



Figure 6 *Guinness Trust Buildings, 1897: an example of Victorian housing improvements for working people*

2.2.3. As industries grew, more people moved into the area, and land that had been market gardens was built on for houses. During the 19th century there was heavy development: Borough census returns were 27,465 in 1801, 65,932 in 1851, and 136,660 in 1891. Many of the people moving into the area were poor and insufficient housing led to problems of overcrowding and disease. In an effort to improve the situation, several Trusts built tenement blocks, for example the Guinness Trust Buildings in Snowsfields. These were, however, available to only a relatively small number of people.



Figure 7 *Arthur's Mission, Snowsfields*

2.2.4. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the expansion of other humanitarian activities; Arthur's Mission in Snowsfields is an example. Schooling was also provided by charities; Bermondsey United Charity School for Girls, "erected AD 1830", still stands in Grange Walk.

## 2.3. 20<sup>th</sup> Century

2.3.1. By the 1920s many areas had been reduced to slums. There was a strong movement of social reform in Bermondsey that led to demolition and rebuilding of housing. The area suffered significant bombing in WW2, which led to further redevelopment and the introduction of public gardens in some of the destroyed areas.

## Bermondsey Street Conservation Area Historical Background

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- 2.3.2. After the war, new economic activities began to develop in Bermondsey. The warehouses lent themselves well to a range of storage and workshop uses and Bermondsey established itself as something of a centre for the antiques trade. The New Caledonian Antiques Market began in Bermondsey Square in 1950.
- 2.3.3. In the 1980s and 90s the same warehouse buildings attracted residential conversion, providing opportunities for “loft style” living close to the centre of London. Established links with antiques and design have increasingly attracted high value businesses in art and other creative fields, attended by associated restaurants and cafés.

Bermondsey Street Conservation Area  
Historical Background

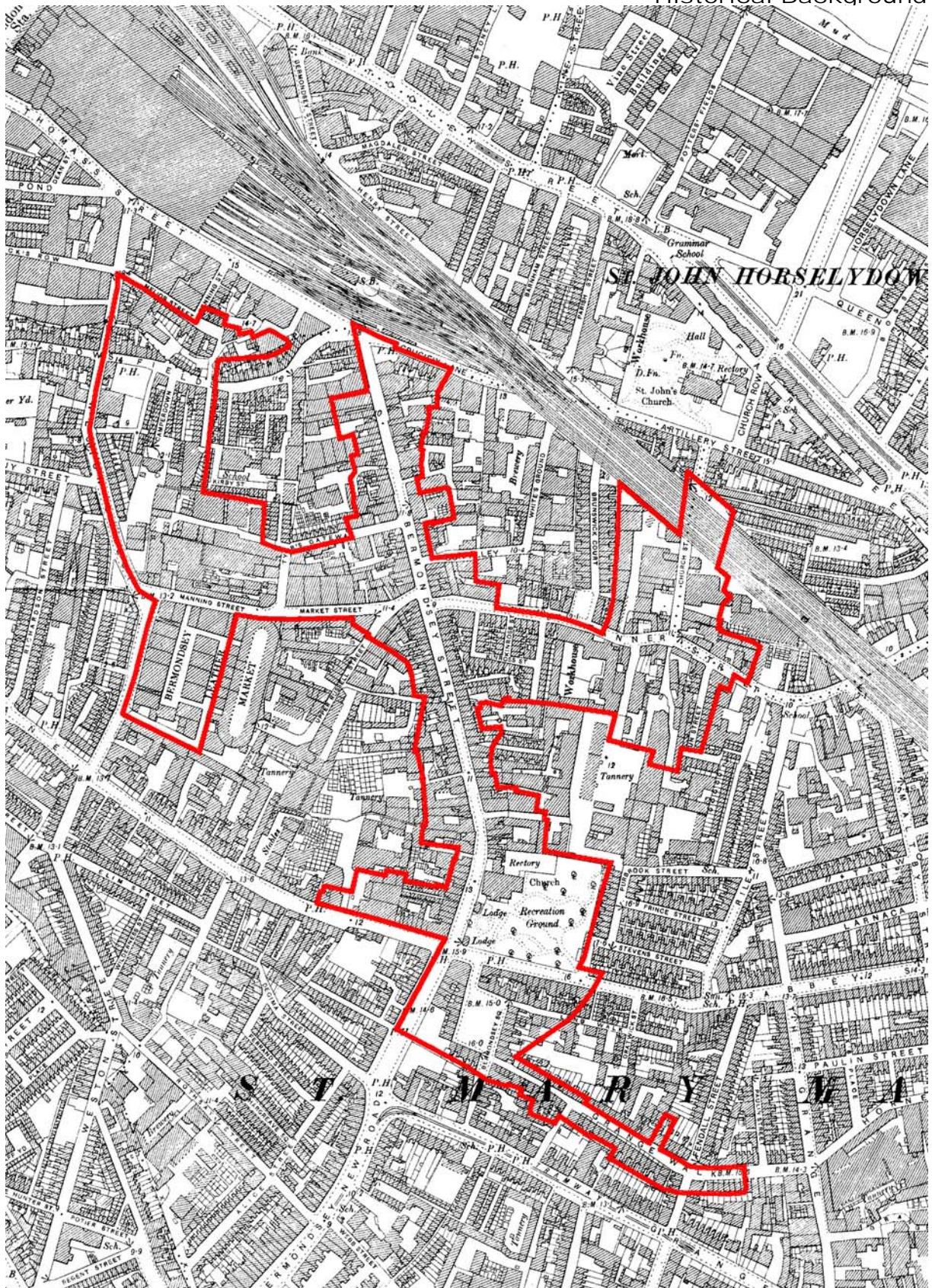


Figure 8 Ordnance Survey map, 1894, prior to the extension of Tower Bridge Road to Bermondsey Square. This represents the most intense level of development that the Conservation Area experienced. By the 1920s, clearance of the workhouse in Tanner street and slums south of Snowfields had created improved dwellings and more open space..

2.4. Sub Area 1

Bermondsey Street - Retention of early street patterns

- 2.4.1. The relationship of Tooley Street to the riverside and the dock area has always been strong, with Bermondsey as its natural hinterland. The area between Tooley Street and the river was already fully developed in the 16th century, and Bermondsey Street was an important route leading from the river south-eastwards out of London. The street frontage was well built-up, but extensive gardens lay behind on both sides.
- 2.4.2. The major inheritance from this early phase of development is the pattern of building frontage and plots along Bermondsey Street. Narrow, relatively long plots allowed as many properties as possible to put their best face to the street, keeping kitchen gardens, workshops and other utility space and yards behind.



Figure 9 88-104 Bermondsey Street: street character influenced by narrow frontage widths of earlier mediaeval plots

- 2.4.3. A typical frontage width of 4.5 to 5 metres is still preserved in much of Bermondsey Street, the width doubled sometimes where ownerships have combined but maintaining the rhythm and scale. Gates and arches allowed direct access into the sites behind. In the most distinctive parts of the street, these elements remain, albeit after numerous rounds of rebuilding.
- 2.4.4. Because Bermondsey Street originated as a causeway over marshy land towards Bermondsey Abbey, lower areas each side were slow to be developed. Gardens behind the main street frontages remained intact until the 18th century when development at the north end intensified and old lanes such as Parish Street (now split between Whites Grounds and Druid Street) became built up too. With industrialisation, there was increasing pressure to develop sites behind the street frontages, and numerous accesses developed between buildings into yards and gardens. While there are relatively few significant streets adjoining Bermondsey Street from the east and the west, frequent, narrow, arched entrances through the street frontage remain a distinctive feature.
- 2.4.5. The construction of the London and Greenwich Railway viaduct in 1838 cut Bermondsey Street off from the riverside perceptually. The expansion and redevelopment of the dockland area north of the railway evolved separately and differently from Bermondsey Street. To some extent this has protected Bermondsey Street, allowing it to retain much of its mediaeval

scale and layout. 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial buildings introduced into the street follow the pattern of narrow mediaeval plots, and key historic elements such as the 18<sup>th</sup> century shops at nos. 68-78 have remained.

2.5. Sub Area 2

Grange Walk - Legacy of Bermondsey Abbey

- 2.5.1. The names Abbey Street, Grange Walk and Spa Road give an indication of the earliest defining features of the area. Bermondsey Abbey was demolished shortly after its dissolution in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. The street pattern around it, however, retained key elements of its layout. Bermondsey Square is based on its inner courtyard, and the gabled buildings at 5-7 Grange Walk retain medieval fabric of a building originally located within the abbey complex. The abbey itself lay on the north side of its courtyard (Bermondsey Square) on the line of Abbey Road to the southern side of St. Mary Magdalene's churchyard.
- 2.5.2. In 1894 Tower Bridge was completed with a southern approach along the new Tower Bridge Road that ended at Tooley Street. Subsequently further demolitions were authorised so that Tower Bridge Road could be extended to join Bermondsey Street at its junction with Grange Road. The section of Tower Bridge Road in the Conservation Area was thus newly created and cut diagonally through Bermondsey Square, demolishing the east side. The other three sides remained until the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; now only the southwest corner of the original square stands.
- 2.5.3. The present day use of the square for the New Caledonian Market dates to 1855, when it was founded by Prince Albert in Islington, north London. Following the Second World War, it was re-established as a livestock / flea market, evolving into today's antiques market.

2.6. Sub Area 3

Weston Street

- 2.6.1. By the time of Hogg's map in 1784, most of the area had been developed, and key streets like Snowfields and Crucifix Lane were established. The construction of the railway viaduct into London Bridge Station began in 1834 and continued into the 1840s as more railway companies serving the south-east added lines. The arched construction allowed most of the old streets to remain linked north-to-south, but the lengths of the tunnels that were created effectively divorce the two ends.
- 2.6.2. The area had long been the centre of the leather trade, and the Bermondsey Leather Market (1833) was built on the corner of Manning Street, now Leathermarket Street. Between here and Snowfields was tightly packed development of tanneries and tiny terraced houses. An account by Charles Dickens Junior records, *"The neighbourhood in which it stands is devoted entirely to thinners and tanners, and the air reeks with evil smells. The population is peculiar, and it is a sight at twelve o'clock to see the men pouring out from all the works. Their clothes are marked with many stains; their trousers are dis-coloured by tan; some have apron and gaiters of raw hide; and about them all seems to hang a scent of blood."*
- 2.6.3. The 19<sup>th</sup> century housing was replaced, initially by charitable housing such as the Guinness Trust Buildings in the 1890s and later by local authority housing. The tannery works have all been cleared, too, and with further clearance due to WWII bombing Leathermarket Gardens has been created as an important green focus for residents and workers in the area.

2.7. Sub Area 4

Tower Bridge Road

- 2.7.1. The London and Greenwich Railway viaduct and Tower Bridge Road were major engineering projects imposed over the existing street pattern and they radically altered the way the area functions. Bermondsey Street had been the major north-south route through the area, and when the railway was constructed it remained as a key route from London Bridge routed via a vaulted tunnel. When Tower Bridge Road was constructed, it provided a broad, modern street preferable to Bermondsey Street as the main link and taking over from it in importance.
- 2.7.2. The new street paralleled Church Street, now Roper Lane to the east of the Sarsons' works. It displaced tannery works south of Tanner Street, and created the opportunity for a new city thoroughfare with the fine commercial buildings that form the eastern part of the Conservation Area.
- 2.7.3. Off Tanner Street west of Tower Bridge Road lay a Workhouse and Kinross Street – a warren of tiny terraced houses. Slum clearance allowed the construction of the present public recreation ground, which was opened in 1929.

### 3. THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE AREA

#### 3.1. Broad Context

3.1.1. The Conservation Area is close to the dense high rise commercial development of the City of London and London Bridge areas. It lies immediately adjacent to the hub of activity associated with London Bridge Station and Guy's Hospital, and a clear change of character is evident to its quieter, smaller scale. The Conservation Area also contrasts in character with the large areas of mid-twentieth century public housing that adjoin it to the east and the west.

3.1.2. The Bermondsey Street Conservation Area has a rich and varied character that at its heart reflects the street scale of its mediaeval origins. Originating as a simple causeway to Bermondsey Abbey (see 0 above), the historic street pattern has largely remained, but is built up by 18<sup>th</sup> century houses and shops, and by 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century warehouse and office buildings. The combination of mediaeval scale and industrial detail creates a very distinctive townscape of narrow streets and building plots, arched alleyways to rear yards, warehouse architecture with tall loading bays, hoists, etc. and the backdrop of the railway arches on Crucifix Lane. This physical character continues to be expressed in a vibrant range of uses and activities that include housing, workshop and office-based businesses and many small-scale shops and cafés.

#### Local Materials and Details

3.1.3. Bermondsey's long development history has bequeathed it a very varied range of architectural forms and styles. There are some common themes, however, that are generally typical of an 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century London setting:

- Yellow London stock brick as the basic construction material, or red facings in certain buildings;
- Façades designed on classical principles, usually with parapet roofs and cornices topping off street elevations that provide a horizontal roofline;
- Generally very simple architectural detail, with plain brick openings and modest brick string courses and cornices; where there is elaboration it is usually in Portland / artificial stone or stucco dressings.

#### Warehouse buildings

3.1.4. The Conservation Area is distinctive for its many small warehouses; typically four storeys, often only three bays wide. Generally, the centre bay will be designed as a vertical "slot" of loading doors, with a swinging gantry at the top for hoisting goods. Often this is expressed as a gabled element (e.g. 60 Weston Street, 2 White's Grounds), and the narrow elevations fit comfortably into the pattern of narrow property frontages described in 0 above. There is a consistency of other details, such as large squarely proportioned windows in the outer bays with arched brick or flat steel lintels, with paned steel or timber windows.



Figure 10 Warehouse building, 60 Weston Street, showing the typical narrow elevation, divided into tall bays with a prominent central loading bay, gables and hoists.

### Corner buildings

3.1.5. The street network of the Conservation Area gives particular prominence to street corners, and buildings generally exploit the architectural potential of such locations distinctively. The Rose in Weston Street, for example, is designed with a corner entrance door and curved plaster panels in the elevation above. Number 35 Bermondsey Street (on the corner of Crucifix Lane) has a splendid chamfered corner entrance, and the Honest Cabbage restaurant's corner onto White's Grounds, has a chamfered corner with chimneys and gables.



Figure 11 (left) The Rose, Weston Street, and

Figure 12 (right) Crucifix Lane/Bermondsey Street: street corners are distinctive places in the conservation area, visually prominent and with potential for inventive architectural statements.

### Shop fronts

3.1.6. Shop fronts are features of Weston Street and Bermondsey Street. In general they are to a traditional format:

- Painted fascias between end consoles, sized and positioned consistently in groups of shops;
- Dividing pilasters marking the division between separate shop premises;



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- The glazing area divided by slim painted mullions;
- Panelled stall risers at ground level.

#### Street surfaces and furniture

- 3.1.7. Few original street surfaces exist in main streets in the area. Stone sett cobbles remain in part of Bermondsey Square, and granite kerbs are still widespread. However, setts and stone paving flags have almost everywhere been replaced by asphalt. There are more examples of stone setts in yards and alleys behind the Bermondsey Street frontages, and in secondary lanes such as Ship and Mermaid Row.



Figure 13 19<sup>th</sup> century street surfaces in Ship and Mermaid Row

Some consistency is being introduced into the Conservation Area with new street lighting that follows a straightforward pattern using a pendant globe beneath a plain metal shade. The style is reminiscent of gaslights, but in a simple modern idiom; they are however set much higher than historic lamp standards would be.

#### 3.2. Sub Area 1 – Bermondsey Street

- 3.2.1. Bermondsey Street is the spine of the Conservation Area. The northern section, between St. Thomas Street and Lamb Walk, is of particularly high quality, and includes a high proportion of listed shops and street front premises. The southern half is more fragmented by more recent, larger building footprints. The key building is the church of St. Mary Magdalene, which has a pivotal location on the only bend in the street, so that it is visible from all parts.

#### Bermondsey Street (north)

- 3.2.2. Bermondsey Street retains the character of a village high street, reflecting its mediaeval origins. The buildings in the listed group, nos. 68 - 78 on the western side, are of particular note in this respect. All originally 18<sup>th</sup> century houses, their three-storey height and domestic scale have been retained throughout a history of change to and from business uses. Numbers 68 and 70 have reconstructed bow-fronted shop windows within earlier shop fronts, and the upper levels are rendered, with sash windows and a

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horizontal roof parapet. The upper storey of No. 78 is distinctively jettied and weather-boarded with a projecting bay window at first floor level: these features are prominent in views along the street and are very evocative of its pre-industrial character. The frontage curves back to a carriage arch at Carmarthen Place to give a slightly wider pavement. This set-back is a small but important subtlety in the character of the street.



Figure 14 (left) 18<sup>th</sup> century houses at 68-78 Bermondsey Street were converted to shops at an early date. Subtle changes in building line and the oriel window and eccentric weather-boarded upper storey of no. 78 are important elements of the group's character, and

Figure 15 (right) early 19<sup>th</sup> century house surviving at no. 59

3.2.3. On the eastern side of the street, buildings are 19<sup>th</sup> century and more typically commercial/warehouse in character. Rising to four storeys, they strongly reinforce the historic building line. Key architectural characteristics are a bigger vertical scale, ordered elevations with regularly arrayed windows and high ground floor sills. Surviving between the later warehouse buildings is No. 59, an early 19<sup>th</sup> century three-storey red brick house that still retains entrance steps and railings. This building is listed Grade II, as are the contemporary warehouse buildings at 61 and 63, with a recessed arched section bridging the access to the rear yard.

3.2.4. Some of the more modern buildings in the street express their functionality in very plain forms with sections of blank wall and shutters that jar with the textures of the older buildings. Inventiveness of detail within a strong structural discipline is key to the quality of the earlier warehouses, and examples like the 1903 group on the corner of Crucifix Lane (nos. 35 to 37 Bermondsey Street) provide visual interest, while adapting well to new retail uses. An excellent example of recent design fitting into the particular street scene of the Conservation Area is at no 60 by architects Weston Williamson, which won a Civic Trust Commendation in 2002. Its simple rectilinear composition, restrained verticality and street level interest reflect the key characteristics of successful parts of Bermondsey Street.

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Figure 16 60 Bermondsey Street: successful modern interpretation of the narrow plot proportions of the mediaeval street.

3.2.5. The central part of Bermondsey Street is now marked by the striking Zandra Rhodes building at no. 79, incorporating the fashion designer's offices, a museum, café and eight apartments. The building was originally an incongruous concrete-framed warehouse/garage dating from the 1950s and it was visually extremely intrusive into the street scene because of its form and pale brick facings. In 2000, Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta transformed it by facing the frame in a simple stuccoed façade punctuated by carefully proportioned and spaced rectangular openings. The primary impact of the building, however, comes from its hot orange and pink colouring, which stands out even in views along the street when the elevation is reduced to a mere vertical sliver. While the building is in its own way no less uncompromising than what it replaces, the new design has confidence and panache, and introduces into the street a vigour and vibrancy that reflects the spirit of Bermondsey Street.



Figure 17 (left) 1950s/60s concrete framed buildings refaced, at 77 Bermondsey Street in "traditional" style, and

Figure 18 (right) the Zandra Rhodes building: a similar problem resolved by architect Legorreta expressing the simple form of the frame in bold rectilinear shapes and colours.

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### Tyers Gate

- 3.2.6. The tight street character of Bermondsey Street extends into Tyers Gate and Leathermarket Street as far as Leathermarket Gardens. The dominating height of the four storey commercial façade on the north side (nos. 2-6) contrasts with the varied scale of the south side, especially the simple two-storey house at No. 1. Westwards, the narrow street width is extended visually beyond the end of the buildings by the railings of Leathermarket Gardens and by the line of the street surfaces, kerbs and bollards; the green of the gardens suggests the opening up of space further on. Eastwards, the Zandra Rhodes building closes the vista with a strong splash of colour.



Figure 19 Tyers Gate: one of the few east-west streets connecting into Bermondsey Street, also showing narrow plot frontages in a mix of later uses.

### Morocco Street

- 3.2.7. Morocco Street forms a very particular townscape with its angled alignment to Leathermarket Street, which creates the distinctive wedge-shaped end of the Morocco Stores at No. 1 Leathermarket Street. The buildings surrounding the triangular space of the junction derive a consistency of character and scale from their three and four storey warehouse façades. No. 2 Morocco Street and nos. 2 and 4 Leathermarket Street are listed Grade II. Elements of detail, such as the painted Morocco Store sign and window boxes on no. 2 are important to the character of the building group.



Figure 20 Morocco Street: triangular corner sites and distinctive warehouse details contribute to a distinctive townscape.