

ILLUMINATED RIVER

Four Bridge Walking Route

Visitor Information Pack

Millennium Bridge



Owner: Bridge House Estates

Completed: 2000

Designer: Arup Group, Foster + Partners and Sir Anthony Caro

Millennium Bridge was London's first new pedestrian bridge for over a century. The design was chosen through open competition and was won by Foster & Partners and Sir Anthony Caro with Arup. The bridge is an unusually shallow stressed cable suspension bridge, specifically designed to provide spectacular views of St Paul's Cathedral and Tate Modern. The bridge was dedicated by Queen Elizabeth II and originally opened in 2000. The sheer volume of pedestrian traffic on the bridge on opening days (90,000 people) caused an unexpected swaying motion, causing it to be nicknamed 'The Wobbly Bridge'.

This problem was fixed by the retrofitting of 37 fluid-viscous (energy dissipating) dampers to control horizontal movement and 52 tuned mass (inertial) dampers to control vertical movement. The bridge was reopened in 2002 and has not been subject to significant vibration since.

Inspired by Sir Norman Foster's love of superhero Flash Gordon, the architect's original lighting scheme was designed to incorporate a 'blade of light'. Alas this was not successfully realised at the time. For Illuminated River, Leo Villareal consulted Fosters & Partners so that he could reference the original lighting concept in his artwork for Millennium Bridge.

Artist Ben Wilson can often be found painting miniature works of art on discarded chewing gum on the walkways. If you look closely at the grooves of Millennium Bridge, you can discover up to 400 works of art.

Artist's Vision

Illuminated River's pulse of light mirrors the movements of people crossing the bridge, highlighting their faces and casting silhouettes that enhance the bridge structure, while preserving the inky darkness of the Thames below.

Southwark Bridge



Owner: Bridge House Estates
Completed: 1921
Designer: Sir Ernest George / Basil Mott
Heritage Status: Grade II

The original Southwark Bridge (formerly known as Queen Street Bridge) designed by John Rennie was completed in 1819. Its official opening was held at midnight to publicise a striking innovation: lighting provided by 30 gas lamps. The bridge was the largest cast iron structure of its era, but it was underused and lacked the strength to carry heavy goods vehicles.

Bridge House Estates bought the structure from the failing Southwark Bridge Company in 1866 and eventually demolished it in 1913. The new bridge, designed by architect Sir Ernest George and engineer Basil Mott, opened in 1921 after significant construction delays during the First World War. Unlike London and Blackfriars Bridges, Southwark Bridge does not have silver dragons to mark the city boundary on the southern bank of the Thames, as its construction was privately financed.

The bridge consists of cast iron arches with abutments and balustrades of grey granite and is painted green and yellow, with sentry-box like structures on the turreted pier headings. The arches and piers are directly aligned with those on the west side of Blackfriars Bridge to ease the flow of the river, reducing the risk of crosscurrents.

Below the bridge on the south landing you can still see some old steps that were once used by the Thames watermen as a landing dock to moor their boats and wait for customers. Before there were many bridges to cross the Thames these watermen provided the main form of transport across the river.

On the north bank of Southwark Bridge runs a pedestrian tunnel with a wall mural that depicts scenes of the Thames frost fairs. In several winters between the 17th and early 19th centuries (known as 'the Little Ice Age'), the Thames froze over giving Londoners the opportunity to set up festivals with food stalls, shops, sporting events and even temporary pubs on ice. The piers of London Bridge were spaced so tightly together that they disrupted the flow of the river and allowed the Thames to freeze over.

Artist's Vision

Drawing inspiration from the colour palettes of the Impressionist masters, the bridge's illumination continues, with slightly more saturation, the colours used on Cannon Street Bridge.

Cannon Street Railway Bridge



Owner: Network Rail

Completed: 1866

Designer: Sir John Hawkshaw

Nothing whatsoever to do with artillery, Cannon Street got its name as a shortening of the Middle English 'candelwrichstrete' which means 'street of candle makers,' first mentioned in the 12th century. The street sits within the Ward of Candlewick, one of 25 ancient subdivisions of the City of London.

Cannon Street Bridge, designed by Sir John Hawkshaw and originally opened in 1866, consists of five impressive spans supported by cast iron Doric pillars. It was officially named the Alexandra Bridge in honour of Princess Alexandra of Denmark, who married Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1863.

The original bridge incorporated two footpaths, one of which was a public toll-path and the other used exclusively by railway employees. The footpaths were removed in 1893, when the bridge was widened and strengthened by adding four extra cast-iron cylinders to the upstream side of each pier.

In the last 100 years the bridge has been rebuilt twice. The station was badly damaged during the Second World War and many of the original ornamental features were removed when British Rail undertook extensive renovations to the structure in 1982. However, two brick towers from the original bridge remain on the riverfront. These towers flank the bridge on the north side and conceal large tanks that contain enough water to power Cannon Street station's hydraulic lifts.

Artist's Vision

Cannon Street Bridge, despite being one of the oldest bridges on the Thames, had never been lit before. Villareal's artwork celebrates the bridge's oft- overlooked utilitarian character and monumental Doric columns, with subtle kinetic colours mirroring the motion of the trains passing above.

London Bridge



Owner: Bridge House Estates
Completed: 1973
Designer: Lord Holford, Mott Hay & Anderson

There has been a bridge on this site for almost as long as there has been a city of London. The first was erected over 2,000 years ago, with successive bridges built by the Romans, William the Conqueror and King John.

In 1014 the Danes had seized London. In an effort to reclaim the English crown, the Saxon King Ethelred the Unready attacked the bridge with the help of a Viking raiding party led by King of Olaf of Norway. They sailed up the Thames, tied their boats to the wooden bridge supports and rowed away on the tide, pulling the bridge down behind them and giving rise to the famous song 'London Bridge is Falling Down.'

During the Tudor period around 600 buildings lined the bridge, some over six stories tall. In fact it was so heavily populated that it became a ward of the city. The heads of traitors used to be impaled on the poles of the bridge's gatehouse, among them William Wallace (d.1305), Thomas More (d.1535) and Thomas Cromwell (d.1540).

In 1722, when the carts, coaches and carriages caused too much congestion on London Bridge, the Lord Mayor decreed that all vehicles should keep to the left, which later became the rule for all roads in Britain. By 1763, the houses and shops lining the bridge were removed to provide extra clearance for the increased traffic.

A severe frost caused permanent damage to the bridge in 1813 and a design competition was arranged calling for entries for its replacement. The competition was won by architect John Rennie, with a conventional design of five stone arches, and the new bridge was built in 1831.

As cars proliferated and traffic continued to increase, in the 1960s the bridge began to sink at one end. In 1968, the structure was purchased for £1 million (then \$2.4 million) by the McCulloch Oil Corporation, who shipped the bridge across the Atlantic and re-erected it, piece-by-piece, over Lake Havasu in Arizona. There is no foundation, alas, to the urban myth that the purchasers mistakenly thought that had bought Tower rather than London Bridge.

Completed in 1973, the London Bridge of today was designed by William Holford & Partners. Consisting of three spans of pre-stressed concrete cantilevers, the bridge is minimalist in appearance, its only decoration the granite obelisks on the faces of the piers and the polished granite facing of the parapet walls.

The footpath on the eastern side of the bridge was made much wider than the western one to accommodate commuters arriving at London Bridge station. It is widely reported that the footpaths are heated during cold spells to prevent icing, however plans for this were never completed due to high running costs.

One Sunday every autumn vehicle traffic is replaced by sheep for the annual Sheep Drive by Freeman of the City of London, a practice that dates back to the 12th century.

Artist's Vision

Villareal's artwork for London Bridge responds to the continuous stream of movement, colour, noise, and cultural activity in the surrounding area. The simple form and silhouette of the bridge is complemented by fields of broad and warm colour.