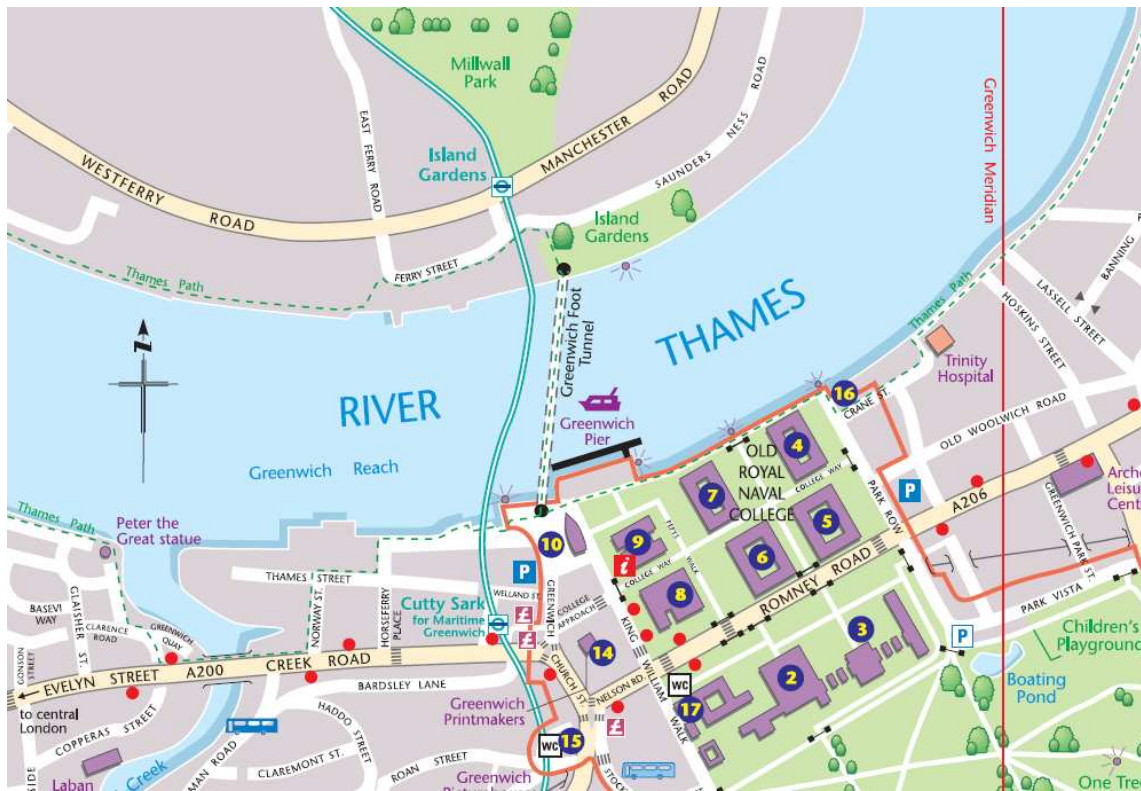




Royal Borough of Greenwich Thames Foot Tunnel



The Foot Tunnel entrance

The Greenwich Foot Tunnel runs under the River Thames between Cutty Sark Gardens and Island Gardens, on the Isle of Dogs. It is 1,217 feet in length and approx 50 feet deep. Its original purpose was to allow south London residents to work in the docks on the Isle of Dogs. It was designed by Sir Alexander Binnie and was opened on 4 August 1902 at a cost of £127,000. The tunnel is lined with 200,000 glazed white tiles.

The circular entrance buildings are similar both sides of the river and contain a lift and a long spiral flight of stairs. It is open 24 hours a day, although the lifts do not always run the full time.

The Woolwich Foot Tunnel, situated about three miles downstream and opened ten years later, is very similar.



Inside the Foot Tunnel

Design and construction

The tunnel was designed by civil engineer Sir Alexander Binnie for London County Council, and was constructed by contractor John Cochrane & Co; the project started in June 1899 and the tunnel was opened on 4 August 1902. The tunnel replaced an expensive and sometimes unreliable ferry service, and was intended to allow workers living on the south side of the Thames to reach their workplaces in the London docks and shipyards then situated in or near the Isle of Dogs. Its creation owed much to the efforts of working-class politician Will Crooks who had worked in the docks and, after chairing the LCC's Bridges Committee responsible for the tunnel, would later serve as Labour MP for nearby Woolwich.

The entrance shafts at both ends lie beneath glazed domes, with lifts (installed in 1904, upgraded in 1992) and helical staircases allowing pedestrians to reach the sloping, tile-lined tunnel at the bottom. The cast-iron tunnel itself is 1,215 feet (370.2 m) long and 50 feet (15.2 m) deep^[3] and has an internal diameter of about 9 feet (2.74 m). Its cast-iron rings are lined with concrete which has been surfaced with some 200,000 white glazed tiles. The northern end was damaged by bombs during World War II and the repairs included a thick steel and concrete inner lining that reduces the diameter substantially for a short distance.