wide variety of cargoes and let their adjacent warehousing to many different merchants'<sup>105</sup>, or by industrial companies and services, they appeared on both sides of the river from London Bridge to the Royal Albert Dock. The most famous wharf became Hay's Wharf with its building Hay's Galleria, which was created on the site of the former Hay's Wharf, built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and destroyed by a fire in 1861. Hay's Galleria acquired a solid reputation for handling nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of all foodstuffs imported into Britain's capital, becoming known as 'the larder of London'<sup>106</sup>.

Other wharves developed along the river and received different cargoes. The Truman Brewery's Black Eagle Wharf in Wapping, for example, stored barrels of beers, which were sold to northern and oversea markets, while Irongate Wharf became London's mail depot for the London, Leith, Edinburgh & Glasgow Steam Packet Company<sup>107</sup>. If the wharves near the city centre were used by merchants and shipbreakers, the areas further east were purchased by industrial companies and saw the building of two famous sugar refineries, Tate and Lyle's.

The Docklands were an area that attracted a variety of workers. Indeed, 'with the dockers and the porters, the engineers and the warehousemen, the watermen and the draymen, the costermongers and the touters, the clerks and the carters, the smiths and the stevedores – as well as the vast assembly of ancillary trades such as tavern-keepers and laundresses, food-sellers and street-hawkers, shopkeepers and prostitutes, marine store dealers and oystermen – there was a working population of many thousands congregated in a relatively small area of the East End'<sup>108</sup>. In addition, there were casual labourers, unskilled workers that helped the other workmen and waited to be chosen for employment at the entrances of the docks<sup>109</sup> (the famous 'call-on'<sup>110</sup>), and

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<sup>105</sup> Ivi, p. 224

<sup>106</sup> Ivi, p.229

<sup>107</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 229

<sup>108</sup> Ackroyd P., *Thames: Sacred River*, p.163

<sup>109</sup> Ivi, p.164

‘coalwhippers’<sup>111</sup>, who extricated the coal from the hold of the ships and loaded it into trucks at the quayside or onto lighters<sup>112</sup>. The docks’ workers usually organized themselves into gangs of up to 13 men in order to complete their work to load or unload the ships at the port. Indeed, apart from unloading the vessels, it was necessary to load the ships that left the port and the workers that undertook this work, the stevedores (‘from the word “estibator”, which was used to describe their Spanish counterparts’<sup>113</sup>), were among the better-paid groups of dock workers. However, remuneration could vary widely and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century ‘dockside work was believed to be the poorest paid’<sup>114</sup>.

Within walking distance from the wharves and the docks, there were the workers’ houses, as well as pubs, beer and public houses, music halls, opium dens and brothels. The population of the East End grew rapidly because of the presence of poor families and immigrants who had flooded there in search for work and cheaper rents. It was necessary to provide houses for these workers and new plans led to the development of Cubitt Town, on the Isle of Dogs. William Cubitt, the Lord Mayor of London, was responsible for the construction of houses and amenities for the dock workers, who colonized the area. In addition to Cubitt Town, an area to the north of the Thames saw the building of many small terraces of houses for the workers of the nearby industry India Rubber Works, the owner of which was Samuel Winkworth Silver. Subsequently, the area became known as Silvertown<sup>115</sup>.

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<sup>110</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 251

<sup>111</sup> *Ivi*, p. 249

<sup>112</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>113</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 250

<sup>114</sup> Ackroyd P., *Thames: Sacred River*, p.163

<sup>115</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 244



## CHAPTER TWO: CRISIS AND DECLINE

### The end of the century and the beginning of the Docklands' decline

Thanks to its position at the centre of the Industrial Revolution, a flourishing colonial empire with a network of activity that linked the country to the rest of the world (India, the South- East, America, but also Australia and New Zealand), as well as to a financial and trade supremacy, Britain had become the first super power. However, this age of prosperity was not to last long, but a period of decline was to start both for the country and for London's Docklands. If the port of the capital had experienced a season of unprecedented growth and development, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the situation started to change and the great dock strike, which took place in 1889, was the beginning of the Docklands' decline.

Originated after the successful strike of another group of employees – the girls working for the London match company Bryant & May<sup>116</sup> – the protest of the dock workers started on August 14<sup>th</sup> 1888, when the dockers of the West India Docks refused to unload the cargo of the *Lady Armstrong*. Under the fellowship of Benn Tillet, fellow worker and unionist<sup>117</sup>, the strike extended to the entire Port of London and the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers' Union was founded. The union's manifesto was drawn up, demanding 'an advance in pay to 6d for daytime work and 8d overtime (workers were currently paid 5d)<sup>118</sup>, the recognition of the dockers' trade union by the dock owners and the employment of the workers for a minimum of four hours a day<sup>119</sup>. The news about the strike spread across the globe and the workers received support from sailors and other groups of workers, as well as donations from New York, Philadelphia and even Australia,

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<sup>116</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p.252

<sup>117</sup> *Ivi*, p. 260

<sup>118</sup> *Ivi*, p. 261

<sup>119</sup> *Ibidem*

where a group of former London dockers had either emigrated or been transported<sup>120</sup> and ‘felt a strong bond with the men they had left behind in London’<sup>121</sup>.

Causing a situation of congestion along the river, due to the presence of a great number of vessels and ships that waited to unload their cargo, the strike extended to other sectors: 6,000 tailors went on strike and cigar makers and boot finishers started organizing meetings. Since the threat of a general strike was real, James Whitehead, the Lord Mayor of the city, decided to find a mediator between the two factions: the Catholic bishop Cardinal Henry Manning, who was able to find an agreement. The strike went on for more than a month, until September 16<sup>th</sup>, and when the dockers returned to work they had achieved their objective, protecting themselves from exploitation and improving their working conditions.

However, the great strike was not the only problem that the port of the city had to face at the end of the century. Indeed, the main difficulty derived from the fact that the docks’ basins could not accommodate larger vessels any more. In this way, ‘many of the enclosed docks were becoming totally inaccessible to the increasing number of huge vessels (...) [then] arriving in the port’<sup>122</sup>. Subsequently, competition among the companies became inevitable and, after the financial disaster of Tilbury, the East and West India Docks Company was striving to remain in business. The only solution proved to be the selling of the company to the London and St Katharine Docks Company, which would control the rival docks but allow its former directors to continue managing the site<sup>123</sup>. In this way, the London and India Docks Joint Committee was created on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1889 and ‘opened up talks with the Millwall and the Surrey Commercial Docks’<sup>124</sup>. In order to reduce competition and reinforce trade, the three companies decided ‘that each dock should specialize in handling specific cargoes’<sup>125</sup> and the solution proved to be a temporary success.

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<sup>120</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 265

<sup>121</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>122</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 267

<sup>123</sup> *Ivi*, p. 268

<sup>124</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibidem*

## The 20<sup>th</sup> century and the First World War

Despite the Docklands' financial recovery during the last years of the previous century, the situation worsened, especially because of the threat of competition from other ports, both British harbours, such as Liverpool, and European ones (for example Antwerp, Hamburg, Rotterdam and Amsterdam<sup>126</sup>). In addition, there were 'problems caused by the "free water clause", which constantly threatened the enclosed docks' warehouse trade'<sup>127</sup>. A solution to stop the Docklands' decline became inevitable and, despite the opposition of the dock companies, in 1908 the Parliament passed *The Port of London Bill* and the following year the state nationalized the docks, assuming their control. The Docklands were united under The Port of London Authority (PLA), a new governing body<sup>128</sup> which started to control an area 'of almost 3,000 acres of prime commercial land, 32 miles of quays and a body of water twice the size of Hyde Park'<sup>129</sup>. In addition, the PLA administered the Thames from Teddington to the sea<sup>130</sup>.

By 1912, the Docklands' nationalization had brought back prosperity to London's harbour, with £400 million of foreign trade per annum and imports of tea, meat, sugar, timber, grain, wines and tobacco<sup>131</sup>. As a result, trade increased, surplus capital was created and facilities were improved, attracting more shipping, providing plenty of work and crowding the docks and wharves again<sup>132</sup>. In addition, the PLA began the construction of the last of the Royal docks, the King George V Dock, which was to become an expansion of the Royal Albert Dock.

However, the advent of the First World War on August 4<sup>th</sup> 1914 put on hold the creation of the new dock and other projects concerning new facilities. The conflict had serious consequences

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<sup>126</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 49

<sup>127</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 268

<sup>128</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>129</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 269

<sup>130</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 49

<sup>131</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 269

<sup>132</sup> *Ivi*, p. 269-70

on the Docklands' area. As soon as Britain declared war to Germany, the country's factories were requisitioned by the government to start producing ammunitions for the British military and even the Docklands experienced the production of TNT. Despite the opposition of the directors of the Brunner Mod Chemical works at Crescent Wharf in Silvertown since the site of the factory was in a densely populated area and TNT was a highly explosive chemical<sup>133</sup>, the factory was converted to produce TNT in 1915. Two years later a terrible explosion occurred. In the disaster the factory and many adjacent streets were deleted, 73 people lost their lives, '900 houses were totally destroyed and up to 70,000 more were badly damaged by the blast'<sup>134</sup>.

In the meanwhile, since factories were providing munitions, the former production of goods had been halted, causing a restriction of commercial activity. A new threat became concrete by January 1915: the German air force and its Zeppelins. During the first air attack, the enemy planes bombarded the Norfolk coastal towns of Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn, and in the following months the raids approached the capital. London, and especially its Docklands, were bombarded for the first time by one of Count Zeppelin's airships<sup>135</sup> on September 8<sup>th</sup> 1915, becoming a prime target of the German aviation. Despite the blackout the government had ordered the population to respect every night, the efforts of the Royal Flying Corps and the anti-craft gunners<sup>136</sup>, the capital and the Docklands were quite vulnerable to the German raids, which went on bombarding the area in order to cause devastation and damage Britain's business.

The Docklands were in an even worse condition, since they stored inflammable goods, and the warehouses started to be 'guarded at all hours by a member of staff trained in fire-fighting'<sup>137</sup>. Nonetheless, the German raids caused devastation and large losses, destroying warehouses and nearby terraces of houses, damaging railways and causing many deaths. On June 13<sup>th</sup> 1917, for

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<sup>133</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 271

<sup>134</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>135</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 275

<sup>136</sup> *Ivi*, p. 276

<sup>137</sup> *Ivi*, p. 275

example, a raid on the East End killed 40 people (among which 10 children in a school<sup>138</sup>) and injured hundreds more<sup>139</sup>. During the war, the Docklands lost 430 employees (they are remembered by the PLA war memorial), as well as an indefinite number of sailors, dockers, merchants and wharfingers<sup>140</sup>.

When the war finally ended, after the German armistice in November 1918, the Docklands' business started again, thanks to the abolition of trade restrictions, and the works that had been halted recommenced. The building of the King George V Dock started again and the complex was officially opened on June 8<sup>th</sup> 1919. Named in honour of the monarch who had ascended to the throne in 1910, the new dock was surrounded by walls along its perimeter and was made up of a great lock, a large entrance basin (800 ft of length by 100ft of width) and a main dock, which could hold 'up to 15 of the largest steamers'<sup>141</sup>. In addition, to the southern edge of this majestic dock, there were seven jetties where electric cranes discharged the vessels' cargoes. Apart from being the last of the Royal Docks, the King George V was also the last great dock built in London capable of accommodating the largest liners<sup>142</sup>. The opening of this majestic complex close a chapter of the Docklands' history .

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<sup>138</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 278

<sup>139</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>140</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 277

<sup>141</sup> *Ivi*, p. 279

<sup>142</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 49

## European competition and the US crisis

In the decade after the First World War, London and its docks slowly recovered from the effects of the conflict, despite competition from continental ports, which offered lower dock rates. Rotterdam, Antwerp and Hamburg, for example, ‘charged between 1s 5d and 2s 6d per ton’<sup>143</sup> to berth and discharge a ship, while the dock rates of English ports, such as London and Liverpool, ‘varied between 4s 9d and 12s per ton’<sup>144</sup>. Thanks to a reduction of the rates and a successful advertising campaign, the PLA was able to attract merchants and ship owners again and bring back prosperity and stability to the Docklands.

In the meanwhile, Britain had increased its trade with the USA, which in the roaring twenties were experiencing a period of growth. American businessmen had invested in the European manufacturing industries but, when the Wall Street Crash on October 24<sup>th</sup> 1929 caused a total market collapse, they had to sell their shares in European companies in order to recoup their losses, damaging even the firms that were connected to the Docklands and decreasing the exportation of goods to the USA<sup>145</sup>.

Despite the negative consequences of the Great Depression, the Docklands continued with their trade and further expansions were added. For example, some entrances to the docks from the Thames were enlarged, the level of others was raised and deeper basins were excavated to accommodate larger vessels<sup>146</sup>. Additional warehouses and cold stores for meat imports<sup>147</sup> were created and new quays were built in the West India, Millwall and Royal Docks, serving them with electronic cranes<sup>148</sup>.

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<sup>143</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 282

<sup>144</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>145</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 281

<sup>146</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 49

<sup>147</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibidem*

## The Second World War

The docks continued to work and see new facilities until the end of the 1930s, when Britain and the entire world saw the advent of a new conflict: the Second World War. Britain declared war against Germany for the second time, on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1939, and if the Great War had caused serious consequences for London and its Docklands, the new conflict resulted in another period of destruction. As concerns the Port of London, this war was even more destructive, causing the death of 30,000 people and seriously damaging the capital.

As soon as the war broke out, the government requisitioned large dock areas and many merchants ships<sup>149</sup>, and the following year it imposed rationing of various items (at first imported commodities such as ham, bacon, butter and sugar, but later on also meat, petrol, tea, cheese, eggs and clothing<sup>150</sup>). The situation led to shortages, long queues at the shops and the inflation of prices by unscrupulous retailers. As a consequence, the government was forced to pass the *Prices of Goods Act* to control the retail cost of many items<sup>151</sup>.

As had happened during the Great War, even during this new conflict London and its Docklands became a prime target for the German aviation, the Luftwaffe, which started bombing the capital on August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1940. Despite the evacuation of a huge number of people to the countryside, the distribution of Anderson shelters and gas masks to the inhabitants of London and a 'blackout' curfew, the air raids devastated the capital. One of the worst periods was the Blitz, during which London, and especially the East End and the Docklands, were bombarded on 57 consecutive nights from September 7<sup>th</sup> 1940. With Downing Street and Buckingham Palace, the port was among the most bombarded areas and on October 16<sup>th</sup> 'the Royal Albert Dock suffered

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<sup>149</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 283

<sup>150</sup> *Ivi*, 283-4

<sup>151</sup> *Ivi*, p. 284

great loss of war supplies from its warehouses when fire from incendiary devices engulfed them'<sup>152</sup>. One of the heaviest bombardments took place the night 19/20 April 1941, starting 1,460 fires in the area of the Royal Victoria, East and West India, Millwall and Greenwich Docks and killing more than 1,200 people<sup>153</sup>. The German aviation dropped more than 1,000 tons of explosives and



Aerial view of London during the Blitz<sup>155</sup>

A German map of Silvertown and the Royal Docks area.  
© National Maritime Museum, London<sup>154</sup>

'warehouses, sheds, silos, timber yards, barges, a variety of dock installations and the Royal Naval College at Greenwich'<sup>156</sup> suffered considerable damage. The German attack went on until mid-May 1941, after that 20,000 tons of explosive<sup>157</sup> had fallen on London and its Docklands.

<sup>152</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 289

<sup>153</sup> Ivi, p.290

<sup>154</sup> <http://www.portcities.org.uk/london/server/show/conMediaFile.223/A-German-map-of-Silvertown-and-the-Royal-Docks-area.html>

<sup>155</sup> [http://www.memoriesofwar.org.uk/page\\_id\\_38\\_path\\_0p15p26p.aspx](http://www.memoriesofwar.org.uk/page_id_38_path_0p15p26p.aspx)

<sup>156</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 290

<sup>157</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London's Docklands*, p.9



In the following months the inhabitants started rebuilding their homes, but by late 1943 the German aviation began with new and even heavier bombardments. The enemy had changed its military strategy, with the introduction of more deadly and destructive bombings: the V1 and V2 ‘long-range rockets’<sup>158</sup>. At first, the missiles reached Kent and the South East and later the capital. London saw the V2 missiles for the first time on September 14<sup>th</sup> 1944 and during the following months ‘the docks themselves also suffered greatly from the onslaught of air raids and attacks’<sup>159</sup>.

Luckily for the English people, the new devastating missiles were launched at the end of the war. However, by May 8<sup>th</sup> 1945, when the conflict had ended in Europe, the situation appeared critical: in the East End the districts of Poplar and West Ham had suffered the greatest damage to property<sup>160</sup>, while Wapping, Rotherhithe, the Isle of Dogs, the West India and Millwall Docks, as well as Cubitt Town and Silvertown had been badly damaged. The enemy bombs had hit wharves, warehouses, old legal quays, dock railway yards, streets and roads, houses and terraces. It is estimated that during the conflict ‘30,000 Londoners had lost their lives in air raids’<sup>161</sup> and ‘thousands of homes and businesses had been destroyed’<sup>162</sup>. Furthermore, the Docklands had been hit by 25,000 bombs<sup>163</sup>, the devastation of which caused not only human suffering and infrastructure destruction but also housing shortage.

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<sup>158</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 292

<sup>159</sup> *Ivi*, p. 293

<sup>160</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>161</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>162</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>163</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London's Docklands*, p.9

## The Post-war period and containerisation

The period after the Second World War saw a series of problems which worsened the situation of the decline of the Docklands' area. Housing crisis, strikes, but especially competition with rival ports and containerisation were all factors that worsened the situation of the port and led to the final closure of the docks.

The first difficulty concerned rebuilding the Docklands, which were among the most devastated areas of the city, and finding a solution to the housing shortage, since thousands of houses had been destroyed by air raids. As a consequence, London's inhabitants were in need for new lodgments, causing also a problem of overcrowding. A first – but temporary – solution was the building of millions of 'prefabs'<sup>164</sup>, prefabricated houses made up of a kitchen, a living room, a bathroom and two bedrooms at a cost of 15 shillings per week to rent<sup>165</sup>. They were 'constructed from cheap, easily obtainable materials and could be erected quickly, by unskilled workers, on cleared bomb sites at a cost of £500 per unit'<sup>166</sup>.

However, the government wanted to provide a long-term solution and in 1943 Professor Patrick Abercrombie, a trained architect and town planner<sup>167</sup>, had proposed *The County of London Plan* and, the following year, in 1944, *The Greater London Plan*. The aim of these urban projects was the reconstruction of London after the war focusing on two key elements: growth and decentralization<sup>168</sup>. He proposed to divide the area of London into four rings starting from Westminster and the City: the Inner Urban Ring, the Suburban Ring, the Green Belt and the Outer

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<sup>164</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 294

<sup>165</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>167</sup> <http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/abercrombie-plan-1944>

<sup>168</sup> Larkham P.J. and Adams D., *The post-war reconstruction planning of London: a wider perspective*, Birmingham University, Centre for Environment and Society Research, Working Paper series no. 8, 2011, p.9

Country Ring, which covered more rural districts around the city<sup>169</sup>. In addition, in order to solve the problem of overcrowding, hundreds of inhabitants living in the capital were moved to other locations, in particular to eight satellite towns, the so called ‘New Towns’. According to Abercrombie, ‘unchecked suburban building was to be halted and growth was to be limited to a population density of 136 persons per acre, and 618,000 would be decentralized. The Greater London Plan, however, added 415,000 to this total. These would be housed in eight new satellite towns (..) (383,250), to be located outside the green belt ring (...) [,] additions to existing towns (261,000)’<sup>170</sup> or in “quasi-satellite” towns in the inner London built-up area<sup>171</sup>. Finally, ‘the remaining people would be moved to locations far from London’<sup>172</sup>.

Nonetheless, ‘the government’s brave new plans were not well received by residents of the East End, many of whom felt a strong allegiance to their city’<sup>173</sup>. However, despite the inhabitants’ opposition and discontent, ‘the authorities pressed on with the redevelopment and resettlement plans’<sup>174</sup>. The population was re-housed either in the new towns or in blocks of flats which were rebuilt in the Docklands’ area, for example in Limehouse, after clearing the sites damaged by the bombs.

The second problem that afflicted the Docklands dealt with the re-organization of the dockers’ work with new methods of employment. During the war the government had faced a great deal of absenteeism, since the workers skipped work and helped their families and neighbours after the German raids’ devastation. Often the docks were undermanned because the workers were clearing their damaged houses or mourning the dead, creating difficulties to the distribution of foodstuffs and military supplies<sup>175</sup>. In order to keep the port working and regulate the dockers’ work, the authorities had created the National Dock Labour Corporation, in 1941. The new

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<sup>169</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 295

<sup>170</sup> Larkham P.J. and Adams D., *The post-war reconstruction planning of London: a wider perspective*, p.9

<sup>171</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>173</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 295

<sup>174</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>175</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 298

regulations would give the dockers an ‘attendance pay’<sup>176</sup>, an incentive to all workers that turned up to work each day, ‘regardless of whether work was available or not’<sup>177</sup>.

However, the new system was not successful but was refused by the dockers, who had been working for years appearing at the morning call-on<sup>178</sup> and considered the new scheme ‘as a threat to their freedom and only a step away from becoming employees of the PLA’<sup>179</sup>. The problems with the dockers lead to the strike of the Surrey Commercial Docks’ stevedores, in November 1944. Since the protest had caused a ‘backlog of ships waiting to leave the dock’<sup>180</sup>, the management were forced to negotiate with the workers. After this successful strike, other workers started new protests, leading to a series of strikes which caused a great deal of problems to the port: delays and queues in unloading the ships’ cargoes, deterioration of perishable goods if not rapidly distributed, the financial losses of merchants and ship owners, the port’s paralysis, as well as the redirection of ships to ports unaffected by the strikes. The situation was so serious that the army was brought in by the government to unload the ships. If the dockers negotiated with the management and returned to work, ‘strike action was destined to afflict the Port of London for the rest of its days’<sup>181</sup>.

Apart from ‘the de-casualization of the dock labour force’<sup>182</sup>, ‘increasingly mechanized handling methods’<sup>183</sup>, such as the use of pallets, fork-lift trucks and unit-loads<sup>184</sup>, helped to reduce the need for dock workers and led to the creation of larger warehouses in which the mechanic tools could be placed and used. In addition, there were difficulties with the security of the port because the docks experienced episodes of thefts (a problem that had always affected the docks), as well as smuggling and contraband. The port and its docks became also a distribution point for drugs, counterfeit currency, especially in the 1960s<sup>185</sup>, and terrorism weapons.

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<sup>176</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>178</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>179</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 299

<sup>180</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>181</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 301

<sup>182</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p. 50

<sup>183</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>184</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>185</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 304

Despite all these difficulties, the port ‘recovered from the ravages of World War 2<sup>nd</sup> and entered their final period of prosperity’<sup>186</sup>. There was plenty of employment and a huge number of ships arriving again at the port to unload their cargo. Trade increased, but this final boom lasted until the mid-1960s, with the inevitable decline and final closure of the docks and warehouses.

Apart from strikes and protests, another factor led to the dismissal of the area: the process of decolonization. In the 1930s, during the first post-war period, Britain had created preferential trading links<sup>187</sup> with many territories of the Commonwealth and, after the second conflict, this form of trade had increased. However, independence from the British rule enabled the former colonies ‘to gain access to more profitable markets in the USA, Russia, Germany and Japan, with the result that Commonwealth trade in London halved during the 1960s’<sup>188</sup>. The independent countries developed their own markets, ‘which often bypassed the Port of London altogether’<sup>189</sup>.

However, the main cause for the decline of the docks derived from a form of trade which had already been introduced 200 years before and saw an increase after the Second World War: containerisation. It ‘set the seal on the decline of London’s docks and of many older docks throughout the world. It also affected the riverside where, at Bermondsey, Rotherhithe, Wapping and Limehouse, warehouses were gradually deserted, demolished, or taken over by squatters and artists’<sup>190</sup>. Containers offered many advantages since ‘the time spent loading and unloading the goods was cut down immeasurably’<sup>191</sup> or because they ‘could be securely sealed, thus radically reducing any opportunities for theft’<sup>192</sup>.

This trade system caused competition with London’s rival ports, such as Tilbury, which could accommodate large container ships more easily. On the other hand, London’s port could not offer deep berths and suitable quays for such large ships. In addition, since ‘container transport

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<sup>186</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 305

<sup>187</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, New York; Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2000 p.132

<sup>188</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>189</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 309

<sup>190</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>191</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 308

<sup>192</sup> *Ibidem*

relied on roads, not rail, and none of the roads in the Docklands then had the capacity for fleets of container lorries<sup>193</sup>, the port started to be dismissed. The Docklands' facilities were supplanted by deepwater container harbours where tankers and containerships could be unloaded.

In 1962 the government created a committee to investigate the Docklands' situation. The committee's opinion was that, despite the useful role and specialised function of London's docks, 'the port activity should be moved away from the centre of London'<sup>194</sup>, for example to Tilbury<sup>195</sup>. As a result, the port of Tilbury, further east in Essex, saw the building of a massive dock. In addition, 'a colossal grain terminal was constructed on nearby Northfleet Hope'<sup>196</sup> and, near the latter site, a terminal was 'specifically designed to accommodate container ships'<sup>197</sup>. On the other hand, the Docklands experienced an inevitable reduction in traffic and trade and 150,000 jobs were lost between 1967 and 1976<sup>198</sup>.

After centuries of prosperous trade, the end of London's old Docklands had begun. The complexes started to close, the first of which were the East India Docks, on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1967. Subsequently, they were followed by the St Katharine and London Docks, in 1968, and the Surrey Docks, between 1968 and 1970. Other complexes continued to work, such as the Royal Docks and the West India Docks, but their decline was inevitable<sup>199</sup>. The last complex to close was the King George V Dock, in 1981, after only sixty years of activity.

Apart from the docks and their complexes, even the Docklands' industries and warehouses had been dismissed and this 6,000 acre area appeared as a derelict wasteland, with rotting docks, crumbling infrastructure<sup>200</sup> and 'vast expenses of polluted land'<sup>201</sup>. In the years between 1976 and 1981, the population of the Docklands decreased from 55,000 to 39,000 people<sup>202</sup> and London's

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<sup>193</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 50

<sup>194</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p.310

<sup>195</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>196</sup> *Ivi*, p. 309

<sup>197</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>198</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 312

<sup>199</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 50

<sup>200</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 315

<sup>201</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>202</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city* p.132

port lost its 'position as the workshop of the world'<sup>203</sup>. As a result, the area experienced 'failures in land, housing and commercial property markets'<sup>204</sup>.

The situation of the former port was critical, as described in an article on *The Thames*: 'Derelict warehouses, overturned ironwork and unvisited sheets of water stretch for miles, and the willow herb flourishes as freely as it did on the bombed sites after the war. A dwindling population lives here and there in terraces half boarded up and grim tower blocks. (...) The Port of London has moved closer to the sea, leaving behind the largest area in need of wholesale redevelopment anywhere in Europe'<sup>205</sup>. The only solution to the abandonment, unemployment and decline of the area was finding a strategy to redevelop it, giving new life to the Docklands and offering an opportunity for growth and regeneration.

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<sup>203</sup> Ivi, p.133

<sup>204</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, London, 1998, p.6

<sup>205</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p.313





## CHAPTER THREE: THE REBIRTH (1981-1998)

### The London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC)

The regeneration of this ‘area of acute deprivation and physical decay’<sup>206</sup> was not a simple process. Apart from the size of derelict land to be regenerated, different interests, political struggles and lack of money helped to create difficulties in putting any of the projects or plans into practice<sup>207</sup>. Indeed, several plans had been drawn for the future of the area, for example those proposed by the PLA in 1970 or the eight projects of engineers Treves and Morgan, who had been commissioned a study by the government and presented their plans in 1973. However, putting these ideas into practice was complex and brought few results. Only Treves and Morgan’s proposal ‘for a “water city for the 21<sup>st</sup> century” ’<sup>208</sup> influenced the redevelopment of the area in the following years.

The situation of the Docklands changed with the advent of a new Conservative government and the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in 1979. The new central government, along with a Conservative GLC<sup>209</sup>, decided to establish an organization to control the land that the PLA wanted to sell<sup>210</sup> and to lead the former port’s area to a new birth. Under the *Local Government, Planning and Land Act* of 1980<sup>211</sup>, an Urban Development Corporation (UDC) was officially formed and became known as the LDDC, the London Docklands Development Corporation. The Secretary of State for the Environment, Michael Heseltine, designated the LDDC to regenerate the Docklands area and the establishment of this agency by the government ‘was a deliberate move to seize control from the boroughs by granting money directly to inner city

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<sup>206</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p.10

<sup>207</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p. 51

<sup>208</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>209</sup> *Ivi*, p. 52

<sup>210</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>211</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk>

regeneration rather than through local government'<sup>212</sup>. Indeed, the LDDC was provided with unprecedented power: it 'was given access to munificent financial resources, the power to acquire land from public sector authorities and, most importantly, total control over the project without the need to seek approval or agreement from the London boroughs in which the land was situated'<sup>213</sup>.

The LDDC worked for about seventeen years – from July 1981 to March 1998 – 'to secure an area of eight-and-a-half square miles stretching across parts of the East End Boroughs of Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham'<sup>214</sup>. It acquired '1,756 acres of development land (plus 417 acres of water) through vesting orders and compulsory purchase from the major, and really very few landholders – British Gas (Beckton), PLA (docks), British Rail (docks and railway land), CEGB and local authorities: these in 1981 had owned 80 per cent of the land within Docklands'<sup>215</sup>. Two areas had been left out: Deptford, in the London Borough of Lewisham, and Woolwich, in the district of Greenwich. However, the regeneration plan also included areas on the south bank of the Thames, the land to the north of the Royal Albert Dock, and even an area 'destined in 1910 for a further dock which was never made'<sup>216</sup>.

The LDDC had to face some difficulties and, apart from the opposition of the boroughs' inhabitants (see chapter 4, p. 83), the main problems derived from the fact that the designated area was large (8½ square miles) and 'there were no models for regeneration on Docklands' immense scale'<sup>217</sup>. The LDDC had to face multiple tasks: 'to bring land and buildings into effective use, encourage the development of existing and new industry, create an attractive environment and ensure that housing and social facilities were made available to encourage people to live and work in the area'<sup>218</sup>.

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<sup>212</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p. 52

<sup>213</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 315

<sup>214</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk>

<sup>215</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p. 52

<sup>216</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>217</sup> *Ivi*, p. 53

<sup>218</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/wapping/index.html>

The consortium worked to set up a redevelopment strategy with ideas ‘to provide permanent regeneration of the docklands’<sup>219</sup> and improve the image of this area. The scheme included the creation of new infrastructure, ‘transport networks up to the standards of the rest of London’<sup>220</sup>, the improvement of the quality of housing and new employment. In addition, a very important move of the LDDC was the rediscovery of the value and potential of the Docklands’ vast expanse of water<sup>221</sup>. The LDDC considered water an exceptional opportunity and a ‘potentially attractive feature’<sup>222</sup> for redevelopment. The consortium decided to stop the docks’ infilling, reopen and restore some of them and provide new waterways<sup>223</sup>.

However, in order to address the multiple market failure which had affected the Docklands during the three previous decades, the main aim of the consortium was to work to make the Docklands attractive to investors, even from the USA. Working to improve the ‘image of dereliction and inaccessibility’<sup>224</sup>, which had characterized the area in the former period, the LDDC built up a strategy including tax incentives and planning concessions to developers<sup>225</sup>. This move led in 1982 to the designation of a new business district on the Isle of Dogs, the Enterprise Zone, and to the emergence of Canary Wharf as ‘a major grade office centre’<sup>226</sup>.

The area saw the building of a huge number of skyscrapers, which became the seats of top retail banks (such as HSBC, Barclays and Citibank<sup>227</sup>) and multinational companies. Canary Wharf even attracted ‘leading media players and some of the big legal firms as well as many other major players in the international financial economy’<sup>228</sup>. As a result, the new business district became ‘an eastward extension of the City of London’<sup>229</sup> but also a potential rival to the City itself<sup>230</sup>. In

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<sup>219</sup> Ivi, p.52

<sup>220</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>221</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p. 54

<sup>222</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p.13

<sup>223</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p. 54

<sup>224</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p.12

<sup>225</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>226</sup> Ivi, p.13

<sup>227</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, Paperback, 23 December 2008, p.47

<sup>228</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>229</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p.13

reality, nowadays Canary Wharf is recognized as ‘the most potent image of Docklands for the whole world’<sup>231</sup> and, despite the early fears that the regeneration of Docklands ‘might undermine the City’s pre-eminent status, in fact it has helped to cement the City’s role as the leading European financial centre’<sup>232</sup>.

The ‘combination of central-government finance and private-sector investment’<sup>233</sup> brought massive redevelopment to the Docklands area, which experienced deep transformations. By 1997 the Docklands had seen an increase in population from 39,400 to 81,231<sup>234</sup>, the creation of more than 44,000 jobs, 1450 businesses and 21,615 new dwellings<sup>235</sup>, as well as the completion of ‘2.3 million square meters of new commercial buildings’<sup>236</sup>.

## **Building process and housing**

As concerns the building process and development, the LDDC worked on the area through a triple, and sometimes mixed, approach. A first move was the demolition of the old warehouses and the former docks in order to avoid costs, build new offices, create housing and realize a radical reconstruction. A second solution proved to be the conservation of the original buildings to safeguard their historical memory and heritage. Finally, the LDDC worked on a mixed development with the conversion of old buildings – industrial complexes, granaries, warehouses and mills<sup>237</sup> –

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<sup>230</sup> Eade J., *Placing London*, p.136

<sup>231</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p. 61

<sup>232</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p.45

<sup>233</sup> Eade J., *Placing London*, p.133

<sup>234</sup> *Ivi*, p.53

<sup>235</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>236</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>237</sup> *Ivi*, p.58

with a change of use. They were interwoven with new build<sup>238</sup>, remodeled and transformed, especially for residential use<sup>239</sup>.

In the 1980s, the Docklands saw Postmodern private housing, realized together with the policies of the new Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher, which accompanied a change in strategy for the LDDC from ‘publicly financed to private housing’<sup>240</sup> and squeezed the building of social accommodations out of the market. Moreover, the transformation of the area included warehouse conversions, speculative initiatives and the work of individual developers – even overseas ones – which employed famous architects. Among the projects realized, there were ‘design and build’<sup>241</sup> contracts: in other words, the architect provided the design, while the project was ‘managed by the house builder’<sup>242</sup>, who could intervene with further changes<sup>243</sup>.

## Transport

One of the main aspects of the regeneration process included the improvement of transport, through the creation of a series of infrastructures which could link the Docklands to the city, as well as to other areas of London and its suburbs. Among the projects of the LDDC, four are worth remembering: the Docklands Light Railway (DLR), the extension of the Jubilee Line, the creation of new roads and Highways and the opening of the London City Airport.

The Docklands Light Railway (DLR) was the first important transport project to be created in the Docklands, linking the former port area to the City and other boroughs of London. Built

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<sup>238</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions *Regenerating London Docklands*, p.57

<sup>239</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p.58

<sup>240</sup> *Ivi*, p. 63

<sup>241</sup> *Ivi*, p. 65

<sup>242</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>243</sup> *Ibidem*

between 1985 and 1987 at a cost of £65 million<sup>244</sup>, the new rail network made use of old railway routes to reconnect the Isle of Dogs with the City, on the east, and Stratford, on the north. Created ‘using single-unit articulated cars, short platforms and 130ft (40 metre) radius curves’<sup>245</sup>, the DLR was inaugurated on August 31<sup>st</sup> 1987 and comprised only two routes: from Tower Gateway (east) and Stratford (north) to Island Gardens, reaching the Isle of Dogs.

However, during the following years, in concomitance with the office boom in Canary Wharf (see p. 65), the DLR was upgraded with additional stations and further extensions, such as the route to Beckton (1988-92), to the south of the city. After the LDDC ceased its work in 1998, the DLR saw new improvements and the last extension was inaugurated in 2011.

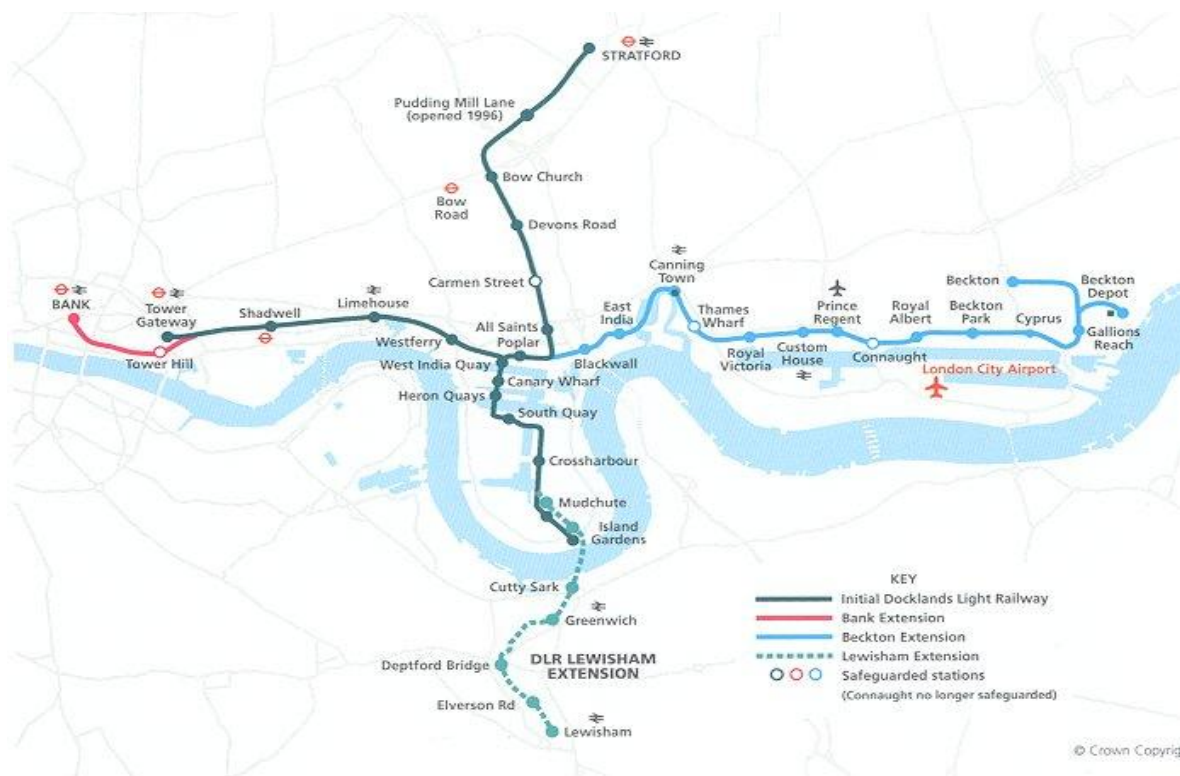


Figure 7: Plan of Docklands Light Railway

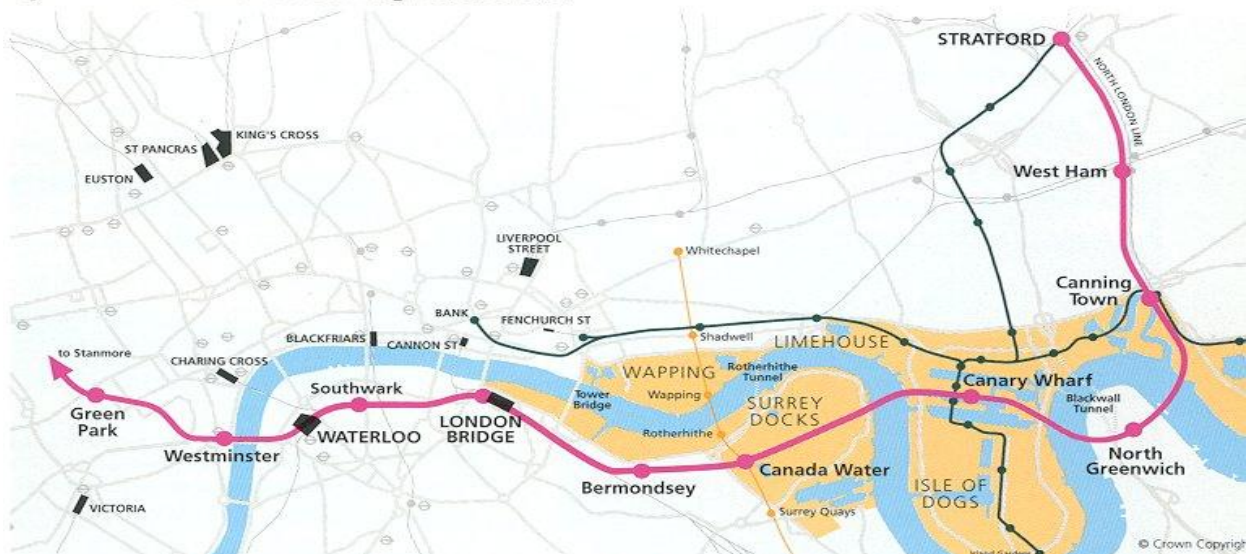
The Docklands Light Railway (<http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/transport/2tran9.jpg>)

<sup>244</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 316

<sup>245</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p. 40

The extension of the Jubilee Line (or Jubilee Line Extension, JLE<sup>246</sup>) to the Docklands area is another relevant achievement of the LDDC. Thanks to the new impetus given by the construction of Canary Wharf<sup>247</sup>, new proposals were submitted ‘for a high capacity link through Docklands to the City, over and above the upgraded Docklands Light Railway’<sup>248</sup>. The favoured route resulted in the one connecting ‘Green Park, Westminster, Waterloo and London Bridge (...) with Bermondsey, Surrey Quays and Canary Wharf’<sup>249</sup>, crossing the Thames to North Greenwich and reaching Canning Town, West Ham and Stratford. The construction of this new infrastructure extended the London underground to the Docklands’ area with seven additional stops: Bermondsey (in Beckton), Canada Water (on the site of the former Surrey Docks), Canary Wharf (on the Isle of Dogs), North Greenwich (on the homonymous area), Canning Town, West Ham and Stratford (the end of line).

Figure 9: Jubilee Line route through East London



The eastern route of the Jubilee Line (<http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/transport/2tran11.jpg>)

<sup>246</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p. 26

<sup>247</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>248</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>249</sup> *Ibidem*



Another transport improvement was the project of a strategic highway network<sup>250</sup>, with new highways linking the area with other boroughs of London and reducing driving time to the City (10 minutes from the Isle of Dogs<sup>251</sup>). As a result, the LDDC built ‘a series of continuous four lane roads linking the Docklands with the city to the west and the North Circular Road and the M11 to the east’<sup>252</sup>. The improvements included other infrastructures such as the Limehouse Link tunnel, to the west (which links Wapping to the city); the Aspen Way, to the north of the isle of Dogs; the East India Dock Link Tunnel, connected to the A13; and the Lower Lea crossing road bridge, linked to the area of the Royal Docks<sup>253</sup>. Furthermore, a southerly arm<sup>254</sup> was added to the Blackwall Tunnel, and a new road network<sup>255</sup> was created even in the Royal Docks.

The most important and strategic project, as well as ‘the centerpiece of the new network’<sup>256</sup>, was the Limehouse Link tunnel. Built at a cost of £293m<sup>257</sup> and opened in May 1993 after seven years of planning and building, the new 1.8 km tunnel connected the Docklands, in particular the area of Limehouse, to the eastern edge of the City. The new infrastructure has contributed to take traffic underground, ‘away from the area’s historic streets’<sup>258</sup>, thus ‘improving the environment for residents’<sup>259</sup>.

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<sup>250</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions *Regenerating London Docklands*, p. 21

<sup>251</sup> *Ivi*, p.22

<sup>252</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>253</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>254</sup> *Ivi*, p. 22

<sup>255</sup> *Ibidem*

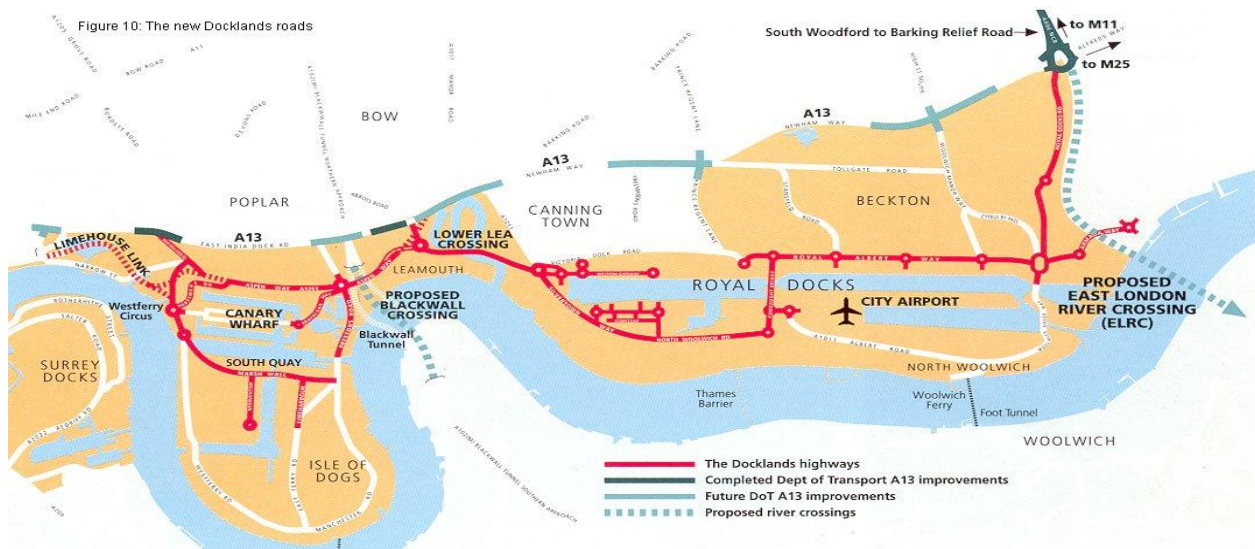
<sup>256</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>257</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>258</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>259</sup> *Ibidem*





The new Docklands roads and highways (<http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/transport/2tran12.jpg>)

However, the most significant project was the building of an airport in the area of the Royal Docks, in particular on the site of the former King George V Dock: the London City Airport (LCY). Because of its proximity to the centre of the capital, for its building ‘permission was granted subject to a number of safeguards relating to noise, safety and hours of operation and constraints on the type of aircraft which could be used’<sup>260</sup>. Owned by the private sector, the London City Airport ‘was entirely a private venture’<sup>261</sup> and was inaugurated in October 1987 with the first commercial flight. The new airport apron and terminal building<sup>262</sup> occupy the dry dock, while its runway has been built ‘on a former wharf, effectively the narrow strip of land that separated the King George V and Albert Docks’<sup>263</sup>.

<sup>260</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p. 19

<sup>261</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p. 41

<sup>262</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London’s Docklands*, p.17

<sup>263</sup> Ivi, p. 16



The London City Airport

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/picturegalleries/8940375/The-worlds-10-most-scenic-airport-approaches-and-landings.html?image=19>

Created to serve ‘the London business travel market’<sup>264</sup> and, especially, the City of London, and aiming at ‘business travelers to European airports’<sup>265</sup>, the airport had only two destinations – Paris and Brussels. The reason for the reduced number of flights derived from a problem of poor infrastructure, since the airport was 6 miles far from the City and when it opened there was lack of public transport: passengers had to reach the city centre either by bus or by an expensive taxi ride<sup>266</sup>. However, when the Docklands Light Railway opened its station in December 2005, further destinations were added, attracting an increasing number of passengers. At present the airport serves thirty British and European cities and handles about three million passengers per year<sup>267</sup> and is the capital’s fifth busiest airport after Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted and Luton<sup>268</sup>.

<sup>264</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p. 19

<sup>265</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p. 188

<sup>266</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London Docklands*, p.18

<sup>267</sup> *Ivi*, p.19

<sup>268</sup> [http://www.airportdirect.com/city\\_airport\\_transfer](http://www.airportdirect.com/city_airport_transfer)

## Environmental initiatives

The work of the LDDC did not focus only on the creation of offices, skyscrapers and new infrastructure. On the contrary, a key role was assumed by the regeneration of the riverfront through a series of environmental initiatives. The corporation started working respecting a set of principles, which included a particular attention for the landscape and high quality waterside design<sup>269</sup>. Some of these requirements focused on the ‘retention and exploitation’<sup>270</sup> of the docks’ water since the LDDC ‘believed that it was the 88 Km of waterfront that gave the Docklands its unique character’<sup>271</sup>. As a result (see the description at p. 51), one of the first moves of the LDDC was to stop the filling of the docks and reopen some of them.

However, the Corporation worked to improve the waterfront image with other projects, such as ‘over 725 hectares of land treated, 160,000 trees planted, 18 conservation areas created’<sup>272</sup>. Moreover, the LDDC promoted ‘the safeguard and enhancement of wildlife and nature conservation’<sup>273</sup> in the area through the creation of a 7 acre wildfowl sanctuary. Located at the point of conjunction between the rivers Lea and Thames, the East India Dock Reserve Park hosts several species of birds, including cormorants, Arctic terns, nightingales and oystercatchers. The nature reserve offers a variety of habitats and has become an important attraction for visitors as well as an educational resource<sup>274</sup>.

Another initiative of the LDDC was the creation of pedestrian and cycle links. An example can be the nine Financial Times Walks, which extend for 19.14 km. Developed in the areas of the Isle of Dogs, Rotherhithe, Bermondsey, Wapping and Limehouse, the walks are promoted by five

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<sup>269</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p. 34-35

<sup>270</sup> *Ivi*, p. 34

<sup>271</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>272</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>273</sup> *Ivi*, p. 35

<sup>274</sup> *Ibidem*

leaflets which describe the features of the Docklands' pedestrian routes and have been realized in a joint initiative between the Consortium and the Financial Times<sup>275</sup>.

The Docklands' regeneration work concerned even green spaces. Attention was focused on recreational sites and led to the creation of gardens and several ecology parks, such as Lavender Pond, Bow Creek, Stave Hill, and Canada Water<sup>276</sup>. In addition, the area offers a huge number of parks, which can be long-established open spaces, converted areas from disused industrial features or purpose built parks. It is the example of Millwall Park, Island Gardens, Thames Barrier Park, Lyle Park, Jubilee Park and Canada Square Park<sup>277</sup>. Among them there are even projects realized or concluded after the LDDC ceased its work; another example is the main green space in Canary Wharf, Jubilee Park, which was completed only in 2002<sup>278</sup>.

The riverside transformation was accompanied by the LDDC's production and publishing of a series of books concerning the Docklands' heritage. They provide information about 'past uses, buildings and the people who worked and lived in the area'<sup>279</sup>. As a result, the area's cultural heritage has contributed to enhance the Docklands' potential as an attraction for tourists and visitors<sup>280</sup> and to provide the creation of leisure space and activities for the local people.

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<sup>275</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>276</sup> *Ibidem*

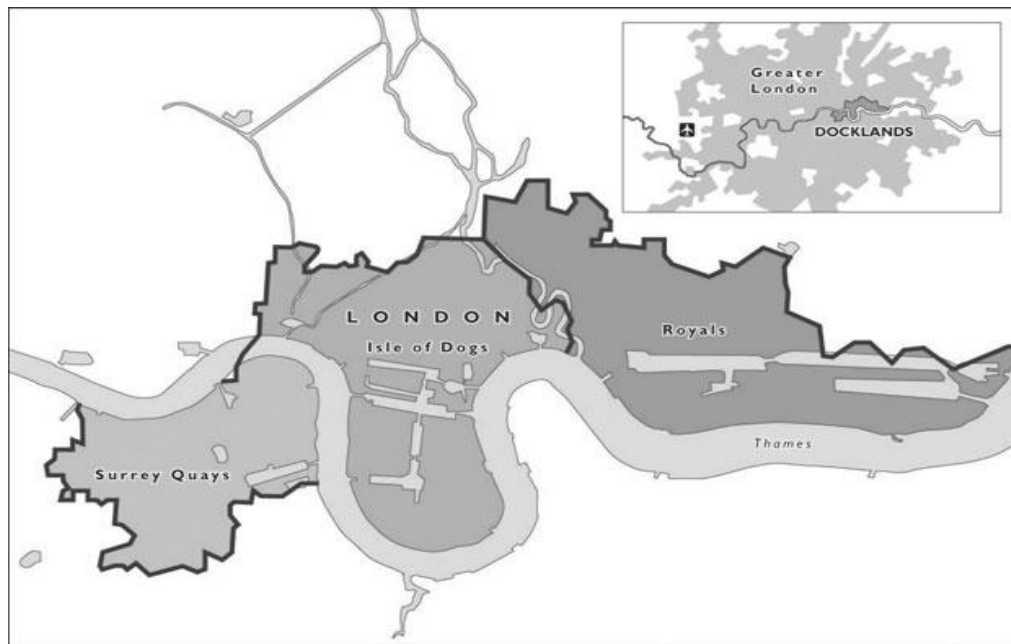
<sup>277</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London's Docklands*, p. 81

<sup>278</sup> *Ivi*, p. 92

<sup>279</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p. 36

<sup>280</sup> *Ibidem*

In the following sections I will focus on the regeneration of each area, starting from the north bank of the Thames and going on with the south area (from east to west). I will describe the transformation of these boroughs, presenting and describing the works that have led to their redevelopment and the results achieved by the LDDC.



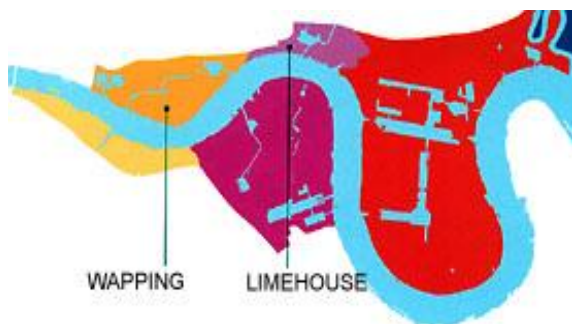
<http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/lddcachieve/index.html#What>

**North Bank:** the north part lies in the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham and includes the areas of: Wapping, Limehouse, Poplar, the Isle of Dogs, the Royal Docks (Royal Victoria, Royal Albert and King George V Docks) and Beckton.

**South Bank:** the south part is included in the London borough of Southwark and comprises the areas of Bermondsey Riverside, Rotherhithe and the former Surrey Docks.

## THE REGENERATION OF THE NORTH BANK

### Wapping and Limehouse



<http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/wapping/index.html>

The first area to be described is Wapping, the most westerly district of the Docklands, on the fringe of the City. Lying within the borough of Tower Hamlets and located on the north bank of the Thames, since the 1980s it has experienced a deep process of transformation thanks to the work and initiatives of the LDDC.

Already isolated from the rest of the city through the high walls built around the docks to deter crime, the isolation of Wapping worsened with the closure of the docks and was accompanied by a condition of unemployment and dereliction<sup>281</sup>. However, even before the advent of the LDDC, the Port of London Authority and the Tower Hamlets Council had begun to work on this area with the aim of regenerating it. During the 1970s the docks had been infilled and many warehouses had been demolished ‘to avoid the costs of looking after dock estates’<sup>282</sup>. Moreover, around the former Eastern Dock new housing had started to be created, while Taylor Woodrow, who had won a public competition to regenerate the old St Katharine Docks, was redeveloping the area. In this 12 hectare site Woodrow build the 835 room Tower Hotel<sup>283</sup> and the Dickens Inn and converted Ivory House ‘into a mixed development of shops, offices and apartments’<sup>284</sup>.

<sup>281</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/wapping/index.html>

<sup>282</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>283</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>284</sup> *Ibidem*



Although the former St Katharine Docks were regenerated from 1971, ‘the 103 acres of the London Docks lay untouched for years’<sup>285</sup>. In 1976 the PLA sold this complex to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets which decided to redevelop the area following a plan drawn by Shephard Epstein & Hunter<sup>286</sup> which included ‘low-rise housing at garden suburb densities (...), generous open space and wedges of green giving access to the river’<sup>287</sup>. The most important aspect of this project was that among the 1500 dwellings to build, a great number were destined for rent, and only some for sale.

However, only a few buildings were created and, when the LDDC started working on the area in 1981, the former masterplan by Shephard Epstein & Hunter was revised and modified. In particular, the strategy of the LDDC involved ‘providing for a majority of houses for sale, not rent’<sup>288</sup>. In addition, it included the creation of ‘a new and very distinctive landscape of waterways and broad, well-planted quays within the former docks’<sup>289</sup>.

Other strategic moves of the Consortium involved the creation of an attractive environment by halting the docks’ in-filling<sup>290</sup>, improving the area’s facilities, and converting the old warehouses. As concerns the latter, the dock warehouses were reused and converted into housing, creating even luxury flats. A good example is the work of the developer Conran Roche who built ‘a well-designed mixed development of flats, shops and workshops’<sup>291</sup> at New Crane Wharf. The LDDC worked to regenerate Wapping with other initiatives: it updated transport – through the opening of the Docklands Light Railway and the improvement of bus services – and created new services. This is the case of the new Hermitage and St Peter’s primary schools, the youth club at Wellclose Square or the Wapping Health Centre.

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<sup>285</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p. 197

<sup>286</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>287</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>288</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p. 197-98

<sup>289</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>290</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/wapping/index.html>

<sup>291</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p. 198

Despite the closeness of Wapping and Limehouse, the regeneration of the latter area has followed different paths and timescales<sup>292</sup>. Indeed, while Wapping experienced deep transformations during the 1980s, the redevelopment of Limehouse was largely a story of the 1990s<sup>293</sup>. One of the most important projects undertaken in Limehouse was the opening of the Limehouse Link in 1993, which proved to be a successful breakthrough and a strategic move to connect the area to the rest of central London. The new tunnel helped to put an end to the isolation of the area and to remove the traffic problem in the streets of Limehouse, which had not been intended for such volumes of traffic<sup>294</sup>. Since the opening of the Limehouse Tunnel affected 169 homes, the LDDC rehoused 556 households, offering the families ‘new housing association homes, mainly on the Isle of Dogs’<sup>295</sup>, and ‘refurbished Council homes’<sup>296</sup>.

Apart from the new tunnel, the LDDC focused on other projects to regenerate Limehouse, which after the closure of the docks had lain untouched for years. Included in the Limehouse Area Development Strategy<sup>297</sup> published in November 1982, the LDDC’s initiatives included the redevelopment of Limehouse Basin and Free Trade Wharf, with the creation of housing (mainly apartment blocks and luxury riverside developments<sup>298</sup>) and facilities, and the opening of the Docklands Light Railway (then known as the Light Rapid Transit Route). Moreover, the LDDC refurbished 635 council homes (an example can be the Barley Mow and Roche Estates), built play areas (such as at St Vincent’s Estate) and a new youth club, improved Gill Street Health Centre, and upgraded and extended the ‘Ropemakers’ Fields’ park.

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<sup>292</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/wapping/index.html>

<sup>293</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>294</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>295</sup> *Ibidem*

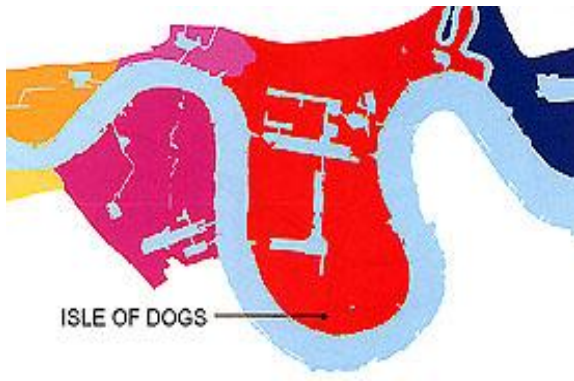
<sup>296</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>297</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>298</sup> <http://www.free-trade-wharf.co.uk/>



## The Isle of Dogs and Canary Wharf



<http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/iod/index.html>

Canary Wharf and its skyscrapers

(<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/347049/London-Docklands>)

After having experienced a long period of prosperity thanks to the presence of the Millwall, East and West India Docks, in the 1970-80s the Isle of Dogs had become ‘an isolated, tightly knit community seemingly in the grip of irreversible decline’<sup>299</sup>. The closure of the docks had been accompanied by an air of isolation and dilapidation. Unemployment was pervasive: out of a population of 15,000 inhabitants, only 7,600 people were in work<sup>300</sup>. In addition, despite its proximity to the centre of London, the area was cut off from the rest of the capital: public transport was poor and limited to a single bus route<sup>301</sup>, the A13/East India – the main road – was congested by traffic and there were neither underground nor rail services to directly serve the Isle of Dogs<sup>302</sup>.

The breakthrough for this area began in 1981 with the advent of the LDDC, which played a leading role for the regeneration of the district<sup>303</sup>: it decided to base its headquarters in this area and radically transform the Isle of Dogs. One of the first moves of the corporation was the creation of a

<sup>299</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/iod/index.html>

<sup>300</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>301</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>302</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>303</sup> *Ibidem*

new business district. As a result, on April 26<sup>th</sup> 1982 the LDDC designated an Enterprise Zone, ‘a band of land bordering the West India and Millwall Docks and covering the infilled area of the West India Docks’<sup>304</sup>.

Covering 195 hectares, the Enterprise Zone also included ‘a small part of the Leamouth area extending into the London Borough of Newham’<sup>305</sup> and was conceived with the aim of attracting investors and enterprises, granting them particular concessions as concerns tax and planning. For example, some of the measures proposed by the LDDC included a ‘no development land tax’<sup>306</sup>, a simplified planning procedure and a ‘100 per cent capital allowance for new commercial buildings to be set against corporation and income taxes’<sup>307</sup>. In this way, low rents and generous taxbreaks<sup>308</sup>, attracted a huge number of developers, investors and businesses, even from the United States. This is the case, for example, of the North American developer G. Ware Travelstead<sup>309</sup>.

Moreover, it was with the creation of Canary Wharf that the Enterprise Zone experienced a turning point and the peak of its activity. Canary Wharf is the most important area of the Isle of Dogs as well as the main attraction for visitors and tourists. Conceived in 1985 and created thanks to the massive investment of the Canadian company Olympia & York, it derives its name from the buildings which served as warehouses to store fruit imports from the Mediterranean, especially from the Canary Islands<sup>310</sup>.

Different definitions have been provided for Canary Wharf: ‘a Manhattan-in-miniature framed in numerous riverside views, a floating island on its raft within the docks, a sheer gorge looming above the DLR track, or silvery alien towers above the brick buildings of Poplar High Street’<sup>311</sup> are only some examples. For others, Canary Wharf is a curiosity within the Enterprise

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<sup>304</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 94

<sup>305</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/iod/index.html>

<sup>306</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 94

<sup>307</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>308</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p.133

<sup>309</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 94

<sup>310</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 317

<sup>311</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 114

Zone<sup>312</sup>, ‘a tightly planned, axial development of formal spaces within the Enterprise Zone’s laissez-faire confusion of buildings’<sup>313</sup>.

What is clear is that Canary Wharf became the most prominent part of the Enterprise Zone and its development deeply influenced the way of conceiving a building: it ‘introduced the British to the speed and efficiency of American fast-track construction on a huge scale, and to the seize, eclecticism and luxury of North American Postmodern commercial architecture and landscape’<sup>314</sup>. As a result, the new Enterprise Zone saw the building of many skyscrapers, among which there are Britain’s tallest ones, such as One Canada Square.

Having become one of the symbols of the Docklands area, and even one of London’s landmarks, One Canada Square was designed by the Argentinean-American architect Cesar Pelli. Originally named the Canary Wharf Tower<sup>315</sup>, it was completed in 1991 and first occupied the following year, in 1992. The skyscraper soars more than 800 feet skywards<sup>316</sup>, has ‘fifty floors and almost four thousand windows’<sup>317</sup>. Only the ground floor is accessible to visitors and the building is now used especially for offices.

Apart from Cesar Pelli, who was responsible for several other buildings in Canary Wharf<sup>318</sup>, other famous architects worked there, realizing important projects mainly over, or in, old docks<sup>319</sup>. It is the case of Terry Farrell and Partners, I. M. Pei, or Foster and Partners, with 15 Westferry Circus and Nos 8 and 33 Canada Square<sup>320</sup>. Other projects include Heron Quays and its office development or South Quay Plaza on Marsh Wall<sup>321</sup>. The skyscrapers built in this area are fundamental for the presence of offices, multinational companies, banks, medias and telecommunications. One example is the American bank Citigroup, as well as HSBC or Barclays

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<sup>312</sup> *Ivi*, p. 113

<sup>313</sup> *Ivi*, p. 113-114

<sup>314</sup> *Ivi*, p. 62

<sup>315</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London’s Docklands*, p. 77

<sup>316</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>317</sup> *Ivi*, p. 77-78

<sup>318</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>319</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>320</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London’s Docklands*, p. 78

<sup>321</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/iod/index.html>

and their impressive towers. This area became home even of The Telegraph, the Mirror Group and Independent, which decided to move there<sup>322</sup>.

In addition to Canary Wharf and its skyscrapers, other impressive projects were created in other areas of the Isle of Dogs, for example at Blackwall and at the East India Dock. Some examples are the NCC Building, KDD Telehouse, the former Financial Times Printing Works<sup>323</sup> or the Reuters Building, designed by Richard Rogers<sup>324</sup>. New industrial development was brought even with the opening of West Ferry Printers at the western end of the Millwall Dock, in the south part of the Isle of Dogs.

Apart from the creation of a new business district, the LDDC provided a series of new facilities for the population of the Isle of Dogs. This is the case of the Asda Superstore on East Ferry Road or the shopping centre in Canary Wharf, which develops on either side of the DLR station and includes shops, a Tesco Metro supermarket, leisure and specialist stores<sup>325</sup>. In addition, a wide number of restaurants, cafés and pubs is available in Canary Wharf, allowing residents, workers and tourists to eat or drink there seven days a week<sup>326</sup>.

However, shopping facilities are not the only kind of services improved by the LDDC. The Corporation invested, for example, in education: this is the case of Tower Hamlets College's extension in Poplar High Street, the building of Arnhem Wharf Primary School and the financial support to many other institutes. In addition, the LDDC opened Access Centres 'to build bridges between training providers and the unemployed'<sup>327</sup>. The Corporation invested in health projects, for example contributing towards Island and Newby Place Health Centres and the Docklands Medical Centre.

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<sup>322</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>323</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 88-89

<sup>324</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/iod/index.html>

<sup>325</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>326</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>327</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/iod/index.html>

One of the aims of the LDDC was working to improve the environment of the Isle of Dogs and, in particular, access to the waterside. It created ‘3.3 km of dockside public walkways’<sup>328</sup> around Millwall Docks and at Canary Wharf<sup>329</sup>, invested in the Docklands Sailing and Watersport Centre, created new open spaces, for example at the Great Eastern Slipway and at Johnson Draw Dock. The Consortium supported the Mudchute Farm and Park (the island’s largest open space area), St John’s Park and Poplar Recreation Ground<sup>330</sup>.

Transport played a fundamental role in the redevelopment of the Isle of Dogs. Thanks to the opening of the Docklands Light Railway, the extension of the Jubilee Line and a series of new roads and highways, this area of Docklands has been connected to the rest of London, in particular to the City. Moreover, new facilities have been provided such as the Docklands Highways, the Lower Lea Crossing – which links the Isle of Dogs with the Royal Docks – or the Limehouse Link Tunnel<sup>331</sup>. Even a network of pedestrian and cycle routes have been created, as well pedestrian bridges, such as those that link ‘Canary Wharf to West India Quay and to South Quay respectively’<sup>332</sup>.

Finally, the LDDC invested in housing. At the end of its remit, in October 1997, ‘4,000 new homes had been built on the Isle of Dogs of which 81% were for private ownership and 19% for rent, mainly through housing associations, or for shared ownership’<sup>333</sup>.

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<sup>328</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/iod/index.html>

<sup>329</sup> *Ibidem*

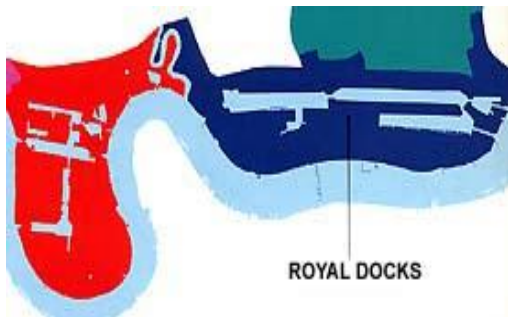
<sup>330</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>331</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>332</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>333</sup> *Ibidem*

## The Royal Docks (Royal Victoria, Royal Albert and King George V)



The Royal Docks and the Excel Exhibition Centre

<http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/royals/index.html#comp>

<http://www.charterworld.com>

The Royal Docks were the last to close in 1981 as well as being the last riverside area to be redeveloped by the LDDC, in 1998. The regeneration of the Royals proved to be the longest and most difficult task for the Consortium, which had to face several problems, since the Royal Docks were ‘the largest, emptiest and most intractable part of the whole regeneration program’<sup>334</sup>. Indeed, they comprised a vast area, about a quarter of the UDA<sup>335</sup>, with the docks covering 230 acres of water surrounded by 540 acres of land<sup>336</sup>.

However, apart from the massive amount of land to be redeveloped, difficulties derived from the isolation of the area, since ‘transport, both public and by road, was poor’<sup>337</sup> and ‘the existing infrastructure was not capable of sustaining even modest regeneration’<sup>338</sup>. After the closure of the docks, the Royals, as well as the surrounding areas of Silvertown and North Woolwich, were in a state of acute economic and social deprivation<sup>339</sup>, with the exception of Tate & Lyle sugar refineries.

<sup>334</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 67

<sup>335</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/royals/index.html>

<sup>336</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>337</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>338</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>339</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/royals/index.html>

The strategy of the LDDC proved to be serious and succeeding<sup>340</sup>. After publishing its first development framework in 1985, the LDDC decided to regenerate this vast area combining private and public sector investment. Indeed, if the former was to invest in ‘new infrastructure, making imaginative use of the potential of the dock waterscape, and providing developments of international quality’<sup>341</sup>, the latter would act concentrating still on infrastructure but ‘by investing in environmental improvements, new roads and public transport, and services including drainage’<sup>342</sup>.

Apart from the London City Airport (see chapter 3, p. 57), which proved to be a fundamental achievement for the LDDC, the consortium worked on other strategic infrastructure projects. Among transport improvements it is important to include the Royal Docks Road, the Royal Albert Way, the Connaught Crossing, ‘built between the docks incorporating a swing bridge to allow shipping to pass beneath’<sup>343</sup>, and the Royal Victoria Footbridge. The LDDC worked to create even two pumping stations at Tidal Basin – designed by Richard Rogers Partnership – and North Woolwich – completed by Nicholas Grimshaw – in order to create a ‘16 mile (...) foul and surface water drainage network’<sup>344</sup>.

As concerns the strategy of the LDDC, it worked to achieve other important results. The redevelopment of the Royals involved the Royals Business Park, opened in February 1997 on the North Side of the Royal Albert<sup>345</sup>, and other two project, which were conceived by the LDDC but completed after the end of its remit. They are the Docklands campus of the University of East London, with a series of cylindrical buildings designed by Edward Cullinan<sup>346</sup>, and the Excel Exhibition Centre, on the north side of the Royal Victoria. Built on a 25 acre site<sup>347</sup> and accommodating ‘up to 7,5000 students’<sup>348</sup>, this modern University Campus opened in 1999 and

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<sup>340</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>341</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>342</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>343</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>344</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>345</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>346</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London's Docklands*, p. 15

<sup>347</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/royals/index.html>

<sup>348</sup> <http://www.uel.ac.uk/news/press-releases/2007/09/openhouse07.htm>



included the Thames Gateway Technology Centre. The latter project, the Excel Exhibition Centre, was completed in 2000 and became ‘an architectural showcase for the bold and the spectacular’<sup>349</sup>, with a 100 acres site and a parking that could accommodate more than 3,500 vehicle<sup>350</sup>. As a result, the new Exhibition Centre became ‘the host venue for a variety of events from award winning exhibitions and conferences to international association meetings, product launches, banquets, award ceremonies, sporting events and great days out’<sup>351</sup>.

Another important achievement of the LDDC was the creation of *The Britannia Village*, known also as *West Silvertown Urban Village*. The work for this complex started in 1994, after the property market crash of the 1980s. The initial project included the creation of more than 1,700 houses, which could accommodate up to 5,000 people<sup>352</sup>. The First Phase of West Silvertown Urban village was undertaken not only by the LDDC but also by a consortium of landowners (including Newham Borough, Tate & Lyle and the Peabody Trust<sup>353</sup>), which worked ‘in partnership with private sector companies’<sup>354</sup>. On the contrary, the Second Phase, with the building of 1500 housing units, was left to English Partnerships, the successor of the LDDC. The Britannia Village now offers not only housing, but also a village hall, doctors’ surgery, a school, shops and a community centre<sup>355</sup>. Particular attention has been dedicated to the environment, with the creation of a green space – ‘the village green’<sup>356</sup> – and the refurbishing of the waterfront, in particular the area of Pontoon Dock.

The LDDC invested in other projects, such as the safeguarding of the environment, with the creation of the 23 acre Thames Barrier Park, developed by the team led by the French landscape architect Alain Provost, as well as a network of footpaths and cycleways<sup>357</sup>. In addition, the

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<sup>349</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London’s Docklands*, p. 25

<sup>350</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>351</sup> <http://www.excel-london.co.uk/about-excel/>

<sup>352</sup> <http://www.royaldockstrust.org.uk/rdhist.htm>

<sup>353</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p. 20

<sup>354</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>355</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London’s Docklands*, p. 29

<sup>356</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p. 20

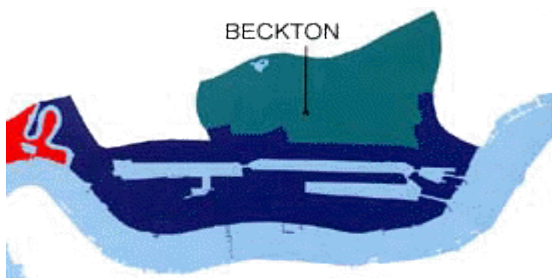
<sup>357</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/royals/index.html>



Consortium worked to safeguard the docks' heritage and memory with a series of conservation initiatives, such as the restoration of the Gallions Hotel.

As concerns the services for the local community, it has benefited from the opening of the 1200-place Royal Docks Community Secondary School, the Drew Primary and Storey Primary Schools, the Royals Medical Centre and a series of sport and leisure facilities. This is the case, for example, of the Royal Docks Waterski Club or the Docklands Watersports Club.

## Beckton



Beckton

[www.lddc-history.org.uk/beckton/index.html](http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/beckton/index.html)



Beckton District Park

<http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/1861549>

This area, which lies to the north of the Royal Docks, derives its name from Simon Adams Beck, who at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the Governor of the Gas Light and Coke Co., one of the most important companies that supplied and imported coal gas and coke. Thanks to the gasworks, the township flourished for many years and the industry attracted a huge number of workers. However, as had happened for the rest of the Docklands, this area was also affected by the consequences of containerisation at the end of the 1960s, and the docks and industries started closing, leaving Beckton in a situation of decline and isolation.

A first attempt to redevelop the area derived from *The Beckton District Plan*, published in 1976. According to the project, the area was to become ‘a low-density mix (...) of park-land, housing and light industry to be developed by a combination of private and public investors’<sup>358</sup>. However, with the advent of the LDDC in 1981, the plan was modified and the work of the corporation led to the creation of a district centre, which comprised a supermarket and a retail park – the commercial heart of the area<sup>359</sup> – ‘a group of church, library and community hall and a health centre’<sup>360</sup>.

Since one of the aims of the LDDC was transforming Beckton into a residential area, thanks to the collaboration with Barratt, Wimpey, Broseley and Comben, new private housing was created by the LDDC. In addition, social housing was provided with the building of 800 homes at the end of 1987 and, the following years, 500 new units at Windsor Park, contributing to encourage residential development in Beckton.

The local inhabitants benefited from a series of initiatives that the LDDC undertook to improve facilities and create new services. Apart from funding primary and secondary schools, the LDDC invested in the ‘new Newham Sixth Form College and the Royal Docks campus of the Newham College of Further Education’<sup>361</sup>. Moreover, the Corporation supported the Royal Docks Medical Centre in Cyprus and the new health centres in West Beckton and Tollgate Road<sup>362</sup>.

The LDDC’s projects included commercial development. The opening of the Asda Superstore and Sainsbury’s Savacentre, the development of the Beckton Retail Park and the arrival of McDonald’s and B&Q are among the most strategic initiatives of the Corporation. In addition, the building of the London Industrial Park provided ‘local jobs, manufacturing, warehousing and distribution in modern, purpose built premises’<sup>363</sup>.

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<sup>358</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 78

<sup>359</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>360</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>361</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/beckton/index.html>

<sup>362</sup> *Ibidem*

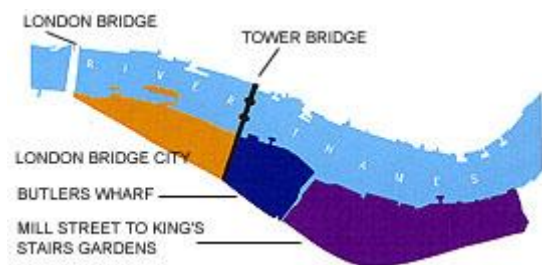
<sup>363</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/beckton/index.html>

Other initiatives included particular emphasis on transport (the opening of the DLR, the creation of the Royal Albert Way and Royal Docks Road new highways, and access to a comprehensive cycle and pedestrian network<sup>364</sup>), leisure (for example the Beckton Alps or the Whitbread's Winsor House Travel Inn) and the environment. As concerns ecological improvements, the LDDC invested in the Beckton District Park, Newham City Farm and 'London's first interactive water ecology park'<sup>365</sup>.

## THE REGENERATION OF THE SOUTH BANK

### Bermondsey Riverside

Bermondsey Riverside is an area of the London Docklands that lies on the South bank of the river Thames, opposite Wapping. Lying within the London Borough of Southwark, it 'stretches one and half miles from London Bridge to the edge of Rotherhithe at King's Stairs Gardens'<sup>366</sup>.



[www.lddc-history.org.uk/bermondsey/index.html](http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/bermondsey/index.html)

During the period of its splendor, the warehouses of Bermondsey Riverside were known as 'The Larder of London'<sup>367</sup>, thanks to the presence of a great quantity of food and provisions imported into the capital and then stored in these buildings waiting for being redistributed.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>365</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>366</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/bermondsey/index.html>

<sup>367</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 229

However, even this area experienced the inevitable decline of the rest of Docklands, with the dismissal of the warehouses, unemployment and a situation of steep decline. Apart from its economic isolation, the area offered basic, social and community facilities, but only to a modest standard<sup>368</sup>.

When the LDDC came into being, a great number of initiatives were undertaken to regenerate the area, 'working constructively with Southwark Council, private owners and developers'<sup>369</sup>. Bermondsey Riverside was divided into three zones: London Bridge City, Butlers Wharf and the area comprised between Mill Street and King's Stairs gardens.

As concerns London Bridge City, the LDDC redeveloped this district in collaboration with the St Martins Property Group, the owners of Hay's Wharf. A first result was the creation of '1.250,000 sq ft of net office accommodation and other uses'<sup>370</sup>, in 1987. The following years, the LDDC was able to build 'a new city in the heart of the old'<sup>371</sup> (this part of London has always been of strategic importance since Roman times). London Bridge City started attracting a huge number of tourists and visitors thanks to the presence of landmark buildings: it is the case of No.1 London Bridge, St Olaf at House, Cottons Centre, but especially Hay's Galleria and HMS Belfast, which through a wide range of events have established the high reputation of this area<sup>372</sup>. In addition, another strategic attraction proved to be the Tower Bridge, one of London's most significant landmarks. The bridge was renovated and refurbished and, in 1982, saw the creation of an exhibition which tells 'the history of the bridge and why it came into existence'<sup>373</sup>.

The second area, Butlers Wharf, is dominated by the building of the same name, which derives its name from Mr. Butler, a merchant who in 1794 traded in grain and had rented warehouses from the Thomas family<sup>374</sup>. When the LDDC started working here in 1981, it approved

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<sup>368</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/bermondsey/index.html>

<sup>369</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>370</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>371</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>372</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>373</sup> <http://www.towerbridge.org.uk/about/>

<sup>374</sup> *Ibidem*

the project of Sir Terence Conran, Conran Roche and their business partners to move the Design Museum, which was in a basement space at the Victoria & Albert Museum, to Shad Thames<sup>375</sup>. Another museum was created – Braham Tea and Coffee Museum – and apart from the Butlers Wharf building, five other complexes were redeveloped in this area: the renamed Cardamom, Clove, Cinnamon, Nutmeg and Coriander warehouses<sup>376</sup>. Furthermore, the former Courage Brewery was transformed into a residential and commercial complex – later renamed Tower Bridge Piazza – and the Gastrodrome, a complex of restaurants and food shops, was opened.

The third district, the area between Mill Street and King’s Stairs gardens experienced the conversion of New Concordia Wharf and China Wharf. Moreover, it saw the creation of a Conservation Area, which was centred around ST Saviours Dock<sup>377</sup>. Archeological excavations funded by the LDDC, for example, brought to the discovery of the remains of Edward III’s Manor House historic site.

Apart from the work in these three specific areas, the LDDC undertook a series of projects which involved housing – such as the Garden and Millpond Estates – training and education, investing in the renovation, for example, of the Beormund Centre. Finally, it improved health facilities, funding Bermondsey Nursery, Bermondsey Carers and the John Dixon Clinic and establishing a new doctor’s surgery in Mill Street<sup>378</sup>.

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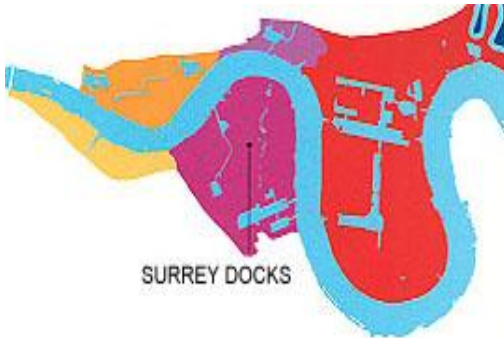
<sup>375</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>376</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>377</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/bermondsey/index.html>

<sup>378</sup> *Ibidem*

## Surrey Docks



Since 1969, with the closure of the Surrey Commercial Docks, which had attracted a huge number of merchants and workers, Rotherhithe and the Surrey Docks experienced a period of inexorable decline. The dismissal and demolishing of the old docks and warehouses was accompanied, as it had happened in other

<http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/surrey/index.html>

areas, by the infilling of the docks. Indeed, the London Borough of Southwark and the Port of London Authority decided to infill '423 of the peninsula's 460 acres of dock water'<sup>379</sup>.

Before the advent of the LDDC, other initiatives were undertaken to regenerate the area. One example is the pioneering conversion of the warehouses round St Mary into flats, workshops and theatres<sup>380</sup> – an innovative project realized after a report on historic buildings by Southwark Council and another on the historic area by the Department of the Environment<sup>381</sup>. However, when the LDDC was established and started working in Rotherhithe, it overtook these initiatives, changing the regeneration approach and bringing a radical transformation.

The Corporation focused its attention on two factors: providing new homes and services and creating attracting open spaces and ecology parks. In particular, two areas were designated for this project: the Southwark Site, on the peninsula, and Greenland and South Dock. For what concerns the provision of new housing, the LDDC 'contributed £7.1 million towards 240 homes for rent and 291 for shared ownership, along with over £14 million towards council housing refurbishment schemes in the Surrey Docks'<sup>382</sup> and benefiting – overall – 2,350 homes<sup>383</sup>.

<sup>379</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/surrey/index.html>

<sup>380</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>381</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 253

<sup>382</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/surrey/index.html>

<sup>383</sup> *Ibidem*



Some examples are the new homes at Broseley's Nelson Reach, Lavender Quay, Lovell Urban Renewals Lady Dock, as well as seven derelict estates refurbished by Southwark Council thanks to the investment of the LDDC.

The regeneration of the Greenland Dock <http://www.webbaviation.co.uk>

The Consortium was able to attract investors and developers to this area and to create many services for the local people. Apart from the 280,000 sq.ft Surrey Quays Shopping Centre (which opened in 1988<sup>384</sup>), the LDDC attracted investment from London and Bath Estates plc and AR & V investments Ltd to start the realization of 'a 135,000 sq.ft leisure development with a nine screen cinema, bingo and social club, restaurants and a pub'<sup>385</sup>. This complex was built on Canada Yard on an area owned by the Southwark Council, helping to increase employment in the area.

Apart from commercial initiatives, the LDDC invested in education, with the creation of Bacon's College – the first new build City Technology College<sup>386</sup> – or Alfred Salter Primary School; health, through a new extension to Albion Street Health Centre; and leisure, with a four star hotel, South Dock Marina (London's largest working one<sup>387</sup>) and Surrey Docks Watersports Centre, at Greenland Dock. However, a special attention was focused to ecology and the environment. As concerns the latter aspect, various were the projects realized. Apart from canals – such as Albion Channel – greenlinks and cycle paths, the LDDC invested in green spaces. It is the case of the ecology parks of Lavender Pond and Stave Hill, Russia Dock Woodland and Pearson Park.

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<sup>384</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>385</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>386</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>387</sup> *Ibidem*





## CHAPTER FOUR: CRITICISM AND FURTHER PROJECTS



The Docklands' riverscape from Greenwich <http://www.berkeleygroup.co.uk>

### **The work of the LDDC: criticism and contradictions**

In these chapters I have analyzed how the image of the Docklands changed between 1981 and 1998 thanks to the work and initiatives of the LDDC. Offices, houses, facilities and services were created, the infrastructures and transport were developed and areas which were isolated were linked to the rest of London, especially to the economic centre of the City. The Docklands riverscape saw deep transformations and the regeneration of the area helped to create new and significant landmarks for the city of London, such as Canary Wharf and its skyscrapers. As a result, the redevelopment of derelict docks, wharfs and warehouses was a success and proved to be 'the world's largest urban regeneration project'<sup>388</sup>. If we compare the situation of the area before the

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<sup>388</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/wapping/index.html>

advent of the LDDC, it is evident that at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Docklands experienced a new birth and were brought back to their splendour.

Despite the undoubted goals and results achieved by the LDDC and by the other projects undertaken in this area, the Docklands' regeneration process has been accompanied by a series of contradictions, problems and difficulties. Unemployment, gentrification, social division, exclusion and polarization are only some of the questions which are still unresolved in the area. However, before analyzing them, it is fundamental to present some premises to better understand the causes which have led to such problems.

First of all we should underline the fact that London saw deep changes, both historical and political, during the last century. From capital of the British Empire to declining industrial city, with the new millennium London experienced a change in status, with a transition to global city<sup>389</sup> and its new 'status as an iconic centre of global financial and cultural flows'<sup>390</sup>. Since the advent of the Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, a series of reforms and initiatives have helped to create a new image for London. During the 1980s, the political approach of Mrs. Thatcher encouraged free enterprise, through market reforms and attracting global flows of capital to London<sup>391</sup>. The moves of the Conservative government to promote the image of Britain's capital as a global city included economic growth and competitiveness at the fulcrum of this strategy, since economic benefits were expected to 'follow from the inflow of investment'<sup>392</sup>.

This process continued and evolved even in the 1990s with political and business leaders working 'to make London more attractive than its global rivals as a place to invest in, make money and spend at leisure'<sup>393</sup>. Among the motors of change, urban regeneration policies played a fundamental role to enhance London competitiveness and these two decades, 1980s and 1990s, coincided with the period of activity of the LDDC. The results of this strategy are visible not only in

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<sup>389</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 10

<sup>390</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p.40

<sup>391</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 36

<sup>392</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p. 6

<sup>393</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p.2

the City<sup>394</sup> but even in the Docklands area, with the creation – for example – of Canary Wharf and the Enterprise Zone. The new business district now hosts multinational companies, banks and legal firms and helps to confirm the economic criteria of a global city<sup>395</sup>, organizing the world economy<sup>396</sup> and hosting ‘key locations for finance and specialized service firms’<sup>397</sup>. Moreover, it is the site for the production of innovations<sup>398</sup>, and creates ‘markets for the products and innovations produced’<sup>399</sup>. Canary Wharf, as well as other dock areas included in the regeneration programs, became a flagship ‘exemplar of broader development ideologies and national state projects’<sup>400</sup>. In other words, the economic growth achieved through investment and redevelopment helped to support the global economic competitiveness of the whole United Kingdom<sup>401</sup>.

However, these policies were not only a catalyst for change and growth, but were accompanied by contrasts, tensions and contradictions. Despite the results of the LDDC, the redevelopment of the Docklands affected and ‘radically altered the social and economic character of this area of the East End’<sup>402</sup>. According to the new urban policies, the role of regeneration was not ‘to redistribute resources across the space economy but to select and support places that are “global winners”’<sup>403</sup>, such as – in our case – the Docklands. As a result, political, social and economical questions interwove with the redevelopment of this area: ‘the “regeneration” of the London Docklands has [had] a much wider significance not only for planning but also as a demonstration of a new socio-economic, political and ideological settlement’<sup>404</sup>.

The first cause of criticism derived from community resistance to the LDDC’s regeneration proposals. The projects and initiatives of the LDDC were not welcomed by the Docklands’ people,

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<sup>394</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p.36

<sup>395</sup> *Ivi*, p. 1

<sup>396</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>397</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>398</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>399</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>400</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p.16

<sup>401</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>402</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p.133

<sup>403</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p. 7

<sup>404</sup> Florio S., Brownhill S., *Whatever happened to criticism? Interpreting the London Docklands Development Corporation’s obituary*, Routledge, 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2010, p. 53

who at first reacted with suspicion, hostility and scepticism<sup>405</sup>. Even community organizations, such as ELDAG (East London Dockland Action Group<sup>406</sup>), and local councilors opposed to the LDDC's moves and their hostility 'was reinforced by the corporation's independence from local democratic controls and its rejection of the Strategic Plan agreed in the late-1970s by local councils and interest groups'<sup>407</sup>. Another reason for opposition was the designation of the Enterprise Zone, which was created by the LDCC 'to attract wealthy outsiders in the City, rather than directly benefit local industrial enterprises and promote working-class jobs'<sup>408</sup>. Moreover, the community organizations were hostile to the LDDC because the latter aimed at transforming the Docklands' negative image 'through up-beat marketing and just the kind of public relations exercise, which ELDAG dismissed as "silly" '<sup>409</sup>.

The attitude of the local people, on the other hand, was characterized by scepticism and disinterest, rather than firm opposition or hostility. However, during a second phase the reaction of the inhabitants transformed into powerlessness and alienation because the impact and brash attitudes of the LDDC had become visible on the area<sup>410</sup>, dismissing local attachments to place<sup>411</sup>. Nevertheless, a community spirit (especially on the Isle of Dogs<sup>412</sup>) survived and responded to the LDDC's initiatives with protests and public demonstrations.

The dissatisfaction of the people mainly derived from the fact that the great majority of housing created by the LDDC was reserved for the private sector, not for rent. Indeed, although the LDDC provided a great number of houses by demolishing or converting the old warehousing and realizing new buildings, only few of the new homes went to local families<sup>413</sup>. On the other hand,

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<sup>405</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 164

<sup>406</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>407</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 165

<sup>408</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>409</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>410</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>411</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>412</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p.166

<sup>413</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p.50

the Consortium ‘contributed to the demand for new housing of a more luxurious type than low-cost family house’<sup>414</sup>.

Following the lack of affordable housing for the former dock workers (since the original inhabitants could not afford the new luxury flats), the Docklands’ regeneration benefited only certain groups of people, leading to a process of residential gentrification and creating a new elite of people living in the area. ‘The conversion of previous land uses such as warehouses and industrial or commercial uses into high-price residential units’<sup>415</sup> was accompanied by the arrival of a new population which started to settle in this area, benefiting from the new housing and becoming ‘the new elite’<sup>416</sup>. The most striking example is Canary Wharf, which became ‘an upmarket dormitory for young City workers’<sup>417</sup>.

Inequalities accompanied the regeneration process even as concerns employment and the provision of jobs for the former dock workers. If the LDDC invested in the creation of thousands of jobs in this area, especially in Canary Wharf, it is fundamental to underline that it did not offer a wide range of opportunities to the dock workers. On the contrary, the LDDC’s deindustrialisation<sup>418</sup> of the old warehouses and dockside cranes<sup>419</sup> transformed the economic structure of Docklands, especially the Isle of Dogs, by attracting top retail banks, legal firms, multinational companies and high technology industrial enterprises<sup>420</sup>. If the number of people working in Docklands increased from 27,200 to 73,000 between 1981 and 1997<sup>421</sup>, only a minority of them were dock workers, since the new jobs did not request their skills. On the contrary, ‘the vast majority of new jobs were not taken by the old residents’<sup>422</sup> and new businesses were created to attract global investment and help to enhance London’s status as a global leading city.

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<sup>414</sup> Williamson E. and Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 62

<sup>415</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p.41

<sup>416</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>417</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>418</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p.43

<sup>419</sup> *Ivi*, p.44

<sup>420</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 168

<sup>421</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>422</sup> Rule F., *London’s Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 319

The case of the Isle of Dogs is exemplar of the social and economic divisions which derived from the policies of the LDDC. In this area the unemployment rate of the indigenous population decreased only from 14% to 11.2%<sup>423</sup> between 1981 and 1997 and the residents' working situation did not improve despite the initiatives of the LDDC to create new jobs. Indeed, the moves of the consortium benefited another group of people: the "newcomers"<sup>424</sup>. They belonged to the middle-class, lived in the City and worked in the Docklands, especially in the business district of the Enterprise Zone. They worked for banks, offices, multinational companies and important firms and commuted from their homes to their working places using the new transport facilities (DLR, Jubilee Line, routes and highways) provided by the LDDC to put an end to the Docklands' isolation. As a result, Canary Wharf and its economic structure started to be dominated by 'daily commuters, the growing numbers of middle-class residents and those passing through (ex-patriate employees of global corporations, for example)<sup>425</sup>.

However, this situation generated another phenomenon: 'members of the new service class (...) received considerable financial inducements to settle in the area made safe partly by a process of image construction where dangerous stereotypes about old, hostile, working-class East End are associated with a distant past'<sup>426</sup>. These middle-class white newcomers began to buy the apartments built by the LDDC and which the local residents could not afford. The new group of inhabitants 'now lived close to estates occupied by old established, white working-class families'<sup>427</sup>. As a result, even though 'the stereotypes of friendly "East Enders"'<sup>428</sup> evaded 'the conflicts along the fissures of race and class'<sup>429</sup>, a social conflict originated from this situation: 'a sharp polarisation between relatively wealthy newcomers and the working-class "indigenous" population'<sup>430</sup>.

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<sup>423</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>424</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 172

<sup>425</sup> *Ibidem*, p.172

<sup>426</sup> Eade J., *Living the global city*, New York, Routledge, 1997, p. 137

<sup>427</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p.172

<sup>428</sup> Eade J., *Living the global city*, p. 137

<sup>429</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>430</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 167

In addition, another form of social debate was caused by the arrival of another group of newcomers which helped to change the residential population of the Isle of Dogs. In this case the new settlers which started to live in this area of Central London were poor foreign immigrants, especially from Bangladesh. These residents were often met with the hostility of both the new wealthy outsiders and the old residents, who competed for council housing with the new foreign inhabitants. Since the LDDC's redevelopment policies had excluded both the Bangladeshi and the white members of the local working class, the resentment of latter group of residents largely focused on Bangladeshis<sup>431</sup>, who were considered possible rivals for scarce council housing<sup>432</sup>.

This struggle and 'a tradition of East End racism'<sup>433</sup> were accompanied by the creation of alliances between older established families and new-middle class residents<sup>434</sup> against the Bangladeshi people. The new and old white communities allied together and the middle-class 'newcomers found that they were able to put their professional skills to good use, exploiting contracts, and bringing a more diverse range of tactics to local action'<sup>435</sup>.

As a result, a new social and economic order within the global city<sup>436</sup> was created. If a 'sharp polarisation between wealthy settlers, on the one hand, and white and Bangladeshi working-class residents, on the other'<sup>437</sup>, was evident, it became clear that there was a social contrast 'between white and Bangladeshi tenants in the neighbouring council estates'<sup>438</sup>, as well as the creation of an alliance between old and new white residents against the Bangladeshi immigrants. In this way the traditional inhabitants probably became more conciliatory not only towards the gentrifiers, but also to the LDDC and the developers<sup>439</sup>.

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<sup>431</sup> Eade J., *Living the global city*, p. 130

<sup>432</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 169

<sup>433</sup> *Ivi*, p. 167

<sup>434</sup> *Ivi*, p. 168

<sup>435</sup> *Ivi*, p. 169

<sup>436</sup> *Ivi*, p. 152

<sup>437</sup> *Ivi*, p. 153

<sup>438</sup> *Ivi*, p. 153

<sup>439</sup> *Ivi*, p. 169

Moreover, this social and economic contrast between white and Bangladeshi people implied cultural consequences. In this case the immigrants were considered as the Other and their ethnic differences were not absorbed by the rest of the community. If ‘earlier racialisations of ethnic differences, which constructed Irish and Jews as unalterably Other’<sup>440</sup> had been forgotten and the ‘previous “immigrants” absorbed within an emergent European cultural category’<sup>441</sup>, in this case the hybrid British-Bangladeshi identity was rejected and isolated and the new residents’ culture was not ‘included inside the portals of an English national home’<sup>442</sup>.

Another area, in this case Limehouse, saw a transformation of its residential population. In the Victorian period, Limehouse had experienced the creation of London’s first Chinatown and the area’s racialisation at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had led to long term effects even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, another contrast, in this case a cultural contrast, became visible between the Chinese descendants of the imperial capital and recent gentrifiers<sup>443</sup> and these two groups became part of Limehouse’s population, in addition to the former dock workers’ families. However, the cultural question was not the only difficulty due to the regeneration of the area. Indeed, Limehouse, as well as Poplar, sued the LDDC and the Olympia and York company because of the environmental conditions of their areas<sup>444</sup>, since their residents were experiencing the worst environmental situation of all Docklands<sup>445</sup>.

Apart from the Isle of Dogs and Limehouse, another area, the Royal Docks, saw the emergence of a series of problems connected to the regeneration process. In this case the Royals’ local people opposed to a project of the LDDC: the new London City Airport. Their protests derived from the fact that a new airport so close to the city centre would create a noisy and polluted environment, with the aircrafts landing and taking off at short distance from their houses and disturbing the people living close to the airport. However, despite the opposition of many residents

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<sup>440</sup> *Ivi*, p. 170

<sup>441</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>442</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>443</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 149-50

<sup>444</sup> *Ivi*, p. 166

<sup>445</sup> *Ibidem*



of nearby Silvertown on the grounds of the noise and fumes the airport would create<sup>446</sup>, the Parliament approved the plans for the new infrastructure.

The LDDC tried to respond to the problems deriving from the Docklands' regeneration and to opposition of the local people with a series of initiatives. After 1987, the Consortium started improving the standard of living of the docks' residents, providing jobs and setting money aside for training projects. The LDDC changed its strategy and 'employed experienced community workers to build alliances with local residents'<sup>447</sup> to improve relationships with local authorities. Among these initiatives it is important to underline that the LDDC 'concluded formal agreements with individual authorities under which LDDC undertook to contribute more to social and community development through agreed programmes in return for local authorities co-operation on transport infrastructure and other development matters'<sup>448</sup>.

Since 'new social housing had been almost squeezed out by the market'<sup>449</sup>, the LDDC responded by funding 'many rehabilitation schemes, such as energy-efficient improvements to the Barleymow estate, Limehouse, as part of their more socially and environmentally aware policies'<sup>450</sup>. Other three notable schemes are Savage Gardens, Windsor Park – both in Beckton – and Britannia Village, in Silvertown<sup>451</sup>. In addition, the consortium started to consult with community groups and residents, organized formal structured meetings<sup>452</sup>, provided publicity material and resident opinion surveys<sup>453</sup> and created Docklands News<sup>454</sup>, which became 'an important means of outreach'<sup>455</sup>. Moreover, in order to provide jobs for the local people, the LDDC

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<sup>446</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A History of the Lost Quarter*, p. 316

<sup>447</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 172

<sup>448</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p.44

<sup>449</sup> Williamson E., Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London: Docklands*, p. 66

<sup>450</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>451</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>452</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p.44

<sup>453</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>454</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>455</sup> *Ibidem*

promoted the Local Labour Project, with the creation of The Docklands Recruitment Centre, a recruitment register and a local business liaison element<sup>456</sup>.

If these initiatives, as well as the meetings and agreements between the consortium's authorities and the people's representatives, improved the relationship between the LDDC and the local inhabitants and local feeling towards the LDDC<sup>457</sup>, on the other hand the Corporation was still criticised for 'favouring wealthy outsiders over the needs of local people'<sup>458</sup>. Moreover, the regeneration policies not only failed to address difficulties and inequalities, but also 'played a significant role in creating and reproducing them'<sup>459</sup>. A more complex, diverse society was the result of this regeneration program, as well as a metropolis 'where new types of productive services (...) [can] be centralized and global flows of capital invested'<sup>460</sup>.

Even the form of trade has changed in this area. While in previous centuries the Docklands, in particular the Isle of Dogs, were a centre and a key point for the trade and redistribution of goods, with the creation of Canary Wharf and the advent of a 'new service class'<sup>461</sup>, the area started attracting 'a new generation of financial traders for information technology'<sup>462</sup>: the result is 'a massive redistribution of resources (...) in the influx of global elites and white middle-class "immigrants", global and national corporations relocating from the City of London, a movement from industry to services and the re-imaging of "Docklands" '<sup>463</sup>.

In particular, it was with the creation of Canary Wharf that the situation was deeply altered and the Isle of Dogs experienced its peak: the new area had a strong impact on the city because 'it decisively shifted the focus of Docklands from light industry to the burgeoning financial sector, creating a need to attract highly skilled white-collar workers from outside the area and initially

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<sup>456</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p.31

<sup>457</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 167

<sup>458</sup> Ivi, p. 148

<sup>459</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p.9

<sup>460</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 2

<sup>461</sup> Ivi, p.134

<sup>462</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London's Docklands*, p.77

<sup>463</sup> Eade J., *Living the global city*, p.130

relegating most local people to support jobs<sup>464</sup>. For some people Canary Wharf even became a rival to the City<sup>465</sup>, 'created where the new businesses have little need of local working-class labour'<sup>466</sup>. As a consequence, the emergence of Canary Wharf contributed to shift London's financial centre of gravity eastwards<sup>467</sup>.

It is clear that Canary Wharf became a symbol and a landmark for the whole Docklands. However, apart from attracting investment from developers, its new symbolic status and significance led to the creation of a target for terrorism. Indeed, on February 9<sup>th</sup> 1996 a group of IRA terrorists detonated a bomb at South Quay and, although the organization had sent warnings 90 minutes before the explosion, two people were killed and many more were injured. Several office blocks at Millwall Dock and South Quay were seriously damaged<sup>468</sup>, in particular 92,900 sq. metres of office space and nearby homes<sup>469</sup>. Even though the buildings were refurbished the following months, this episode highlighted that the new order, portrayed in the new financial and business district, and the power of global interests were not invulnerable, as the bombing had revealed<sup>470</sup>.

However, despite these problems and contradictions, the regeneration of the area had positive consequences. If the main aim of the regeneration process was to attract global investment, the task has been fulfilled: 'a major redevelopment financed by national, public investment and private finance from national and global corporations'<sup>471</sup> has helped to 'establish a global identity for the area, so that investors can buy property here rather than in those cities which are London's competitors'<sup>472</sup>.

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<sup>464</sup> Williamson E., Pevsner N. with Tucker M., *London : Docklands*, p. 62

<sup>465</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p.136

<sup>466</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>467</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p.50

<sup>468</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p.17

<sup>469</sup> <http://www.lddc-history.ork.uk/iod/index.html>

<sup>470</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 174

<sup>471</sup> Eade J., *Living the global city*, p. 136

<sup>472</sup> *Ivi*, p. 137

Another example of the positive effects deriving from the area's regeneration is that that the Docklands, originally isolated from the rest of London and considered a derelict place, transformed their image and were rediscovered by the Londoners as well as by tourists from the rest of the country and from abroad. This area started to attract visitors and experienced a rapid expansion of global tourism<sup>473</sup>. Docklands have become an area of 'leisure and recreation rather than international trade'<sup>474</sup>: 'tourists are encouraged to look beyond the City of London boundary to (...) Docklands, where images of poverty and danger are being challenged by gentrification and drastic redevelopment'<sup>475</sup>. This area of London now offers a series of alternative experiences<sup>476</sup> and, even though Canary Wharf remains one of the principal destinations since 'for many people, Docklands is the Isle of Dogs'<sup>477</sup>, new tourist outposts have started to attract visitors, such as the Design Museum or Island Gardens, as well as the London Docklands Museum St Katharine's Dock, Butler's Wharf and Hay's Galleria<sup>478</sup>. Even the area's riverscape became a pole of attraction, along with parks and gardens.

Another factor which has helped to create benefits is transport. Regeneration included even the improvement of infrastructure and facilities, but especially transport links, which have shortened journey times from the City and the rest of London to the Docklands. Residents and workers have benefited also from reduced delays and congestion<sup>479</sup>. As a result, the gap between the Docklands and other boroughs of London, such as the prosperous areas in the City or in the West End, has narrowed thanks to redevelopment and regeneration<sup>480</sup>.

Finally, it is fundamental to underline that the Docklands have changed their image and perception. The area's environment has been improved and if before the regeneration process the area was considered derelict, abandoned and isolated, nowadays 'the heritage of buildings and

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<sup>473</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 13

<sup>474</sup> Eade J., *Living the global city*, p. 132

<sup>475</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 45

<sup>476</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>477</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city* *Placing London*, p. 148

<sup>478</sup> *Ivi*, p. 147

<sup>479</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Regenerating London Docklands*, p. 41

<sup>480</sup> Eade J., *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*, p. 123

community spirit are linked to images of a bright, new Docklands where natural resources (water) forge a link between the past, present and future'<sup>481</sup>. The Docklands' new image has attracted and encouraged investors across the world and the area's redevelopment has helped to create London's new image, as well as to establish its new status as a global city and enhance the city's competitiveness. Moreover, the regeneration of London's Docklands has offered a model for the redevelopment of other port areas, such as Baltimore, in the USA, or Melbourne, in Australia<sup>482</sup>. 'London docklands'-style entrepreneurial approaches<sup>483</sup> were replicated, transforming former industrial waterfronts into 'gleaming beacons of post-industrial urbanism'<sup>484</sup>.

Nevertheless, the Docklands' new image has not always been appreciated. Indeed, there are still some of the erstwhile workers and residents which think the area is now unrecognizable. These people 'are disappointed that the Port of London's maritime character has been swept away and almost all mourn the loss of the once-thriving industry that existed in and along the banks of the Thames'<sup>485</sup>. According to Alan Richardson<sup>486</sup>, a retired tally clerk who summarizes the opinion of many others, 'the old warehouses have been turned into millionaire flats overlooking the Thames, but the show's over'<sup>487</sup>.

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<sup>481</sup> Eade J., *Living the global city*, p. 137

<sup>482</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p.173

<sup>483</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>484</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>485</sup> Rule F., *London's Docklands, A history of the lost quarter*, p. 325

<sup>486</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>487</sup> *Ibidem*

## Further projects

The regeneration of the Docklands did not cease with the closure of the LDDC. Despite the enormous success of the Consortium's work, in 1998 there were still areas waiting for regeneration. A series of further improvements and initiatives were undertaken to bring more development, create new jobs, housing and tourist attractions. Moreover, transport was updated and expanded and new parks and green areas were created to improve the docks' derelict image.

A first example it is the case of the Royal Docks, on the north side of the Thames. Left uncompleted by the LDDC since the Consortium had started to redevelop the area only in 1998, the Royal Docks were the district with the largest amount of land to be regenerated and many projects and improvements were undertaken at end of the 1990s and during the 2000s, after the Corporation ceased its work. Some examples are the Excel Exhibition Centre, which was completed in 2000 and started attracting a huge number of people with its events (such as the London Boat Show) and meetings; the Docklands campus of the University of East London, which opened the previous year; or the 'five-storey structure in glass'<sup>488</sup> overlooking the Royal Albert Dock of Building 1000, which was inaugurated in 2004 and became in 2007 the administrative centre of the London Borough of Newham.

Among the other projects, the Royal Docks saw the opening of the Royal Victoria Dock Bridge, in 1999, which was built at a cost of almost £4 million<sup>489</sup>. Linking the Royal Victoria Dock to Britannia Village, the new footbridge was built sinking its uprights into the dock floor<sup>490</sup>. Affording 'unrivalled views of Docklands'<sup>491</sup> for the pedestrians, the bridge is more than 400 feet long and 40 feet high and contains lifts<sup>492</sup> (as well as eighty steps to the top<sup>493</sup>). Other new projects

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<sup>488</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London's Docklands*, p.21

<sup>489</sup> *Ivi*, p.26

<sup>490</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>491</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>492</sup> *Ibidem*

were the Regatta Centre, which opened in 2000 and was designed by Ian Ritchie Architects to serve local rowing clubs,<sup>494</sup> and the arrival of the Docklands Light Railway, in December 2005<sup>495</sup>.



The Docklands Campus of the University of East London  
<http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/3250712>

Another example of projects completed after 1998 are the skyscrapers of Canary Wharf. If One Canada Square was the tallest building in UK up to 2012 (when the Shard, designed by the Italian architect Renzo Piano, became the highest skyscraper of the country<sup>496</sup>), during the decades 1990s- 2000s, new majestic towers were built in Canary Wharf (for example Nos 8 and 25 Canada Square, Pan Peninsula or 22 Marsh Wall), and some skyscrapers are still under construction (as Baltimore Tower<sup>497</sup>). Among the last projects submitted to Tower Hamlets Council, there is Quay House, the new 228-metre skyscraper<sup>498</sup> that will include apartments<sup>499</sup>, ‘cafés, restaurants, and bars as well as a residents’ gym and children’s zone’<sup>500</sup> and will contribute to modify the Isle of Dogs’ skyline.

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<sup>493</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>494</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London’s Docklands*, p.21

<sup>495</sup> *Ivi*, p.18

<sup>496</sup> <http://www.shardldn.com/the-shard-html/>

<sup>497</sup> <http://www.baltimorewharf.com/development.html>

<sup>498</sup> <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/canary-wharf-new-228-metre-skyscraper-quay-house-would-rise-over-london-financial-district-1449484>

<sup>499</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>500</sup> *Ibidem*

Apart from towers and skyscrapers, another project completed after 1998 is the opening of Canary Wharf Underground station. Inaugurated in 1999 as part of London Underground's Jubilee Line extension<sup>501</sup>, the new station was designed by Foster and Partners and built within a drained dock<sup>502</sup>. In particular, the new station 'is contained within a 325-yard-long concrete box that has been sunk into the dock and then "pegged" in place with huge piles'<sup>503</sup>. Canary Wharf Underground station, with its cavernous form, is a masterpiece of steel and glass and an example of minimalistic architecture<sup>504</sup>.

The Isle of Dogs saw even the opening of Jubilee Park (completed in 2002<sup>505</sup>), the principal green space of Canary Wharf<sup>506</sup>, and the building of the Museum of London's Docklands, inaugurated in 2003 at West India Quay. A subsidiary of the Museum of London<sup>507</sup>, the new museum was built on the site of a former sugar warehouse – Number 1 Warehouse – and 'tells the story of London as a port from before Roman times to the present day'<sup>508</sup>. The museum offers a wide range of topics, from sugar trade to Docklands at war<sup>509</sup>, and hosts "Sailortown" gallery<sup>510</sup>, 'an excellent walk-through re-creation of nineteenth-century Wapping'<sup>511</sup>.

Another district which experienced a phase of redevelopment and saw the creation of new projects is Greenwich, on the south bank of the Thames. During the period of activity of the LDDC Greenwich was not included in the work of the Consortium. However, numerous initiatives were undertaken to improve the image of this area. It is the case of the Fan Museum, the exhibition of the Cutty Sark, a clipper ship built in 1869, or the Greenwich Peninsula Ecology Park. Every year Greenwich hosts The Greenwich+Docklands International Festival (GDIF) and is now served by both the railway and the Docklands Light Railway, with the underground stations of Greenwich and

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<sup>501</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London's Docklands*, p. 79

<sup>502</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>503</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>504</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>505</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London's Docklands*, p. 92

<sup>506</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>507</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London's Docklands*, p. 72

<sup>508</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>509</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>510</sup> [www.museumoflondon.org.uk/docklands/whats-on/permanent-galleries/sailortown-1840-1850/](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/docklands/whats-on/permanent-galleries/sailortown-1840-1850/)

<sup>511</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London's Docklands*, p. 72



Cutty Sark. Transport improvement transformed the area, ‘making it into an inner London gentrifying district which is only twenty-two minutes from the City; the effect on the prices of its terraced housing has been equally dramatic’<sup>512</sup>.

However, Greenwich’s most famous project proved to be the Millennium Dome, now known as the O2 Arena. Projected by Richard Rogers, this building became the largest dome in the world and hosted the Millennium Experience, in 2000. An exhibition for the approach of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium AD<sup>513</sup>, the Millennium Experience was inaugurated on the New Year’s Eve of December 1999, with a celebration attended by some 10,500 people, including the Prime Minister and the Queen<sup>514</sup>. This event influenced even the surrounding areas and the Millennium Dome, later renamed The O2 after a mobile phone company,<sup>515</sup> became a symbol for the whole Docklands.



The O2 Arena <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/mar/16/o2-sundance-festival-london>

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<sup>512</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p. 55

<sup>513</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/382742/Millennium-Dome>

<sup>514</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>515</sup> *Ibidem*

Other projects include: new residential apartment developments, such as Gallions Reach, built on the site of the old Beckton Gasworks<sup>516</sup>, in Beckton; extensions and improvements of the Docklands Light Railway; or a new ninety-berth leisure marina<sup>517</sup> created in 1999 at Poplar. Moreover, it is important to remember the completion of Container Cities I, II and III<sup>518</sup> (the project had been started by the LDDC) at Trinity Buoy Wharf, built re-using ‘shipping containers linked together to provide high strength, prefabricated steel modules that can be combined to create a wide variety of building shapes’<sup>519</sup>.



Container City in East London

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/property/9243318/Container-living-a-home-for-under-50000.html>

Nevertheless, vast spaces are still relatively undeveloped. Among the areas which have not been regenerated either by the consortium or by other initiatives, there is the case of part of Silvertown, in the Royal Docks. After a period of prosperity thanks to the presence of the factories of the chemical manufacture and food-processing industry<sup>520</sup>, Silvertown experienced a phase of decline. Some areas, especially in West Silvertown, are still waiting for regeneration, with sites that lay abandoned and undeveloped. Moreover, other sites are awaiting the arrival of developers, as the derelict building of Spiller’s Millennium Mills<sup>521</sup>, at Britannia Village.

<sup>516</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p.49

<sup>517</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London’s Docklands*, p.66

<sup>518</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London’s Docklands*, p.62

<sup>519</sup> <http://www.containercity.com/about>

<sup>520</sup> Fautley C., *Discovering London’s Docklands*, p.33

<sup>521</sup> Ivi, p.32

## The Blue Ribbon Network

The latest phase of London's riverside redevelopment<sup>522</sup> started in 2001, with the new metropolitan government, the creation of the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the election of London's socialist mayor Ken Livingstone. According to the mayor, London needed a successful and strategic plan to achieve a sustainable growth and a fundamental role was played by the proposals of *the Blue Ribbon Network*. Conceived in 2004 after the *London Plan*, *the Blue Ribbon Network* focused on the regeneration and renewal of some areas of London, especially waterfront sites. In particular, *the Blue Ribbon Network* aimed at balancing economic growth with equity, sustainability and the reduction of social polarisation<sup>523</sup>. Apart from social inclusion, an element which the LDDC had failed to promote through its initiatives, the strategy included particular attention to environment and biodiversity. The key challenge of *the Blue Ribbon Network* (but especially of the *London Plan*<sup>524</sup>) was 'to continue London's economic growth and global city prosperity along with reinvesting in the city's infrastructure, increasing social inclusion and, fundamentally, improving London's environmental sustainability'<sup>525</sup>. In particular, riverfront spaces and natural resources were given fundamental importance, becoming vital elements 'for urban liveability and flood defence'<sup>526</sup> and requiring protection and enhancement.

If we analyze the objectives of the *Blue Ribbon Network* in detail, these were the project's principles :

- To accommodate London's growth within its boundaries without encroaching on green spaces, policies should make the most sustainable and efficient use of space in London, by

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<sup>522</sup> Davidson M., *London's Blue Ribbon Network*, Paperback, December 2008, p. 174

<sup>523</sup> *Ivi*, p. 175

<sup>524</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>525</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>526</sup> Davidson M., *London's Blue Ribbon Network*, p. 176

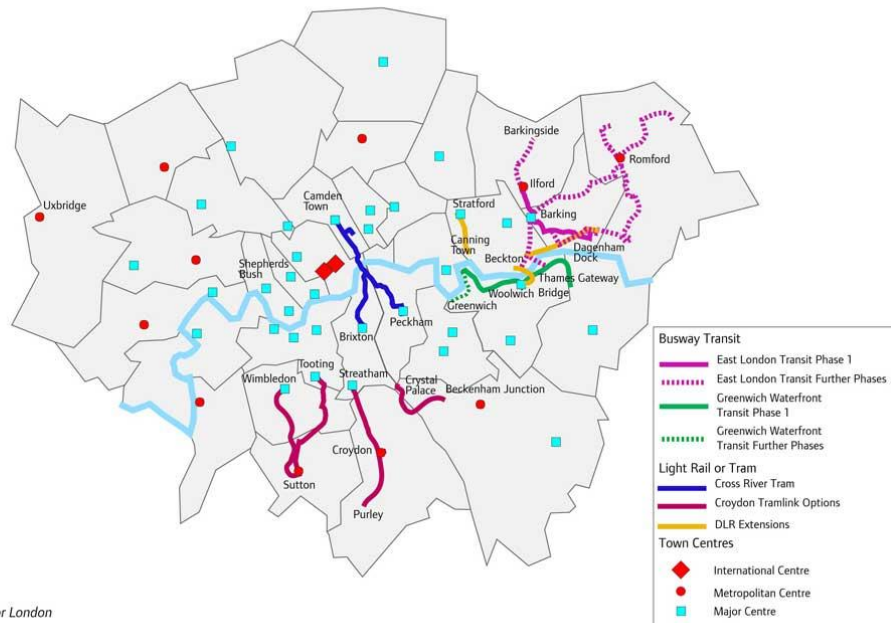
protecting and enhancing the multi-functional nature of *the Blue Ribbon Network* so that it enables and supports those uses and activities that require a water or waterside location.

- To make London a better city for people to live in, policies should protect and enhance the Blue Ribbon Network as a part of the public realm contributing to London's open space network. Opportunities for sport, leisure and education should be promoted. *The Blue Ribbon Network* should be safe and healthy and offer a mixture of vibrant and calm places.
- To make London a more prosperous city with strong and diverse economic growth, policies should exploit the potential for water-borne transport, leisure, tourism, and waterway support industries. The attractiveness of *the Blue Ribbon Network* for investment should be captured by appropriate waterside development and regeneration. This will include the restoration of the network and creation of new links.
- To promote social inclusion and tackle deprivation and discrimination, policies should ensure that *the Blue Ribbon Network* is accessible for everyone as part of London's public realm and that its cultural and environmental assets are used to stimulate appropriate development in areas of regeneration and need.
- To improve London's accessibility, use of *the Blue Ribbon Network* for water-borne transport of people and goods (including waste and aggregates) should be increased. Alongside *the Blue Ribbon Network* there are also opportunities for pedestrian and cycling routes.
- To make London a more attractive, well-designed and green city, policies should protect and enhance the biodiversity and landscape value of *the Blue Ribbon Network*. The network should also be respected as the location of a rich variety of heritage that contributes to the vitality and distinctiveness of many parts of London. London must also have reliable and sustainable supplies of water and methods of sewage disposal and precautionary approach must be taken to the risks created by global warming and the potential for flooding.<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>527</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p. 177

## Proposed Light Transit Schemes in London



source Transport for London

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Diagram: GLA The London Plan - consolidated with alterations since 2004 (2008)  
www.london.gov.uk/thelondonplan

<http://www.london.gov.uk/thelondonplan/maps-diagrams/map-3c-02.jsp>



The regenerated area of Thamesmead West

[http://www.cartoplus.co.uk/greenwich/text/10\\_w\\_water.htm](http://www.cartoplus.co.uk/greenwich/text/10_w_water.htm)

However, despite its principles and objectives, *the Blue Ribbon Network* had unexpected consequences. Indeed, ‘the inclusive spaces and society envisaged in *the Blue Ribbon Network* policy are not being realised<sup>528</sup> since the regeneration of the area has not brought equal benefits to all groups of residents: ‘whilst affordable housing provisions have addressed the needs of some, it is unclear whether the redevelopment has accrued further benefits, reduced social exclusion, or created the kinds of urban spaces and inclusive communities envisage in *the Blue Ribbon Network*’<sup>529</sup>. As a consequence, if we exclude limited affordable housing, the objectives of this project – although praiseworthy – have failed to provide direct benefits ‘to London’s socially excluded residents’<sup>530</sup>.

Among the London Boroughs included in the new proposal of regeneration, there are some Docklands areas which had not directly been regenerated by the LDDC. This is the case, for example, of Thamesmead West, on the south bank of the Thames (Greenwich), which had not experienced the LDDC’s regeneration program and has been included in *the Blue Ribbon Network*. If we consider this area, a new development of 414 housing units was created at Royal Artillery Quays (Barratt Homes plc.)<sup>531</sup>. However, only 21% of the development (82 housing units) is affordable<sup>532</sup> and ‘recent redevelopment has had an overwhelming upgrading effect on the social composition of the riverside, gentrifying much of the waterfront’<sup>533</sup>, as had happened for Canary Wharf. Since middle-class people moved into working-class neighbourhoods<sup>534</sup> new groups of residents, some of London’s different social groups, have started living into closer proximity<sup>535</sup>.

Despite the project’s principles of social inclusion, a socially mixed neighbourhood has not been created. As revealed by a series of interviews with the residents of Thamesmead West

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<sup>528</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p.20

<sup>529</sup> *Ivi*, p.182

<sup>530</sup> *Ivi*, p.178

<sup>531</sup> *Ivi*, p.180

<sup>532</sup> *Ivi*, p. 181

<sup>533</sup> *Ivi*, p.182

<sup>534</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>535</sup> *Ibidem*



riverside development and the surrounding communities<sup>536</sup>, although spatial proximity is evident ‘no social mixing between new and existing residents’<sup>537</sup> has been formed. If the initiatives of *the Blue Ribbon Network* ‘changed class propinquity (...) bringing a number of social groups together along the Thames’<sup>538</sup>, class divisions are still present and a socially mixed neighbourhood has not been created. The lifeworlds of the new middle-class residents – which live in new luxury one- and two-bedroom flats<sup>539</sup> – are simply juxtaposed to those of the native inhabitants.

According to Mark Davidson’s forecast, if the benefits of redevelopment policies ‘are not spread to low-income groups, then the riverside will likely only feature spatially juxtaposed, “socially tectonic” communities’<sup>540</sup>. Moreover, if this form of gentrification continues, greater displacement pressures will be present, along with higher housing costs, the dispersal of friends and neighbours and the reorientation of local shops to new clients<sup>541</sup>.

Furthermore, *the Blue Ribbon Network* led to another phenomenon. The developers’ colonization and privatization of the riverside isolated the native community even under the special point of view, with the emergence of an architectural segregation between the new developments and surrounding communities<sup>542</sup>. Indeed, at Artillery Quays ‘steel gates are used to completely restrict access to the riverside spaces in front of the development. (...) Paired with more CCTV cameras and security patrols, this development is an archetypal gated community’<sup>543</sup>.

However, *the Blue Ribbon Network* is not to be entirely condemned. Indeed, apart from gentrification, isolation and displacement<sup>544</sup>, this programme had positive effects. For example, it implemented biodiversity protection and transit development<sup>545</sup>, brought new life to areas of blight

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<sup>536</sup> Irmie R., Lees L., Raco M., *Regenerating London, Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, p.187

<sup>537</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>538</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>539</sup> Davidson M., *London’s Blue Ribbon Network*, p. 189

<sup>540</sup> *Ivi*, p. 187

<sup>541</sup> *Ivi*, p. 190

<sup>542</sup> *Ivi*, p. 185

<sup>543</sup> *Ivi*, p. 185

<sup>544</sup> *Ivi*, p. 190

<sup>545</sup> *Ibidem*

along the river<sup>546</sup>, and, thanks to the influx of affluent people to riverside neighbourhoods<sup>547</sup>, offered ‘a boost for local economies’<sup>548</sup>. Long-term effects, maybe positive ones, will be visible in some decades. However, only when regeneration policies focus on initiatives to reduce social exclusion and benefit marginalized groups of people, will London ‘truly be able to claim itself to be an exemplary ‘sustainable world city’<sup>549</sup>.

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<sup>546</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>547</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>548</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>549</sup> Davidson M., *London's Blue Ribbon Network*, p. 191



## CONCLUSION

London's Docklands have experienced a deep transformation during the last thirty-five years. Thanks to the initiatives of the LDDC, *the Blue Ribbon Network* moves and other projects, this area of East London has seen a new birth. Unemployment, dereliction and decline – the negative effects of containerization – have been faced with a series of measures, in particular successful redevelopment policies. The creation of the Enterprise Zone and the new business district of Canary Wharf, the transport and environmental improvements, as well as the provision of housing and employment proved to be successful strategies to regenerate the area, enhance its economic potential and attract developers, investors, visitors and even new middle-class residents.

From derelict riverside to Wall Street on water, the Docklands are now a new, modern area which has helped to shift London's financial centre of gravity eastwards and to establish the status of Britain's capital as a leading global city. However, this unstoppable evolution has left unresolved questions. In particular, the riverside colonization and gentrification by wealthy outsiders has led to an economic, social and cultural isolation of some groups of residents. If the Docklands' area has broken its physical separation from the rest of London, new forms of exclusion, in some cases even architectural segregation, are still present. As a result, discrimination, racialisation, competition for council housing and conflicts among native inhabitants, new middle-class settlers and Bangladeshi immigrants are still present in this area. In addition, these problems have led to a process of social polarisation and have created new identities and significances.

It is clear that the regeneration process has benefited the area's image and economy but, at the same time, has excluded part of Docklands' population from these benefits. However, the problems and divisions which have derived from redevelopment can still be solved. Since in the next decades Docklands will inevitably experience a further evolution, new programs will be undertaken to promote the area's growth and competitiveness. If the new projects benefit all groups

of citizens, narrowing the gap between different social classes and cultures, reducing social exclusion and providing equal opportunities to all residents, this area's growth will be complete and sustainable. Only then will Docklands be a vital centre in the heart of London, experiencing a real riverside Renaissance and helping not only to modify the city's skyline, but also enhancing London's status as a sustainable global city.

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## RIASSUNTO

Quando si pensa a Londra, l'attenzione delle persone si rivolge subito a Buckingham Palace, al Palazzo del Parlamento, alla Torre di Londra o a St. Paul's Cathedral. Si tratta infatti di luoghi divenuti ormai immagini internazionali di questa città, dei veri e propri simboli. Negli ultimi decenni, tuttavia, nuove icone si sono aggiunte a questa lista, venendo riconosciute in Inghilterra e persino all'estero come simboli di Londra. È il caso, ad esempio, di Canary Wharf e dei suoi palazzi e grattacieli, in particolare One Canada Square, o del Millennium Dome, successivamente ribattezzato O2 Arena, la gigantesca costruzione progettata da Richard Rogers per accogliere la mostra Millennium Experience nel 2000. Se i simboli tradizionali si trovano nella zona centrale e occidentale della città, nella City o Westminster, le nuove icone sono invece situate in un'altra area di Londra: i Docklands.

La storia di questa zona, che prende il nome dai 'docks', porzioni di terra racchiuse dall'acqua, ove si trovano banchine per l'attracco e lo scarico delle navi, risale alla fondazione di Londra ed alla creazione di un porto commerciale lungo le sponde del Tamigi, nella parte orientale della città. Nel corso dei secoli questo porto crebbe e diventò un punto strategico, attirando mercanti da tutto l'Impero Romano. Successivamente il porto vide l'arrivo di invasori e conquistatori provenienti dal continente: Angli, Sassoni, Juti, ed infine Normanni, con Guglielmo Duca di Normandia, nel 1066.

Durante il Medioevo Londra crebbe in importanza e prosperità, così come il suo porto, fino al Rinascimento, in cui si ebbe un periodo di grande splendore, in corrispondenza con il regno di Elisabetta I. Il porto, divenuto centro strategico per il commercio di beni provenienti da ogni dove e per la costruzione di navi che venivano realizzate lungo le sponde del fiume, fu anche punto di partenza per esploratori, colonizzatori (i padri pellegrini con la nave Mayflower, ad esempio), nonché mercanti coinvolti nella tratta degli schiavi. Nei secoli successivi il porto si espanse ulteriormente, con l'affermazione di importanti compagnie mercantili quali la Compagnia delle

Indie Orientali ed Occidentali, nonostante alcuni tra i più disastrosi episodi della storia d'Inghilterra, quali la Grande Peste del 1665 ed il grande incendio di Londra, l'anno seguente.

All'inizio dell'800 la zona fiorì notevolmente grazie alla rivoluzione industriale e alla creazione dei primi grandi complessi dei Docks: West ed East India Docks, London, Surrey Commercial e St Katharine's Docks. Venne costruito un efficiente sistema di canali e nell'età Vittoriana, così come nei decenni seguenti, vi fu il periodo di massimo splendore per i Docklands, con la costruzione degli ultimi tre grandi Docks – Royal Albert, Royal Victoria e King George V.

Successivamente, a causa delle due guerre mondiali, della crisi del '29 e dell'introduzione dei container nel sistema commerciale, i Docklands furono abbandonati perché le navi che trasportavano le nuove attrezzature erano impossibilitate a risalire il Tamigi a causa delle dimensioni sempre più ingombranti dei mercantili e dei container trasportati ed anche per la morfologia del fiume stesso, non sufficientemente largo e profondo per permettere un passaggio sicuro ed agevole. Il commercio venne quindi dirottato su altri scali portuali (come Tilbury, nei pressi della foce del Tamigi), che potevano offrire spazi adeguati per l'attracco e le manovre delle navi, senza creare congestione ed incidenti.

Di conseguenza, i Docklands sprofondarono in una crisi profonda, un abisso di degrado, abbandono e disoccupazione, divenendo un'area isolata dal resto di Londra sia dal punto di vista economico che infrastrutturale, a causa della mancanza di adeguati collegamenti e trasporti pubblici. Migliaia di persone persero il proprio posto di lavoro non solo nei docks, ma anche nelle industrie che erano sorte lungo il Tamigi, che vennero dismesse a causa dell'interruzione della produzione industriale.

Il punto di svolta si ebbe nel 1981, in concomitanza con il nuovo governo conservatore di Margaret Thatcher, con la creazione della LDDC, la London Docklands Development Corporation. Questo consorzio venne istituito dal Segretario di Stato per l'Ambiente Michael Heseltine per rigenerare 1.756 acri di terra su entrambe le sponde del Tamigi e 417 acri di acqua fluviale. La LDDC lavorò per circa diciassette anni, fino al 1998, per rigenerare sette distretti inclusi nell'area

dei Docklands e compresi nei quartieri di Tower Hamlets, Newham e Southwark: Wapping, Limehouse, Isle of Dogs, Royal Docks, Beckton, Bermondsey Riverside e Surrey Docks.

La strategia della LDDC consistette nell'utilizzare il capitale messo a disposizione dal governo e nell'attrarre gli investimenti di compagnie (la più importante fu la canadese Olympia & York), costruttori ed imprenditori per attuare una serie di misure volte alla rigenerazione dell'area. I progetti della LDDC si focalizzarono sui seguenti aspetti: incoraggiare lo sviluppo industriale, creare nuove opportunità di crescita, valorizzare l'ambiente e rendere disponibili alloggi e infrastrutture volte ad attirare un numero crescente di persone per vivere e lavorare nei Docklands.

Le iniziative furono molteplici, e spesso si rivelarono delle scelte vincenti. Innanzitutto la LDDC creò migliaia di appartamenti seguendo tre strategie operative, che sovente si sovrapposero. Si procedette demolendo i vecchi docks e magazzini, costruendo nuovi complessi residenziali, o utilizzando edifici pre-esistenti che vennero convertiti per ospitare nuovi alloggi, soprattutto lussuosi appartamenti affacciati sul Tamigi. In tal modo l'area vide l'afflusso di un numero crescente di persone provenienti dal resto di Londra, specialmente dalla City, che iniziarono a stabilirsi nei nuovi complessi.

Se si considera invece l'aspetto occupazionale, la LDDC creò un nuovo distretto finanziario, la Enterprise Zone, nella Isle of Dogs, in particolare nell'area di Canary Wharf. Il processo comportò la costruzione di maestosi grattacieli, primo fra tutti One Canada Square, progettati da architetti di fama internazionale, l'apertura di sedi di multinazionali, compagnie, banche, ditte ed uffici. Il risultato fu un secondo movimento di persone verso i Docklands, in questo caso per lavorare in questa Wall Street sull'acqua, una nuova Manhattan in miniatura creata sulla sponda settentrionale del Tamigi.

Un altro settore su cui la LDDC investì notevolmente fu quello legato alle infrastrutture ed ai trasporti. Questo aspetto ebbe il vantaggio di ridurre, se non addirittura porre fine, all'isolamento di questa zona dal resto di Londra e dal cuore finanziario della City. Tra le misure intraprese dalla LDDC si possono ricordare l'apertura del London City Airport nella zona dei Royal Docks,

l'estensione della Jubilee Line e la creazione di una nuova linea metropolitana di superficie, la Docklands Light Railway. Inoltre, la LDDC lavorò all'apertura del Limehouse Link Tunnel, una galleria che mise in comunicazione Wapping con la zona ovest della città, e alla costruzione di una fitta rete di collegamenti stradali ed autostradali. In tal modo il traffico venne notevolmente ridotto, così come i tempi di percorrenza e spostamento di lavoratori pendolari.

Infine, la LDDC intraprese una serie di iniziative per rigenerare e salvaguardare l'ambiente dei Docklands, che a causa dell'abbandono dei siti industriali si trovava in una condizione di inquinamento e diffuso degrado. Dal momento che tra gli obiettivi del consorzio vi era la valorizzazione del paesaggio fluviale, la LDDC procedette alla creazione di canali, parchi ecologici, giardini, riserve naturali, spazi verdi e pedonali, piste ciclabili.

Nonostante il successo di questi progetti, il lavoro della LDDC venne pesantemente criticato da più parti. Gli aspetti più problematici derivarono dall'esclusione di una parte consistente della popolazione originariamente residente nell'area dei Docklands dal processo di rigenerazione. Se vennero creati nuovi posti di lavoro, così come un numero elevato di alloggi, è altresì vero che non furono riservati ai residenti. Infatti, le offerte di lavoro ricercarono profili prevalentemente specializzati nel campo finanziario ed economico e non si rivolsero ad un personale operaio quale quello costituito dagli ex-lavoratori portuali. D'altra parte, la popolazione locale non si poteva permettere gli alloggi lussuosi costruiti dalla LDDC e questi nuovi appartamenti furono acquistati da persone benestanti, o appartenenti alla classe media, che si stabilirono nei quartieri rigenerati della zona.

Questa situazione portò ad un diffuso risentimento tra la popolazione originaria, nonché ad una serie di proteste nei confronti della LDDC. Il consorzio procedette adottando una nuova strategia per migliorare i rapporti con i residenti, fornendo loro servizi ed un maggior numero di alloggi economici e posti di lavoro, così come attuando un sistema di consultazioni e sondaggi di opinione. Nonostante ciò, le tensioni non furono completamente sanate ed il processo di

rigenerazione causò conflitti sociali, economici e culturali tra gli abitanti originari, i nuovi residenti della classe media ed un altro gruppo di persone giunte nella zona: immigrati provenienti dal Bangladesh. In questo caso il motivo alla base di tali contrasti fu la competizione per l'assegnazione degli alloggi popolari tra le famiglie degli ex-lavoratori portuali e questo nuovo gruppo di residenti, che vennero esclusi ed emarginati dal momento che si formò un'alleanza tra gli abitanti originari e i nuovi 'coloni' della classe media.

Tra le altre questioni legate alla rigenerazione dei Docklands vi fu l'opposizione degli abitanti di Silvertown alla costruzione del London City Airport, poiché una struttura di questo tipo in prossimità del centro cittadino avrebbe creato problemi di inquinamento acustico ed ambientale. Inoltre, visto il successo della Enterprise Zone ed il suo nuovo status simbolico di successo economico e finanziario, la zona entrò nel mirino dei terroristi con l'attentato avvenuto a Canary Wharf nel febbraio 1996 ad opera di un gruppo di militanti dell'IRA.

Nonostante le difficoltà, vi furono anche aspetti positivi che seguirono la rigenerazione dell'area: l'afflusso di capitali ed investimenti, la creazione di un turismo globale, così come un efficiente sistema di trasporto pubblico e di vie di comunicazione stradali ed autostradali. Inoltre, grazie ai miglioramenti apportati nella zona, venne creata una nuova immagine per questa area un tempo considerata emarginata, isolata e degradata.

Negli anni successivi, nuovi progetti furono intrapresi per sanare e rigenerare ulteriormente sia questi distretti che altre zone portuali, come ad esempio Greenwich, nelle quali la LDDC non era intervenuta. Un'iniziativa di particolare rilievo fu quella del *Blue Ribbon Network*, un progetto promosso dall'allora sindaco socialista di Londra Ken Livingstone nel 2004. Tra gli obiettivi di questo piano vi erano uno sviluppo ed una crescita sostenibili, accompagnati dalla creazione di spazi rigenerati ed iniziative atte a promuovere la coesione sociale e l'inclusione di tutti i cittadini.

Tra le aree comprese nel *Blue Ribbon Network*, vi fu anche Thamesmead West, nel distretto di Greenwich. La zona vide la creazione del complesso residenziale Artillery Quays ma, anche in questo caso, la rigenerazione fu accompagnata da problematiche sociali simili a quelle seguite ai

lavori della LDDC. Gentrificazione, esclusione, segregazione architettonica furono il risultato di questo processo, che vide però anche un rilancio dell'economia, un netto miglioramento delle condizioni ambientali e la protezione delle biodiversità.

In questi anni i Docklands si sono trasformati, modificando lo skyline di Londra e contribuendo all'ascesa ed affermazione della capitale del Regno Unito quale città globale. Il processo di rigenerazione non è terminato e nel futuro nuove iniziative saranno intraprese per apportare ulteriore crescita e sviluppo. Tuttavia, queste misure saranno realmente strategiche ed efficaci solo se contribuiranno a sanare le divisioni sociali, economiche e culturali e tenderanno a rendere partecipi dei benefici della rigenerazione tutti gli strati della popolazione. Solo in quel caso i Docklands potranno realmente costituire un esempio di crescita sostenibile.