



## Turkish room at Bermondsey Public Baths

### Date

1927

### Description

The public baths on Grange Road in Bermondsey opened in 1927 and were a very grand affair designed in ornate fashion to enable the poor of the borough to wash. While

the baths performed their public function very well, the Turkish baths and Russian steam room in the basement also took on another role as a notorious and tolerated homosexual rendezvous. Before the days of open homosexuality public baths such as these were well-known cruising and homosocial spaces, especially as many were open late at night with little supervision. Bermondsey became quite famous in queer circles with even carry-on star Kenneth Williams commenting that having been there for 'traditional interest' in 1958 he found it 'quite fabulous'. Stuart Feather remembers that in 50s and 60s it was "the talk of all the queens in the West End - they used to say if you want a docker, you go to Bermondsey baths". The baths were quite-run down by this point especially due to bomb damage sustained during WWII but they remained open in a dilapidated state until they were finally closed down in 1973. [For further information on the London public baths in this context see Matt Houlbrook's excellent book *Queer London*]