



# Bazalgette Embankment (Blackfriars Bridge Foreshore): Poetry Commission City Arts Initiative: update 6<sup>th</sup> April 2023

## 1 Background

### 1.1 The Commission

- 1.1.1 As part of the public art for Bazalgette are site-specific short poems on each of the three ventilation columns by poet Dorothea Smartt.
- 1.1.2 Tideway has commissioned Smartt to write poems for the sites where ventilation column/s are accessible for the public to walk close to. The brief was for the poems to be thematically linked to the 'Lost Rivers' of London.
- 1.1.3 The Lost Rivers theme gives the opportunity for some element of site-specificity, as each of the 9 sites will relate back to a specific River nearby.
- 1.1.4 The texts work as stand-alone poems but the Lost Rivers theme is the connecting element. This reflects the fact that people may not travel to every site and also acknowledges that this is a project-wide commission.

### 1.2 The Poems

- 1.2.1 Dorothea Smartt's poems for Bazalgette Embankment responding to the Lost River Fleet are as follows:

**The furious Fleet flows red with Roman blood, Boudica battles bravely.**

*(64 characters)*

**St. Barbara's defended, lost. Buried beneath you Bazalgette's workers,  
tunnelling mudlarks swathed by the forgotten rivers of this town.**

*(137 characters)*

**The stillness of refuge seeps from old St Pancras Church, soothing this  
troubled mind to recovery, a tranquillity sourced from the buried river.**

*(146 characters)*

- 1.2.2 The first poem relates to Boudica fighting off the Romans at Battle Bridge.
- 1.2.3 The second poem to St Barbara, the patron saint of excavations, tunnelling, & explosions and a eulogy to those killed during the construction of the Embankment and sewers. Which has a resonance with the Black Stages sculptures and their response to the heroic endeavour of Bazalgette and the construction of the sewers.



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- 1.2.4 The third is a reference to the mental health users of Recovery College (Candi NHS Trust) near St Pancras Old Church further north on the River Fleet, but also the tranquil elements of the future site and landscaping. This supports the landscaping strategy for the Blackfriars site, which narrates the journey of the River Fleet down from Hampstead through the different representative landscape treatment within the public space – from deciduous trees to meadow and marsh.

### **1.3 Scale**

- 1.3.1 The text for the ventilation columns is limited to approx. 150 characters and is located edge that runs up the whole height of the column, although the text itself will be limited to the lower 3.5m for legibility. The text will be at 90 degrees to the ground plane, starting 300mm from the bottom of the column. The text is 170pt/60mm in sentence case in Doves font. The text will be engraved into the columns.
- 1.3.2 The ventilation columns are chimney structures with a 5.1m height above ground level for the Central contract (6m maximum elsewhere) and varying in cross sectional area. These ventilation columns are part of the air ventilation and aesthetic requirements of the tunnel, shaft and CSO structures at each of the Tideway sites.
- 1.3.3 The column is bolted below ground level so that bolts are hidden by the surface finishes. The ventilation columns will have some up-lighting as part of the wider site lighting strategy, but will not be bright spot lighting.
- 1.3.4 The columns at Bazalgette Embankment will be made of cast iron and have yet to be fabricated.

## **2 Update**

### **2.1 Consent**

- 2.1.1 The poems were presented to the CAI on the 8 November 2018. The CAI “recommended that the proposal be approved subject to confirmation of the final font and font size being received by the CAI for comment”.
- 2.1.2 The poems were approved at Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee on the 11 December 2018, “subject to confirmation of the final font and font size being received by CAI for comment”.

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- 2.1.3 Partial discharge of schedule 3 requirements relating to Landscaping works to BLABF 14, including the poems and the Black Stages sculptures by Nathan Coley, were approved by the City of London on the 9 September 2021.

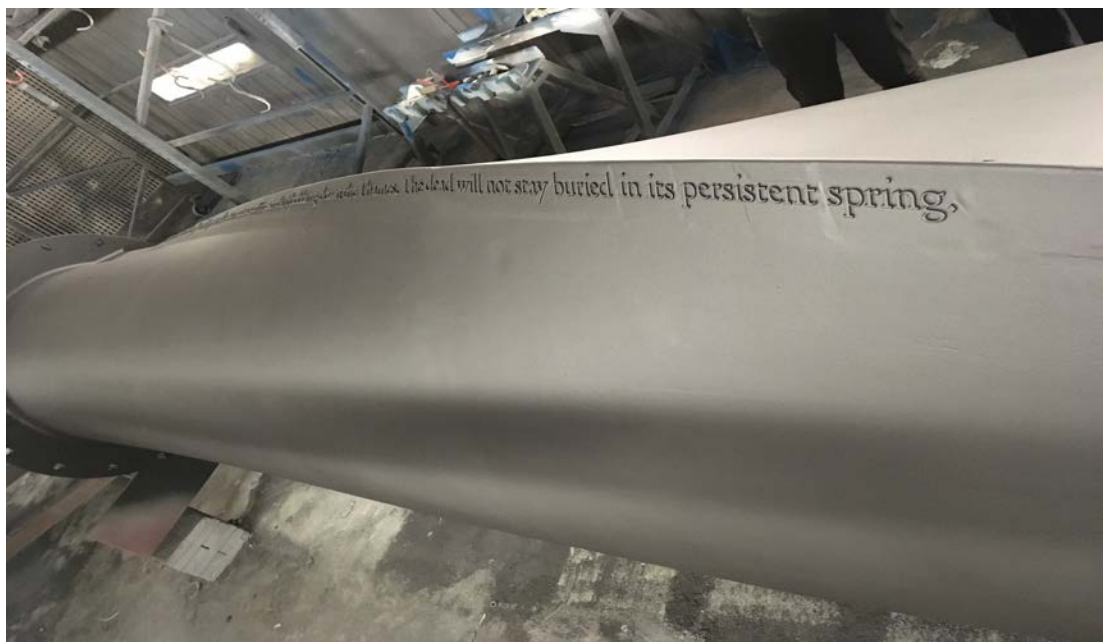
### 2.2 Legibility

- 2.2.1 Sentence case Doves font was confirmed and it measures 60mm including heads and tails.

- 2.2.2 The City of London Access Advisor was consulted in May 2019 and gave the following feedback:

*The Doves font has good legibility, the use of mixed case text (rather than all capitals) is welcomed and the text is adequately sized. An important factor for legibility is the visual contrast of the text against the background of which it is seen, therefore it would be helpful be shown a sample of the material and technique that will be used (either photo or actual sample).*

- 2.2.3 The below is an image of one of the cast iron columns for the Tideway Albert Embankment Foreshore site prior to installation – which shows the legibility and clarity of the same font and font size as proposed for Bazalgette Embankment.



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2.2.4 Below is an image of the bronze columns for the Tideway Victoria Embankment Foreshore site recently installed, and Putney Embankment – which show the same font and font size as proposed for Bazalgette Embankment and how these will look once installed.



Vent 1 Victoria Embankment Foreshore (Tyburn Quay), bronze.



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Vent 1 Victoria Embankment Foreshore (Tyburn Quay) - detail



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Vent 2 Victoria Embankment Foreshore (Tyburn Quay)



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Putney Embankment (bronze)