



Further Reading

- Black, G, (2007), *Jewish London*. outlines London's Jewish history.
- Bullman, J, et al. (2012), *The Secret History of Our Streets*, Chapter 4 details the history of the area around Arnold Circus on the Boundary Street Estate and the area's redevelopment.
- Eade, J, (2000), *Placing London*, discovers representations and experiences of both City and East End.
- Jacobs, JM, (1996), *Edge of Empire*, Chapter 3 outlines the controversy surrounding No. 1 Poultry (see also HRH Prince of Wales (1989), *A Vision of Britain*); and Chapter 4 discusses Spitalfields
- Lees, L, et al. (2013), *Gentrification* is an academic focussed but comprehensive review of the theory of gentrification and urban change. (See also Zukin, S, (2009), *Naked City* which is a more politically rooted critique of the subject.)
- Minton, A, (2012) *Ground Control*, is a polemic exploring the debates about public space politics exemplified by the Broadgate development (see also Davis, M, (2006) *City of Quartz*, Chapter 4).
- Taylor, W, (2001), *This Bright Field*, sets out a comprehensive history of Spitalfields, although because of the book's age, does not cover its recent gentrification.
- Charles Booth ignored the City of London in his Poverty Map (1889, revised 1899), but mapped the East End, including Spitalfields, in detail. The original, pre-publication maps can be seen at the Museum of London; reproductions of the 1889 map are published by the London Topographical Society; and the 1899 maps and associated Police Notebooks can be viewed online at booth.lse.ac.uk. For a different perspective on East End poverty, see William Booth (founder of the Salvation Army and no relation of Charles!), In *Darkest England* (1890), online at www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/475

Key websites:

- www.bankofengland.co.uk, for details of the Bank of England museum.
- www.cityoflondon.gov.uk, search for 'Mansion House' for information on the building, tours, and art collection.
- www.thedrapers.co.uk, information on the present role played by the former Guild of Drapers.
- www.broadgate.co.uk details services and events in the Broadgate centre.
- www.spitalfields.co.uk and www.oldspitalfieldsmarket.com tell the history and current uses of Spitalfields Market.
- www.toynbeehall.org.uk set out the current activities of the organisation.
- www.whitechapelgallery.org opening hours and gallery exhibition details.
- www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk and www.bricklanejammemasjid.co.uk detail history and current events at each mosque.
- www.19princesletstreet.org.uk, information on the building and the efforts to create a museum of immigration and diversity.
- www.trumanbrewery.com and www.richmix.org.uk, listings websites for these two cultural and events spaces.

Walk information

Distance: 3.75 miles / 6 km • Time to complete walk: 2.5 to 3 hours

The walk starts at Bank Underground Station and finishes at Folgate Street, 0.5 miles from Liverpool Street or 0.2 miles from Shoreditch High Street Stations.

As the crow flies, the furthest two points on this walk are little more than a mile apart. However, within that short distance are some of London's widest extremes, financial, cultural and historical. The walk witnesses how London exists as a city of difference, and as a city in constant flux. As commerce and technologies change, and as communities arrive and depart, the traces left on the urban landscape are visible across the City and Spitalfields.

The walk begins at the heart of the financial district, where monumental post-World War I bank buildings stand alongside tower blocks housing financial services and constructed following the 1980s boom. Scattered between them are memories of the area's distant past.

Leaving the City and moving east towards Spitalfields and Brick Lane, the route explores inner city demographic and cultural upheaval. The area, poverty ridden in the late 1800s and home to Jews fleeing Eastern Europe in the early 1900s, now has the highest concentrations of people of Bangladeshi origin in the UK. With gentrification, the area is changing once again. Shops and services catering to the Bangladeshi community, and traditional working class spaces like Spitalfields fruit and vegetable market, are gradually disappearing, replaced by cafes, art galleries, and high end retail.



Ramble London is a project celebrating the contribution of Richard Dennis, who joined UCL in 1974 and retired as Professor of Historical Geography in 2014. Continuing his research as Professor Emeritus, Dennis investigates the modernisation of cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

A passionate communicator, Dennis used walking tours to engage students in teaching beyond the lecture theatre. The Ramble London project aims to bring his research and teaching beyond the university and out to a wider public. As the project develops, additional walks will be developed by other members of UCL Geography academics, allowing everyone to access the latest in urban social science research.



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A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF

CITY AND SPITALFIELDS

City of difference, City in flux



Walk with me, reader...

www.ucl.ac.uk/ramble-london

CITY AND SPITALFIELDS

City of difference, City in flux

The walk begins with the monumental buildings around Bank station: the **Bank of England** [1], the **Royal Exchange** [2], and **Mansion House** [3]. Compare these with the postmodern building at **No. 1 Poultry** [4], designed by James Stirling and completed in 1998. This stands on the site of the Victorian commercial block that housed the jewellers Mappin & Webb and its construction caused fierce controversy. In 1968 the developer, Peter Palumbo, was granted planning permission to replace it with a modernist office tower designed by Mies van der Rohe.



No. 1 Poultry

Following opposition, van der Rohe's design was eventually thrown out by a 1985 planning enquiry but the possibility of alternative redevelopment was allowed. The current building, designed by James Stirling, was also initially rejected by planners and dismissed by Prince Charles as "an old 1930s wireless". At a public inquiry, the Environment Minister, Nicholas Ridley, ruled in favour of Stirling's plans, but there were further delays as conservationists appealed Ridley's ruling. Construction finally began in 1994, some twenty-six years after the first planning permission was granted.

Opposite No. 1 Poultry are bank buildings constructed in the interwar years and designed by two celebrated English architects, Edwin Cooper's **National Westminster Bank** [5] offices and Edwin Lutyens' **Midland Bank** [6] (now HSBC).

The area's cultural history abuts its modern identity as a home for banking and finance. The street, Old Jewry, was the heart of London's medieval Jewish quarter. The landscape also reflects how economic priorities have changed over time. Opposite the **Stock Exchange Building** [7] is the elaborate **Drapers Hall** [8], once the meeting place of the guild of drapers. The frontage was most recently modified in 1899 though the site has been home to the drapers since 1543. **Tower 42** [9], was opened in 1981 as the home of NatWest bank. It was since sold and now houses general office space.

The Broadgate [10] development is built on the site of the former Broad Street station which was closed in 1986, and houses businesses from across the financial sector. Like many developments in London, the Broadgate centre is indicative of new ways of managing city spaces that took off in the 1980s.

As plaques around the centre make clear, the entire complex including its open spaces are privately owned – these are not public spaces in their conventional sense, and there is no automatic right of entry for members of the public. A 50% stake in the property is owned by British Land, and the other 50% is owned by the GIG Sovereign Wealth Fund, an investment company which feeds profits to the Singaporean government.

Enter **Liverpool Street Station** [11] via the Octagon Arcade, an underpass of shops by the large iron sculpture called the Fulcrum. Liverpool Street station opened in 1874, replacing the original terminus of the Great Eastern Railway which had been on the other side of Bishopsgate. Part of the deal that allowed the company to extend their line, and in so doing knock down slum housing, was the requirement to run trains with low cost workmen's fares. From the forecourt you get a good view of the **Heron Tower** (110 Bishopsgate), completed in 2011, 202m high (+28m mast), the tallest building in the City. Another tall building of note, straddling the railway tracks immediately north of the station, is **Broadgate Tower** (2009, 165m), indicative of the extension of Broadgate north and east from the original centre on the site of Broad Street Station. Walk straight through the station and exit via the escalators. Like many London termini, Liverpool Street has its own hotel – the **Great Eastern Hotel** [12] which opened in 1884.



Liverpool Street station

Turn left on to Bishopsgate. Artillery Lane, on the right, was so named because Henry VIII's Royal Artillery Company used to hold gunnery practice here. At the borders of the City of London's administration and the borough of Tower Hamlets, notice the presence of older buildings, many only recently rehabilitated,



Sandy's Row Synagogue

rather than the high rise commercial spaces of the City. Notice too, the gentrification, evidenced by the growing number of high end shops and services.

The area's Jewish heritage is not limited to medieval history. **The Synagogue** [13] on Sandys Row is the first separate Jewish synagogue to be built



9a Artillery Passage

in the East End by Dutch Jews in 1874. The Dutch Jews worked as cigarette and cigar makers, diamond polishers and fruit and flower sellers in Spitalfields Market. On **Artillery Passage** [14], 9a is typical of the houses built after the 1666 Great Fire of London. Formerly at **40 Gun Street** [15], although now replaced by flats, is the site where the first meeting of the Hebrew Socialist Union took place on 20 May 1876. Under the leadership of Aron Lieberman, considered the prophet of Socialist Zionism, the Union lasted only until December of that year when Lieberman left the UK. Though short lived, the Union had considerable significance in debates in Jewish politics of the time.

From soon after the Great Fire and until 1991, fruit and vegetables have been sold at **Spitalfields Market** [16]. The fruit and veg sales were relocated east to Leyton, and Spitalfields' redevelopment into its present high end commercial space is demonstrative of the intensity of east London's gentrification. At the edge of the market on Commercial Street, is a Victorian pub called **The Ten Bells** [17]. Formerly known as the Jack the Ripper because of its association with two of his victims, the pub changed its name in the late 1980s. This was driven by protests from the campaign group Reclaim the Night that its affiliation with the murderer glorified violence towards women.



The Ten Bells

Beside the pub is **Christ Church, Spitalfields** [18], which was built by Nicholas Hawksmoor, a contemporary of Christopher Wren, in 1729. The attached **church garden** [19], popularly known as "Itchy Park", was a traditional sleeping place for the poor and destitute homeless of London. There is a description of it in Jack London's book, *The People of the Abyss*.



Fashion Street

While walking south along Commercial Street, be sure to look along

Fashion Street [20]. The name of the street belies its purpose – here is the beginning of the rag and leather trade. From the Huguenot silk weavers, to Jewish tailors, to Bengali garment factories, the rag trade has been one of the main sources of employment for the different groups of settlers who have made their homes in Spitalfields.

One side of the street is dominated by the Moorish Market, an early (and failed) attempt to gentrify the once slum-lined street. Built by Abraham Davis in 1905, it closed as a market only four years later. The building had several incarnations in the intervening years, including a factory and general retail. Following a fire which destroyed much of the interior, it was derelict for a time before an adventurous redevelopment in which a completely new interior was placed against the carefully preserved, and Grade II listed, frontage.

Further along Commercial Street is **Toynbee Hall** [21]. Founded in the 1880s, it was a settlement house, rather like a mission but not so religious; a place where young Oxbridge graduates would go to live for a couple of years to help educate and, as it was then put, 'improve' the East End poor. The history of the **Whitechapel Gallery** [22] is similarly rooted in improvement of the poor and was one of the first publically funded galleries. It has since shown many radical exhibitions including the only display of Picasso's *Guernica* in Britain in 1939, and the 1956 show *This is Tomorrow* which was hugely influential in the development of British modern art.



Whitechapel Gallery

A short walk further down Whitechapel Road is the **East London Mosque** [23], which opened in 1985 with a £1 million donation from the Saudi Arabian government. It will serve as a point of comparison for another Mosque later on the route. Turn back and look for Osborn Street on the right. Osborn Street soon becomes Brick Lane, the heart of the Bengali settlement in the area. Indian seamen have been living in the East End since the late 18th century. Amongst them from at least the late 19th century were Bengali-speakers from Sylhet, a rural district of what is now Bangladesh, and these were to provide the origins for the Bengali community that developed in the East End from the 1960s.

In 1991, approximately 23% of the Tower Hamlets population was Bangladeshi, increasing to 32% in 2011. Indeed, the borough now houses the largest Bangladeshi population in London – some 40% of its total. While the traditional sources of employment have

been the rag trade and the restaurant business (the founders of so called Indian restaurants in the UK are mainly Bengalis) more recent social research suggests that these trades are no longer the aspiration of many young British-born Bengalis.

Brick Lane has been the site of some of the worst racist attacks in London, sadly echoing the anti-Semitic attacks which took place during the 1930s. For example, in June 1978, 150-200 white youths rampaged through Brick Lane, resulting in deaths and damage to property. This coincided with elections in which British National Party candidates were standing. In 1993 a BNP candidate was elected in the Isle of Dogs, Tower Hamlets, although he was subsequently ousted.

On the corner of Brick Lane and Fournier Street stands what is now the **London Jamme Masjid Mosque** [24], a building which reflects the changing ethnic history of the area. It was originally built as a Huguenot chapel in 1742. In 1809 it was leased to the London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews, but in 1819 it became a Methodist chapel. In 1897 it was bought by the Jewish ultra-Orthodox immigrant Machzikei Hadath society, composed mainly of Polish and Russian Jews, and became the Spitalfields Great Synagogue. In 1976 the building became the London Jamme Masjid Mosque, or London Great Mosque. It remains very much a spiritual centre for local Bengali Muslims – in contrast to the much larger, purpose-built East London Mosque seen on Whitechapel Road.

In their adaptation of the building, the local Muslims found themselves in dispute with the gentrifiers who moved into areas like Fournier Street during the 1980s. The Mosque Committee's attempts to adapt the building to accommodate more worshippers were strongly opposed by conservationists. For a long time, nothing was done to Islamise the building externally – except the list of prayer times on the noticeboard which was formerly used by the Talmud Torah School – although renovation took place inside to create more space. A new minaret was completed in 2010 as part of a local regeneration project. It was to be accompanied by arches at the top and bottom of Brick Lane, although following public resistance in the national press, these were never constructed.

The architecture on the surrounding streets reflects its history. Fournier Street was the heart of Huguenot settlement in London. Many of its houses were built by Huguenot merchants in the 1720s, their typical features are the narrow windows in the mansard roof. A run down area just a few decades ago, today, following gentrification, almost all the houses have been elaborately restored with wooden shutters, chandeliers and other period features.

Wilkes Street and Princelet Street also contain examples of renovated Huguenot houses. The first Yiddish theatre was once housed at **3 Princelet Street** [25]. **19 Princelet Street** [26] combines a silk weaver's house from 1719 with a hidden synagogue, added in 1869. This was the United Friends



19 Princelet Street

Synagogue, the first purpose built 'minor' synagogue in East London, and the third oldest surviving synagogue in England; it remained a synagogue until 1980. The building is planned to become a permanent Museum of Immigration and Diversity, but at the moment it is only open on a few days of the year.

The route continues north along Brick Lane past the **Truman Brewery** [27a].

The brewery produced beer from 1666 to 1989, but is now a centre for small businesses, artists' studios, bars and night clubs. Continue under the railway bridge (where a Sunday market is held – notice the murals produced by local children) and past some surviving Jewish bagel bakeries. The importance of art and culture in the area's gentrification is further demonstrated by the **Rich Mix Centre** [27b], opened in Spring 2006 and funded by a mixture of public and private partnership.

This will lead you into **Arnold Circus** [28], the centre of the LCC's famous Boundary Street Estate, erected in the 1890s on the site of 'The Nichol' a notorious slum fictionalised in Arthur Morrison's novel, *A Child of the Jago*. On Charles Booth's poverty map this area was dark blue and black. The estate was London's first large-scale council housing, with earlier efforts to house the poor paid for privately or by philanthropic funding. The unusual style of the blocks reflects this new approach to housing the poor, with novel and aesthetically pleasing detailing chosen in contrast to the austere design of social housing projects of the time. The buildings are now Grade II listed.

On Bethnal Green Road, note the former **Synagogue** [29] now converted to industrial use. The final point on this route looks again at social housing. **The Victorian flats** [30] at the junction of Commercial Street and Folgate Street is the very first of a wave of social housing funded initially by a £150,000 donation by the American-born banker and philanthropist George Peabody in 1862. Unlike the buildings around Arnold Circus, the flats are no longer social housing having been sold on the open market in the late 1990s.



Victorian flats at the junction of Commercial and Folgate Streets