

# **Housing the Workers**

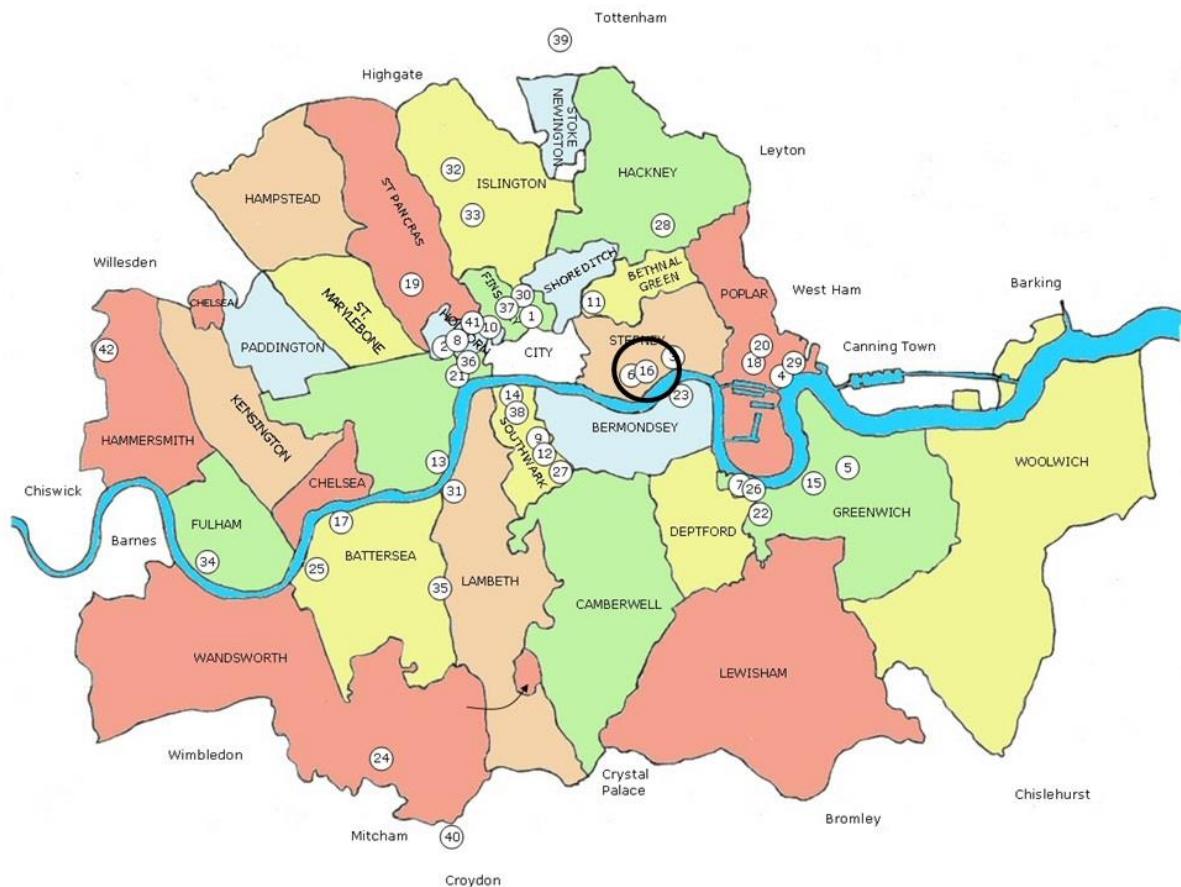
## **Early London County Council Housing**

### **1889-1914**

**Martin Stilwell**  
**August 2015**

#### **Part 3 – the schemes in detail**

##### **16 – Cable Street, Shadwell**



## **Cable Street, Shadwell scheme, Limehouse (eastern section)**

## Lowood and Chancery Buildings, 1901 Built under the 1882 Artizans' Dwellings Act

This development in Shadwell was the second phase of the Cable Street scheme and covered the eastern section of the site as shown in Fig. 1 below.

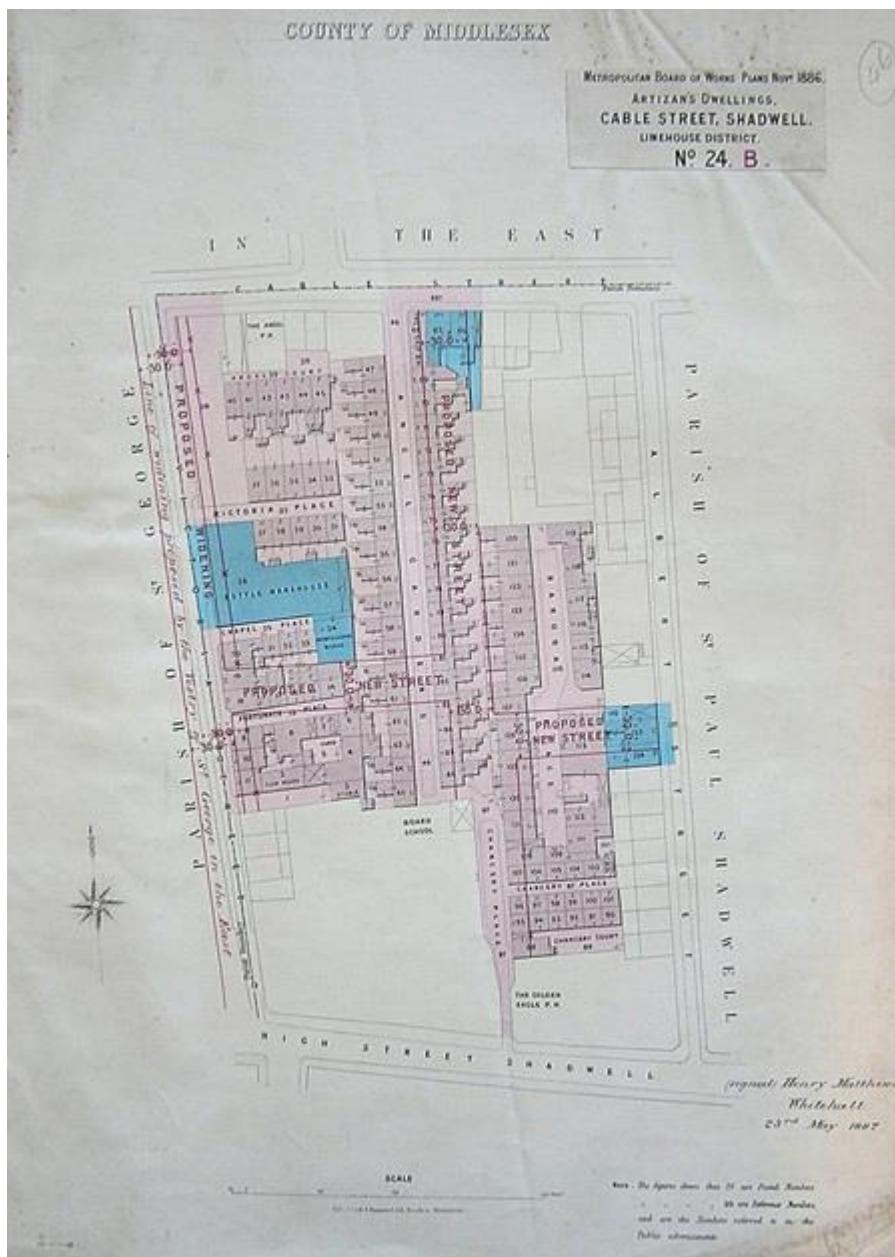


Fig. 1: Cable Street development area (LMA ref: MBW/2646)

For the history of the clearance of the Cable Street site and the construction of the Dellow and Bewley Buildings, see the earlier section for Cable Street, Shadwell, Phase 1.

This section covers the construction of Lowood and Chancery Buildings on what were known as Plots B and C on the site. The plan in Fig. 2 below shows the location of the sites in respect to the original plan above. Plot A was used for Dellow and Bewley Buildings which were completed in March 1896.

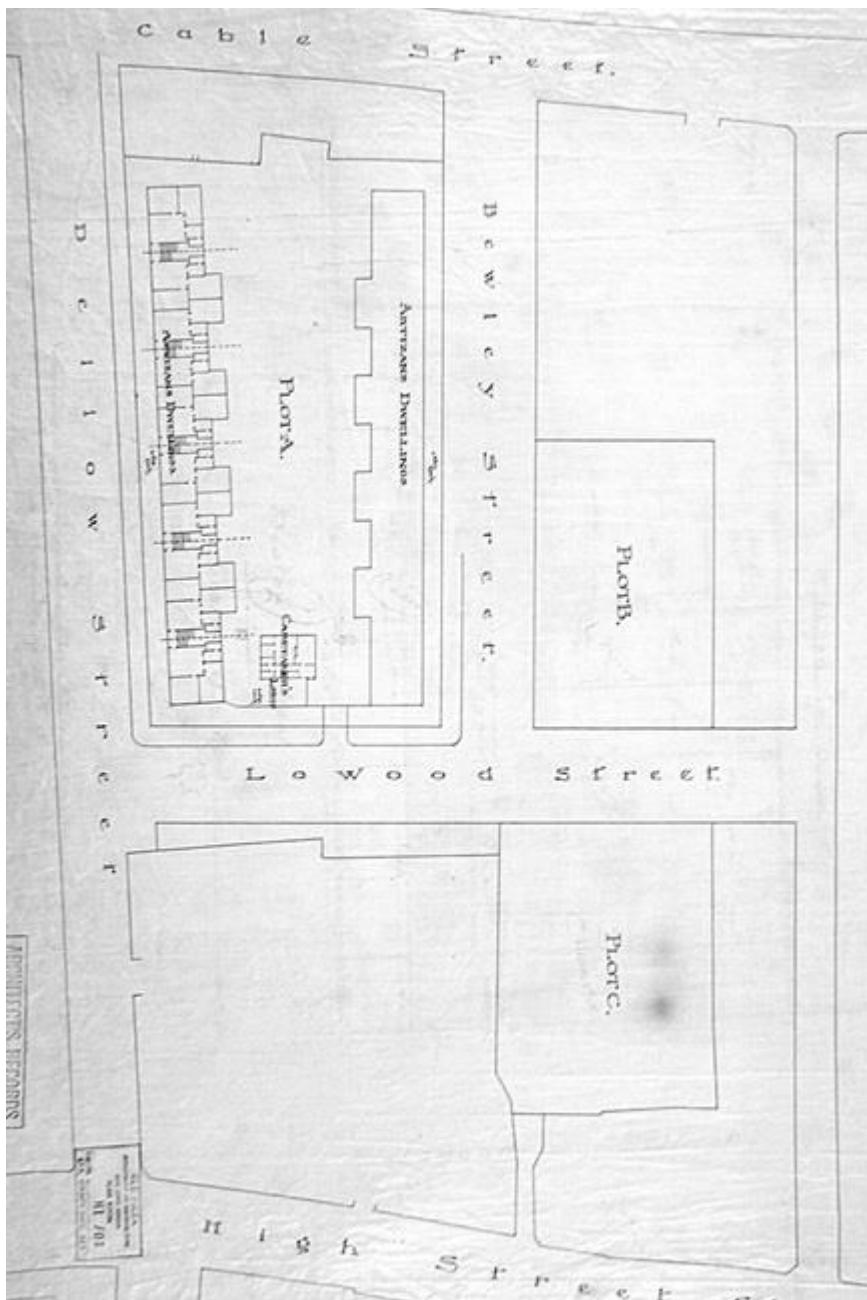


Fig. 2: Plots B (Lowood) and C (Chancery). Note Dellow & Bewley Buildings already in plot A  
(LMA ref: LCC/AR/HS/3/46)

The floor plan of Lowood Buildings below (Chancery Buildings was almost identical) shows a very straightforward design. The sculleries are of a useful size and of squarer dimensions than in many designs. It is interesting to note that the plan is showing 5 tenements, with the left-hand one being one-roomed. This illustrates the simplicity that can be achieved with a site of suitable size and dimensions.

The resulting buildings were typical 5-storey blocks with front-facing external balconies. The earlier two blocks, Dellow and Bewley Buildings, had internal landings and small rear balconies.

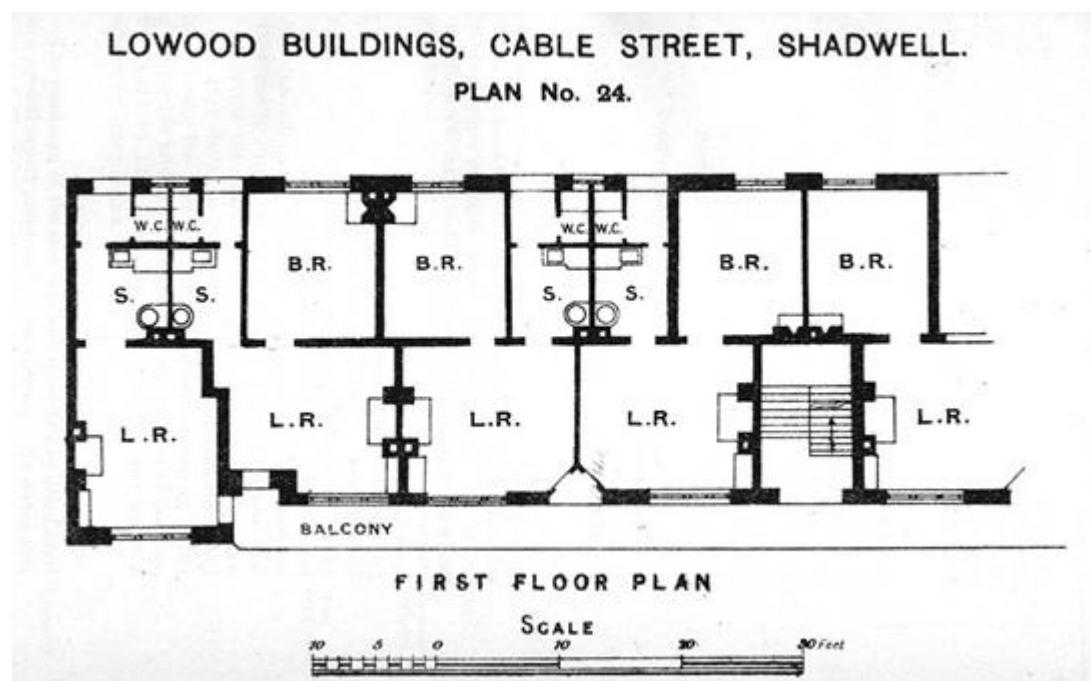


Fig. 3: Lowood Buildings floor plan<sup>i</sup>

The two buildings housed 276 persons in one and two-roomed tenements. Added to the 522 for Dellow and Bewley Buildings, this gives a useful capacity of 798 persons.

The costs for Lowood and Chancery Buildings cannot be easily separated from those for Dellow and Bewley Buildings and so the cost of the whole scheme is in Table 1 below. The resulting £109 per person is a good average for the period and area.

|  | Outgoings | Income |             |
|--|-----------|--------|-------------|
| Cost of property                       | £46,390   |        |             |
| Street improvements                    | £4,831    |        |             |
| Sale of materials                      |           | £1,436 |             |
| Sale of land surplus land              |           | £330   |             |
| Cost of constructing all 4 buildings   | £37,592   |        |             |
| NET COST                               |           |        | £87,047     |
| Cost per person (based on 798 persons) |           |        | £109pp      |
| Balance of accounts, 1913-1914         | £2,721    | £2,914 | £193 (6.6%) |

Table 1: Costs for the construction of Dellow, Bewley, Lowood and Chancery Buildings

The 1911 census returns indicate a typical occupancy for the time with only 2 tenements of the 80 unoccupied. The proximity to the Thames is highlighted by 13 tenements being occupied by dock labourers or lightermen. More satisfactorily, the buildings do seem to have suited the needs of the locals as 47 are occupied by heads of household born in the east end or the City of London. The occupations recorded are mainly various types of manual jobs with a few

exceptions such as four Police Constables and an insurance agent. With the two buildings made up entirely of 1 and 2-roomed tenements it is not surprising to find overcrowding is a problem, with 13 tenements in that state. The total occupancy of the two buildings was 86% against the theoretical maximum compared to Bewley and Dellow Buildings which had an occupancy of 75%.

Along with Dellow and Bewley Buildings, Lowood and Chancery Buildings still stand but are showing all the signs of stress and lack of resident's pride. Lowood and Chancery differ noticeably from the earlier two blocks in that they have front balconies. Normally, buildings with front balconies are more popular with residents as they give a feeling of openness and enable the walkways to be used for plants. However, the current residents seem to be keener to display their washing as can be seen from the photographs below. Hanging washing out like this would not have been tolerated in the early days of the LCC.



Fig. 4: Lowood House, front, 2009



Fig. 5: Chancery House, rear, 2009

## Footnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> C. J. Stewart; The Housing Question in London; The London County Council 1900; p184