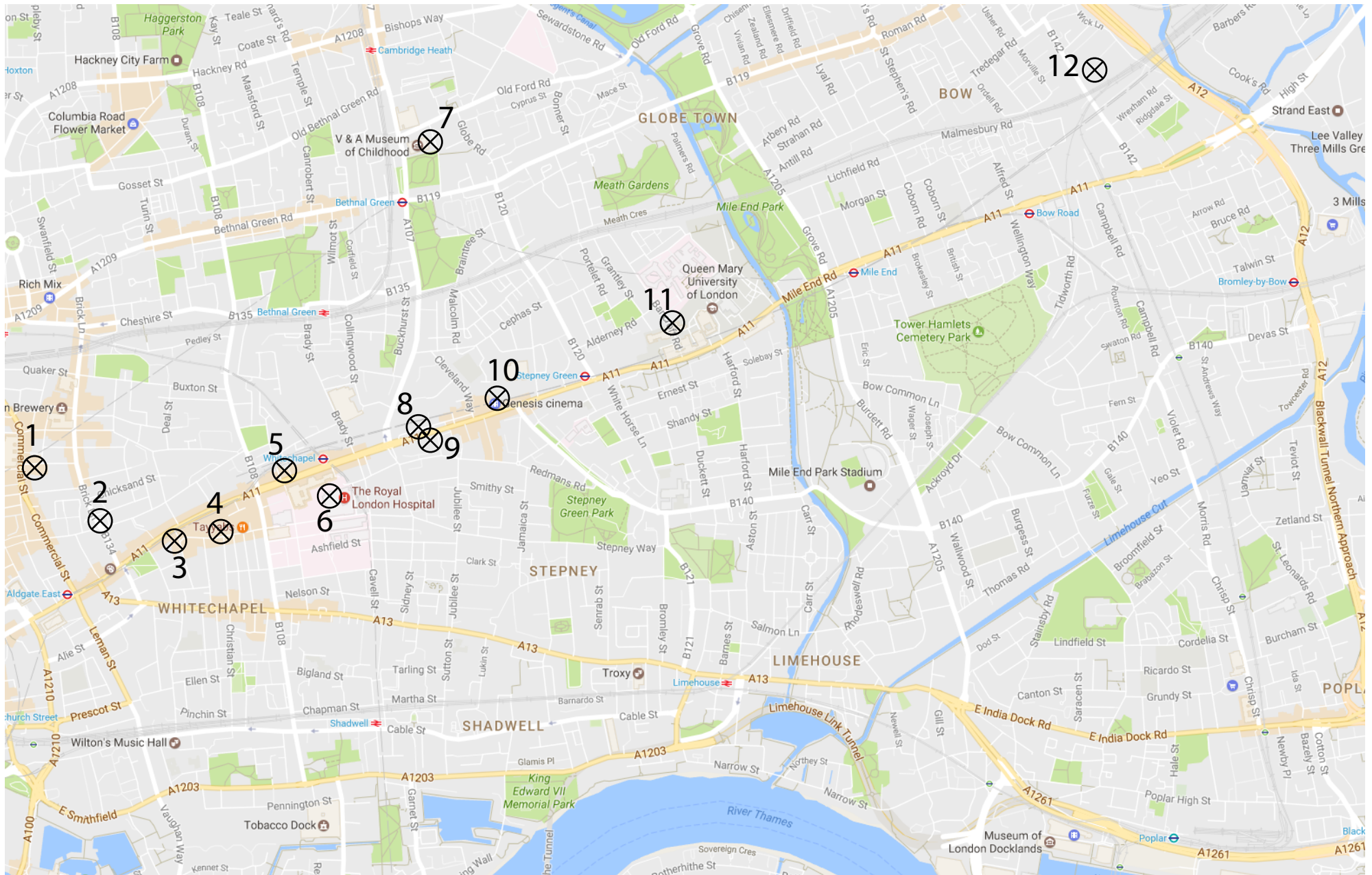


Local History



Local History

1. Christ Church, Spitalfields

This is one of the six Anglican churches in London designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor, a contemporary of Christopher Wren and John Vanbrugh, and it is a Grade 1 listed building built between 1714 and 1729. The church was saved from demolition in 1960 and it has now been restored to its pre-1850 condition.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ_Church,_Spitalfields

2. Brick Lane

Taking its name from a brick works started in the 15th century, this is now the centre of London's Bengali community. The area's history is exemplified by the 18th century building on the corner of Brick Lane and Fournier Street: it started life as a French Huguenot chapel, but it has also been a Methodist Church and a synagogue; it is now a mosque. Visit Fournier Street and Princelet Street to see examples of early 18th century houses. Or for a sugar high and a different "taste" of East London, visit the Cereal Killer Café at 139 Brick Lane and sample some of the 120 different cereals from around the world.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brick_Lane

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fournier_Street

<http://www.cerealkillercafe.co.uk>

3. Whitechapel Bell Foundry

Now closed, this bell foundry dates back to 1570 and the premises had been producing bells since 1739. The foundry has cast the Liberty Bell (no refunds!), Big Ben (the name of the bell in the Queen Elizabeth Tower at Westminster) and, more recently, the Bell of Hope.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitechapel_Bell_Foundry

4. Whitechapel Rownton House

In 1902 the American writer Jack London spent several months living as a vagrant in Whitechapel and described this building as the "Monster Doss House" in his book, *People of the Abyss*. In 1907 both Stalin and Litvinov stayed here for two weeks while attending the Bolshevik conference in Fulbourne Street nearby. The building is now called Tower House and has been converted into luxury flats.

<http://www.workhouses.org.uk/RowtonWhitechapel/>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/photography/what-to-see/jack-londons-undercover-portrait-of-east-end-squalor/>

5. Fulbourne Street

In May 1907 a meeting of the Bolshevik Congress was held in a socialist club in the building on the east side of this street. Notable attendees included Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Gorky and Litvinov.

<http://sarahjyoung.com/site/2011/01/16/russians-in-london-lenin/>

6. Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel

Founded in 1740 the original building still stands on Whitechapel Road even though the hospital is now housed in a modern, multi-storey building behind it. A museum in the Medical School (which is part of Queen Mary) contains the skeleton of Joseph Merrick (The Elephant Man) who was exhibited in a "penny gaff" opposite the hospital. (The museum is not open to the public.)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_London_Hospital

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Merrick

7. Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green

Part of the Victoria and Albert Museum, this Victorian building houses the UK's national collection of childhood-related objects. One of the finest toy collections in the world.

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/moc/>

8. Trinity Green Alms Houses

Built in 1695 to provide housing for "28 decay'd Masters & Commanders of Ships or ye Widows of such" these are now Grade 1 listed buildings. William Morris was one of the people who successfully petitioned to prevent their destruction in 1895-96. Look out for the model ships (complete with rigging) on either side of the entrance! A statue in memory of William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, is nearby.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity_Green_Almshouses

9. Site of Captain James Cook's House

Although James Cook was born in Whitby, Yorkshire, he lived in a house on the Mile End Road for a while in the 18th century. Following Cook's death in Hawaii in 1779, his widow Elizabeth continued to live in the house. A plaque on a brick wall marks the site.

<http://www.captaincooksociety.com/home/detail/cook-s-stepney-now-named-tower-hamlets>

10. Genesis Cinema

Before it became a cinema, this building was the Paragon Theatre of Varieties, built as a music hall in 1885. Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel are known to have performed here before they left for the USA.

<http://genesiscinema.co.uk/GenesisCinema.dll/Page?PageID=3&SubListID=1&SubPageID=5>

11. Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

If you want to trace ancestors or simply know more about the local area then this is the place to go. In the foyer you can see an excellent exhibition, Mapping the Hamlets, showing maps of the area going back to the early 18th century.

<http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history>

<http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history-mapping-the-hamlets>

12. Bryant & May Factory, Bow

Now rebranded as the Bow Quarter, a gated community of luxury flats, this building was originally the Bryant and May factory where matches were manufactured from 1861. In 1888 it was the scene of the London matchgirls' strike. The mostly Irish women and teenage girls in the factory worked long hours in appalling conditions with many suffering from "phossy jaw", a horrific medical condition caused by exposure to the white phosphorous used in making matches. The strike was ultimately successful.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bow_Quarter

<http://spartacus-educational.com/TUmatchgirls.htm>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_matchgirls_strike_of_1888