

Collection research guide:

Electoral records

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Background: voting law, 1832-1983.....	2
Types of voting records	4
Information in the electoral register	4
Information in poll books and jury lists	5
Important information to keep in mind	5
Finding the records you need	6
Appendix: Charts and Tables.....	7
Electoral district changes in Southwark, 1832-2025.....	8
Electoral registers in Southwark Archives.....	9
Electoral districts and wards in Southwark, 1832-2005	15

Introduction

Southwark Archives holds different types of records relating to voting. These **electoral records** often tie people to addresses. They are very useful for researching your family or house history.

This guide aims to explain:

- the legal background for these records
- what different kinds of voting records we hold
- what information you can find in voting records
- important information to keep in mind when using voting records
- what voting records we hold and how you can find and order specific items
- how local voting districts (**constituencies**) have changed

There are two main types of elections in the UK: parliamentary and local. Parliamentary elections decide who will represent the area in the House of Commons. The 650 members of the House of Commons form half of the Parliament, the body that makes UK-wide law. Local elections decide the make-up of local and regional councils. In some areas, like London, there are also local elections for mayor. These bodies set policy on a local or regional level.

Voting records detail which local residents have the right to vote. They may be able to vote in one type of election, both, or neither, depending on their age and nationality. Who had the right to vote in which elections varied over time. The records that document that right also change over time.

Up to the early 19th century, there were two kinds of Parliamentary seats, county and borough. Voters in county elections had to own property with an annual rental value of 40 shillings. Who could vote in borough elections varied by borough. In some, most adult homeowners could vote, while in others, only a tiny group of residents could. Only about 1% of the population could vote.

On a local level, the situation was more complex. Some areas had In our area, local parish vestries raised taxes and provided some services. The minister and parishioners elected local vestry officials. Elected boards provided other services in some areas. Anyone who paid local taxes (**ratepayers**) could vote in these elections. Local tax records (**ratebooks**) doubled as voter qualification records for these elections.

Background: voting law, 1832-1983

In 1832, the **Great Reform Act** modernised the parliamentary system. It restricted voting by law to men, and standardised voting qualifications. All owners and tenants of property with an annual rental value of £10 now could now vote. This extended the franchise by about 60%, but that amounted to 7% of the population. It also introduced voter registration, making local officials responsible for the **electoral register**.

The **Reform Act of 1867** split Parliamentary borough voters into **occupiers** and **lodgers**. Occupiers were owners or tenants of any property who paid their own local taxes. Lodgers occupied only part of a house, but any who paid at least £10 a year in rent could also vote. The Act also shifted the duty to pay local taxes on borough properties from owners to occupiers. It split Parliamentary county voters into **property** and **occupation** voters. Property voters owned or leased land worth at least £5 a year in rent. Occupier voters in the counties occupied land worth at least £12 a year. Occupying property in a borough could qualify someone as a county voter as well. These changes roughly doubled the English and Welsh electorate from 1 to 2 million men. This was still less than half of the 7 million adult men in England and Wales.

The **Municipal Franchise Act 1869** made it easier to vote in local elections. It also gave some women the explicit right to vote. This right extended only to unmarried female taxpayers. These women could also run for local offices. The Local Government Act of 1889 gave qualified single women the right to vote and stand in county elections. In 1894, the Local Government Act extended the vote to qualified married women. In practice, the way qualification worked meant that few married women voted.

The **Representation of the People Act 1885** created modern single-member Parliamentary constituencies. It also made the qualifications for a county vote the same as for a borough vote. This meant that any man paying £10 annual rent, or holding land worth £10 a year in rent, could vote. Finally, it created the **service franchise**. This covered properties where the owner was absent, but an employee lived on-site. Such employees could vote as tenant-occupiers. These changes added about 2 million new voters. But two out of five men and all women still couldn't vote in Parliamentary elections.

The **Representation of the People Act 1918** brought in several critical changes. It required annual electoral registers, and a single, nationwide election day. All men over 21 who were resident for six months could vote, as could men who turned 19 while on active war service. It also extended the vote to women over 30 who occupied a house or property worth at least £5 a year, or whose husbands did. It also made county and borough constituencies exclusive of each other. This meant people who owned a single property could no longer vote twice. Many people could still cast more than one legal vote. They included university graduates, as well as people who owned property in an area they did not live. These changes tripled the electorate, including 8.5 million women, who made up about 40% of voters.

The **Representation of the People Act 1928** finally gave women the vote on the same terms as men. This meant anyone over 21 and resident in the area for 6 months or more could vote. It added 5 million women voters, making them more than 52% of the electorate.

The **Representation of the People Act 1948** removed the ability to cast more than one legal vote. It also brought in electoral registration officers. These were responsible for the electoral register, electoral wards, and polling places. Finally, it created 613 new, single-member constituencies for the 1950 general election.

The **Representation of the People Act 1969** lowered the voting age from 21 to 18, in line with legal adulthood. In 1983, the **Representation of the People Act** let Irish and Commonwealth citizens vote in all British elections.

Types of voting records

Electoral registers are the most common type of electoral record in our collection. They are lists of people entitled to vote in local and/or national elections. Qualifications to vote varied over time. The background section of this guide, on page 2, explains them in more detail.

We also hold very small numbers of two related records, poll books and jury lists. **Poll books** record which eligible voters actually voted in an election, as well as how they voted. **Jury lists** record the details of people who were liable to serve as a juror at the local petty sessions court. Qualifications to be on a jury varied over time. Generally jurors had to be between 21 and 70 years old and own property. This group overlapped with eligible voters.

Information in the electoral register

An electoral register holds different information that may be useful for your research. The information in a register varies over time, but often includes:

Voter's name and address: Addresses usually include postcodes after 1917. For property and non-resident occupation voters, the register also listed their residential address. It also lists the constituency, ward, and polling place a voter voted from.

The qualifying date: by which a voter must have a connection to a local address to be eligible to vote. From 1832, it was most often June/July. From 1950 the qualifying date shifted to October/November. Since 2001 the qualifying date is in December, but voters can add themselves to updates.

The dates the register is in force: this period begins 3-6 months after the qualifying date and lasts for a year. During this time, only people on the register or updates to it may vote in the district. Before 1928, gender, age, and property determined if someone could vote. Registers before this time split the register listings up based on **qualification type**. These could include:

- ownership -- these voters did not need to live in the area. Entries include a description of the qualifying property, and home address for non-locals.
- division 1 occupiers -- either residents of houses, or those who leased land or buildings. Entries include a description of the qualifying property, and home address for non-locals.
- division 2 occupiers -- on-site employees of absent employers (**service voters**). Entries include a description of the qualifying property. If the employer moved into the property, division 2 occupiers lost the right to vote.
- division 3 voters -- entitled to vote only in local elections. These include men entitled to vote at another property in or out of the district. Until 1918, the only women entitled to vote appeared here.
- lodgers -- people renting part of a house. Entries contain details of the rental property, rent paid, and landlord.

Modern electoral registers show **restrictions on voting** using codes next to voters' names:

- B, G, L, M: Can vote in local elections only
- F: Can vote in Parliamentary elections only
- Y: Will become old enough to vote while the register is valid. Their date of birth is also given, as the date from which they are old enough to vote.

Early electoral registers list in alphabetical order by surname within each qualification type. Modern electoral registers break down by ward and polling district. They list streets in alphabetical order and voters by house number.

Information in poll books and jury lists

Poll books list the names of voters, the parish in which they lived, and how they voted. They may also list the voter's address, and/or the address of the property that qualified them to vote. **Jury lists** also give names and ages of property owners, and may also include their addresses. Some entries might note reasons not to call someone for service, such as illness.

Important information to keep in mind

Our collection of electoral records is incomplete and only includes areas inside Southwark. We hold a handful of electoral registers relating to Camberwell from the early 1830s. We have no other electoral records dating before the late 19th or early 20th centuries. You will need to use another source to research local addresses during those periods. You will also need to use other sources for addresses elsewhere in London or the UK. During the First and Second World Wars, there were no elections. This means there are no electoral registers for the periods 1916-1917 and 1940-1944. The electoral register *only* lists people who will be eligible to vote while it is in force. Anyone who moved to an address after the qualifying date will not appear.

Before 1918 (for men) or 1928 (for women), voters had to qualify. Gender, age, and property were the main qualifications, and these changed over time. Working-class men and women may not have had the vote before 1918/1928. They are unlikely to appear in early electoral registers.

Since 2003, there are two versions of the electoral register: full and open. The full electoral register contains the details of everyone eligible to vote. The open register is available to buy, and anyone can opt out of appearing in it. Southwark Archives *only* holds the full electoral register. We do not hold the periodic updates to the electoral register.

You can only use the full electoral register for research purposes. You must not give information from the full electoral register to others or use it for marketing. You are not allowed to copy full registers 10 years or less old by any means other than handwritten notes.

Electoral registers, poll books, and jury lists are archival records. You will need to make an appointment to consult them. Electoral registers up to 1972 are available online on Ancestry. Please search these first; you can do so by name or address.

Finding the records you need

Local government officials make the electoral registers for local districts. They do not create those districts, though: central government does. That means that an electoral district can cross local political divisions. It can also gain or lose territory as population shifts. The chart on page Electoral district changes in Southwark, 1832-2025 on page 8 below shows changes in local electoral districts since 1832. The table beginning on page 15 lists the areas contained in each electoral district over time.

Local political divisions can also change over time. In our local area, 10 civil parishes merged into 3 metropolitan boroughs in 1900. The metropolitan boroughs in turn merged into the modern London borough in 1965. These changes make for a complex set of records. To make them easier to use, we chose to arrange them by creating body, then by district. This means that you may find earlier registers in a different collection than later ones. Inside each collection, we arranged electoral registers into smaller groups, or **series**. We chose series based on districts, dates, and physical arrangement. We made new series for major changes in districts, or when a district's name changed. Sometimes more than one district's electoral registers are bound into a single book. Where this is the case, we put all the districts into a single series. We arranged districts alphabetically by date of creation.

To use our electoral register volumes, you need to know an address and the electoral district it is in. To find out the electoral district connected to an address, you can check:

- *Names of Streets and Places in the Administrative County of London*. The [1905 update](#) to the first edition is on the internet. We have the 1929 and 1955 editions in our open access books.
- the [Ordnance Survey's election maps](#), which gives current electoral district and ward
- the [historic electoral district maps](#) on the [UK Parliamentary Constituencies](#) website. It has details of the major redistricting events from 1885 to 2024.

The table beginning on page 9 lists the:

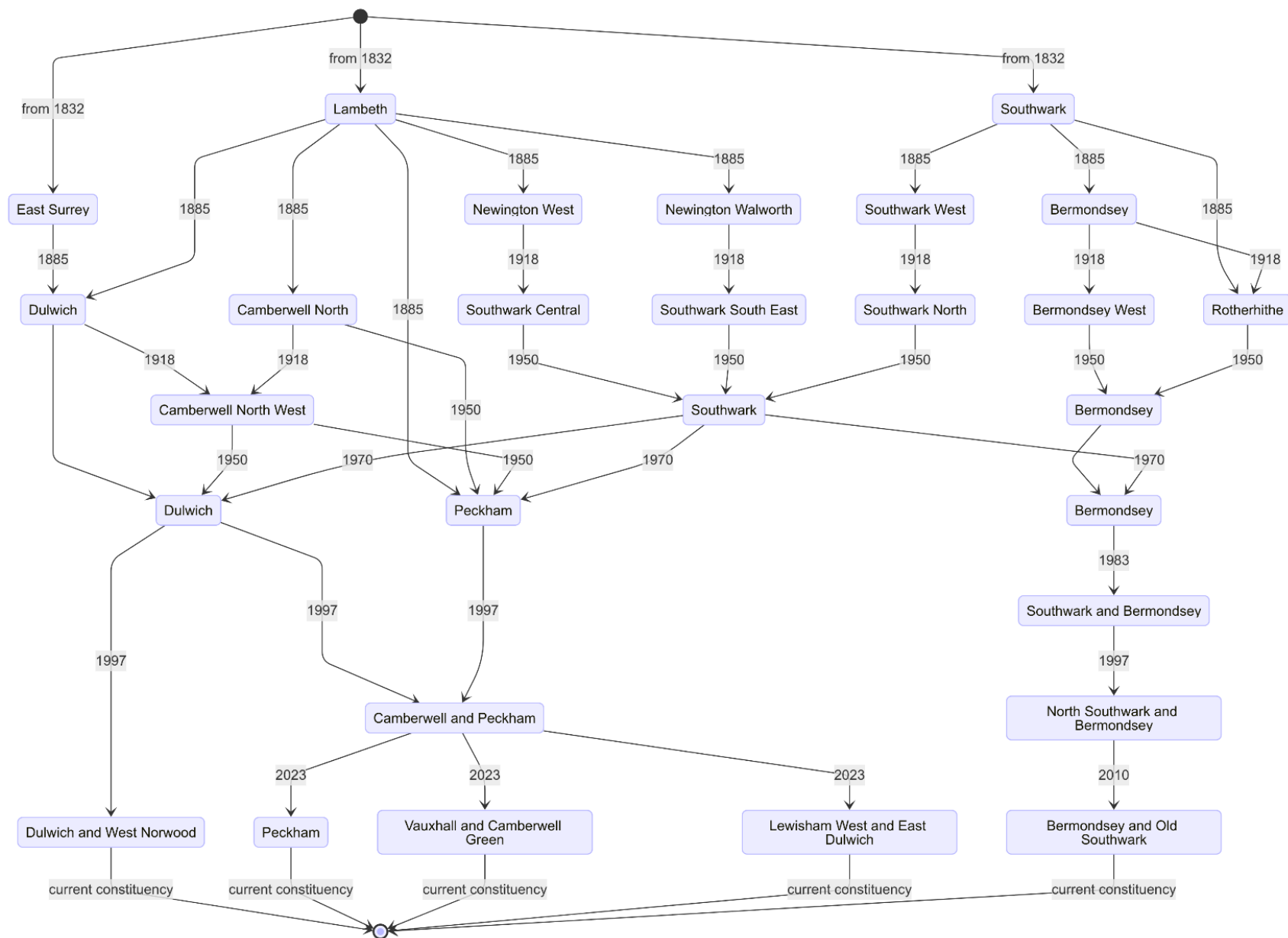
- electoral districts that covered the modern borough of Southwark from 1832 to the present
- dates those districts existed and/or covered Southwark
- reference(s) we use for subsets of the registers for that district and
- dates for which we hold electoral registers for that district

Once you know the electoral district you need, you can check the table below for details of what we hold. Our catalogue will give you the specific reference codes you need to order individual volumes. You can contact us via email or telephone to arrange an appointment.

Appendix: Charts and Tables



Electoral district changes in Southwark, 1832-2025



Electoral registers in Southwark Archives

Constituency	Dates active	Dates we hold	Southwark Archives reference
Bermondsey	1885-1918	1887-1899 1900-1915 1909-1910 (St George the Martyr division only)	MB/1/8/3-11 MBB/ER/1 MBS/ER/1
Bermondsey	1950-1982	1950-1964 1965-1982	MBB/ER/4 LBS/ER/1
Bermondsey and Old Southwark	2010-	2010-	LBS/ER/9
Bermondsey West	1918-1949	1918-1949	MBB/ER/3

Constituency	Dates active	Dates we hold	Southwark Archives reference
Camberwell and Peckham	1997-2023	1997-2023	LBS/ER/6
Camberwell North	1885-1950	1913-1939 1945-1949	MBC/ER/1 MBC/ER/5
Camberwell North West	1918-1949	1918-1939 1945-1949	MBC/ER/4 MBC/ER/5
Camberwell ownership electors' register for North East Surrey AKA Wimbledon	[1867-1918]	1913-1915	MBC/ER/7
Camberwell Peckham	1885-1997	1913-1939 1945-1949 1950-1964	MBC/ER/2 MBC/ER/5 MBC/ER/6

Constituency	Dates active	Dates we hold	Southwark Archives reference
		1965-1996	LBS/ER/3
Dulwich	1885-1997	1913-1939 1945-1949 1950-1964 1965-1996	MBC/ER/3 MBC/ER/5 MBC/ER/6 LBS/ER/2
Dulwich and West Norwood	1997-	1997-	LBS/ER/7
East Surrey	1832-1885	None	None
Lambeth	1832-1885	1833 1835 1880-1884	GC/1/14/1-3 GC/1/14/4-5 MN/1/15/5-9

Constituency	Dates active	Dates we hold	Southwark Archives reference
Lewisham West and East Dulwich	2023-	2023-	LBS/ER/10
Newington Walworth	1885-1918	1885-1899 1900-1915	MN/1/15/10-29 MBS/ER/2
Newington West	1885-1918	1885-1899 1900-1915	MN/1/15/10-29 MBS/ER/2
North Bermondsey and Southwark	1997-2009	1997-2009	LBS/ER/8
Peckham	2023-	2023-	LBS/ER/11
Rotherhithe	1885-1949	1887-1898 1900-1915	MR/1/4/2-13 MBB/ER/2

Constituency	Dates active	Dates we hold	Southwark Archives reference
		1918-1949	MBB/ER/3
Southwark	1832-1885	None	None
Southwark	1950-1969	1950-1964 1964-1969	MBS/ER/6 LBS/ER/4
Southwark and Bermondsey	1983-1997	1983-1997	LBS/ER/5
Southwark Central	1918-1949	1918-1949	MBS/ER/5
Southwark North	1918-1949	1918-1949	MBS/ER/5
Southwark South East	1918-1949	1918-1949	MBS/ER/5

Constituency	Dates active	Dates we hold	Southwark Archives reference
Southwark West	1885-1918	1894-1899 1900-1915	GM/1/13/15-20 MBS/ER/3
Vauxhall and Camberwell Green	2023-	2023-	LBS/ER/12

Electoral districts and wards in Southwark, 1832-2025

Constituency	Date from	Date to	District(s) from	District(s) to	Borough(s)	Local areas included
East Surrey	1832	1885	N/A	Dulwich	N/A	Dulwich
Lambeth	1832	1885	N/A	Dulwich Newington Walworth Newington West Peckham	N/A	St Mary Newington parish St Giles Camberwell parish <i>except</i> Dulwich
Southwark	1832	1885	N/A	Bermondsey Rotherhithe Southwark West	N/A	Parishes of: Christ Church, St Olave, St George the Martyr, St Mary Bermondsey, St Mary Rotherhithe, St Thomas, St Saviour, St John Horseleydown

Constituency	Date from	Date to	District(s) from	District(s) to	Borough(s)	Local areas included
Bermondsey	1885	1918	Southwark	Bermondsey West Rotherhithe [part]	MB Bermondsey	Bermondsey 1-4 wards
Camberwell North	1885	1950	Lambeth	Peckham	MB Camberwell	Coburg, Marlborough, North Peckham and St George's wards
Camberwell North	1885	1918	Lambeth	Camberwell North West (part)	MB Camberwell	Coburg, Marlborough, North Peckham and St George's wards
Camberwell North	1918	1950		Peckham	MB Camberwell	Coburg, Marlborough, North Peckham and St George's wards
Camberwell Peckham	1885	1997	Lambeth	Camberwell and Peckham	MB Camberwell	Varied: see below

Constituency	Date from	Date to	District(s) from	District(s) to	Borough(s)	Local areas included
				Bermondsey and Old Southwark (part)	LB Southwark	
	1885	1918			MB Camberwell	North Peckham and South Peckham wards
	1918	1950			MB Camberwell	Clifton, Goldsmith, Nunhead, Rye Lane, St Mary's, and The Rye wards.
	1950	1970			MB Camberwell	Addington, Clifton, Coburg, Goldsmith, Marlborough, North Peckham, St George's, St Giles, St Mary's, The West, and Town Hall wards

Constituency	Date from	Date to	District(s) from	District(s) to	Borough(s)	Local areas included
	1970	1983	Southwark (part)		LB Southwark	Brunswick, Burgess, Consort, Faraday, Friary, Newington, and St Giles wards
	1983	1997		Camberwell and Peckham Bermondsey and Old Southwark (part)	LB Southwark	Barset, Brunswick, Consort, Faraday, Friary, Liddle, Newington, and St Giles wards.
Dulwich	1885	1997	East Surrey Lambeth	Dulwich and West Norwood Camberwell and Peckham (part)	MB Camberwell LB Southwark	Varied: see below
	1885	1918	East Surrey Lambeth		MB Camberwell	Camberwell, Dulwich, and the hamlet of Penge

Constituency	Date from	Date to	District(s) from	District(s) to	Borough(s)	Local areas included
	1918	1950			MB Camberwell	Alleyn, College, Hamlet, Ruskin, and St John's wards
	1950	1970			MB Camberwell LB Southwark	Alleyn, College, Hamlet, Lyndhurst, Nunhead, Ruskin, Rye, Rye Lane, and St John's wards
	1970	1983	Southwark (small part)		LB Southwark	Alleyn, Bellenden, College, Lyndhurst, Ruskin, Rye, The Lane, and Waverley wards
	1983	1997		Dulwich and West Norwood	LB Southwark	Alleyn, Bellenden, College, Lyndhurst, Ruskin, Rye, The Lane, and Waverley wards

Constituency	Date from	Date to	District(s) from	District(s) to	Borough(s)	Local areas included
Newington Walworth	1885	1918	Lambeth	Southwark South East	MB Southwark	St Mary's, St Paul's, and Trinity wards
Newington West	1885	1918	Lambeth	Southwark Central	MB Southwark	St Peter's and St Paul's wards
Rotherhithe	1885	1950	Surrey (part)	Bermondsey	MB Bermondsey	Varied: see below
	1885	1918	Surrey (part)		MB Bermondsey	St Olave's, St John's, St Thomas's, St Mary, Rotherhithe and St Mary Magdalen, Bermondsey wards
	1918	1950		Bermondsey	MB Bermondsey	St John, St Olave, Bermondsey 5-6, and Rotherhithe 1-3 wards

Constituency	Date from	Date to	District(s) from	District(s) to	Borough(s)	Local areas included
Southwark West	1885	1918	Southwark	Southwark North	MB Southwark	Christchurch, St George the Martyr 1-2, and St Saviour's 1-2 wards
Bermondsey West	1918	1950	Bermondsey	Bermondsey	MB Bermondsey	Bermondsey 1-4 wards
Camberwell North West	1918	1950	Camberwell North (part) Dulwich (part)	Peckham (part) Dulwich (part)	MB Camberwell	Addington, Lyndhurst, St Giles, Town Hall, and West wards
Southwark Central	1918	1950	Newington West	Southwark	MB Southwark	St Mary's, St Paul's and Trinity wards, and a small section of St George's ward

Constituency	Date from	Date to	District(s) from	District(s) to	Borough(s)	Local areas included
Southwark North	1918	1950	Southwark West	Southwark	MB Southwark	Christchurch, St. Jude's, St. Michael's and St. Saviour's wards
Southwark South East	1918	1950	Newington Walworth	Southwark	MB Southwark	St. George's, St. John's and St. Peter's wards
Bermondsey	1950	1983	Bermondsey West Rotherhithe Southwark (part)	Southwark and Bermondsey	MB Bermondsey LB Southwark	Varied: see below
	1950	1970	Bermondsey West Rotherhithe		MB Bermondsey	All of the Metropolitan Borough of Bermondsey

Constituency	Date from	Date to	District(s) from	District(s) to	Borough(s)	Local areas included
	1970	1983	Southwark (part)	Southwark and Bermondsey	LB Southwark	Abbey, Bricklayers, Browning, Cathedral, Chaucer, Dockyard, Riverside, and Rotherhithe wards
Southwark	1950	1970	Southwark Central Southwark North Southwark Southeast	Bermondsey Peckham Dulwich (small part)	MB Southwark LB Southwark	
Southwark and Bermondsey	1983	1997	Bermondsey	North Southwark and Bermondsey	LB Southwark	Abbey, Bricklayers, Browning, Burgess, Cathedral, Chaucer, Dockyard, Riverside, and Rotherhithe wards

Constituency	Date from	Date to	District(s) from	District(s) to	Borough(s)	Local areas included
Camberwell and Peckham	1997	2023	Peckham (part) Dulwich (part)	Peckham Vauxhall and Camberwell Green	LB Southwark	Varied: see below
	1997	2010	Peckham (part) Dulwich (part)		LB Southwark	Barset, Brunswick, Consort, Faraday, Friary, Liddle, St Giles, The Lane, and Waverley wards
	2010	2023		Peckham Vauxhall and Camberwell Green	LB Southwark	Brunswick Park, Camberwell Green, Faraday, Livesey, Nunhead, Peckham, Peckham Rye, South Camberwell, and The Lane wards
Dulwich and West Norwood	1997	Present	Dulwich	N/A	LB Southwark	Varied: see below

Constituency	Date from	Date to	District(s) from	District(s) to	Borough(s)	Local areas included
	1997	2010	Dulwich		LB Southwark	Alleyn, Bellenden, College, Lyndhurst, Ruskin, and Rye wards
	2010	2023			LB Southwark	College, East Dulwich, and Village wards
	2023	Present			LB Southwark	Champion Hill, Dulwich Village, and Dulwich Wood wards
North Bermondsey and Southwark	1997	2010	Southwark and Bermondsey	Bermondsey and Old Southwark	LB Southwark	Abbey, Bricklayers, Browning, Burgess, Cathedral, Chaucer, Dockyard, Newington, Riverside, and Rotherhithe wards

Constituency	Date from	Date to	District(s) from	District(s) to	Borough(s)	Local areas included
Bermondsey and Old Southwark	2010	Present	North Bermondsey and Southwark	N/A	LB Southwark	Varied: see below
	2010	2023	North Bermondsey and Southwark		LB Southwark	Cathedrals, Chaucer, East Walworth, Grange, Newington, Riverside, Rotherhithe, South Bermondsey, Surrey Docks wards
	2023	Present		N/A	LB Southwark	Borough & Bankside; Chaucer; London Bridge & West Bermondsey; North Bermondsey; Rotherhithe; St. George's; South Bermondsey; Surrey Docks wards (as they existed at 1 Dec 2020)

Constituency	Date from	Date to	District(s) from	District(s) to	Borough(s)	Local areas included
Lewisham West and East Dulwich	2023-	Present	Camberwell and Peckham	N/A	LB Southwark	Dulwich Hill, Goose Green, and Peckham Rye wards (as they existed at 1 Dec 2020)
Peckham	2023-	Present	Camberwell and Peckham	N/A	LB Southwark	Faraday; North Walworth; Nunhead & Queen's Road; Old Kent Road; Peckham; Rye Lane; St. Giles wards (as they existed at 1 Dec 2020)
Vauxhall and Camberwell Green	2023-	Present	Camberwell and Peckham	N/A	LB Southwark	Camberwell Green and Newington wards (as they existed on 1 Dec 2020)