

Bermondsey / Rotherhithe

William Beeston Pridmore was part of the Pridmore families who originated from Bourne and Long Sutton but instead of following on in the family traditions of saddlery and rope making, William appears to have chosen a less arduous and more sedentary occupation, as he is found to be a Clerk to an Attorney in his London career.

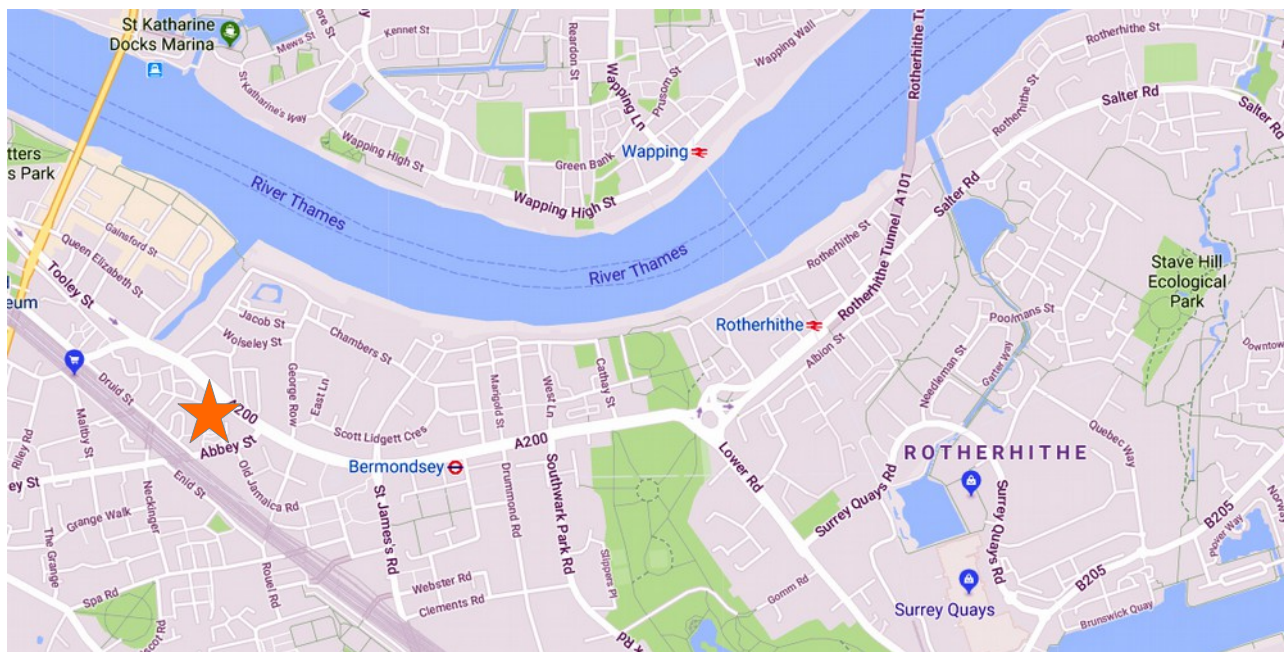
Born in 1817 in Long Sutton he made his way down south by his early twenties and married Eliza Tooke, a Hammersmith girl, in 1840 in St Olave's parish, Bermondsey.

At the heart of the town was a Cluniac priory (later elevated to an abbey) which stood at the junction of the modern Abbey Street and Long Lane with Tower Bridge Road; it was dissolved at the Reformation and none of its fabric survives.

William's address in 1851 was 6 Abbey Street which, it appears he shared with two other families with a total of 13 people registered here in the census.

Unlike today's fashionable area, 19th century Bermondsey was based around the workings of the Thames. Situated just east of Tower Bridge, the area was one of the worst slums of London, used by Dickens in *Oliver Twist*

“... crazy wooden galleries common to the backs of half a dozen houses, with holes from which to look upon the slime beneath; windows, broken and patched, with poles thrust out, on which to dry the linen that is never there; rooms so small, so filthy, so confined, that the air would seem to be too tainted even for the dirt and squalor which they shelter; wooden chambers thrusting themselves out above the mud and threatening to fall into it — as some have done; dirt-besmeared walls and decaying foundations, every repulsive lineament of poverty, every loathsome indication of filth, rot, and garbage: all these ornament the banks of Jacob's Island. “



The industrial boom of the 19th century was an extension of Bermondsey's manufacturing role in earlier eras. As in the East End, industries that were deemed too noisome to be carried on within the narrow confines of the City of London had been located here — one such that came to dominate

central Bermondsey, away from the riverfront, was the processing and trading of leather and hides.

Many of the warehouse buildings from this era survive around Bermondsey Street, Tanner Street, Morocco Street and Leathermarket Street including the huge Leather Market of 1833 and the Leather, Hide and Wool Exchange of 1878; virtually all are now residential and small work spaces or offices). Hepburn and Gale's tannery (disused as of early 2007) on Long Lane is also a substantial surviving building of the leather trade. The Exchange building had a fine private club, effectively a gentlemen's club for the leading merchants and manufacturers. In 1703 they had acquired a royal charter from Queen Anne to gain a monopoly of trading and training of apprentices for within 30 miles (50 kilometres) of the ancient parish, similar to a City livery company, the Bermondsey Tanners.



Leather Hide and Wool Exchange with Leather Market

In 1861, William had changed profession to become a “Dairy Man” but was still in Abbey Street at number 21. A further move along Abbey Street to number 153 in 1871 had seen William one more change profession and he was now a Chemist and Druggist, a move which may have encouraged his son Campbell William to become a doctor as he is shown as a medical student. Son Jesse was a Merchant's clerk pointing to the continuation of a link with the river trades and son Felix was also a clerk but to a Shipbroker.

With Ellen becoming a music teacher and Frank Andrews Pridmore a clerk in the Leather and Parchment trade (later to become an inventor and submit a patent in the USA for a leisure park ride) it may be speculated that the family were not in the worst of situations and slowly climbing the ladders to being reasonably well off for that area.