

London's Docklands: An Overview

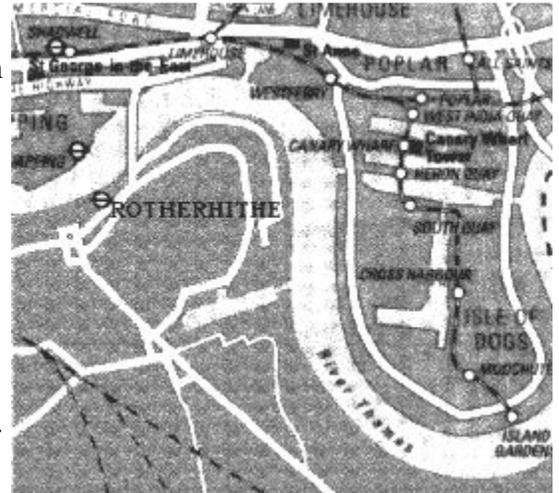
by Paul Minor (pminor@pacificnet.net)

London's Docklands contains one of the worst collections of late twentieth-century architecture to be seen anywhere in the world. It is a marvel, if it were not so embarrassing, that so many very bad buildings from the same period can be found in such a comparatively small area of the city.

Stephanie Williams,

Phaidon Architecture Guide.

Home to a diversified crowd, (working class laborers, smugglers, street punks and mobsters) London's Docklands stretch across both the north and south banks of the Thames River. Warehouse architecture, industrial estate sheds and huge swaths of dereliction dominate this area. In fact the only real landmark is the 800ft tall Canary Wharf tower which, was the tallest building in London until the 1200ft Century Tower was built in the early 2000s. Despite much talk about the Docklands being one of London's worst failures, the area has actually done quite well. Even the docks themselves which had not been used for shipping since the 1970's are experiencing a pickup in business by small firms who want to transfer cargo to bigger ports in a quicker and safer manner than over land.

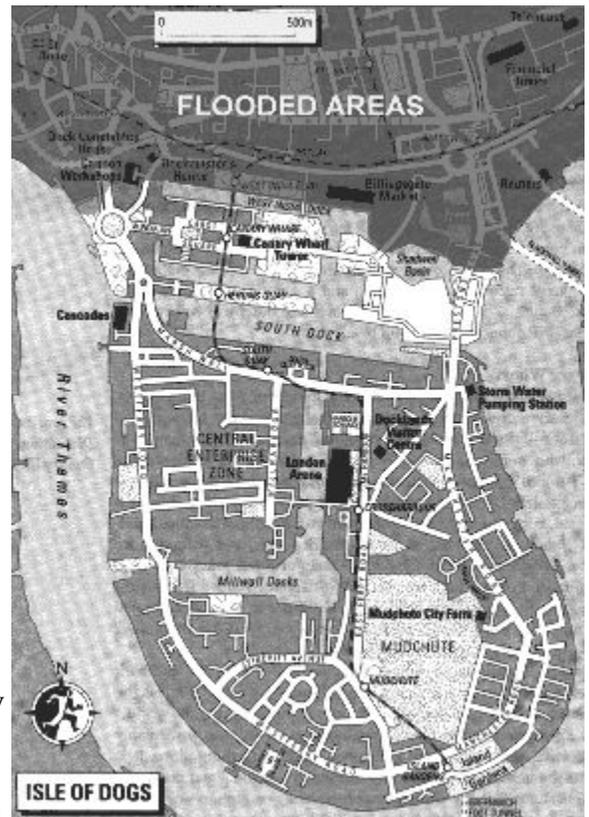


History

From the sixteenth century onwards the port of London was the key to the cities wealth. In it's heyday, the port was crowded with 1700 ships waiting to be unloaded. Its port system was the largest in the world at the time. In the mid 1960s the docks began to see a decline in business as container ships were developed and put into use, and the ports were moved to Tilbury. For two decades the area became a virtual wasteland as all the city docks began to close. In 1981 the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) was formed in an effort to rejuvenate the area. By the 90s it was easy to see that this movement was largely unsuccessful. The (LDDC) did manage, however, to bolster the Dockland's economy somewhat by getting some industry into the area by offering things like 100% tax relief on capital expenditure. In 2006 another attempt was made at kickstarting the economy of the Docklands in the form of The Docklands Reclamation Project. This project was highly successfull at the beginning of its life but eventually fell into bankruptcy, before it did it managed to bring quite a bit of industry into the area. Today the Docklands serve mostly as a warehouse district but has seen an increase in business in the ports. Many firms are now calling for a better transport of a relatively small amount of goods from London to the larger ports. Many companies are now operating this way through use of hovercrafts, small boats and the mini submersibles that are in such wide use in the EEC.

The Isle of Dogs

The Isle of Dogs, the small peninsula formed by the dramatic horseshoe bend of the Thames, once the ideological heart of the Docklands and home to the famous Canary Wharf, is now truly and island due to the bombing of the Thames River Barrier slightly to the east. Everything north of the West India Dock is under a foot of murky water and is "officially" uninhabited. Due to this unfortunate incident the area's Central Enterprise Zone has seen a decline in businesses. Although many of the warehouse owners have moved across the river to Rotherhithe, the major companies who depend on the Wharves for business have preferred to stay here rather than use the smaller Greenland dock across the river. This area is also the area in which England's native organized crime syndicate, The Firm, calls its headquarters. The Firm is involved in almost all aspects of criminal activity in this area. Despite the fact that all smugglers in the area must pay protection money, they continue to stay because business here is still highly profitable. The island is only accessible by using either the docks by river, the few small tunnels from the south bank or to use the Docklands Light Railway (DLR), a monorail built by the LDDC in the 80s, which runs from the City to The Isle of Dogs.



Rotherhithe

Rotherhithe lies on the south bank of the Thames, directly across from the Isle of Dogs and extends southward. Today, the Rotherhithe area makes up the bulk of the Docklands. It is primarily a vast sprawl of warehouses and other industrial buildings. Its main port is the Greenland Dock which accommodates quite a few small companies. Rotherhithe is usually characterized as a tough area. This is probably an understatement. Rotherhithe is filled with illicit establishments and has a crime rate that continues to rise. The many street gangs inhabit the area are constantly fighting and shootings are as commonplace as afternoon tea. The gangs here are hard to identify as they seldom have fixed colors or turf. Your best bet is to either stay out of the area at night, or pack your shotgun and hope for the best.

SOUTH BANK

Docklands

Resting on the south bank of the Thames, directly across from the South Dock, The South Bank is a seedy industrial district characterized by its low rent warehouses, backroom vice dens and frequent gang fights. Don't forget to pack your 9mm.

#1 North Atlantic Import Co.

The North Atlantic Import Co. is a front for a black market smuggling operation dealing in weapons and illegal cyberware. The large warehouse runs onto a finger pier which can accommodate various ships for unloading.

#2 Offices of North Atlantic Import

This building was converted from an old industrial diving school. This building contains offices of various people including, its proprietor, Reagan F.E. Jackson, who runs a successful black market operation and is currently embroiled in a small war with the Firm. This building also houses Jackson's dockworkers in dorm style rooms. The complex also includes a helipad for a V-22B Osprey.

#3 UK Export Co.

A small shipping firm that specializes in shipping cargo, that is considered unsafe to be shipped by land, to the larger ports where it is loaded onto modular cargo vessels.

#4 South Pacific Imports

This company imports many things from the pacific rim but mostly deals in entertainment such as: videos, music chips, brandance an sometimes even opium.

#5 Kao Trucking Enterprises

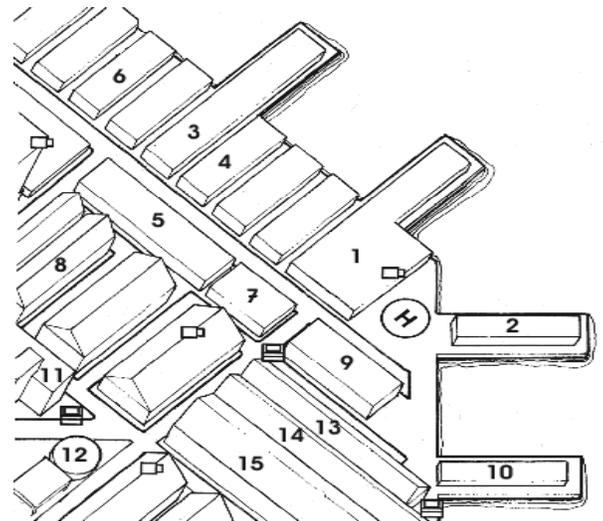
KTE is a trucking firm that bases its operation out of this building. The building includes the office, the dispatch system and garages for the trucks. It is a well known fact that Mr. Kao doesn't mind making a little money on the side by shipping questionable items for questionable people.

#6 Wharf Rat Inn

The Wharf rat is a common working class pub. Although it is not known for its cleanliness, it is a popular place for the local dockworkers and toughs. They have a staggering selection of beers, and also serve basket meals.

#7 Osgood Electronics

Osgood Electronics is a small company in the business of buying and selling large quantities of electronic parts. As a wholesaler



Osgood mostly supplies smaller retailers. You can find any sort of electronic part you need here, if you are willing to buy it in bulk.

#8 S&M of London

Although you wouldn't know it by its outside appearance, this warehouse houses one of London's largest and most exotic strip clubs. The interior is illuminated by a blinding array of lasers and neon bounced off the chromed surfaces in the room. The dancers here perform bizarre S&M dances that include healthy doses of leather. This cesspool of vice is a favorite hangout for many of the gangs.

#9 Ace Distribution

Ace does allot of legitimate distribution, but there allot of things like "medical supplies" that come in through the back door.

#10 Thames Courier Service

This is the homebase for TCS, a courier service that uses its small fleet of GEB Dusters to transport small packages throughout the city via the river. There is always a multitude of used Dusters for sale through this company.

#11 Docklands Real Estate

A specialty Realtor dealing only in factory and warehouse space in the Docklands area. Their main office is in the Canary Wharf tower.

#12 United Petrol

Your average gas station with CHOOH2 and electric charges. Local gangs have been known to give victims the "Full Service", which entails placing the nozzle in the victims mouth and pumping them full off CHOOH2.

#13 The Clinic

This warehouse is home to a black market doctor who fits illegal cyberware and "weapon trauma surgery." Needless to say he gets allot of business from the local gang element.

#14 Class War

The home and presses of England's foremost anarchist publication. Its readership has increased drastically with the growing realization that the new monarchy has no intent of giving the power back to the people. A hub of anarchist activity in London.

#15 Rotherhithe Storage

a conglomeration of storage space for many small businesses.

NEW CHINATOWN

New Chinatown- The streets here are never quiet. Deep within the ethnically segregated ghettos of South London, Triad gangs vie for exclusive control of the rackets, while honest inhabitants work endless hours to make ends meet. The days here look safe enough, but at night its a different story.

History:

Far removed from the touristy "Chinatown" north of the Thames, New Chinatown is less a Little China then it is an ethnic ghetto. With Hong Kong's return to communist rule in 1997, the late 90s saw an influx of Chinese people into the UK. Thousands came to London with little money and were forced to move in to decaying housing projects south of the Thames river. This district is the major triad stronghold in London, with at least two major gangs (Lotus Eaters, HK7), and multitudes of smaller less organized ones. Most of the taller buildings in the area are multilevel housing tenements, all of witch are in poor condition.

#1 Man Wah Chinese Cafe

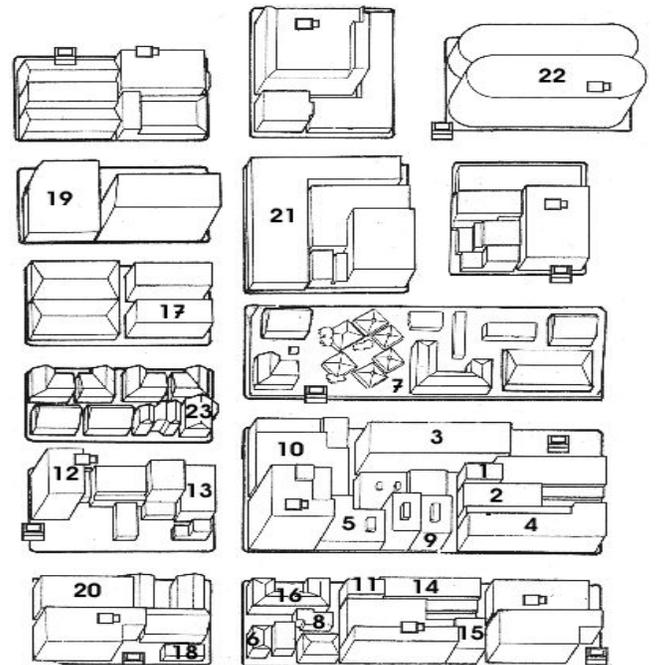
Man Wah is a small Chinese fast food restaurant occupying the first floor of this building. The food here is quite popular but is no where near healthy. The upper two levels house four other businesses including two small nick-knack stores, a tattoo parlor and the office of Jay Lee, Private Detective.

#2 Club August

This club appears to be your basic low rent bar/dance club but on closer inspection you will find the real reason for the crowd. If you know the right people you can enter the casino in the back of the bar and gamble the night (and all your money) away. The bar is owned by Wong Po, who is the boss of the local Triad group, the Lotus Eaters.

#3 Excalibur Inn

This is one of the many cubical/coffin hotels owned and operated by the Red Door Inn hotel chain. For £24 a night you can stay in a small cubicle compete with a small folding bed, a small storage locker and a small sink. Or for the even more thrifty, sleep coffins are available for only £12. This flophouse is a magnet for robberies, since there is no security.



#4 Hong Kong Supermarket

Your average Chinese grocery store with fish, vegetables, canned goods etc...

#5 Ming's Fine Oriental Foods

A high quality restaurant with a variety of Chinese cuisine. The restaurant caters exclusively to the Chinatown population, and any outsiders will be treated with hostility. Ming's is considered a "cease fire" area by the local triad gangs, and any sort of rowdiness is simply not tolerated by the owner.

#6 A to Z electronics

This small building and the parallel structure serve as the storefront and warehouse for this successful enterprise. Upon entering, the customer will see a cluttered mess of parts for all kinds of electronics dating back to the 20th century. The store's proprietors, Bobby and John Leung, are excellent tech and can fix almost anything you can bring them.

#7 Chinese Open Air Market

One of the land marks of the New Chinatown area is its market. It is your typical outdoor market, with hundreds of fresh food dealers, noodle stands and some of the finest sea food in London. The market is popular with the Chinese and *Gwailows* (whites) alike.

#8 Buddhist Temple

Actually, this so called temple is simply a makeshift place of warship in a cramped little building. The owner, Hai Kit Wai, teaches a blend of Buddhism and Taoism. The back room of the temple is lined with hundreds of jars and containers containing various herbs. Hai Kit Wai can usually be found watching an old TV in a closet sized room in the very back.

#9 Authentic Oriental Massage

Housed in an old hotel, Authentic Oriental Message offers an "authentic" oriental message (surprise, surprise) for £40 an hour. Also available are the popular "stress relief massage", and other "special" services. The building also contains a small tattoo parlor on the first floor and a drug den run by the HK7 Triad on the top floor.

#10 Hainan Business Complex

An indoor shopping center which contains a large quantity of small shops, most of which are pretty much the same, and none of which are worth mentioning.

#11 Tanjin Tea House

This popular tea house occupies the bottom two floors of this building. Tanjin is your basic teahouse but also serves small seafood plates. Its decor is modern, and it is laid out into a table section and a "bar" style section. One of its more striking features is the large saltwater aquarium running the length of the bar. It is from this aquarium that most of the seafood entrees are prepared. The Tanjin Tea House is a popular spot with local triads, who do business here frequently.

#12 Low Rent Flats

This is one of the many multilevel housing projects left over from the building spree in the early 1960s. This particular one is owned by a Spanish slumlord, who is currently at war with the Triads over ownership of this building. The building is filled with hard working people as well as with brothels, drug dens and other illicit establishments.

#13 The Sea Breeze

This tacky looking bar, with its light blue exterior and its multicolored wave logo, is actually one of the best bars in the area. It features live jazz nightly and the coldest drinks in town. A great place to wind down after a hard day.

#14 Strip Mall

A small strip mall containing a Laundromat, a hair salon and a liquor store.

#15 Ng's Market Pharmacy

Robert Ng is a local pharmacist who uses his drug store as a cover for his ripperdoc practice. He is the man most triad thugs see after getting wounded in a street fight. Ng's is not considered a "cease fire" area and the local gangs have been known to drag certain patients back out into the street to finish the job. Needless to say Ng asks for his payment up front.

#16 Shopping Complex

This shopping complex contains the following:

Hong Kong Video is a basic Chinese video store. They have tons of current releases, old releases and

braindance. If you talk to the right people you can get the newest illegal braindance including porn and snuff.

The building also contains a convenience store and a pawn shop.

#17 Starcade

An arcade with both regular games and braindance versions. Popular with youths everywhere. The owner is said to have a side career as a black-marketer.

#18 News +

A newsstand carrying entirely Asian publications. The owner, Wong Lin, is a good source of information if you are Chinese.

#19 Chin's Motor Works

Chin specializes in fixing all sorts of motorcycles and scooters, but is also quite handy when it comes to cars. Chin will also help you "unload" any "extra" motorcycles you may have acquired.

#20 Kar-wai Imports

Run by an older Chinese couple, this establishment deals in imported eastern goods.

#21 Warehouse Complex

What more is there to say.

#22 Water Treatment Plant

This facility was once used to treat and store water for the area. After a newer facility was built to the west, this one was abandoned. Its anybody's guess what goes on here after dark.

#23 Good Luck Family Grocery

Good Luck is a mediocre connivance store with a large liquor section. It has been busted several times for selling hard core porn to minors.