Booth's Classification of London Poverty

Charles Booth, the victorian social reformer, created what he called 'poverty maps' based on walks around London. He published them as 'Maps Descriptive of London Poverty 1898-1899'. Degrees of poverty are represented by a 7-grade colour coding system, black being the poorest.

Areas are marked on the Booth maps thus:

BLACK: Lowest class. Vicious, semi-criminal.
DARK BLUE: Very poor, casual. Chronic want.
LIGHT BLUE: Poor. 18s. to 21s. a week for a moderate family
PURPLE: Mixed. Some comfortable others poor
PINK: Fairly comfortable. Good ordinary earnings.
RED: Middle class. Well-to-do.
YELLOW: Upper-middle and Upper classes. Wealthy.

A combination of colours indicated that the street contained a proportion of each of the classes represented by the respective colours.

Vyner Street area as coded by Booth:

Vyner Street	**LIGHT BLUE**
Wadeson Street	**LIGHT BLUE**
Mowlem Street	**LIGHT BLUE**
Lark Row	**LIGHT BLUE**
Russia Lane	**LIGHT BLUE** to **PURPLE**
Cambridge Heath Road	**PURPLE**
Peel Grove	**PURPLE**
Parmiter	**PURPLE** to **PINK**
Old Ford Road	**PURPLE** to **PINK**
Bishops Way	**PINK**

The streets have been ordered poorest to most prosperous.

It may be seen that the area immediately around Vyner Street was the poorest (Vyner Street itself was a little better than Wadeson Street "but hardly as good as purple", according to Booth), with a predominance of Light Blue, therefore designated 'Poor'. The walk, like many others, was conducted in the company of a police officer with local knowledge. He probably also was used for extra protection.

Wayne Clements