

LONDON'S LOST VILLAGE

This timeline of the history of Trinity Buoy Wharf and the surrounding Leamouth Peninsula has been produced by Thames Festival Trust as part of the *London's Lost Village* project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Trinity Buoy Wharf Trust.



Above left: Lifting a lantern supporting trestle onto a high focal plane buoy, 1959. *Trinity Buoy Wharf*

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Above right: Wooden and steel buoy frames at Trinity Buoy Wharf, c. 1920. *Trinity Buoy Wharf*



Right: Trinity Buoy Wharf, late 1990s.





EARLY HISTORY

Before the eighteenth-century this area was little more than marsh land at the confluence of the Thames and Bow Creek. It was divided into two freehold estates: Goodluck Hope to the north, and Orchard House to the south.

While ship building had taken place to the west at Blackwall for centuries and copperas mined on the western banks of Bow Creek since the seventeenth century, this area was much quieter: an orchard and a manor house virtually the only features of this reedy landscape.

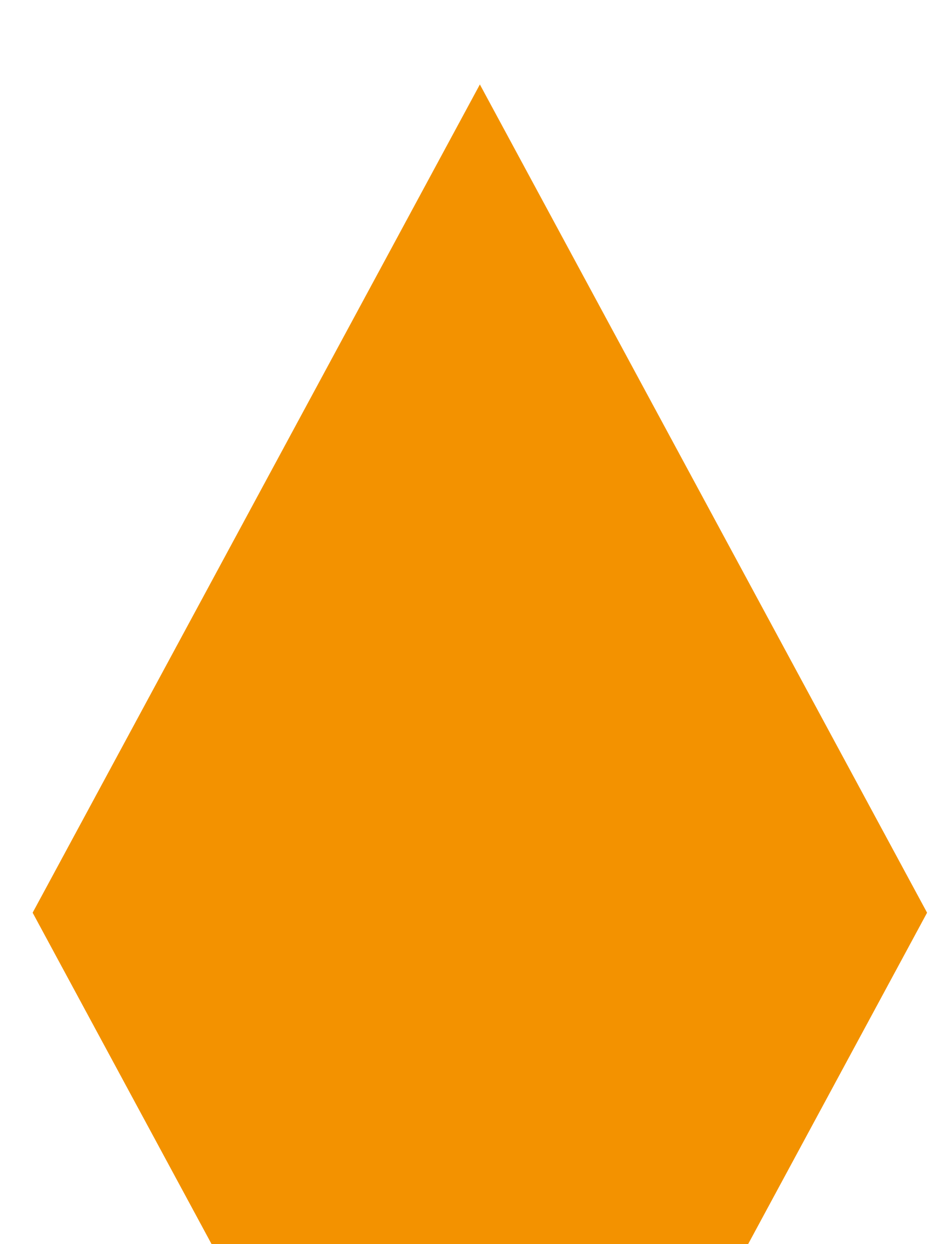
The first noxious industry to set up here was James Mather's firm in the 1780s, extracting oil from boiling and processing whale blubber near the southern bend of Bow Creek. Mathers sold part of his land for the building of the Brunswick Dock, opening in 1790.

During the 1790s land on the Orchard House estate began to come into the hands of those who would open the East India Docks. East India merchant Robert Wigram purchased Orchard Wharf on the Thames, using the land for ships and timber.



Above: Brunswick Dock, painted by William Daniell, 1803. Yale Center for British Art

Left: William Gascoyne's map of Stepney, 1703. The Leamouth Peninsula can be seen on the far right of the image on the Thames, referred to here as part of 'The East Marsh' of Poplar. London Metropolitan Archives





NEW DEVELOPMENTS

1803 – Trinity Buoy Wharf was opened by Trinity House, the official authority for providing and maintaining navigational aids such as buoys, lightvessels and lighthouses. The area was used for testing and storage.

1804 – Superintendent's House built at Trinity Buoy Wharf by James Walker, complete with garden.

1806 – East India Docks, built by the East India Dock Company and supported by the East India Company, opened to trade. They are managed by deputy of Trinity House Joseph Cotton. It was estimated that 20,000 people attended the opening ceremony.

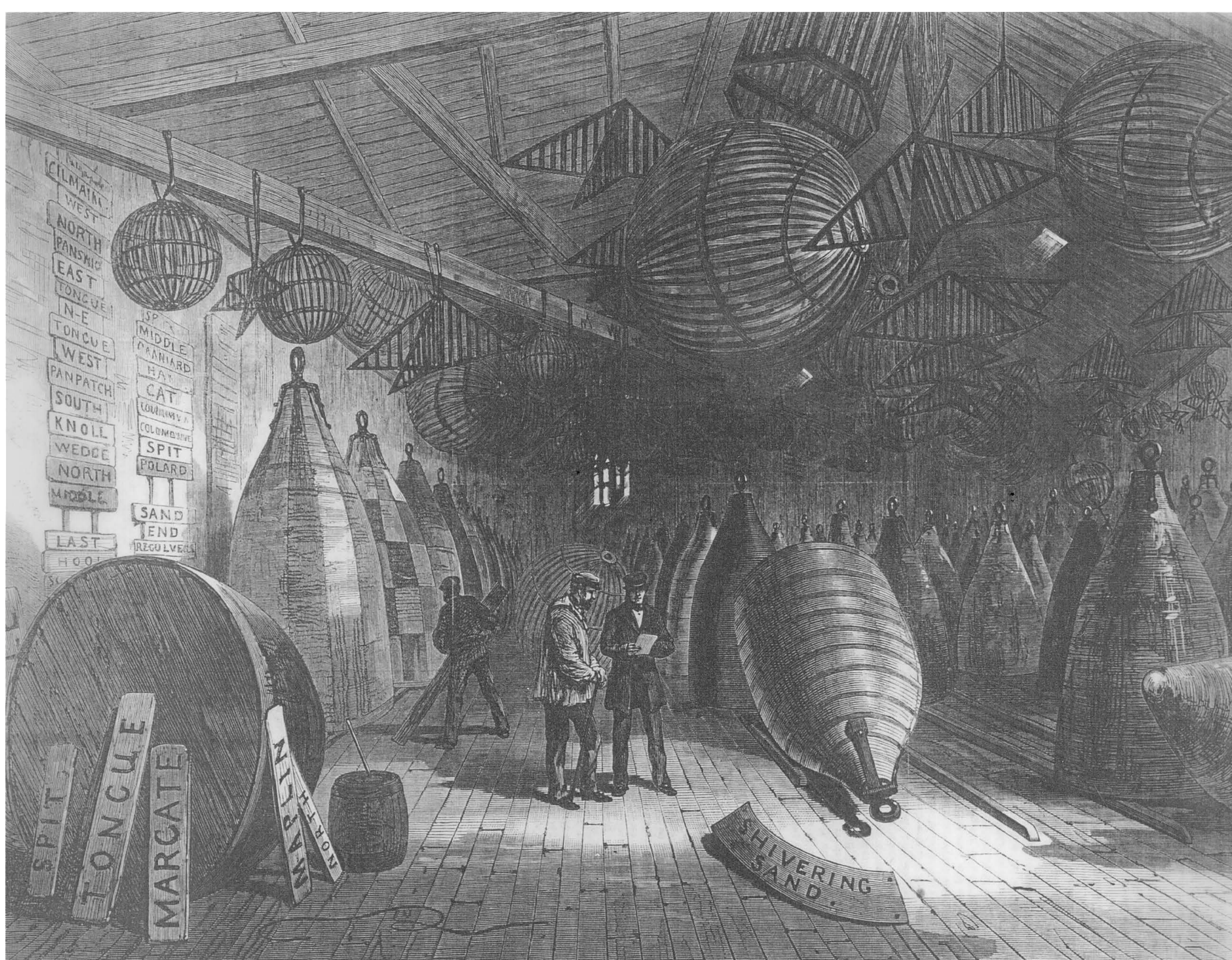
1808 – The East India Company opened a goods depot, used to store goods including pepper, sugar, saltpetre, and cotton. The buildings were known locally as the 'Pepper Warehouses'.

1812 – A road – Orchard Place – begins to be laid out east to west from Trinity Buoy Wharf to the East India Docks. Brick cottages would follow in the next decade, as well as a northward branch of the road.

1810s – Many firms began to set up close to Orchard Place including ship builders, cement works and coal refiners.

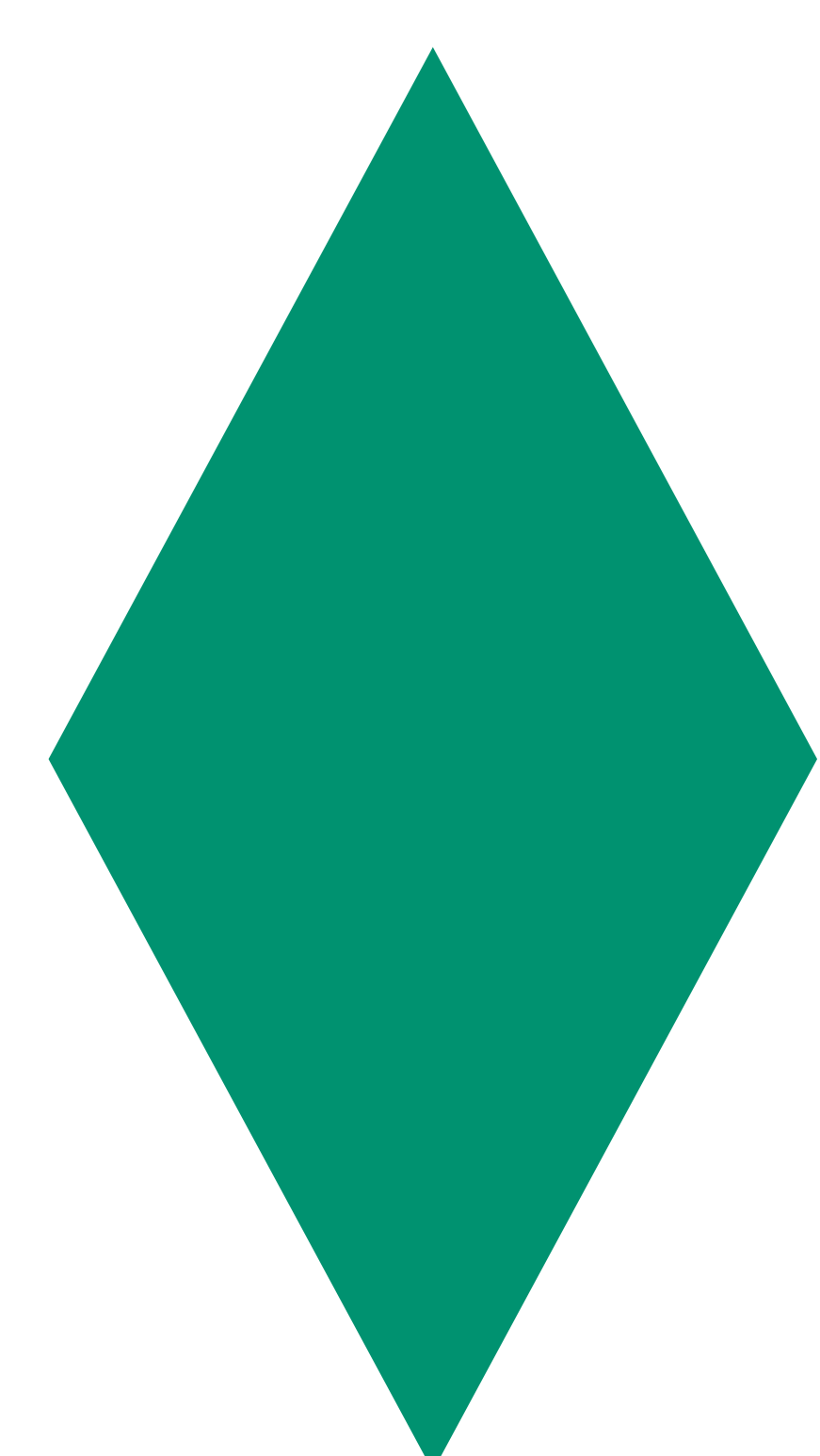
1822 – The river wall along Bow Creek was rebuilt in brick and stone, surviving to this day.

1833 – The East India Company were stripped of their trading and commercial privileges by Parliament. The pepper warehouses were sold to the East India Dock Company two years later.



Above: The East India Docks, painted by William Daniell, 1808. *Yale Center for British Art*

Left: The Buoy Store at Trinity Buoy Wharf during the nineteenth century. *Trinity Buoy Wharf*





EARLY GROWTH

1833 – The Brunswick Hotel & Tavern is built nearby, quickly gaining a reputation for ‘Whitebait Suppers’.

1835 – Thames Plate Glass Company opens at the northern end of Goodluck Hope, producing plate glass for windows, mirrors, and furnishings.

1836 – The Electrician’s Building at Trinity Buoy Wharf was built by James Walker, the Chief Engineer of Trinity House, originally used for the storage of oil.

1836 – Michael Faraday becomes scientific advisor to Trinity House, a position he will retain until his death.

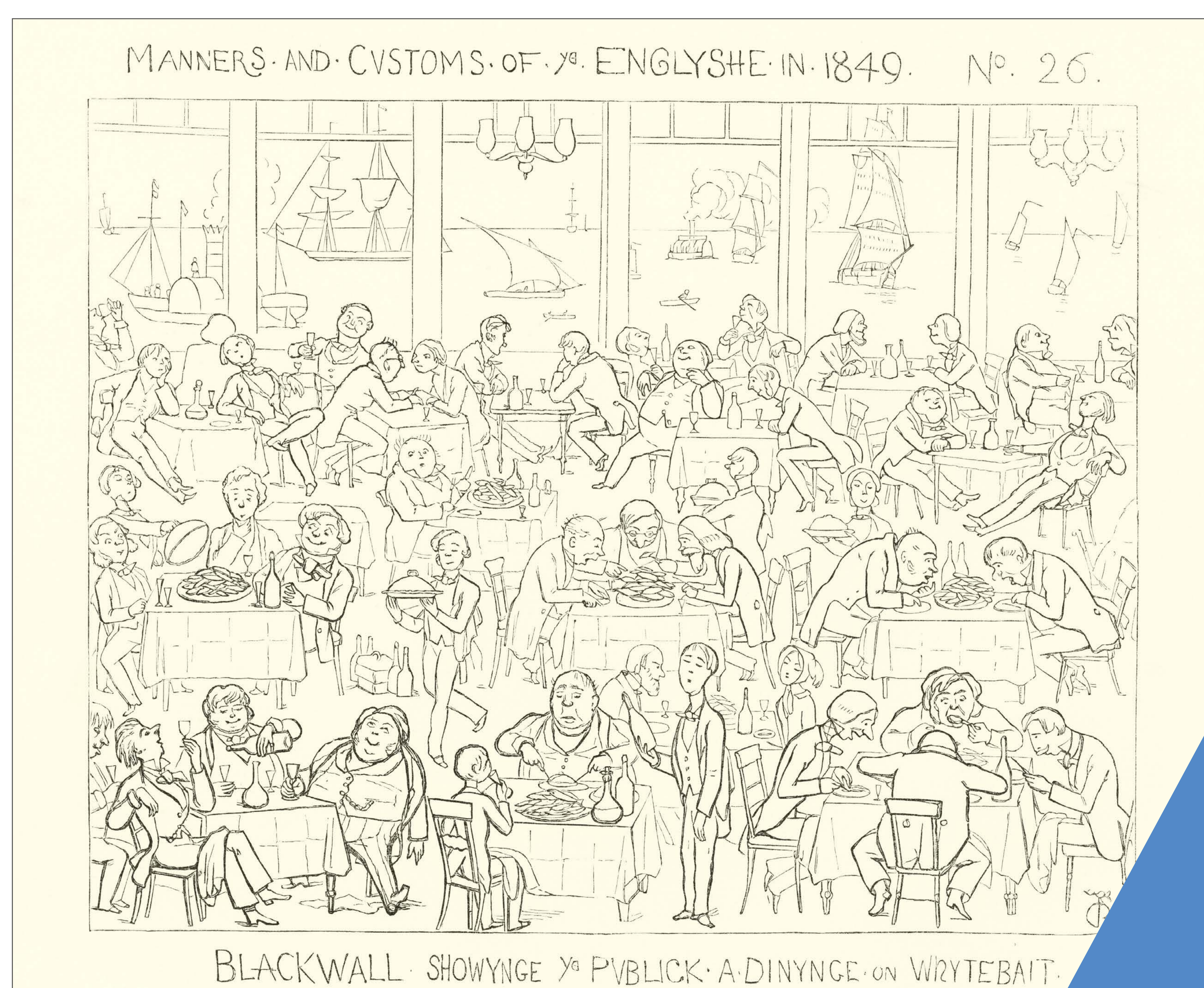
1838 – Ditchburn & Mare shipbuilders set up at Orchard Place, one of the first builders of iron ships.

1840s – Other shipbuilders including Miller & Ravenhill, Samuda Brothers and R. & H. Green set up at the peninsula. So did tar and turpentine distillers Samuel Turner & Company (later Turner Blewitt & Company).

1844 – Samuda Brothers’ first test ship, the Gipsy Queen, explodes killing nine employees and Jacob Samuda. Another explosion the following year kills three.

1846 – The pepper warehouses were purchased by the Eastern Counties Railway Company to be used as a depot. They continued to be used by railway companies until 1968.

1847 – Ditchburn and Mare renamed to CJ & Mare, who would begin setting up premises on the Essex-side of Bow Creek as well as at Orchard Place.



Above: Explosion at the Samuda Brothers’ shipyard, 1845. *Look and Learn*

Left: Whitebait dinners at the Brunswick Hotel & Tavern, 1849. *Look and Learn*



BUILDING A COMMUNITY

Late 1840s – Three cul-de-sacs were constructed westward between Orchard Place and Bow Creek. More houses, shops, pubs, and a coffee house were built.

1854 – Original lighthouse built by James Walker at Trinity Buoy Wharf.

1857 – Following financial difficulties, CJ & Mare, now with some 3000 employees, is taken over by Conservative MP for Greenwich Peter Rolt, and is renamed the Thames Ironworks and Shipbuilding Company.

1860 – Thames Ironworks launch HMS Warrior, at its time the largest warship in the world. As well as ships, over the next twenty-five years their work ranged from roofs for the Royal Aquarium and Alexandra Palace, to Blackfriars railway bridge and Hammersmith suspension bridge.

1866 – A new chain & buoy store and a second lighthouse are completed by new Engineer in Chief James Douglass, used as a venue for testing new technologies and training lighthouse keepers.

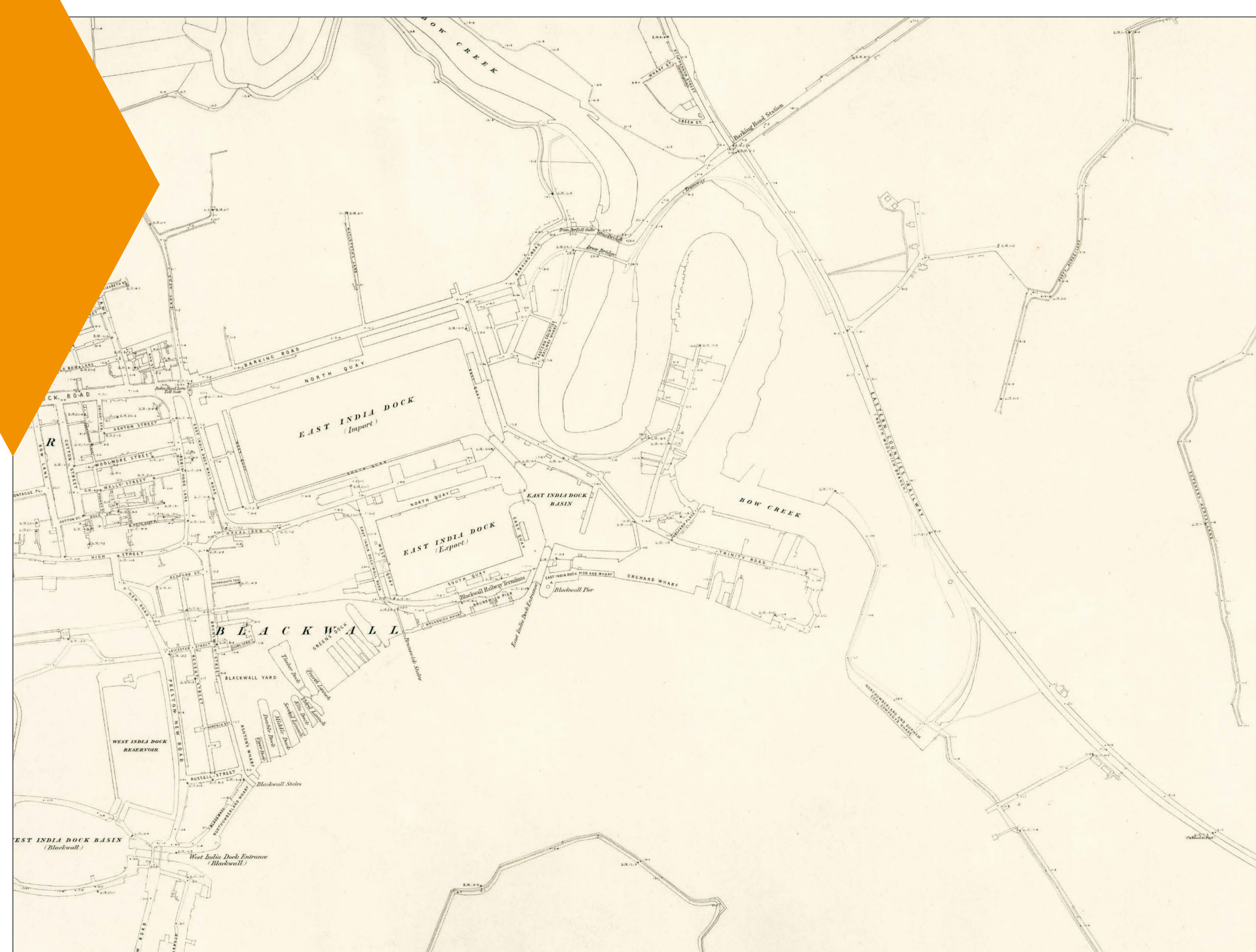
1867 – Michael Faraday dies.

1870 – Trinity House has a workforce of 28 people at Trinity Buoy Wharf.

1873 – The Brunswick Hotel & Tavern closes, re-opened the following year by New Zealand government as a depot for emigrants.

1874 – Bow Creek School opened in a converted warehouse on Duke Street.

1875 – Thames Plate Glass Company closes.



Above: Trinity Buoy Wharf, 1868. *Look and Learn*

Left: Ordnance Survey Map showing the Leamouth Peninsula, 1851. *National Library of Scotland*



STABILITY

1875 – With space at Trinity Buoy Wharf running out due to increasing workload, Trinity House were given permission to expand into the neighbouring R. & H. Green's Shipyard by the Board of Trade.

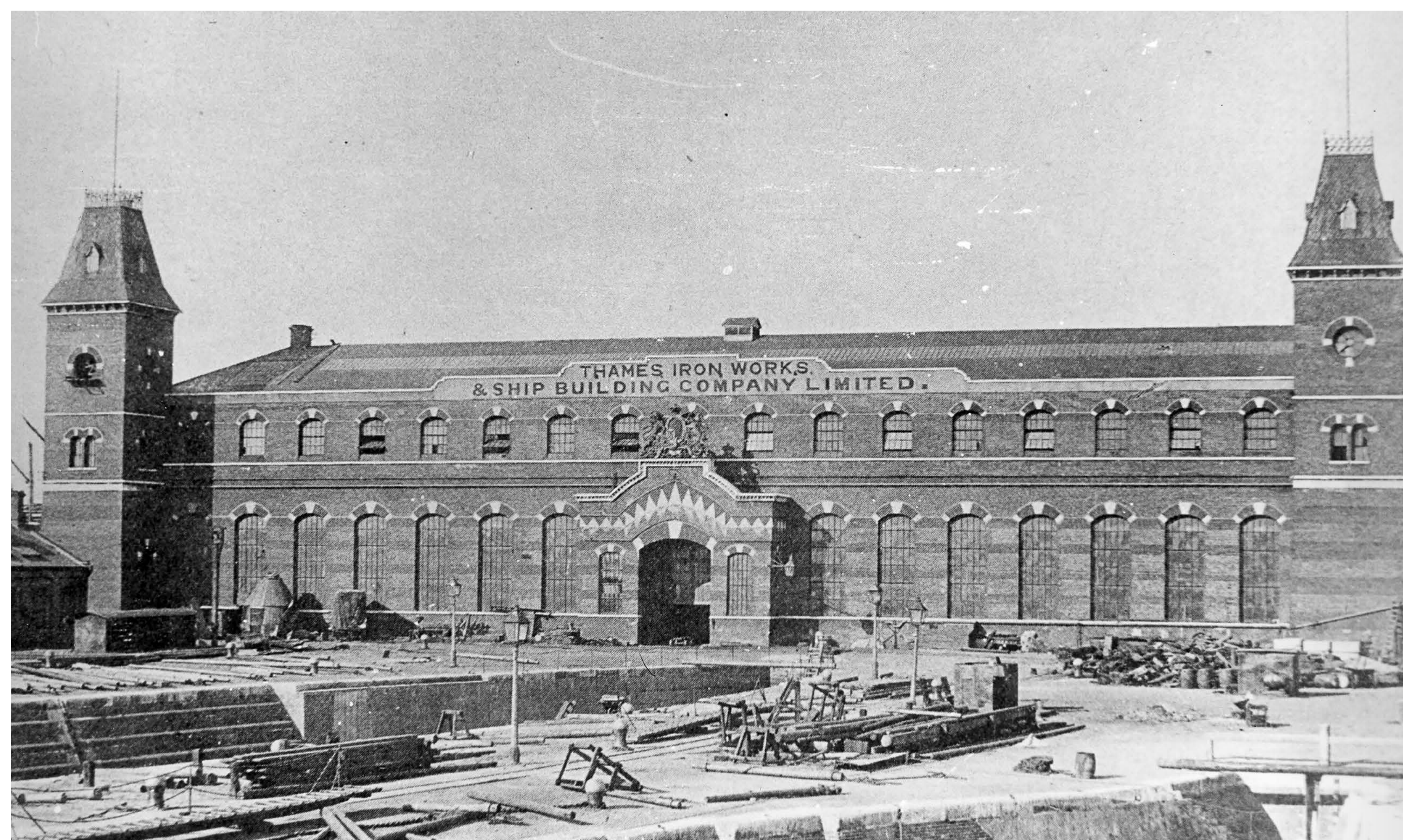
1875 – Work begins on the Proving House at Trinity Buoy Wharf, where testing took place until 1954.

1877 – The Union Lighterage Company took over the former Thames-side premises of the Thames Ironworks, staying here until 1902.

1878 – A new Superintendent's House was built at Trinity Buoy Wharf after the old house was flooded out. The new house was said to be ugly in comparison to the old one and was demolished into the 1950s.

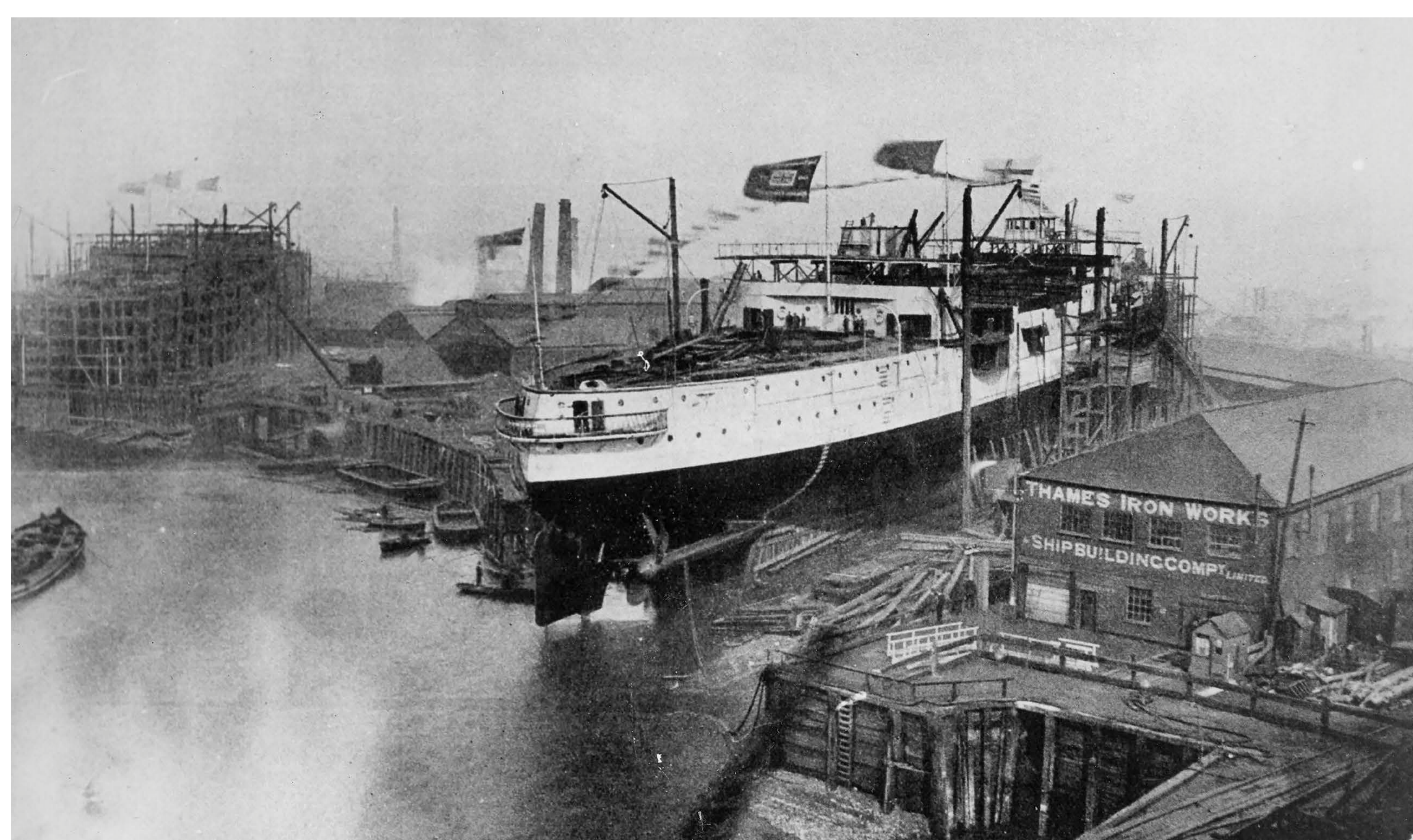
1880s – New firms came to the peninsula at this time, including a ship engine works, sugar and oil refiners, the Thames Sack & Bag Company, and the Blackwall Galvanized Iron Company manufacturing corrugated-roofing, wrought-iron baths, and umbrella stands.

1883 – The chief imports of the East India Dock were from the British Empire, Australia, and America, and comprised rice, jute, seed, wheat, meat, wool, and tallow.



Above: Unloading tea at the East India Docks, 1867. *Look and Learn*

Left: General office of the Thames Ironworks & Shipbuilding Company. *Newham Archives*



Below left: HMS Duncan, built by the Thames Ironworks, ready for launching on to Bow Creek, 1901. *Newham Archives*



CHANGE

1885 – Original buoy store demolished at Trinity Buoy Wharf.

1886 – Orchard Dry Dock opens on the site of R. & H. Green's old yard, eventually purchased by the London Graving Dock Company.

1889 – The Great Dock Strike takes place, with thousands of dockers across East London successfully striking for an increase in pay and improvement in conditions.

1890 – SS Robin, the last remaining original coastal cargo steam ship was built at Orchard Wharf.

1894 – Having outgrown their premises on Duke Street, Bow Creek School was moved to new premises on Orchard Place. The school gained a good reputation with the authorities for high educational standards.

1898 – Thames Ironworks launch HMS Albion, one of the largest warships they ever built. As it entered Bow Creek it created a large wave which destroyed a temporary wooden bridge holding spectators. Many were killed or injured.

1902 – Baldwins Ltd., take over the site of the Blackwall Galvanized Iron Company.

1903 – The Thames Ironworks leave Orchard Place, continuing operations on the Essex side of Bow Creek for nine more years.

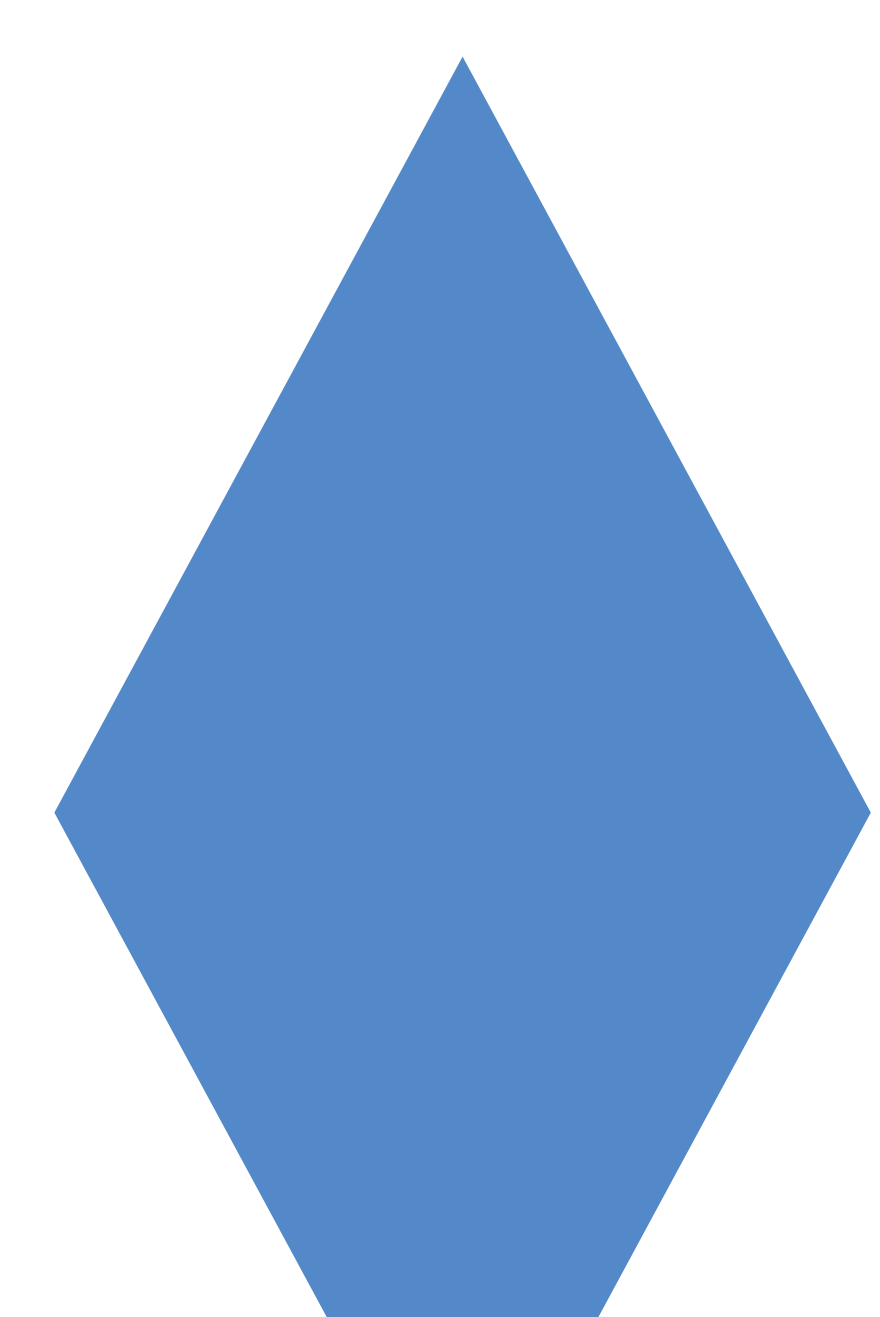
1909 – The East India Docks are taken under the control of the newly created Port of London Authority.

1910 – Approximately 150 people, including platers, riveters, carpenters, and tinsmiths, are employed maintaining buoys and light ships at Trinity Buoy Wharf.



Above: Trinity Buoy Wharf, c. 1900.
Trinity Buoy Wharf

Left: Residents of Orchard Place, 1935. *The Times / News Licensing*





DECLINE

Late 1920s – Original lighthouse at Trinity Buoy Wharf is demolished.

1928 – Significant floods laid great damage to the area, particularly to the Orchard Place community.

1935 – A devastating fire severely damages the premises of the Thames Sack & Bag Company.

1936 – Slum clearance order given to demolish most houses that had sprung up at Orchard Place. Bow Creek School was also closed.

1940 – The East India Docks used for construction of Mulberry Harbours, used in the D-Day landings.

Early 1950s – The Fitting Shop is built at Trinity Buoy Wharf. The Boiler Makers House was also built around this time, designed in the spirit of the Festival of Britain.

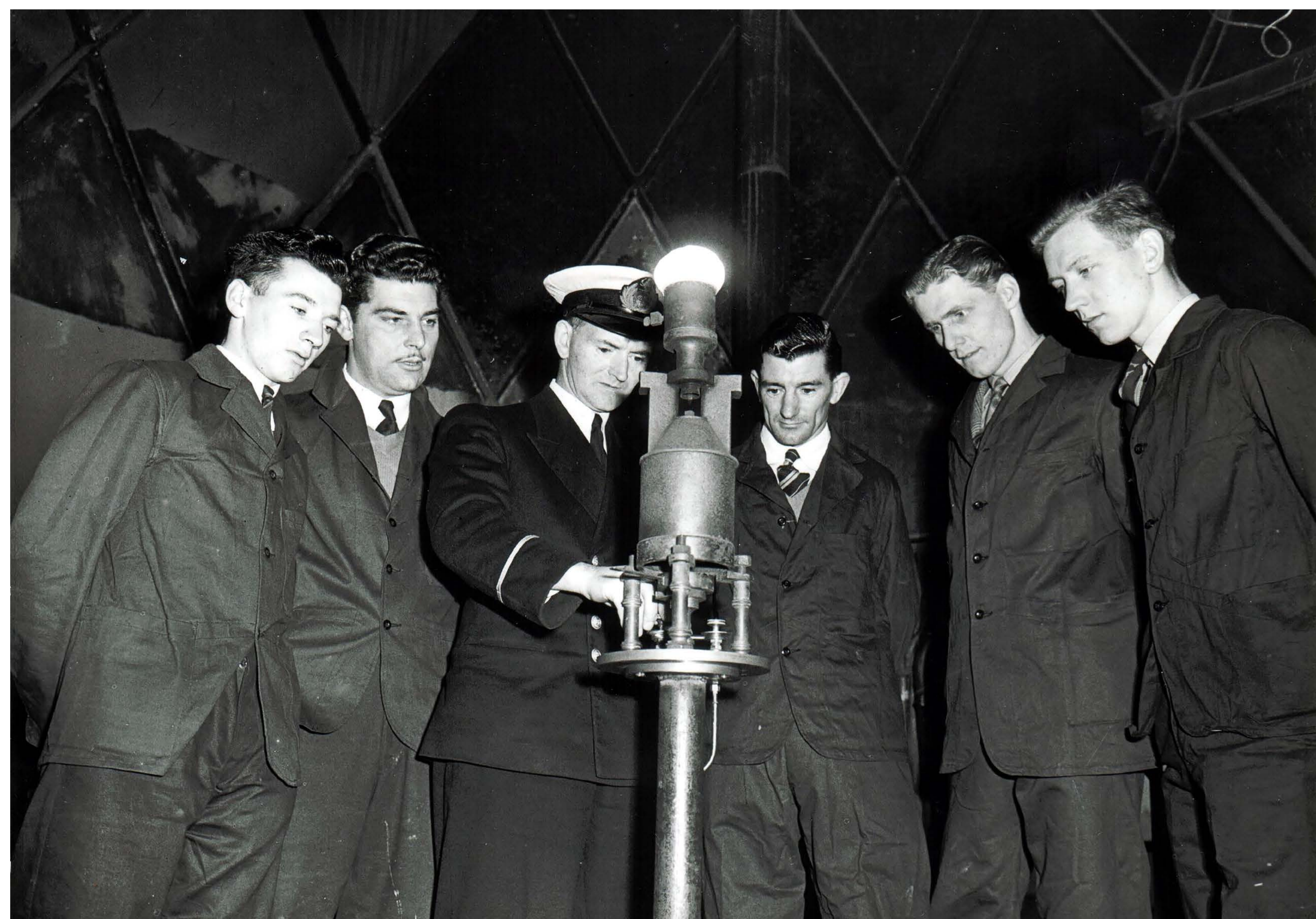
1956 – Brunswick Power Station is completed, opening in place of the former East India export dock.

1967 – East India Docks become the first of London's docks to close, with the import dock eventually filled in and the basin becoming a nature reserve.

1970 – The Orchard Dry Dock is filled in.

1984 – Brunswick Power Station decommissioned. The station had been producing less and less electricity per year following the 1973 oil crisis.

1988 – Trinity House officially close Trinity Buoy Wharf in December. The land is acquired by the London Docklands Development Corporation.



Above: Flooding at The Crown Pub, Orchard Place, 1928. *London Metropolitan Archives*

Left: Trainee lighthouse keepers watching a demonstration from Mr. G. A. Cooper at Trinity Buoy Wharf, 1950s. *Trinity Buoy Wharf*



REDEVELOPMENT

1994 – A new Docklands Light Railway branch opens stopping nearby at Blackwall, East India, and Canning Town.

1998 – The Trinity Buoy Wharf Trust is set up with a lease on the former Trinity House depot, with the freehold passed to Tower Hamlets council. Urban Space Management has a 124-year lease from the Trust, with 25% of the sites' income given to the Trust for promotion of artistic and cultural activities.

2000s – Container City is set up at Trinity Buoy Wharf between 2000 and 2005, comprising Container City 1 & 2 and the Riverside Building, providing studio and office space.

2002 – The first pier is installed at Trinity Buoy Wharf, which was enlarged in 2007 and again in 2018.

2003 – Fatboy's Diner is moved to Trinity Buoy Wharf, built in c. 1956 in Worcester, Massachusetts, USA.

2006 – Pura Foods Ltd., one of the last big industries in the area, ceases operations.

2008 – Lightship LV95 comes to Trinity Buoy Wharf. The vessel was originally built in 1939 for Trinity House. After ending service in 2003 it was won at auction and converted into a music recording studio.

2009 – Faraday School opened at Trinity Buoy Wharf.

2015 – Container City 4, Clipper House, is opened at Trinity Buoy Wharf, recycled from the 2012 Olympic Broadcasting Studios.

2016 – The new London City Island housing development opens.

2022 – Over 750 people now work on site at Trinity Buoy Wharf.

2023 – Trinity Buoy Wharf celebrates its twenty fifth anniversary.



Above: Trinity Buoy Wharf, late 1990s.
Trinity Buoy Wharf

Left: Performers at Trinity Buoy Wharf's tenth anniversary celebrations, 2008.
Trinity Buoy Wharf