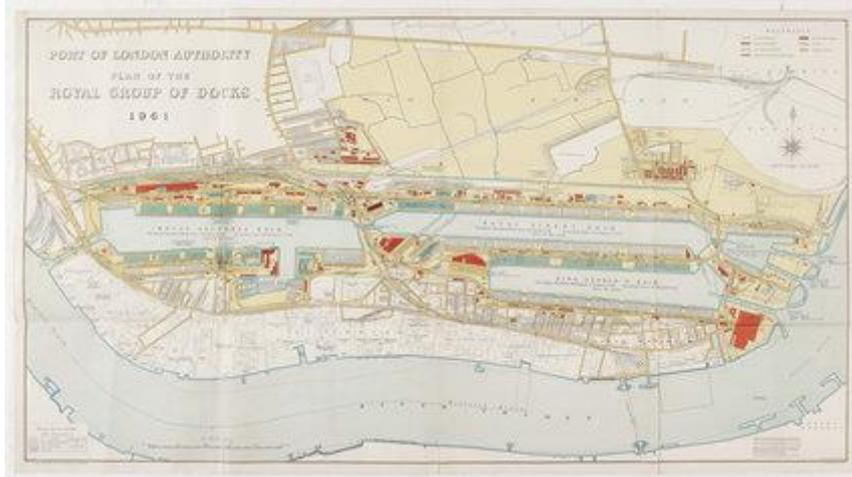


Engineering plans and drawings

The Port of London Authority (PLA) Archive contains around 50,000 plans and technical drawings relating to all aspects of London's enclosed docks and the River Thames. Most of the plans were made between the early 19th century and the 1970s, and were previously held in the Port of London Authority (PLA) Engineers' Office. They are an excellent resource for a wide variety of research topics – developers working on construction projects in Docklands regularly consult plans from the collection, but they can also be highly valuable for many other researchers interested in engineering history, architecture or how the docks have changed over time.



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Accessing the Plans

The plans can be viewed on Thursdays by appointment only in the Port and River Archive's Search Room at the Museum of London Docklands. Further details are available at <https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/collections/access-and-enquiries/port-london-authority-archive>.

Unfortunately we do not currently have a publicly available catalogue allowing you to search the plans collection yourself. This guide is intended to give an overview which you may find useful before you contact the archivist. Once you have submitted an enquiry, the archivist will help you decide before your visit which plans may be most relevant so they can be retrieved in advance.

Due to the large size and often fragile condition of many plans it may be necessary to limit the number of plans you can see in one appointment. It may also not always be possible for you to request additional plans on the day of your visit itself.

How to Find Plans

In the early 20th century the PLA devised a 7-digit numbering system to identify uniquely all the plans it held and would have in the future. This 7-digit number can generally be found written or stamped in the bottom right corner of each plan. The first digit of the number refers to the area covered by the plan. The second and third digits relate to the subject of the plan. So, for example, all the plans with numbers beginning “7” relate to the Royal Docks, and all the plans with numbers beginning “757” show bridges built at the Royal Docks. See Appendix for full details of the numbering system.

The archive holds photocopies of typewritten and handwritten finding aids for the plans collection which seem to have been produced in around the 1970s. Depending on the area and the amount of plans you might be interested in, the archivist may invite you to book an appointment to view these finding aids prior to accessing the plans themselves. It should be noted that the finding aids include details of many plans which are not held in the archive. It is unclear if these missing plans still survive and where they are now.

The archive team is working to improve the cataloguing of the plans so it is clear which ones survive and the records can be easily searched and sorted. The PLA 7-digit number is being incorporated into the new archive reference codes assigned to each plan (so, for example, the plan numbered “6760015” becomes PLA/PLANS/6/76/0015 in the archive catalogue).

Appendix – PLA 7-digit numbering system

First digit of number	Area covered by plan
0	General
1	River
2	Land and estate
4	London and St Katharine Docks
5	Surrey Docks
6	India and Millwall Docks
7	Victoria, Albert and King George V Docks (Royal Docks)
8	Tilbury Docks

Second and third digits of number	Subject of plan
01	General
02	Plans not connected directly with PLA
05	Historical
07	Parliamentary, Royal Commission, public inquiry
09	Tides and currents, tide gauges, observations, flood records etc.
10	Marine surveys previous to 1909
11	Standard Charts (River)
12	Field Sheets
13	Current river surveys
15	Dock surveys
16	Channel jetty and embankment lines, limits of jurisdiction etc.
17	Admiralty Charts
19	Mooring plans
21	Surveyors' outline plans of docks etc.
23	River Surveyor's original plans
25	Applications for river accommodation
29	Dredging
30	Floating craft other than PLA
31	Mooring materials
32	Tugs and steam launches
33	Motor boats, small boats etc.
34	Dredgers
35	Hoppers
36	Barges, rafts, oil separators, pontoons
37	Wreck raising and marking, diving plant
38	Floating docks
39	Floating cranes
40	Floating grain elevators
41	Lighting buoys, light vessels
42	Floating and fixed piers, landing stages
43	River jetties, dolphins, river wharves (not docks)
44	Embankments, flood prevention works, river and docks, causeways, river banks, paths, river walls etc.

45	Geological surveys, boreholes
46	Insurance plans
47	Ordnance Surveys
48	Land purchase, sale and transfer, exchange, land surveys, property general
49	Letting and agreement plans
50	Boundaries, beacons, flag staffs, walls, fences, gates, Customs fences, railway fences
51	Roads, footpaths, parapets and lighting of roads, lamp standards
52	Road vehicles, hand trucks, electric trucks
54	Railways, permanent way, crane tracks, turn tables, railway platforms, railway signals
55	Railway rolling stock, vans and carriages
57	Bridges
58	Tunnels, subways etc.
62	Buildings, warehouses, sheds etc., hotels, canteens, huts, garages etc.
66	Power houses
67	Cold stores and cold storage machinery
68	Granaries, silos
70	Docks, dock jetties, equipment, general bollards, quay walls etc.
73	Dry docks, graving docks, keel blocks
76	Entrance locks and passages, pier heads
78	Pumping stations, pumps, impounding stations etc.
80	Miscellaneous machinery
82	Caissons
84	Lock gates
86	Cranes (all descriptions except floating)
88	Drainage, sewers, chambers etc.
90	Mains, gas, water, hydraulic, electrical, radar equipment
92	Locks and weirs up-river