

Bermondsey Street Nature Trail Guide

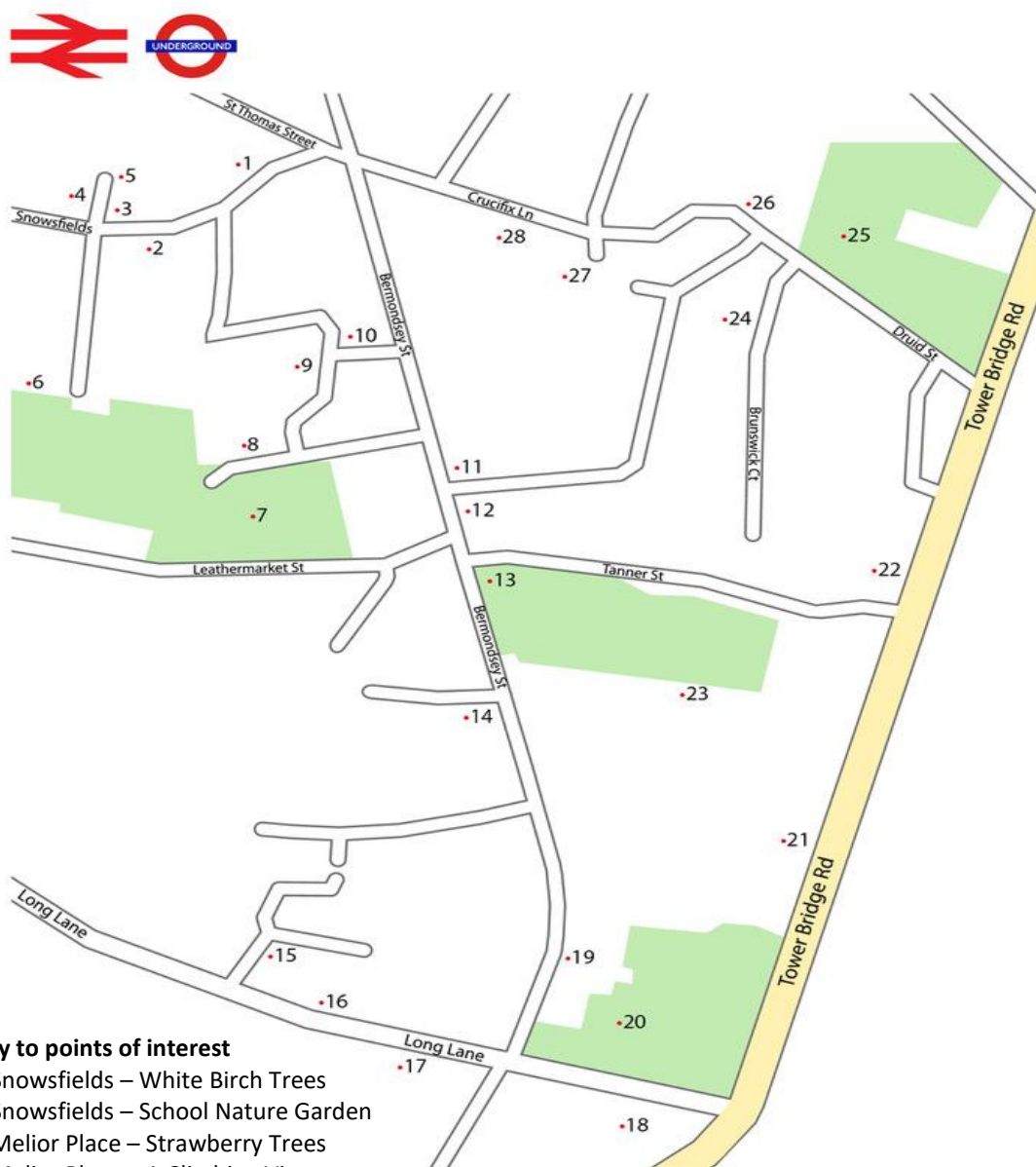
August 2019



This guide introduces you to some of the interesting nature in our otherwise very built-up and densely populated area. The walk starts and finishes on Bermondsey Street at the junction with St Thomas Street. It takes about 1-1.5 hours.

Acknowledgements – compiled by Clare Birks based on information provided by local landscape architect Jessica Beattie and Sofia Akbar (dog breeds). Local photographs by Denis Loretto.

Map of the Points of Interest included in the Trail



Key to points of interest

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Note: Wildlife and Dogs

Depending on the time of day and year, you may see city garden birds, insects and animals as you make your way round the area, and of course, dogs being walked. At the end of the guide, there are pictures to help you identify them.

The Trail begins...

Stand at the junction of Bermondsey Street and St Thomas Street, with the railway behind you. Turn slightly to your right and head off down Snowsfields.

1 Snowsfields – White Birch Trees

The name Snowsfields derives from the ownership of the land by a Mr Snow. In the 18th century, it was used as a tenter ground where cloth was hung between posts to dry, held in place by tenter hooks.



The first tree you come to, planted in the pavement is a Himalayan white birch. We'll see many more of these as we follow our trail. They are a great addition to an urban landscape as they grow rapidly and their white bark makes them crisp and elegant even in the winter when the leaves have fallen.

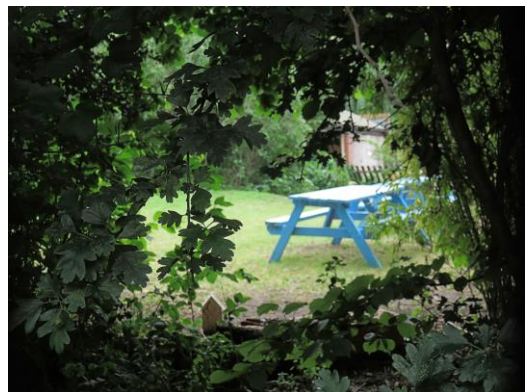
Walk on until you are outside the convenience store then turn to look across the road. Here you will find the...

2 Snowsfields School Nature Garden

This garden is maintained by the primary school and contains a pond, raised beds for planting and numerous trees.

The pond has water lilies, flag iris and sedge and is used by newts and frogs. The shrubs and planting include hawthorn, buddleia, alder, dogwood, guelder rose, holly, foxglove, comfrey, fennel, teasel, bluebells, snowdrops, crocus, daffodils and periwinkle.

The trees include a large cherry, silver birch, maple, hazel and sycamore, all native types of tree and so, good for wildlife. Pipstrelle bats may be seen flying at



dusk. You may also see grey squirrels, blackbirds, great tits and sparrows in the garden. Maple and cherry trees are two of the most common types of tree in our area, so you can expect to see more of them.

Further along Snowfields, at the junction with Melior Place, you can see...

3 Melior Place - Strawberry Trees

Strawberry trees are unusual. There are fewer than 200 in the whole of London. They have very interesting pinkish bark and produce red fruit (hence the name) and grow slowly. They are very attractive to bees. However bee-keepers prefer to avoid them as the honey produced is intensely bitter.

Look across to the other side of Melior Place and you will see...



4 Melior Place - A Climbing Vine

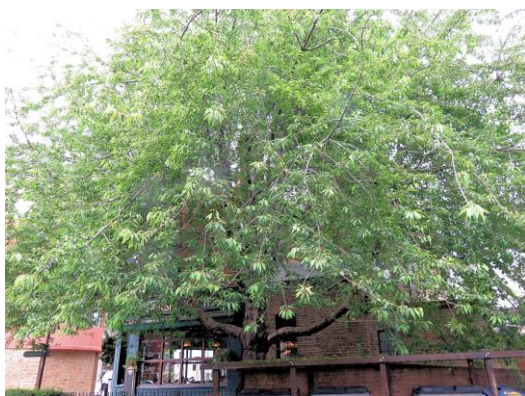


This is a member of the grape family and climbs by twining tendrils round supports. It has been growing here for nearly 30 years. When it is in full leaf in the summer it helps to keep the glass house behind cool. Sadly, the fruits are not edible.

If you look through the metal gate to the left of the vine you can see that its two trunks are growing from the ground all the way up to second storey height. At nesting time you will probably notice blackbirds flying into and out of the vine.

Look across to The Horseshoe pub and on the footpath to the right of the pub you will see...

5 Melior Place - A Native Cherry Tree



This tree has reached a stature which tells us it has been here for some time. Look at what the roots have done to the surface of the pavement. Cherry trees are shallow-rooted, typically, and so they are difficult to combine with hard surfaces as the roots push up through the surface and make it difficult to walk on.

Turn round and cross Snowfields into Kirby Grove. Walk down the graceful avenue of white birches into Leathermarket Gardens.

6 Leathermarket Gardens - Bee-friendly Planting

The gardens were laid out on the site of a tannery and warehouses that were destroyed by air raids during the Blitz of World War 2. At that time, the site was flat, and it remains a mystery what lies under the mounds at this end of the park.

Once you are in the park turn hard right and here you will find an area of bee-friendly planting including rosemary, achillea, jasmine, passionflower, hebe, sarcococca (scented even in February!), wallflowers, flowering currant bushes, dwarf apple trees, edible currants, clematis and sweet box as well as other shrubs and planting. All these plants



have been selected so that collectively they produce a continuous supply of nectar spring to autumn for honey bees. You can find out more information about which plants are good for honey bees here www.bbka.org.uk/gardening-for-bees

Bermondsey Street Bees, a local specialist honey business, instigated the project to introduce bee-friendly planting here and in other local parks and gardens. London has the densest population of hives in Europe and is facing a forage crisis which affects all pollinators. Bee-friendly planting is essential not just for honey bees but also for wild bees and other pollinators.

Bear left past the village hall, and on your right you'll see a Lombardy poplar tree (below left), native to Europe. They are pioneer trees which grow quickly in difficult conditions. Follow the winding path through the shrubbery and you will see to the left of the circular rose bed, two horse chestnut trees and to the right, a magnificent evergreen magnolia tree (below right) opposite Leathermarket Court.



Continue past the circular rose bed and the tall shrubbery, down the slope to the formal rose garden, the parterre.

7 Leathermarket Gardens - The Parterre



The layout of the rose garden on the parterre follows a traditional geometric design. The low box hedges are intended to distract from the unsightly bare stems of the rose plants when the roses are not in leaf. When the roses are in flower there are blooms of almost every colour.

Turn back and retrace your steps and leave the park into Tyers Gate. Walk towards the orange building (the Fashion and Textile Museum).

8 Tyers Gate - Flowering Pear Trees

In the pavement, there are several flowering pear trees. These are quite delicate-looking and help to soften the contours of the street, as do the well-established evergreen shrubs between the block of flats and the pavement. The pear trees bear no fruit, and so work well in areas where people walk, as here on the pavement.



At the end of the block of flats, turn left into the estate and head diagonally over towards the line of wooden buildings. There you will see round the community sculpture, The Shared...

9 Tyers Estate - Planting round The Shared

There is a stand of mature plane trees nearby complemented by beds of ferns and other shade-loving plants, such as grasses and euphorbia.

Continue along the cobbled street towards the arch and you will see...



10 Carmarthen Place - Trailing Ivy



Ivy and other trailing plants cascade over the top of a brick wall at the side of a garden and provide a lovely habitat for small birds and insects.

Walk under the arch and out into Bermondsey Street. Turn right and walk south (away from the railway viaduct) and you'll see some small trees on the pavements...

11 Bermondsey Street – White's Grounds Estate

In the pavement, there are privet trees, excellent in a constrained urban environment as they are compact and evergreen. They were planted about 20 years ago. The privet outside the estate agent opposite is a golden privet with a variegated leaf.

Carry on south down Bermondsey Street until you come on the left to...

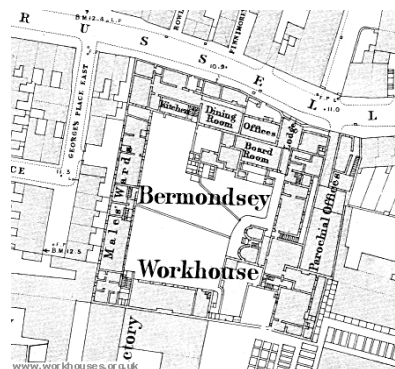


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13 Tanner Street Park

The park was created in the 1920s by the demolition of the old Bermondsey Workhouse (1791 – 1925) and houses. This area had originally belonged to Bermondsey Abbey, and later, the site was used as a tannery. The street labelled Russell Street in the map is now Tanner Street.



The park opened in 1929, with space for cricket, tennis and football. Other facilities included a Tudor-style shelter with caretaker's office and changing rooms. There are still tennis courts, but no longer space for football or cricket.



There is a handkerchief tree (above left), pine tree and Turkish hazel with catkins in the spring, a recently-planted maple and tree of heaven on the right of the path (above right).



We have a horse-chestnut tree on the left of the path (above left). In the grass on the right of the path, there is a pair of tulip trees, named for the shape of the leaf (above centre). The hedgerow on the southern boundary, consists of hawthorn, hazel, rowan and cherry and is well used by birds, particularly great tits. We are proud to have an Eastern Redbud tree (above right) on the Tanner Street boundary to the north, one of only ten in London.

Leave the park and continue southwards a little further along Bermondsey St. You will see at the junction with Lamb Walk...



14 Bermondsey Street – Holm Oak Tree

In the forecourt of the White Cube Gallery is a recently planted holm oak tree. The holm oak is both broad-leaved and evergreen and is much favoured as an urban tree.

The White Cube art gallery is open to the public, free.

Carry on down Bermondsey Street and turn right into the alley by South Point Suites (number 194). At the far end you will see a gate. Walk through it and bear right behind a building. This tortuous route will bring you out into the yard of

15 Blue Lion Place

Here there is a lot to see. First note how the white perimeter wall has been planted with a variety of climbing greenery which makes the space feel more relaxed.



Turn round and look up at the balconies (left). You can see one of them has been heavily planted with shrubs that stay green all winter. As with the climbing plants against the white-washed walls, this helps to soften the impression of this industrial building.

Continue round to the south of the building. There is a bed with lots of ground cover, shrubs and a tree (right), ideal for small birds.



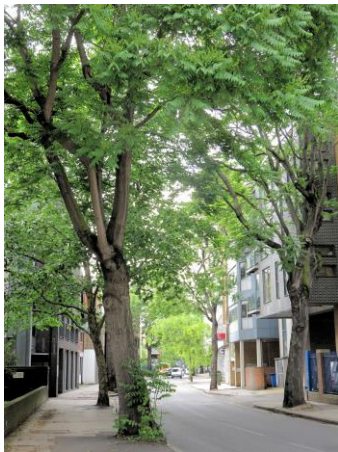
Look along the front of the building and you can see some tall narrow cherry trees and impressive shrubs (left).

Swing round and you can't miss two wonderful plane trees, so wonderful that they are the subject of a tree preservation order. Plane trees account for more than 10% of all the trees in our area. They are a very beneficial addition to the urban landscape as they resist pollution, are great for wildlife and are very long-lived. You will probably spot a grey squirrel or two skittering up and down the enormous tree trunks.



Exit through the blue gate to Long Lane and look for the...

16 Long Lane – Trees of Heaven (Ailanthus)



These are laid out in what was at one time clearly an elegant avenue effect. Sadly, some trees have disappeared leaving gaps and some gaps have been filled with other types of tree eg London plane, so it no longer looks as striking as originally intended.

Turn left and walk along Long Lane. Outside the Barrow, Hepburn and Gale building, cross the road and you will find ...

17 Long Lane - Honey Locust Tree

In the pavement is a tree with enormous bean pods in autumn. This is a Honey Locust tree, native to North American/Asia.

Carry on walking east on Long Lane past the junction with Bermondsey Street and you will see Bermondsey Square open up on your right with some planters...



18 Bermondsey Square



The entrance to Bermondsey Square is marked by a number of olive trees in pots. The reason the trees have to be in pots is to protect the archaeological remains underground from damage by tree roots. The archaeological remains are what is left of the medieval Bermondsey Abbey. The abbey was destroyed in the 16th century and its remains are now designated as an Ancient Monument.

Retrace your steps out of the square, cross the road by the crossing and turn left and then right into Bermondsey Street. Admire the two privet trees planted in the pavement near the church. Take a closer look at the church...

19 Bermondsey Street - St Mary Magdalen church entrance

Here in the sheltered yard is a mature fig tree (below left) and a tall cotoneaster shrub (below right) at the rear which has red berries in winter.



Retrace your steps back down the street towards the narrow entrance to ...

20 Bermondsey Street - St Mary Magdalen Churchyard

The churchyard was closed by order of Council in 1845 and has been a public park since 1883. The gateway and street are shaded by a large bay tree and a yew, traditional in English church yards (below left). Turn into the churchyard and walk past the interesting sycamore stump (below right).



To your left are two mature plane trees (below left) and two ginkgo trees (below right).



Also of interest is a Weeping Ash (below left). Cross the churchyard diagonally by the path and you'll see along the boundary another area of bee-friendly planting, master-minded by Bermondsey Street Bees (below right). The plants include hebe, rosemary and St John's wort.



Exit to Tower Bridge Road. Here you will see...

21 Tower Bridge Road - Avenue of London Plane Trees

When the road was built 1895 – 1908 to carry traffic to and from the recently opened Tower Bridge, the designer wanted it to be an impressive boulevard. An avenue of plane trees was planted which are now well grown. They impart a sense of graciousness despite the frequent traffic jams at ground level.



Continue north along Tower Bridge Road (towards the railway viaduct) until you reach Tanner Street and look across at the area of wide pavement...

22 Tower Bridge Road - Cherry Trees



There are two lines of cherry trees planted when the old Sarson's Vinegar factory on this site was redeveloped 20 years ago into offices and flats. The trees are lit after dark and look very beautiful. Turn left into Tanner St and continue until you can turn into Tanner St Park on the left.

23 Tanner Street Park (again)

Walk into the park and past the children's play area. Outside the Pique Nique restaurant, in the far left corner, there are cultivated beds with an interesting mix of flowers and vegetables.



Leave the park by the same entrance you came in and cross Tanner Street into Brunswick Court....

24 Brunswick Court House Gardens



Some of the residents in this street have taken a lot of care with their gardens and planting. There is a sweet row of square wooden planters in the form and colours of the London and



Brighton railway line which used to terminate at London Bridge station. You can see olive trees in pots (which bear fruit in the autumn), roses, a luxuriant camellia which flowers in February and jasmine in the early summer (above right).

Continue north towards the railway viaduct. There are several buddleia bushes (much beloved by butterflies and bees) growing out of the brickwork of the viaduct. Buddleias are very common on railway embankments and abandoned buildings and in the countryside are classed as an invasive species.

Continue under the railway viaduct and across Druid Street into...

25 Druid Street - St John's Horsleydown Churchyard



Stop in the churchyard where the path forks. There are towering plane trees (to your left) and horse chestnut trees (to your right) which were planted over 200 years ago. The churchyard has been improved several times in the last 20 years with additional planting. The gardens are now largely grass, with some island flower beds. On the far right, there is a

parade of cherry trees which blossom extravagantly in February/March. The central bed is a rainwater garden.

Leave the churchyard by the same entrance you came in and turn right. Where the road bends to the left under the railway line, you'll see on your right, the...

26 Druid Street - Wildflower Meadow

This was planted by Team London Bridge (our local Business Improvement District) as one of their greening projects. In the spring it is a sea of blossom. The trees are unusual for this area. On the corner is a eucalyptus and in the centre a cedar (right).



There are also two magnolias, two crab apples and a recently planted swamp cypress (pictured on the left). It is a very adaptable tree, most famously associated with the mangrove swamps in the south eastern states of America.

Cross over Druid Street and walk under the railway line. Turn left into White's Grounds Estate. Nestled in amongst the residential blocks you will find ...

27 White's Grounds Estate Community Garden

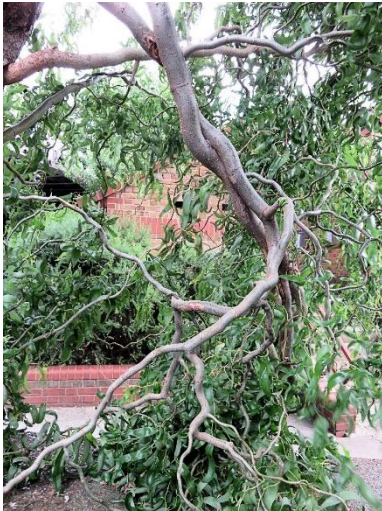
The estate was once the site of the Black Eagle brewery. Shrubs have been used to screen exposed areas of buildings. The large internal courtyard has been planted and raised beds set up, producing salads, vegetables and flowers for insects and bees, including lavender, sage, fennel and mint. The grass has been replaced with colourful borders, planting and fruit trees. The plants have been selected to be tolerant to heat and drought, for example, agave.



The transformation was kick-started in 2014 when Alan Titchmarsh donated 1100 plants used in his Chelsea Flower Show garden. A further donation came in 2017 from the RHS Chatsworth Flower Show courtesy of luxury travel brand Belmond.

Leave the estate the way you came in and turn left. At the corner of the next vehicle entrance, to The Tanneries, before Chapter House, you will see a stunning tree....

28 Crucifix Lane - Dragon's Claw Willow



This is a very unusual tree which looks as if it may have self-seeded here at the edge of the tarmac. It has a small bird box attached high up the trunk.

Walk on until you come to Bermondsey St, where we began the walk. We hope you have enjoyed the nature trail. Do try it again at another season - it will be a quite different experience. If you have any comments or suggestions, you can contact us on hello@bermondseystreet.london.

Wildlife Identifier

Birds

Blackbird



Pigeon (Rock Dove)



Wren



Crow



Robin



Animals

Dunnoch



Seagull



Fox



Goldfinch



Grey squirrel



Great Tit



Sparrow



Mouse



Magpie



Starling



Butterflies

Common Blue



Large White



Red Admiral



Painted Lady



Tortoiseshell



Other Insects

Ant



Aphid



Beetle



Bumble Bee



Cricket



Earwig



Fly



Honey Bee



Ladybird



Slug



Snail



Spider



Wasp



Wood Louse



Worm



Dog Identifier

Bichon Frise



Bull Terrier



Fox Terrier



Border Collie



Chihuahua



French Bulldog



Dachshund



German Shepherd



Border Terrier



Dalmation



British Bulldog



Doberman



Golden Retriever



Greyhound



Pekingese



Schnauzer



Pointer



Shar-Pei



Husky



Poodle



West Highland Terrier



Irish Setter



Yorkshire Terrier



Pug



Labrador

