

East  
London

# HERITAGE Trails



Explore and discover the  
secret heritage of Tower Hamlets



*This event will take place  
over the weekend of  
13th – 14th September, 2008.  
However, the self-guided trails in this  
booklet can be explored independently  
whenever you wish.*

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## CONTENTS

<b>Historical Introduction to Tower Hamlets</b>	8
<b>1 Tower Hill and the Eastern City Fringe</b>	10
<i>Trail around the outside of The Tower</i>	11
All Hallows by the Tower	14
<i>Trail from Tower Hill Station to</i> <i>St George's German Lutheran Church</i>	15
St George's German Lutheran Church	16
<b>2 Wapping</b>	18
<i>Circular Trail from Shadwell DLR to</i> <i>Wapping Hydraulic Power Station</i>	19
Wapping Hydraulic Power Station	20
<b>3 Shadwell and St George's</b>	22
<i>Trail from Shadwell DLR to St George</i> <i>in the East and Wilton's Music Hall</i>	23
St George in the East	24
Wilton's Music Hall	25
<i>Trail from Shadwell DLR to Commercial</i> <i>Street and Synagogues</i>	27
Congregation of Jacob Synagogue	28
Nelson St Synagogue	29
<b>4 Ratcliffe and Limehouse</b>	30
<i>Circular Trail from Limehouse DLR to</i> <i>St Anne Limehouse</i>	31
St Anne Limehouse	33
<b>5 Stepney Green</b>	34
<i>Trail from Stepney Green Station to</i> <i>St Dunstan and All Saints</i>	35
St Dunstan and All Saints	36

<b>6 Mile End</b>	38
<i>Trail from Mile End Station via Queen Mary College to Stepney Green Station</i>	39
Queen Mary College and the People's Palace	40
The Velho and Nuevo Sephardic Cemeteries	42
<b>7 Bethnal Green</b>	44
<i>Circular Trail from Bethnal Green Station</i>	45
St John on Bethnal Green	47
V&A Museum of Childhood	48
<i>Trail from St Leonard Shoreditch to St Matthew Bethnal Green</i>	49
St Leonard Shoreditch	52
Shoreditch Tabernacle Hall	54
St Matthew Bethnal Green	55
<b>8 Bromley and Poplar</b>	56
<i>Trail from Langdon Park DLR</i>	57
Balfron Tower	59
Bromley Hall	60
<b>9 Isle of Dogs</b>	62
<i>Trail around the West India Docks from West Ferry DLR to South Quay DLR</i>	63
Museum in Docklands	65
<i>Trail from Mudchute DLR to Christ Church and The Space</i>	65
Christ Church and St John with St Luke	66
The Space	68

<b>Heritage of London Trust</b>	70
<i>Websites and Further Reading</i>	71
<i>Opening Times</i>	72
<i>Guided Walks and Activities</i>	73
<i>Educational Events</i>	74
<i>Fold out maps</i>	

### *How to use this Guide*

This guide offers an introduction to the different parts of Tower Hamlets with suggested self-guided walking trails around each area. These trails are followed by descriptions of a small selection of interesting buildings that will be open over the weekend of 13th – 14th September, 2008.

### *Key to symbols*



Disabled access



Toilets



Family friendly



London Underground (Tube)



Docklands Light Railway (DLR)



KENSINGTON PALACE

**Foreword from HRH The Duke of Gloucester, KG, GCVO  
Patron of the Heritage of London Trust**

I warmly commend to you the East London Heritage Trails which have been prepared by the Heritage of London Trust with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

London has a rich legacy of historic buildings built for past communities and adapted to modern city uses. This is especially true of East London but the average tourist rarely ventures further East than the Tower, so this aspect of our inheritance is not well appreciated. This imaginative guide book is a series of walking trails linking the heritage of those buildings which are open over the weekend of 13th and 14th September to their neighbours.

Many of these buildings have received conservation grants from the Trust. They are much cherished by the local people who use and look after them, and who also understand their unique significance to our National Heritage.

Over the millennia the River Thames has brought wave upon wave of immigration to our shores. People from all over the world have settled in East London bringing with them their own unique and special skills, which have enriched our lives and added to our identity.

The Heritage of London Trust is not endowed and does not receive any government grant and I do congratulate the Trust for championing this vulnerable and fascinating built heritage and encourage you to support the work of the Trust by joining the Trust's Group of Friends.



**Welcome from Councillor Denise Jones,  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

Welcome to the first East London Heritage Trails Weekend! The Heritage of London Trust and Tower Hamlets Council have worked closely together over the past few months to bring this celebration of the borough's huge range of historic and architectural treasures to a wider audience.

The East London Heritage Trails take place on 13th and 14th September. It focuses on East London's most unusual heritage buildings, many of which are rarely open to the public. This Guide is intended to help you get the most from the Weekend and to discover some of the borough's best-kept secrets. In it, you'll find self-guided walks taking in sights across the borough – ranging from synagogues to a former power station. You can also join one of our special 'Guided Walks' during the Weekend – see the end of this Guide for details.

As you walk through the streets of East London, you'll discover a thriving modern day 'East End'. Fashion, design and craft businesses have sprung up, mirroring the area's earlier fame as a centre for the weaving and silk trades. Historic buildings have been sympathetically converted for modern day use. These sit alongside key landmarks which hint at the area's rich history. We hope this Guide will help you to explore one of London's richest cultural areas, where contemporary culture draws on a historic past. We're delighted to be involved in the East London Heritage Trails Weekend and look forward to a fruitful partnership with Heritage of London Trust in the years to come.

# HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO Tower Hamlets



Tower Hamlets is a unique place with a long history and a diverse historic environment. The name was originally limited to neighbourhoods close to the Tower of London, but is now used for the wider built up area between the City and the River Lea.

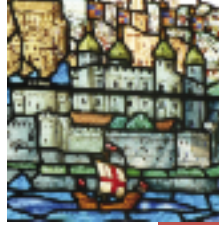
Victorian expansion enveloped the older 'hamlets' or small settlements, but as the trails in this booklet show, names, buildings and street patterns still provide clues to the hamlets' distinctive characters, despite much later reconstruction.

For many centuries, riverside Wapping, Shadwell and Limehouse were occupied with the overseas trade which made London of world importance; their landmarks are still the 18th century churches built for a populace involved in shipbuilding and maritime industry. Close to the City the densely built streets of Whitechapel, Spitalfields and Bethnal Green tell of a succession of crowded immigrant communities who contributed their skills to weaving, clothing and food production. Prosperous merchants' houses remain near the medieval parish church of Stepney; while further east a fragment of Bromley Manor is a reminder of the country mansions which bordered the Lea. The remnants of the great enterprises of the enclosed docks show how Wapping, Poplar and the once isolated Isle of Dogs were transformed after 1800. Not least of interest is the variety of innovative housing built from late Victorian times up to the present day, in response to the continuing need for better living conditions for a rapidly expanding population.

Lying between the City and new developments further east along the Thames Gateway, Tower Hamlets now faces new challenges. The borough remains one of the most deprived places in England, in need of more affordable housing and homes for families, better access to open spaces, and employment or training opportunities for young people. Stimulated by recent regeneration and development, Tower Hamlets is set to continue to grow, with more than 31,500 new homes and 100,000 new jobs in the next 10-15 years. The Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012 will leave a legacy of world class sporting and media facilities, and a completely new urban quarter to the east of the borough.

It is vital that new growth takes account of the precious asset of the historic environment, which not only gives Tower Hamlets its special identity but contributes to the health and wellbeing of the community. The extent of the historic fabric is indicated by over 2000 listed buildings and 50 protected Conservation Areas (with a possible eight more on the way). The borough's two key partners for the historic environment in the past decade have been English Heritage and the Heritage of London Trust. Here in this booklet you will see where the Trust has made a real difference to a diverse range of buildings and places, strengthening the way the past can contribute to the present, and helping to improve the lives of the local residents who use and enjoy these historic buildings.

# 1 Tower Hill and the Eastern City Fringe



The White Tower was built under William the Conqueror (1066–87) and his son William Rufus (1087–1100) in the very eastern corner of the Roman city wall and the Roman river wall. It was built as a fortress and a royal residence to overawe Londoners.

Tower Hill was part of the Tower Liberties, the area immediately surrounding the Tower which was under the direct control of the Constable of the castle. Although originally within the city walls, the Tower has never been part of the City of London, and this jurisdictional divide survives today as the Tower is now in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Liberties had a 'lawless' reputation, as those on the run from the city authorities would hide out here, safe from the city beadle.

In Trinity Gardens, a plaque marks the site of the Tower Hill scaffold, erected permanently by Edward IV in the 15th century, where the vast majority of executions associated with the Tower took place. Executions were public and popular, with grandstands erected across Tower Hill for the event. Lord Lovat was the last man to be publicly beheaded here in 1747 after the failure of the '45 Jacobite rebellion, and the last hangings took place in 1780.

Only the most favoured or controversial were granted the privilege of being executed within the Tower itself away from the public gaze, although these 'private' executions would still have had an audience.



## *Trail around the outside of The Tower*



Remains of the Roman city wall and the medieval postern gate through the wall are visible on the way through the underpass from Tower Hill tube. Facing the Tower, it is clear how far eastward the castle expanded in the 13th century, breaking through the Roman city wall which initially provided the castle with its eastern defence.

Turning westward, to circle the Tower, 16th century gun ports are visible as windows in Legge's Mount, the bastion at the western corner. Walking down Tower Hill to the river, the city-side defences are formidable, with the huge moat, dug under Edward I (1272–1307) and the ranges of arrowloops in the outer wall, particularly concentrated around the main entrance. The moat was filled in the 19th century when the Duke of Wellington was Constable as it was, in the words of the Tower surgeon, 'excrementitious' and a health hazard to the garrison and local residents. The Tower is still garrisoned with soldiers today, and the thirty-five Yeoman Warders (Beefeaters), all former soldiers with distinguished service, also live on site.

Although notorious as a state prison, the Tower was a fortress and royal residence. From the 14th century until 1661, it was the starting point for the coronation procession through London to Westminster Abbey, with monarchs residing at the Tower immediately beforehand, creating Knights of the Bath who held vigil in the White Tower.

It was also the point at which ambassadors could be welcomed into London. Looking at the Western entrance (now the main visitor entrance), it is clear that the towers line up, providing a ceremonial route in and out of the Tower. These traditions are reflected in gun salutes on the wharf at the moment of coronation, royal anniversaries and when heads of state visit the country.

Immediately before the main entrance, remains of the Lion Tower drawbridge pit are visible, giving an idea of the full extent of Tower defences on the city side. This drawbridge gave access to Edward I's Lion Tower, which lies underneath part of the present Tower shop and the pavement in front. In 1235, Henry III (1216–72) was given three lions as a diplomatic gift by Emperor Frederick II, mirroring the three lions on the English royal shield. Lions were kept and bred, along with other animals, in the Royal Menagerie at the Tower until it was closed in 1830 and the animals transferred to the new London Zoo. Excavations have uncovered 14th century Barbary lion skulls in this area, a North African species which is now extinct. The Menagerie was a popular visitor attraction, and in the age of



transatlantic slavery, the Menagerie keeper had a slave who he dressed up to make the presentation of the exotic menagerie beasts more appealing. Granville Sharp, who worked for over twenty years as a civil servant at the Tower, was one of the founding members of the Society for the Abolition of Slavery.



As well as controlling London, the Tower was designed to control the river and its traffic. The Constable had rights to a cut of certain goods being brought into London, remembered today in the ceremony of Constable's Dues when the Royal Navy ceremonially present at barrel of rum to the Tower authorities. The wharf was built across the river front of the castle in the 14th century, with the poet Geoffrey Chaucer as Clerk of the Works supervising the eastern end. This area was later used for arms manufactories, particularly during the Napoleonic Wars.

St Thomas' Tower, which stands over Traitors' Gate, was the grandest water entrance at the Tower, built for Edward I. The basin underneath was large enough to moor the royal barge. Originally, it projected straight out into the river and was highly decorated. Looking back towards the Tower, it is clear how far the castle has encroached on the river. The outer curtain wall, like the wharf, is built on piles sunk into the river bed, while the inner curtain wall lies on the line of the Roman waterfront.

## All Hallows by the Tower

### Byward Street EC3



Lying just west of the Tower of London, All Hallows was founded by Barking Abbey in Essex, and is the only church in the City which preserves some Anglo-Saxon fabric, probably of 11th century date. This was discovered at the west end, after the church had been badly damaged in World War

II. Reconstruction by Seely & Paget included the creation of an undercroft where historical relics are displayed, including Roman mosaics found on the site. The 17th century tower was rebuilt with an elegant baroque spire of copper, added in 1958. The many furnishings of interest include a font cover ascribed to Grinling Gibbons, and a fine Purbeck marble tomb of 1477 to a City Alderman, on which is placed the Toc H lamp, made 1923, which commemorates the Christian Service Club founded in World War I by the vicar of All Hallows, the Rev Tubby Clayton (1885–1972).



 Tower Hill



## Trail from Tower Hill Station to St George's German Lutheran Church

Close to the underground a substantial piece of the City Wall marks the eastern boundary of the Roman city. Turn right toward the former grand Port of London Authority building and up Coopers Row, past a group of Georgian houses (No 42, has a plaque to Rev Tubby Clayton of All Hallows, see above). Continue through the archway of the Grange City Hotel to a courtyard where more of the city wall is visible (a noticeboard gives details).



A path leads through the wall to Crescent, fragment of a smart domestic Georgian redevelopment of 1767–70 by the city's surveyor George Dance junior, inspired by the grander neo-classical planning of Bath. Hammett Street leads into the busy Minories, outside the line of the

city ditch. The name comes from the medieval convent of the Minorettes or Poor Clares, followers of St Francis, which stood nearby. Cross over and walk down Portsoken Street past Ibez House, streamlined Art Deco offices of 1935–7 by Fuller, Hall & Foulsham, then across Mansell Street to Prescott Street. Here are reminders of a poor and overcrowded Victorian inner suburb: English Martyrs Roman Catholic Church, 1875–7, is by Pugin & Pugin, sons of the great Gothic Revival architect, built to serve Irish immigrants. It is squeezed onto a tight site close to a railway, so has a short nave supplemented by galleries.





Further on, the colourful Venetian style restaurant was built as Whitechapel County and Police Court in 1858. Turn up St Mark's Street, past Tenter Street, formerly hanging space for cloth manufacture, now with tenements of c.1900 built for Jewish residents. Turn right along Alie Street, across Lemn Street, past the grand former Eastern Dispensary of 1958, now a pub, but built in 1858 to provide free healthcare for the poor. St George's German Lutheran Church is on the left.

### St George's German Lutheran Church 33 Alie Street E1

German communities have a long history in London. This is the oldest surviving German church in England, built by the carpenter-architect Joel Johnson in 1763 for the Lutheran sugar-bakers who had settled just east of the City. The church appears modest from outside – it has lost its original bell turret – but it preserves an atmospheric Georgian interior, with typical Lutheran Protestant fittings.



The trio of pulpit and reading desks are raised up high; behind on the wall are large, decoratively framed German texts. Numbered box pews are packed in tightly, with galleries on three sides for further seating. Adjoining the church is a domestic-looking brick vestry of 1765–7. Its upper room formerly housed a distinguished theological library founded by the first pastor, Dr Wachsel; the books are now in the British Library.

The community flourished through the 19th century; its school buildings of 1859 and 1877 still stand on adjacent sites. There is an exhibit about Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer (theologian and Christian martyr) who was associated with the work of the church in the 1930s, when the church was an important centre for refugees. With a declining congregation, in 1996 the church was placed in the care of the Chapels Society. It is in regular use for meetings and concerts.



 Tower Hill, Aldgate

# 2 Wapping



Wapping, immediately east of the Tower of London, was largely marshland until drained in the 14th century. In the 17th century the riverside community gained its own church and vestry, but from 1801 much of the area was swallowed up by the huge London Docks, built to create secure spaces for the unloading of goods. The smaller St Katharine's Dock close to the Tower of London followed in 1828 (displacing the medieval Foundation of St Katharine, see p. 31). These Docks, like the West India Docks on the Isle of Dogs, were great walled enclosures. They cut off much of Wapping from the surrounding neighbourhood, and forced the diminished population into overcrowded housing around the fringes.



Widespread slum clearance took place only in the 1920s–30s. Fifty years later, the docks closed, as trade moved downstream to accommodate

larger ships. St Katharine's Dock became a marina and much of London Dock was in-filled. Nearly all the dock warehouses were demolished and the surviving walls now encircle new housing. Shadwell Basin, a late extension of 1824 and 1854, alone remains as a sizeable expanse of water. Eastward along the river, stretches of tall riverside warehouses, although converted to flats in the 1980s–90s still give some impression of the former density of trading activity in the area.

## *Circular Trail from Shadwell DLR to Wapping Hydraulic Power Station*

From Shadwell Station follow the signs to Shadwell Basin, across the Highway and down Garnet Street. On the right is part of the massive wall around the London Docks. At the bridge, turn left by the canal toward Shadwell Basin. The attractive housing of 1985 which now surrounds the tranquil waters was designed by McCormack Jamieson Prichard & White.

To the north, beyond the dock wall, rises the steeple of St Paul's Church, built 1817–21 to replace an older chapel. Turn right and follow the path around the dock to the right, go down the steps and turn left along to the cobbled street to Wapping Wall. Its closed canyon-like character developed during the 19th century, with towering warehouses shutting off the river. An impressively complete sequence of warehouses includes many still with iron wall cranes. The tallest, from the 1890s, belong to the proudly named Metropolitan Wharf. Do not miss the tiny slot which leads to Pelican Stairs, with access to the foreshore.



Adjacent is the historic Prospect of Whitby, a pub of 16th century origin, full of shipping mementoes; its narrow width reflects the size of early riverfront plots. Opposite is the Wapping Hydraulic Power Station (see below).



From here continue north up Glamis Road over the former lifting bridge of the 1930s. Turn left to walk around Shadwell Basin and up the stairs past St Paul's Church. To reach Shadwell DLR Station, turn left along the Highway and turn right up Dellow Street.

### Wapping Hydraulic Power Station Wapping Wall E1

The picturesque creeper covered red brick exterior is a striking contrast to the unadorned industrial spaces inside. This is the best survival of the five power stations built by the London Hydraulic Power Company in 1889-93. They harnessed Thames water which, under high pressure, provided waterpower



to work machinery in the surrounding docks and throughout the central London area.

When this one finally closed in 1977 it was the last of its kind in the world. The distinctive brick tower contains a hydraulic accumulator which accommodated fluctuations in the flow through the hydraulic mains.

The building now houses The Wapping Project, which has become celebrated for its combination of challenging contemporary art and performance, fine food and innovative architecture. The conversion, designed by the architectural and design practice SHED 54, aims to create a backdrop against which artists can create daring contemporary work. The new elements were deliberately given a feeling of architectural impermanence – for example stairs made from mild steel and untreated to develop a patina of rust.



Shadwell



# 3 Shadwell and St George's



The old hamlet of Shadwell lay between Wapping and Ratcliffe, a riverside settlement which developed rapidly in the 17th century with the expansion of shipbuilding and maritime industries. It was largely destroyed in the 19th century by the creation of Shadwell Basin (see p. 18).



The church of St George in the East (p. 24) was built for the northern suburb of Shadwell. Here in the 18th century were larger houses for skilled artisan and professional families, centred on Prince's Square and Wellclose Square. Both squares attracted foreign residents: Swedish merchants built a chapel in Prince's Square, (later renamed

Swedenborg Square after the Swedish writer buried there in 1772), while Wellclose Square had a Danish church designed by the distinguished sculptor and architect Caius Gabriel Cibber.

In the 19th century, with increasing demand for lodgings for both dockworkers and sailors, the area lost its select character and became notoriously overcrowded. The Danish church was replaced by schools and mission room. Later philanthropic enterprises helped the overcrowded Jewish immigrants living in the area further north around Commercial Road (see p. 27).

Radical post-war re-planning after extensive war damage disrupted old patterns. New housing was designed away from the old routes; the older houses in the squares which had survived the war were brutally swept away, leaving only the group around Wilton's Music Hall (p. 25) just off Wellclose Square.

## *Trail from Shadwell DLR to St George in the East and Wilton's Music Hall*

Walk south down Watney Street to Cable Street and turn right. Since the post-war widening of the Highway, Cable Street, once busy, has become a quiet backwater. It is named from the ropeworks which developed on the fringe of riverside Shadwell. In the 18th century only the western part of the road bore this name; its continuation, Bluegate Field, ran past market gardens and common land.



By the mid 19th century this part of Shadwell was fully built up, and the Italianate-fronted St George's Town Hall on the south side of Cable Street was built in 1860 for the parish authority responsible for the area before the creation of the borough of Stepney. The striking mural on its west flank,



painted in 1980–3, shows the 1936 Battle of Cable Street, emphasising East End dockworkers and Jewish residents united against Mosley's fascist marchers.

Continue past late Georgian terrace houses, restored 1978, and turn left into Cannon Street Road to St George in the East (p. 24).

Continue the walk by crossing Cannon Street Road, walk west along The Highway, right up Crowder Street and through the park around St George's estate to Wellclose Square. Built by the London County Council in 1963–70, the estate is a tough example of the council's post-war 'mixed development', with a powerful landmark of three 28 storey concrete towers, but the loss of the two 18th century squares was much regretted. Wellclose Square retains only its Victorian Gothic centrepiece of church school and mission rooms, with Wilton's tucked away off the NW corner, in Graces' Alley (see p. 25).

### St George in the East 16 Cannon Street Road E1

The west tower and four side turrets give St George one of the most arresting profiles of any church in

London. This is one of the three magnificent East End churches designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor, who trained as an assistant of Sir Christopher Wren, but developed his own very distinctive form of Baroque architecture. It was built in 1714–29, as part of the government's campaign to strengthen the position of the

Church of England, at a time when alternative forms of worship – which were particularly popular in the growing eastern suburbs – were considered a threat to political stability.

The tall tower also served as a significant landmark for shipping. It gave Hawksmoor a chance to demonstrate his interest in reconciling classical and Gothic styles: the octagonal lantern has Gothic precedents, but the carved finials at the top are

derived from Roman altars. The side doors led to stair turrets to the galleries which provided additional seating for the anticipated crowds of worshippers.

The interior is unexpected. The building was gutted during the 1941 raid on the docks, and only the apse gives an idea of its former appearance, with some original plasterwork, and mosaics added in 1880. An ingenious rebuilding by Ansell & Bailey in 1960 preserved Hawksmoor's outer walls and provided a smaller church, with a glazed west wall looking out on an enclosed courtyard, flanked by flats in the former aisles.

The churchyard was laid out as a garden in 1886. It has a monument to the Raine family, founders of Wapping charity school.

**Activities:** Trips up the tower by prior arrangement only (tel: 020 7481 1345)



Shadwell



### Wilton's Music Hall Grace's Alley, Ensign Street E1

Wilton's claims to be the last surviving grand music hall in the world. The surprisingly spacious hall is hidden behind an early 19th century terrace along an alley near the site of the Georgian Wellclose Square.



This vital piece of East End social history preserves an evocative exterior of peeled paint and pilasters with foliate decoration. An even more impressive interior survives intact: a long thin room with a richly decorated gallery on barley-sugar columns on three sides. Performances in the 1850s–60s ranged from classical overtures and opera, to dance, circus acts, and folk songs.

Like many Victorian music halls the origin was a modest concert room behind a public house. Established in 1843, it was rebuilt in 1859–60 on its present grand scale by the manager John Wilton, after he had acquired the neighbouring properties. Inside, facing the street, the room now called the Mahogany Bar survives from the Prince of Denmark pub. Elsewhere is a warren of former supper rooms, retaining traces of once sumptuous (but inexpensive) papier maché decoration.

After John Wilton died in 1880 the hall was used as a Methodist Mission from 1888, known as The Old Mahogany Mission until 1956. In the first Dockers' strike of 1889 it served 2,000 meals a day to the strikers and was the headquarters for the people of the East End who gathered to stop Mosley's fascists in the famous 1936 Battle of Cable Street.

In 1956 the building was sold and used as a rag warehouse; campaigns rescued it from demolition. Repairs have been carried out (though more work is needed) and the hall is used regularly for performances and functions.

**Activities:** Video display and taped music



Aldgate East

### Trail from Shadwell DLR to Commercial Road and Synagogues

From Shadwell DLR, turn right towards Commercial Road. On the left is Bigland Street which was the eponymous name of the school featured in the book, 'To Sir With Love' by the Guyanese writer, E.R Braithwaite. It was allegedly a true story of his time there in the post-war years as a teacher. The school is now Mulberry Girls School, and is regarded as one of the most successful in Tower Hamlets. Proceed to Commercial Road through Watney Street Market, a rather dreary post-war development. The pre-war market was very popular with the Jewish housewives in the area.

The Commercial Road was seen as the major boundary between the Jewish East End and the non-Jewish East End, the Jewish part being north of the road. However, some streets to the south were very Jewish – Cannon Street Road, Hessel, Cable and Lemn Streets. Most of the Jewish population of the area has now left, but there are still remaining buildings with Jewish connections. Continue east along Commercial Road and on the north side is one of the four remaining synagogues in the Borough – the Congregation of Jacob (p. 28). Turn back to the west and continue along Commercial Road, past the south side of Sidney Street, where the great siege of 1911 took place. Turn right up Philpott Street (home to two synagogues before World War II) and then right into Nelson Street,

where you can view another synagogue, the East London Central (p. 29).



### Congregation of Jacob Synagogue (Kehillas Ya'akov)

351-353 Commercial Road E1

This is one of only four remaining active synagogues in the East End, out of some 150 which existed pre-war. The orientation of the synagogue is incorrect as the Ark faces north instead of towards Jerusalem. It was a former bootmakers, but converted in 1921 by Digby Solomon, son of the more famous Lewis Solomon. It has been well restored recently. Dr. Sharman Kadish of Jewish Built Heritage describes it as being "one of England's intimate folk-art Eastern European synagogues". The interior is illuminated by a skylight, a feature from Eastern Europe. Above the Ark are a pair of heavily gilded, but crudely carved heraldic Lions of Judah and a wall painting featuring traditional Jewish symbols.



It is an orthodox synagogue and the women normally use the ladies gallery (currently being restored). It was once controlled by the Federation of Synagogues, but it is now independent. The congregation sometimes has difficulty in getting a minyan (a quorum) of 10 men, but the welcome here is always very warm.



Shadwell



### Nelson Street Synagogue

30-40 Nelson Street E1

Formally known as the East London Central Synagogue, also designed by Digby Solomon, this is the largest of the remaining East End synagogues, capable of seating up to 500. It was built 1922-23. The congregation worships according to the Sephardic rites, but it is not Sephardic as such. This suggests that the founders were in fact Hasidic Jews.

The exterior, of plain red brick, is in need of refurbishment. The interior is very well kept and is a delight, well lit by large windows. It is painted in the ubiquitous blue and white, used by both the United Synagogues and Federation, since the creation of the state of Israel. The un-fluted ionic columns are hollow, concealing iron shafts. The Ark is set in an apse within a simplified Palladian arch. The arrangement here is reminiscent of the Duke's Place Synagogue, which was destroyed in the blitz.

Since World War II Nelson Street Synagogue has absorbed some 13 surrounding synagogues, but is itself now in danger of closing. It is the only synagogue in the East End owned by the Federation.



Shadwell

# 4 Ratcliffe and Limehouse

Ratcliffe, with a wharf in 1348, was possibly the oldest of the Thames-side settlements in Tower Hamlets. The hamlet was linked to the village centre of Stepney (p. 34) by Ratcliffe Street (now Butcher Row and White Horse Road). Beside the riverside Narrow Street leads east to Limehouse, once an isolated place, named from its lime kilns which burnt chalk from Kent. By the 18th century Limehouse and Ratcliffe were considered the easternmost part of built up London. Limehouse was one of the main centres for shipbuilding, with a busy waterfront with warehouses and small industries, and the distinguished Hawksmoor church of St Anne (p. 33).

The rare survival of modestly scaled riverside houses and stores along Narrow Street conveys something of its old character. Although shipbuilding declined, Limehouse remained important for inland waterborne trade. The Limehouse Cut, opened 1770, linked the Thames to the Lea, and Limehouse Basin was created in 1820 at the entrance to the Regent's Canal. In Victorian times Limehouse was a poor area, noted for its lodging houses for foreign sailors; its small Chinese community had an exotic appeal for late 19th writers.



20th century slum clearance and bomb damage swept away most of the crowded 19th century housing. Trade and industry have disappeared but Limehouse Basin has a new life as a marina and focus for recent expensive housing,

while the towpaths provide pedestrian routes to the new Mile End Park and to Bow Locks.



## *Circular Trail from Limehouse DLR to St Anne Limehouse*

From the arch below the station turn left toward 'Grocery station shop', then right under the arches of a railway bridge. Turn left into Butcher Row, once the centre of the riverside hamlet of Ratcliffe. Prominent across the road at the corner of Cable Street, is a domed cornerpiece, Globe House; now studios, it was built as Batger's sweet factory in 1919.



Opposite on the east side, is No 2 Butcher Row now part of Royal Foundation of St Katharine. This is the sole remnant of the rebuilding of Ratcliffe which took place after a major fire in 1794, a rare survival in the area of a prosperous merchant's house. The owner was

Matthew Whiting, sugar refiner and director of the Phoenix Assurance Company.

The Foundation, now a retreat and charitable conference centre, is a newcomer here, but goes back to 1147, when it was established by Queen Matilda, wife of Stephen, to serve the poor and ill outside the City walls. It was forced from its original site close to the Tower of London to make way for St Katharine's Docks in 1825, but returned to the East End in the 20th century, taking over the site of the 19th century church of St James Ratcliffe, destroyed in 1940, and the Georgian house in Butcher Row which had been used as a vicarage.

A simple brick chapel (housing furnishings from the medieval church), cloister and accommodation, built in 1951 by R.E. Enthoven, with additions of 2003–4, are grouped around a peaceful courtyard garden.

Turn left through St James Gardens, the former churchyard, past a World War I memorial. Cross the footbridge, where you have a first glimpse of Limehouse Basin, built 1820 as part of the Regent's Canal. Continue to Horseferry Road, turn left, then right and walk down to Narrow Street, which flanks the river. Walk east in the direction of Canary

Wharf, which looms in the distance, past 19th century warehouses and wharfs, now redeveloped as flats. The Narrow Street pub by the bridge over the entrance to Limehouse Basin, is a former Dockmaster's House of c. 1905.

Further on, The Grapes pub on the right forms part of a surviving

terrace of riverfront houses and stores dating from the 17th and 18th centuries. Here Charles Dickens sang for customers as a child and later immortalised the pub in *Our Mutual Friend*.

Continue past Limehouse Wharf, Sailmaker's Wharf and Dunbar Wharf. Turn left into Three Colt Street and walk to St Anne Limehouse (see below), whose tower looms over the DLR railway. Return to Limehouse DLR via busy Commercial Road past

the Passmore Edwards Library (1900) and statue of Prime Minister Clement Atlee (1988) (or walk along the west approach of St Anne's down Newell Street and follow the canal around Limehouse Basin).



## St Anne Limehouse

### St Anne's Place E14

One of Hawksmoor's three great East End churches, ordered to be built under the 1711 Churches Act (see also St George in the East, p. 24). It was completed 1727 to serve the expanding population of the riverside hamlet of

Limehouse, at the time one of London's principal centres of shipbuilding. The narrow approach from the west, past some older houses, still gives an impression of how the church must have towered over the old settlement. The tower rises behind a domed entrance, which leads into a dignified circular vestibule. The original interior was damaged by fire in 1850, but sensitively repaired and given new furnishings (currently closed for restoration). The church clock, made by the same company as Big Ben, is the highest in London and the eighth largest clock face in the country.

In the churchyard the remains of numerous chest tombs of prosperous Limehouse inhabitants can be seen around the walls. The most unusual monument is a large stone pyramid, formerly on a square plinth, with 'The wisdom of Solomon' inscribed in English and Hebrew. The War Memorial by Arthur G. Walker dates from 1921.

**Activities:** Tours of the crypt



Limehouse



# 5 Stepney Green



The medieval village of Stepney grew up around the church of St Dunstan, south of the Roman road now known as Mile End Road. From the 17th century the village, then known as Mile End Old Town, was a genteel retreat away from the crowded Thames-side hamlets, favoured by those who had profited from maritime trade and industry. Along Stepney Green attractive brick houses remain, as in other villages around London. But from the early 19th century building spread east from Whitechapel, along Mile End Road and along Commercial Road, the route laid out in 1804 as a route to the Docks. The whole area between these roads became densely packed with terraced streets and pockets of industry; open spaces shrank to a tiny remnant of Stepney Green, the churchyard of St Dunstan and a few burial grounds. To alleviate



the serious overcrowding that existed by the end of the 19th century, model tenements were built by philanthropic agencies, some of them for the many Jewish immigrants who settled in this part of east London.

Wartime destruction provided the opportunity for radical re-planning.

In a reaction against traditional streets of terrace houses with backyards, new housing was in a mixture of heights and sizes, in open settings. Generous green spaces were a part of the plan, although these took many years to realise. Over the last 20 years, with the destruction of some of the tower blocks built in the 1950s–60s, more recent lower housing has revived the tradition of the East End terrace, while the new Stepney Green Park and a city farm give the area a surprisingly rural flavour.

## *Trail from Stepney Green Station to St Dunstan and All Saints*

Leave the station, cross over Mile End Road and turn into Hayfield Passage, named from the Hayfield, a pub that belonged to Charringtons Brewery on Mile End Road. Continue south to Stepney Green. The row of mostly 18th century houses once looked out over the open land of Stepney Green.



The railed space in front, all that remains of the green, was made into public gardens in 1872. The earliest surviving house, No 37, a fine detached residence, was built in 1694 for a London merchant. The wrought iron gate has the monogram of its 18th century owner, Lady Mary Gayer, widow of an East India Company governor. In the later 19th century it was a Jewish old people's home, then a craft school and council offices before reverting to private ownership.



On the west side, Dunstan Houses are tenements of 1899 built by the East End Dwellings Company, founded by Canon Barnett of Toynbee Hall, on the east side Stepney Green Dwellings (now Stepney Green Court), was Jewish housing built in 1895 by Lord Rothschild's Four per cent Industrial Dwellings Company. Nearby is a building of 1906, part of the former Stepney Jewish School.

A passage to the east leads to Temple Court, built in 1876 by Davis and Emmanuel as the first large Synagogue in the East End. The building was sadly vandalised before its conversion to flats, but fragments of its interior decoration have been preserved.

Return to Stepney Green. At the corner of Ben Jonson Road, a late 20th century wall mosaic commemorates Stepney history. Cross over to the entrance of St Dunstan's churchyard (see below) which faces Stepney High Street, an area which suffered heavy bomb damage. The solitary Gothic archway on the west side is a relic from a Baptist Training College.

### St Dunstan and All Saints Stepney High Street E1

The church was founded in 952 by St Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, and is the oldest church in East London, once serving the whole of Tower Hamlets. The bells of Stepney are in the Oranges and Lemons rhyme. The present substantial ragstone building with its tall west tower dates largely from the 15th century, although many later repairs, including the lively gargoyles, give the exterior a somewhat Victorian appearance.



Post-war repairs include the west doorway, now the main entrance, with carvings of a ship and of the devil with tongs. The latter refers to the legend in which St Dunstan, who was trained as a blacksmith, was tempted by the devil in the guise of a young girl. Recognising the figure's cloven hooves, he gripped the devil's nose with his red-hot tongs and sent him on this way.

Inside, the church impresses by its 150ft length, now without any of the screens that would have divided up the medieval building. Its treasures include a small late Saxon Crucifixion behind the altar. Handsome memorials record prosperous Stepney residents of the 15th century onwards, many of them with seafaring connections. Births, deaths and marriages at sea used to be registered here, and St Dunstan's was known as the Church of the High Seas. Post-war repairs included new stained glass by Hugh Easton; the forceful East window shows war-damaged Stepney, the church tower without its present pinnacles.

The extensive churchyard was enlarged for plague burial in the 17th century, when thousands were buried here. It was given its elegant railings in 1844, and made into much needed public gardens in 1887, retaining only a few of its once numerous monuments.

**Activities:** Photo display and guided talks on interior



 Stepney Green

# 6 Mile End

The hamlet of Mile End was named for its distance along the road from London. In the Middle Ages small houses clustered around the manorial common land of Mile End Green. This green space was where Wat Tyler, who led the peasant's revolt of 1381, assembled his followers and obtained concessions from King Richard II, which the king later reneged on.

The green space diminished when speculative development started in the 17th century and progressed rapidly in the 18th, aimed at a wealthy new class of merchants and mariners. Some of the houses built then are still extant. Towards the end of the 19th century industrial development changed the select appearance of the area. At the same time large numbers of impoverished East European Jews moved into Mile End and subdivided many of the formerly smart houses.

All that remains of the green space now is the so called Mile End Waste, where General William Booth first started his preaching against the evil of alcohol and where there are two memorials to him. The breweries in Mile End Road were specially targeted by the General.

In the post-war period much council housing was built, but from the 1970s older houses due for demolition were saved, some of them restored by the Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust. More recent gentrification has seen others refurbished.

At the east end of Mile End Road, around Queen Mary College, the area continues to be transformed by expanding university buildings, accompanied by the imaginative Mile End Park.



## *Trail from Mile End Station via Queen Mary College to Stepney Green Station*

From the station, turn left and walk under the unusual 'green bridge' into Mile End Road. The bridge, the brainchild of the architect Piers Gough, links two parts of Mile End Park. The idea of the park was conceived in 1943, but only realized in 1995. It covers c.90 acres along the Regents Park Canal, and includes sports facilities and an art gallery.



Proceed along Mile End Road. On the right is the Roman Catholic church of Guardian Angels (1902 by E.A. Walters). It was paid for by the Dukes of Norfolk, in memory of Lady Margaret Howard, who worked in the East End. Its red brick turret is a well known local landmark.

Along the road before you reach Queens Hall you will see the eclectic buildings of Queen Mary College (p. 40). The first buildings are those of the recent Students Village, along Westfield Way. They make an attractively varied group along the canal and are nicely landscaped.



On the left, opposite Queen Mary College, is the Ocean estate, one of the largest council estates in Britain, begun by the London County Council as part of the reconstruction of Stepney after World War II. Most of it dates from 1946-57, with refurbishment and recent additions.

Along Mile End Road between the college and Stepney Green Station several examples show how old buildings have been adapted for changing needs. No 253, Albert Stern House, (near the Velho cemetery (p. 42)) now a students' hostel, was built as a Jewish old people's home in 1912, on the site of an earlier Jewish Hospital. Further on, the Half



Moon pub, a converted former Methodist Chapel of 1899, incorporates the unusual former Half Moon Theatre of 1984, designed with an outside galleried auditorium. Near Stepney Green Station are the former Stepney Baths, 1930, adapted 1995 as the Globe Centre for Aids patients.

### Queen Mary College and the People's Palace Mile End Road E1

Queen Mary College, University of London had its origins in the growing awareness of conditions in London's East End and the need to provide educational facilities for its local inhabitants. The phrase 'People's Palace' was taken from the novel by Walter Besant called *All sorts of Conditions of Men*, describing life in the East End. The Beaumont Trust, a group of Unitarian philanthropists, in 1885 granted £20,000 for the erection of technical schools here, with Queen Victoria laying the foundation stone in 1887.



The People's Palace was also used for cultural purposes and sport. The original building is now the Queen's Building, the central focus of the university, designed by E.R Robson, an elaborate stone frontage with a fine clock tower in memory of Baron de Stern, a major philanthropist in the East End. Inside, its showpiece is a fine octagonal galleried library.

The New People's Palace to the west of the Queen's Building was built in 1936 by Campbell Jones and Smithers and acquired by the college in 1954. Its outstanding features are the reliefs by Eric Gill depicting Drama, Music Fellowship, Dancing, Sport and Recreation.



## The Velho and Nuevo Sephardic Cemeteries off Mile End Road E1

Both these cemeteries are within the campus of Queen Mary College and belong to the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in Maida Vale.

The Velho, situated behind Albert Stern House, is the oldest post-resettlement Jewish burial ground in Britain, having opened in 1672 and used until 1742. The stones are flat, as in the Sephardic tradition and are mostly illegible. There is however an interesting tomb chest of Don Isaac Lindo.

The most interesting person buried here is Rabbi Abraham Caravajal, regarded as the father of Anglo-Judaism. The rear wall and the plaque bearing the Portuguese inscription are listed. The plaque, dating from 1684, gives the names of the founders of the cemetery and is decorated with a cherub in relief.



The Nuevo cemetery is situated to the east of the College's new library. In 1974 an Act of Parliament allowed the College to purchase most of the cemetery and 7000 bodies were dumped in a communal grave in Brentwood in Essex. The most famous body to be removed was that of the 18th century boxer Daniel Mendoza (see p. 46). A plaque to him was recently unveiled and can be seen on the west wall of the library.



The cemetery was founded in 1783, but only the graves dating from after 1874 are still left. The remaining cemetery is well worth a visit. Among those still buried here is Sir Joseph Sebag, the famous Victorian stockbroker, Lady Flora Sassoon and representatives of other great Sephardic families such as the Nabarro, Lindos and Montefiores.

*Directions available from reception in Queen's Building, Queen Mary College*

 Mile End



# 7 Bethnal Green



Bethnal Green was once a quiet rural hamlet within the Manor of Stepney, where the Bishops of London owned a manor house, and in the 16th and 17th centuries wealthy merchants or courtiers built mansions within easy reach of the City. By the 18th century the silk weaving and furniture-making industries of Spitalfields and Shoreditch were expanding eastwards from Brick Lane and Cheshire Street, and by 1743 Bethnal Green's first parish church, St Matthew's (p. 55), was under way. Many new residents were from the French Huguenot community, which had outgrown their enclave in Spitalfields, the first of many waves of immigrants who would make Bethnal Green their home.

By the early 19th century fast expanding Bethnal Green was becoming one of London's worst slums. Huguenots were replaced by new generations of immigrants from Eastern Europe, packed into ramshackle buildings with poor sanitation, prompting philanthropists such as Baroness Burdett-Coutts to fund projects for the poor. While the housing blocks she constructed met with some success, her grand new market hall, Columbia

Market (1866–8), was abandoned after less than 20 years, and demolished 1958. The traders preferred the street, where they are still to be found today at Columbia Road Flower Market.



A large Jewish community was firmly established in Bethnal Green during this period, many involved in the furniture and printing trades. The community began to disperse after World War II and a new wave of immigrants, this time from the Indian sub-continent, arrived from the 1960s. Bangladeshi immigrants have since been followed by artists searching for warehouse studios, and city workers who, much like their forebears, see the appeal of living on the City fringe.

## *Circular Trail from Bethnal Green Station*

Bethnal Green Station lies at the crossroads of the old Roman Road and Cambridge Heath Road. At the outbreak of World War II this incomplete part of the tube network was used as an air raid shelter – it was the site of a horrible disaster on the night of 3rd March 1943, when 174 people died, the largest death toll among civilians during the war. Details were kept secret until after the war.



Immediately at the corner of Roman Road and Cambridge Heath Road next to St John's Church (p. 47), is what remains of the Green, now Museum Gardens. These 'Poor Lands' were purchased by a group of philanthropists in the mid 1860s for £2,000, to provide land for a museum and ornamental gardens, which opened in 1875.

Northeast of the Museum of Childhood (p. 48) in Old Ford Road is a rare reminder of rural Bethnal Green, Netteswell House, of 16th century origin, with 17th century curved gables.



York Hall opposite, recently refurbished, was built in 1926 by the borough as baths and washhouses, with swimming baths convertible to a theatre. It became famous for its boxing events. Further north along Cambridge Heath Road is the former Town Hall with

octagonal domed tower, built 1909–10 by Percy Robinson & W. Alban Jones, an ambitious building for a local authority which remained independent until it became part of Tower Hamlets in 1965. The striking sculpture by Henry Poole shows a woman representing Municipality protecting local industry; cherubs hold cornucopia signifying the fruits of labour.



Return towards the station, passing on your right a row of late Georgian/Victorian terrace houses in Paradise Row. The narrow strip of garden in front is all that remains of the Green

on the west side of the Cambridge Heath Road. 3 Paradise Row has a plaque commemorating Daniel Mendoza (1764–1836), famous Jewish boxer, English champion in 1792–5.

## St John on Bethnal Green

### 200 Cambridge Heath Road E2

Standing in an impressive location at the crossroads of Bethnal Green Road, Roman Road, and Cambridge Heath Road, St John's was designed by Sir John Soane. It opened in October 1828, at a time when the old parish church of St Matthew's was no longer sufficient to cope with a swiftly growing population. The stock brick façade is enlivened by giant pilasters with stylised capitals. The western entrance creates an impressive vista down Bethnal Green Road, with stone pilasters, pedimented doorway and quirky tower with mini cupola, accented with classic Soanian curved finials. Soane planned a taller tower, but one storey was omitted to save money.



Following a fire in 1870 much of the interior and windows were remodelled by local architect William Mundy, though Soane's Doric columns survive in the nave. Mundy was probably responsible for the Gothic pulpit. The chancel was extended by G.F. Bodley in 1888 – a Reredos by C.G. Hare (1913) with a standing statue of Christ within a marble aedicule dominates the space. The church contains some interesting monuments, including bronze tablets commemorating members of the East London Regiment of Royal Engineers. The crypt, with its fascinating brick relieving arches, accommodates several community businesses and an arts studio.

**Activities:** Drawing activities and sculpture studio open to view



 Bethnal Green



### V&A Museum of Childhood Cambridge Heath Road E2

The iron-framed building which houses the Museum of Childhood moved to Bethnal Green in 1866, having first been used as a temporary museum building in South Kensington, in west London during the construction of what is now the V&A Museum. It was designed and built by Charles Young and Company and was similar in construction to the much larger Crystal Palace built for the 1851 Exhibition.

Upon completion of the permanent museum in South Kensington, the iron structure was offered to local authorities for the formation of a local museum. Only Bethnal Green responded. The building was re-erected using the original iron columns and girders for the interior, encased in a new red brick exterior shell. Additional features by the architect J.W. Wild include the east and west

façades with their semi-circular windows.

A prominent external decorative feature is the series of mosaic panels on the north and south walls, designed in the



South Kensington Works Office by F.W. Moody and made by students at the Art Training School at South Kensington. They represent agriculture on the south, and science and art on the north. Inside is a floor of marble mosaic tiles, made by women prisoners in Woking jail.

The museum was re-launched as a national Museum of Childhood in 1974, however the collection of childhood objects started in the 1920s. The building now houses an outstanding collection of toys, games, dolls, dolls' houses, children's clothing, furniture and nursery items dating from the 16th century to present day.

**Activities:** Special tours 11:15am and 2:30pm, Saturday and Sunday



Bethnal Green

### *Trail from St Leonard Shoreditch to Shoreditch Tabernacle Hall and St Matthew Bethnal Green*

Shoreditch grew up on the north east fringe of the City of London, around the junction of two Roman roads, present-day Kingsland Road and Old Street, where the parish church of St Leonard still stands (p. 52), and where this trail starts.

Immediately south of the entrance to the churchyard is the quaintly numbered 118½ Shoreditch High Street, known as the Clerk's House, a tiny house of about 1735. Opposite are former showrooms of Wells & Co, Commercial Ironworks, built c.1878, with large arched windows and mosaic decoration.





Hackney Road to the north east is the boundary between Shoreditch and Bethnal Green. Follow it round to Shoreditch Tabernacle Hall (p. 54). Continue north and turn right into Columbia Road. On the south side Leopold Buildings (1872), sturdy blocks of flats with open staircases and curved iron balustrades, were built for the Shoreditch printer Sydney Waterlow's Improved Industrial Dwellings Company, to provide decent and affordable housing for local workers.

Continue east; on the north side in front of Columbia Market Nursery School, railings and elegantly carved gate piers, one with a heraldic lion, remain from Baroness Burdett-Coutt's Columbia Market (built 1866–8, demolished 1958, p. 44), described by Pevsner as "...one of the great follies of the Victorian age."

Continue past the junction with Ravenscroft Street – in this eastern section of Columbia Road the famous Flower Market is held each Sunday. The south side terrace houses with shops date from the 1860s.



Turn right into Barnet Grove, with simple but elegant two storey houses in stock brick. With Elwin Street and Quilter Street it forms a triangle around Jesus Green, named after Jesus Hospital (founded in Barnet by James Ravenscroft in 1670), which owned the land here.

Continue south along Barnet Grove to the junction with Wellington Row, where the former Queen Victoria pub (now flats) is lavishly embellished with pilasters and royal arms.

Continue south and cross Bethnal Green Road. Turn right and take the first left into St Matthew's Row. The former St Matthew National Schools, c.1820, with gothic windows and Greek key iron railings, adjoins the churchyard with St Matthew's Church (p. 55). In the southwest corner of the churchyard is the old Watchhouse (1754), built to prevent grave robbing. The funerals of the infamous gangsters the Kray Twins were held here in more recent times.

Return to Bethnal Green Road and walk east to Bethnal Green station or turn right into Cheshire Street and south along Brick Lane to Liverpool Street Station.



*Old Street, Liverpool Street – then buses 48 or 78 to Shoreditch High Street*



## St Leonard Shoreditch

119 Shoreditch High Street E1

St Leonard's was designed by the City surveyor George Dance the Elder to replace the medieval church after its tower had partially collapsed in 1716. The new church built 1736–40 continues the monumental tradition established by Hawksmoor in the East End (p. 24), with a grand Portland stone entrance portico and a tower with elongated domed lantern (inspired by Wren's St Mary le Bow) and tall stone steeple.



The body of the church is less ambitious, of red brick with stone dressings. A pediment and arched window mark the east end.


Inside the majestic giant Doric columns of the nave carry sections of entablature with metope friezes and arches above. The interior was modified in 1857 by T.E.

Knightley, who removed the north and south galleries, and the church was redecorated by Butterfield, 1870–71, though much of his decoration was later painted over.

There are some excellent fittings, including a fine stone font, pulpit, and mahogany communion table (all c.1740), and a splendidly ornate rococo clock. Interesting monuments and memorial plaques include one to Elizabeth Benson (1710 by Francis Bird), decorated with an oak tree with skeletons pulling at its branches, and a plaque set up by the London Shakespeare league in 1913 to Shakespeare and his associates who performed at the nearby Curtain Theatre in Shoreditch. The Elizabethan actors James and Richard Burbage are among those buried here.

St Leonard's has a fine tradition of bell ringing, commemorated by many inscriptions.



 *Old Street, Liverpool Street – then buses 48 or 78 to Shoreditch High Street*



## Shoreditch Tabernacle Hall (Tab Centre)

18–20 Hackney Road E2

This former Sunday School designed by George Baines, 1890–1 is a reminder of the importance of non conformist churches in the later 19th century and of their significant role in education. It formerly adjoined the grand Shoreditch Tabernacle Baptist Chapel, which was demolished after World War II bomb damage and replaced by a more modest building.

As it was originally surrounded by buildings, little effort was taken with the exterior elevations. The innovative plan was derived from precedents in the USA. The light and airy horse-shoe-shaped interior has continuous clerestory windows, columned galleries on three sides, and delicate ironwork railings and ceiling supports. The galleries were designed with panelled partitions to create flexible and separate school rooms around the central hall –

parts of the upper gallery have now been filled in to make these spaces more permanent. The building continues in use as a community centre in connection with the new Baptist church.



**Activities:** Richard Tate Art Show



 Old Street, Liverpool Street – then buses 48 or 78 to Shoreditch High Street

## St Matthew Bethnal Green

St Matthew's Row E2

Built to the designs of George Dance the Elder, 1743–6. The site had been purchased in 1725 by the Commissioners for Fifty New Churches, and this was the first parish church for Bethnal Green, which had previously come under St Dunstan Stepney (p. 36). It was intended to accommodate the burgeoning community of weavers and craftsmen who had outgrown their enclave in Spitalfields and had begun to settle further east. The church is simpler than Dance's St Leonard's Shoreditch (p. 52), of stock brick with stone quoins and window surrounds, and a Venetian window at the east end.



The entrance is flanked by Doric columns carrying a triglyph frieze, with a plain tower above. Dance's interior, which included galleries on 3 sides, has disappeared, the church having suffered a fire in the 1850s, remodelling by T.E. Knightley in 1859–61, and then severe bomb damage in 1940. The post-war refurbishment of 1959–61 by J. Anthony Lewis, restored the exterior to Dance's design and created a simple un-aisled interior, punctuated by an eastern gallery of concrete and western gallery of cantilevered steel. It is enriched by an impressive collection of post-war furnishings and artworks.



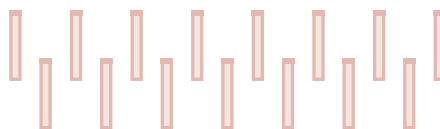
 Bethnal Green

# 8 Bromley and Poplar

The separate parishes of Bow and Bromley began as settlements on the banks of the river Lea. Industry developed early, making use of water power from the Lea, as can still be appreciated at the Three Mills centre at Bromley by Bow. Already by the 18th century factories had overwhelmed the country houses which formerly enjoyed open prospects across the river. Remarkably, one of these early buildings, part of the manor house of South Bromley, has survived (p. 60).

Further south, Poplar began as a hamlet on the higher land above the Isle of Dogs, growing in importance with the establishment of East India Company shipping at Blackwall in the early 17th century.

Following the construction of the East India Docks in 1803–6 at Blackwall, and the West India Docks on the Isle of Dogs (p. 62), a haphazard mixture of housing, industry and gasworks spread north, and by the late 19th century had covered the whole of Poplar, Bromley and Bow (by then united to form the metropolitan borough of Poplar). Much of this Victorian development has disappeared, for the area suffered badly in World War II, and post-war reconstruction was far reaching, with the London County Council taking a major role in providing new housing. The task was made more difficult by the widening of the A12, the approach road to Blackwall Tunnel, which in the 1960s cut a great swathe through north east Poplar and the old centre of Bromley. Some industry still remains along the Lea Navigation, the canal linking the Lea to Limehouse Basin, but recent efforts at regeneration are slowly transforming the derelict areas beside the waterways and around the A12.



## Trail from Langdon Park DLR

The eye-catching Langdon Park Station, opened in 2007, is a late arrival on the DLR line to Stratford.



From the station, go east toward Langdon Park, a plain post-war open space where some more imaginative landscaping is imminent. After heavy damage in World War II, rebuilding over the last fifty years has

transformed this area into a quiet neighbourhood of low rise housing with plentiful green areas. Walk across the park past Langdon Park School, whose oldest building, a three storey brick Board School of 1907 rises above later additions.

Ahead is a tower with a clock, belonging to the former church of St Michael and All Angels, Poplar, built in 1864 for the expanding population by the local architect R.W Morris. Church, vicarage and hall, although now converted to flats, remain as a distinctive brick Gothic group in this largely rebuilt area. Turn right past the unusual First World War Memorial by A.R. Adams and walk south down St Leonard's Road toward the tall towers of the Brownfield estate, Balfour Tower and Carradale House (p. 59) looming up beside the A12.



For the second part of this trail, walk north up St Leonard's Road to the end of the park. The road led to the old parish church of Bromley which disappeared in the 1960s with the destructive widening of the A12 at the approach to Blackwall Tunnel. Radford House dated 1920, three storey flats with railed roof drying area, shows the modest scale of early social housing by the Borough of Poplar. Turn right down Zetland Street past Poplar and Berger Baptist Church, 1950 (note the elegantly lettered inscription), and cross by the subway below the A12 to the group standing defiantly beside the noisy main road.



The stone-faced Edwardian Baroque Poplar Library (1904), stood empty for many years. It was converted to offices in 2002 by the Heritage of London Trust Operations, spearheading regeneration in this area. Next door is Bromley Hall (p. 60).

For an interesting return route, brave the traffic noise

briefly and continue north past the former fire station, built in 1909 for both horse and motor engines, and some grand late 19th century warehouses. At Bow Locks follow the peaceful towpath of the Lea Navigation toward Limehouse. To return to Langdon Park Station, exit by the stairs at Violet Road and walk south.



## Balfron Tower Rowlett Street E14

The rebuilding of Poplar after World War II was a lengthy process which taxed the resources of the local authorities. A burst of energy created the first phase of the modestly scaled Lansbury estate for the Festival of Britain in 1952. Progress elsewhere was slower, and by the 1960s architects were turning to different models. By then the London County Council had more work than their own architects could cope with, so outside architects were invited to help. Thus Ernő Goldfinger, a Hungarian



refugee, achieved his aim of building housing in the manner of Le Corbusier, tall blocks that would reach up into the sky, away from the pollution of the nearby road. The architect demonstrated his belief in the design by living there for two months after the buildings were complete (and later built Trellick Tower in North Kensington to a similar design). Balfron tower, at 26 storeys, built 1965-7, was among the tallest of the decade. A distinctive feature, used also for its neighbour, Carradale House, is the separate service tower, with boiler house at the top, and lifts linked to the flats only at



every third floor to increase speed. The buildings stand out for the high quality of their concrete exterior surfaces and their landscaped setting among trees.

The flats are on a generous scale, their large balconies creating a decisive grid pattern across the façades. Bow Arts Trust is currently restoring one of the flats as a museum, which will be open to view.

**Activities:** Living History of Balfron Tower sound archive exhibition in the heritage flat



Langdon Park

## Bromley Hall

Gillender Street E14



This is one of the most unexpected survivals in East London. Around 1900 historians recognised the significance of this building, then enveloped by industry, but it received little attention. War damage and the hostile setting created by the widened A12 seemed to deny it a future, and it was empty for many years. Yet it is now a triumph of recent regeneration, and investigation during its repair has added to its interest. Despite the misleading Georgian appearance of the exterior, this is a late 15th century structure, as has been established by tree ring dating of timbers inside.

The brick corner buttresses belong to the original building, which appears to have been a four room range, once part of a larger courtyard complex of the medieval Manor House of South Bromley. Inside are early Tudor doorcases and timber ceilings, but no evidence of fireplaces, so this was possibly a service range.

**Activities:** Manorfield Primary School children's art exhibition



Bromley-by-Bow



Langdon Park



# 9 Isle of Dogs

The Isle of Dogs is said to derive its name from the royal hunting dogs kept here for use in Greenwich Park. Lying below high tide level, this isolated peninsula had few buildings before 1800. The change came with the construction of the great enclosed Import and Export Docks of the West India Company, created in 1797, which allowed ships to enter from the Thames and load and unload their goods within the security of a walled precinct.

The warehouses built for the valuable cargoes of sugar and coffee alongside the import dock still remain in part, massive for their date, but now dwarfed by the late 20th century office developments which took over the area after the closure of the docks in the 1970s.

South Dock and Millwall Docks further south increased the facilities for shipping in the 19th century. Industry and warehouses thronged the riverside and inland housing for dockworkers sprang up, largely rebuilt after extensive damage in World War II. Until the

transformations of the 1980s and the building of the DLR, the Isle remained remote and little visited by outsiders. Today there is private housing in place of riverside warehouses, and a new world of landscaped offices and public sculpture around the surviving waters of the docks.



## *Trail around the West India Docks from West Ferry DLR to South Quay DLR*

Cross over West Ferry Road, walk along the path by the DLR viaduct and turn right into Garford Street. The row of neat cottages was built in 1819 for the Dock Police Force: a single house for the sergeant, flanking pairs for the constables. Turn right toward Dockmaster's House (now a restaurant). This was built as an Excise Office in 1807 and, with the now demolished Customs House, flanked the surviving stone gatepiers to the main entrance to the Docks.

The tall warehouses in front formerly stretched for half a mile. Originally an outer ditch protected their access road. Turn right, to see the proud foundation stone of 1800. Adjoining is Ledger Building, built as the Dock Office in 1803, remodelled 1827 for the storage of records. The first warehouse now contains the Museum in Docklands (p. 65). In front of the museum entrance, the bronze statue commemorates Robert Milligan, West India merchant, chief instigator of the Company.





The West India Docks were laid out with parallel Import and Export Docks, with access to the Thames at each end (now closed). Walk round the end of the Import (or North) Dock, noting the original brick dock walls, to the replica entrance archway, erected here in 2000. Continue through Willoughby Passage, cross over West India Avenue, the modern road between the two original docks, then follow Mackenzie Walk around the north side of the former Export Dock. Only one end remains as water; the rest provided a spacious underground site for Canary Wharf Station, with the densely landscaped Jubilee Park laid out above.


Pass through Jubilee Place or by Heron Quays DLR to reach South Dock, and cross by the elegant curved footbridge. From here is visible the Blue Bridge (rebuilt 1967) over the one remaining working lock between the docks and the river.

South Dock in its present form dates from the 1920s. It began as a canal through the Isle of Dogs, promoted in 1802 by the City of London to bring trade to the City, but was taken over by the W.I.C. and remodelled from 1829. It still provides berths for shipping; the tall wooden sailing ships of the Jubilee Sailing Trust can sometimes be seen here. Walk east along the south side to the canal which links the dock to the extensive waters of the Millwall Docks (built 1863). South Quay DLR is nearby.

## Museum in Docklands West India Quay

The museum occupies part of the massive range of brick warehouses which stored sugar and coffee from the West Indies. Built in 1800–3 and enlarged in 1827, they form a sober classical composition along the quay, enlivened by stone banding, iron grilles and half-moon attic windows. The museum tells the story of the creation of the Docks, and includes a lively display of life around the Docks. The wider impact of West India trade is explored through the exhibition *London, Sugar and Slavery*.



 *West Ferry, West India Quay  
(River bus Canary Wharf Pier)*

## Trail from Mudchute DLR to Christ Church and The Space

Looking north and south from the station you will see the future and the past – to the north, the gleaming towers of Canary Wharf, and to the south the classical façades of the Royal Hospital and the Royal Observatory atop the hill at Greenwich. Cross

the road into Mudchute Park. Covering 31 acres, the park was created on waste land used as a dump for mud dredged from the nearby Millwall Docks 1875–1910.



It had been earmarked for a high rise development until local people mounted a campaign to save it in 1974.

Continue eastwards through the park to Mudchute City Farm, home to sheep, pigs, and even a few llamas. The largest inner city farm in the UK, it was established in 1977 on the site of World War II gun emplacements – the remaining structures have been turned into animal pens.

Continue south to Globe Ropewalk, formerly the site of Hawkins and Tipson's Globe Rope Works who occupied the site between 1881 and 1971. Turn south into Millwall Park, laid out by the LCC in 1919. Walk south through the park to Island Gardens Station and turn left into Manchester Road, the centre of Cubitt Town, originally built up in the mid 19th century. Walk along Manchester Road and on the south side is Christ Church and St John (see below). Return to Island Gardens Station or alternatively take the D3 or D7 bus west along Manchester Road to The Space in Westferry Road (p. 68).

### Christ Church and St John with St Luke Manchester Road E14

This church was designed by Frederick Johnstone and built 1852–4. William Cubitt, brother of the great speculative builder Thomas Cubitt, built and paid for the church. It was the parish church for William's new Cubitt Town (1842–1880s), a development of terraces, factories and wharves then taking shape in this part of the Isle of Dogs.



Built of stock brick with Portland stone dressings in Victorian Gothic, the church has a prominent side tower and spire. The vestry was enlarged and repairs made 1906–7 by J.E.K. and J.P. Cutts and the west end subdivided 1982–3, but otherwise the church remains fairly intact, although most of surrounding Cubitt Town was destroyed by bombing.



Following a cruciform plan but without aisles, the interior is marked by a broad nave, chancel and transept arms crowned by an impressive timber crown-post roof. The church has an interesting selection of High Church furnishings and varied decorations, some brought from St John, Roserton Street (by A.W. Blomfield 1871–2, demolished 1950s) including an altar and reredos, with Italian primitive style painting, now in the north transept.

Over the chancel arch is a large mural painting of The Company of Heaven, by F.A. Jackson after designs by J.R. Spencer Stanhope, 1907–14. There is also a pulpit decorated with Pre-Raphaelite style panels by his niece Gertrude Spencer Stanhope, c.1914. Cubitt's original vicarage (c.1858) survives just east of the church.

**Activities:** Photo exhibition of Island Churches and local history talks



Island Gardens



### The Space

269 Westferry Road E14

The Space was originally built as the St Paul Presbyterian Church in England in 1859 to the designs of T.E. Knightley. The foundation stone was laid by John Scott Russell, who was Isambard Kingdom Brunel's partner in the construction of his famous iron sailing ship, the Great Eastern, built at Russell's shipyard in Millwall. Knightley produced a flamboyant design based on the west front of Pisa Cathedral in miniature, with 3 tiers of stone arcades and polychrome brick in yellow, blue and red.



The interior is more subdued, consisting of a large open space lit by clerestory windows with an unusual open timber roof with 3 semicircular ribs below the windows carrying the upper truss. There is a mezzanine gallery above the entrance, and the cast-iron tracery windows have art-nouveau style coloured glass and more recent engraved panes with images relating to the building's history.



St Paul's was closed in 1972 and the congregation moved to a new church at Island House, Castalia Square. The building was then used by a crane maintenance firm – they removed a large window on the south side, inserting a doorway to allow for movement of heavy machinery. In the late 1980s the building was once again vacant and under threat of becoming derelict, but it was saved by the St Paul's Arts Trust, who undertook a thoughtful conversion to an arts and performance space, 1993–6. The former Vestry and schoolrooms (1906) adjoining the church have been turned into a bar and café.

**Activities:** Jazz concert, Sunday 1–4pm (£5)



Mudchute

# Heritage of London Trust



The Heritage of London Trust was founded in 1980 by the late William Bell and Sir John Lambert, KCVO, CMG, and is the only building preservation trust covering the whole of London. We offer grants towards the restoration of historic and listed buildings and monuments that are used and enjoyed by local communities.

Over the past 28 years we have offered over £3 million in grants to a diverse selection of restoration schemes across the capital. Most of these buildings house vital facilities for their local communities, such as after-school programmes for children and services for the disabled and elderly. The Trust has no endowment and must continually raise funds for our grants programme – our donors include livery companies, private individuals, companies and charitable trusts.

The Trust has an active Society of Friends, and arranges educational visits and events throughout the year. We welcome people of all ages who are interested in London's history, culture and heritage. Membership costs just £25 a year. For further details see [www.heritageoflondon.com](http://www.heritageoflondon.com) or contact us at:

Heritage of London Trust  
38 Ebury Street  
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telephone: 020 7730 9472

e-mail: [info@heritageoflondon.com](mailto:info@heritageoflondon.com)

*Picture: Minnie Lansbury Memorial Clock, Electric House Bow Road (before restoration). Erected in 1922 as a memorial for the suffragette and Poplar councillor Minnie Lansbury, the clock was recently restored by Tower Hamlets Council with a grant from the Heritage of London Trust.*

Since 1982 the Heritage of London Trust has invested over £200,000 into over 45 restoration projects in Tower Hamlets.

Restoration projects that we have supported include: Bromley Hall, Christ Church Manchester Road, Christ Church Spitalfields, Columbia Market gate piers, Congregation of Jacob Synagogue, Minnie Lansbury Memorial Clock, Poplar Library, Queen Mary College, St Anne Limehouse, St Dunstan and All Saints Stepney Green, St George's German Lutheran Church Alie Street, St John Bethnal Green, Shoreditch Tabernacle Hall (Tab Centre), The Space, St Matthias Poplar, and Whitechapel Art Gallery, among many others.

## Websites and Further Reading

[www.eastlondonhistory.org.uk](http://www.eastlondonhistory.org.uk)

(website of East London History Society)

[www.exploringeastlondon.co.uk](http://www.exploringeastlondon.co.uk)

(maps, trails and history)

[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk)

(council website with historical information)

Bridget Cherry, Charles O'Brien and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England London 5: East*. Yale University Press, 2005.

Ed Glinert, *East End Chronicles*. Penguin Books Ltd., 2006.

Alan Palmer, *The East End: Four Centuries of London Life*. John Murray Publishers Ltd, 2000.

Rosemary Taylor, *Walks Through History: Exploring the East End*. Breedon Books Publishing Co Ltd., 2001.

## Opening Times

Following are the opening times for those buildings participating in the East London Heritage Trails on Saturday September 13th and Sunday September 14th, 2008.

*Please note: Opening times may be subject to alteration or change.*

Building Name	Saturday	Sunday
All Hallows by the Tower	closed	2-5pm
Balfron Tower Apartment	11-5pm	11-5pm
Bromley Hall	11-2pm	11-2pm
Christ Church Manchester Rd	10-5pm	10-5pm
Jacob Synagogue	closed	11-2pm
<i>Museum of Childhood</i>	10-5:45pm	10-5:45pm
<i>Museum in Docklands*</i>	10-6pm	10-6pm
Nelson St Synagogue	closed	11-2pm
Nuevo and Velho Cemeteries	10-5pm	10-5pm
Queen Mary College	10-5pm	10-5pm
St Anne Limehouse Crypt	10-4pm	12-4pm
St Dunstan and All Saints	10-5pm	11:30-5pm
St George's German Lutheran Church	10-5pm	12-5pm
St George in the East	10-5pm	12-5pm
St John Bethnal Green	10-5pm	11-5pm
St Leonard Shoreditch	closed	1-5pm
St Matthew Bethnal Green	10-5pm	10-5pm
<i>The Space</i>	10-6pm	10-6pm
Tab Centre	10-6pm	closed
<i>The Tower**</i>	9-5:30pm	10-5:30pm
<i>Wapping Hydraulic Power Station</i>	10-12am	10-5:30pm
Wilton's Music Hall	closed	1-5pm

Buildings shown in *blue* are regularly open to the public.

\* Museum in Docklands annual ticket £5, concessions £3; free for under 16s, NUS (card holders) and disabled carers.

\*\* Entry charge – Tower Hamlets residents only pay £1 at the Tower of London with proof of address.

## Guided Walks and Activities

These events are free unless otherwise stated.

### Saturday, September 13th, 2008

**11am** – Walk: *A Walk to All Saints and St Dunstan's Church via Stepney Green*, led by Helen Mowat. Meet outside Stepney Green Tube.

**11am** – Walk: *From Shoreditch into Bethnal Green*, led by Tara Draper-Stumm. Meet at churchyard of St Leonard's Shoreditch. Nearest tube: Old Street, Liverpool Street.

**11:15am** – Special Tour, V&A Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green. Meeting place: enquire at reception.

**2pm** – Walk: *Shadwell to St George in the East*, led by Bridget Cherry. Meet at Shadwell DLR station ticket machines.

**2:30pm** – Special Tour, V&A Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green. Meeting place: enquire at reception.

### Sunday, September 14th, 2008

**10:30am** – Walk: *Jewish East End and Synagogues*, led by Clive Bettington. Meet at Shadwell DLR station ticket machines.

**11:15am** – Special Tour, V&A Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green. Meeting place: enquire at reception.

**1-4pm** – Jazz Concert, The Space, 269 Westferry Road, E14. Nearest tube: Mudchute DLR. Charge: £5 if visitors wish to stay for the entire concert.

**2pm** – Lecture: *A Trip Around the Block: Tower Hill and its Neighbours*. Venue: All Hallows by the Tower.

**2pm** – Walk: *To the end of Mile End*, led by Catherine Cartwright. Meet at the taxi rank outside Mile End Tube.

**2:30pm** – Special Tour, V&A Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green. Meeting place: enquire at reception.

**3pm** – Talk and Display: Tower Beach. Venue: Tower of London, riverfront wharf railings.

### *Educational Events: Limehouse Arts Foundation*

In association with the East London Heritage Trails, Limehouse Arts Foundation (LAF) organised a project with Year 6 children from Manorfield Primary School focusing on local built heritage and Bromley Hall and Balfron Tower in particular. The school's name derives from its location on land that once belonged to the manor of Bromley Hall. LAF arranged visits to the two buildings for the children and engaged artist Kay Walsh to work alongside the school's artist in residence John Mayson to devise a project that encouraged the children to use various forms of mapping and recording as a process of discovery on the heritage trail. The resulting artwork comprising photography, drawing, sound recordings and video will be on display at Bromley Hall (and possibly Balfron Tower) over the heritage trail weekend and will also feature a 3D representation of the history of the area which the children have been developing over the school year.



- 1 Trail around the outside of The Tower
- 2 Trail from Tower Hill Station to St George's German Lutheran Church
- 3 Circular Trail from Shadwell DLR to Wapping Hydraulic Power Station
- 4 Trail from Shadwell DLR to St George in the East and Wilton's Music Hall
- 5 Trail from Shadwell DLR to Commercial Street and Synagogues
- 6 Circular Trail from Limehouse DLR to St Anne Limehouse
- 7 Trail from Stepney Green Station to St Dunstan and All Saints
- 8 Trail from Mile End Station via Queen Mary College to Stepney Green Station
- 9 Circular Trail from Bethnal Green Station
- 10 Trail from St Leonard Shoreditch to St Matthew Bethnal Green
- 11 Trail from Langdon Park DLR
- 12 Trail around the West India Docks from West Ferry DLR to South Quay DLR
- 13 Trail from Mudchute DLR to Christ Church and The Space



