

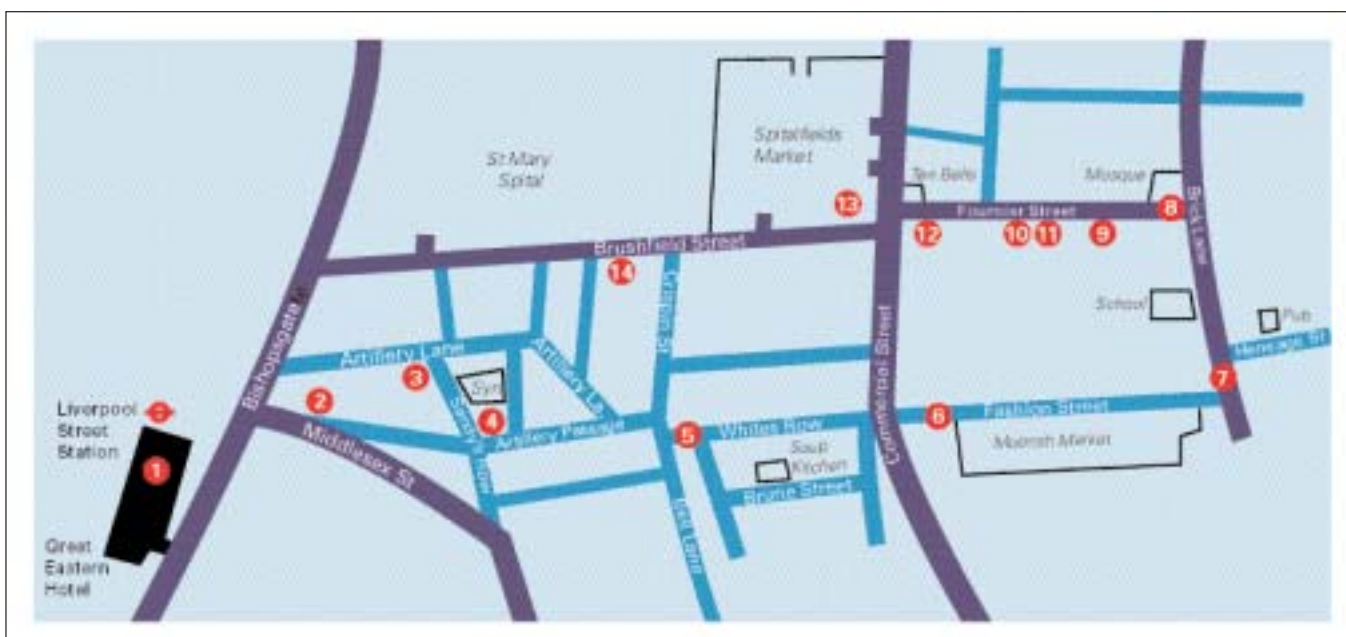
ON YOUR FEET

Walk 5: A In Spitalfields

Walk compiled by Gareth Harris for Cityside Regeneration

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Start and finish: Liverpool Street Station



One of the 21 “hamlets of the Tower” making up Tower Hamlets, Spitalfields lies at the heart of the East End. It was named after a priory and hospital, founded in 1197, known as St Mary Spital. The land holdings of the priory were called the Spital Fields; the area is as old as London itself is, as recent excavations of its Roman graveyard have shown. Its position on the boundary of the City of London gives it an energy common to border zones. Often in opposition politically and financially, its many layered patterns of settlement have created a rich mixture of cultures which have all left their mark. The French Huguenots who settled here in the 17th Century, in what was a fashionable area, left glorious houses in which they wove silk (establishing live/work as a concept for Londoners to catch up with some centuries later).

Jews, who settled from Eastern Europe, revolutionised the textile trade and established a theatre in Spitalfields which would be the genesis of the Hollywood film industry. The Bangladeshis, whose cuisine has enriched and altered the national diet, joined an inclusive community of East Enders. Walter Raleigh’s ship builders at Wapping, whose West country accents were the forerunners of Cockney, and agricultural workers, leaving Norfolk and Essex in the industrial revolution, accepted newcomers amongst them, as they, like most Londoners, were new themselves. This nature of acceptance, rubbing along and caring for neighbours continues as the most endearing feature of East End life. Descendants of all these groups still live in the area and have welcomed the largest community of artists in Europe into their midst in the last 30 years, making Spitalfields a fashionable area once more. The City is indeed fortunate to have such a culturally exciting neighbour.

Start: Liverpool Street Station



The Great Eastern Railway terminus. The recently listed Braithwaite Viaduct in Shoreditch of 1839, was the first railway viaduct in London built to bring to the capital workers and goods from Norfolk and Essex. Its original terminus was on Shoreditch High Street. However, economics dictated an extension to Liverpool Street Station in 1875. The carved brickwork to the left as one leaves the station by the Bishopsgate exit is the Great Eastern Hotel. For many years the only hotel in the City of London, it is now run by Sir Terrance Conran.



1) Bishopsgate exit



At Bishopsgate - to the right where the second set of traffic lights now stands, was the gate in the Roman City Wall, which gives its name to this street. An important thoroughfare leading due south to London Bridge, for centuries the only bridge across the Thames. Along this street in 1598 William Shakespeare and friends walked the timbers of the Theatre – the first public theatre in England – from Shorditch to Southwark to build the Globe Theatre. Turn left



and walk north up Bishopsgate to the traffic lights at its junction with Middlesex Street, cross the road towards Dirty Dick's pub and take second on the right into Artillery Lane.

2) The bollards



The bollards mark the boundary of the City and Tower Hamlets, to the left is a ship's chandlers, an appropriate reminder of the industry in the docks and of the many East Londoners who arrived by ship. King Henry VIII seized St Mary Spital during the reformation of the monasteries and disposed of its buildings and land. He gave a large field to a company of gentlemen archers, now the Honourable Artillery Company, to practice archery and gunnery. Samuel Pepys records visiting the artillery ground to watch guns being fired, a popular entertainment for Londoners in fields outside the city. Pepys also visited Spitalfields to listen to the Spital sermon preached from an outdoor pulpit called the Spital Cross, the foundations of which were discovered in the Spitalfields Market Excavations. The sermon blessing the city of London, its workers and apprentices, is still preached every Easter from St Lawrence Jewry and is possibly the area's oldest continuous tradition.

3) Turn right into Sandys Row

This and its adjoining streets follow their original post fire of London Street plan. After the great fire of London in 1666 King Charles II visited Londoners who were camping in the Moorfields and Spitalfields. Realising that London had burnt down due to the massive overcrowding of the city, he was the first monarch to allow the expansion of London and asked Christopher Wren to value his property holdings in Spitalfields. This area can claim to be one of the first planned suburbs of London, the King granting a charter for a market at Spitalfields in 1682. Notice Sandys Row Synagogue sometimes known as the Dutch Synagogue, on account of the large numbers of Dutch Jews who settled here in the 19th century.



4) First left into Artillery Passage



Just large enough for a horse and carriage, this passage and the adjoining Parliament Court are typical of the many courts and alleyways of this part of London. At number 9A we see a

rebuilt house of the type built by Nicholas Barbon after the fire of London. Within 20 years however, we see the far grander 56 and 58 Artillery Lane built in 1705, (remodelled 1750), showing how popular the area had become. Indeed, in the early 18th century an address in Spitalfields was as grand as any in London. Number 56 is grade I listed and was built by the Jourdain family, successful silk merchants who had left France following religious persecution in the late 17th century. They and many other Huguenots settled in Spitalfields and consolidated the silk weaving industry here. On the left, at the junction with Gun Street, is a door with "MEN" inscribed above, the Catholic Sisters of Mercy established a night shelter here in 1860 for 100 women and 20 men of "good character". By the mid 19th century philanthropic organisations such as the Oxford Movement were moving to this part of the East End. The entrance for "Women" is around the corner. Turn right at the end of Artillery Lane into Bell Lane and left into Whites Row.



5) Right into Tenter Ground

Named after the tenter frames placed here to dry and stretch woven cloth – hence "being on tenter hooks" Weavers could double the length of their cloth and their profits by means of the tenter frame. Turning left into Brune Street, named after Walter and Rosia Brune, who founded St Mary Spital, on the left



is the Soup Kitchen for the Jewish poor which was the last of many purpose built soup kitchens in Spitalfields. The first, called La Soup, was opened in 1797 on Brick Lane, giving nourishment to starving French silk weavers. The soup kitchen for the Jewish poor offered meat, bread and salt to the hungry settlers from Eastern Europe fleeing the pogroms of Tsar Alexander II. There were 4 Jewish soup kitchens, the first of which was built on Leman Street in 1854. To the left on the site now

occupied by the large blue office building stood the Jews Free School from 1820. By 1907 it was the largest school in the country, with three and a half thousand children. At the top of Brune Street turn left into Toynbee Street and cross Commercial Street to Fashion Street.



6) Abraham Davis's Moorish Market occupying the entire south side of the street dominates this street



Conceived as a covered market place in 1905, it was intended Mr Davis lure in local street traders but, as Angela Burdett Coult was to discover with her ill-fated Columbia Market, the cockney costermonger doesn't mind the rain. The Moorish Market was a financial disaster, it closed in 1909. Fashion Street is where Brit Art meets Brick Lane. The East End has a long tradition of harbouring artists; Henry VIII's court painter lived in Bethnal Green. The great artist Rubens was invited to London by Charles II, he also stayed locally. The first gold medal winner in 1775 at the newly formed

Royal Academy of Arts, John Bacon Junior, was a Spitalfields resident, and Spitalfields enjoys a virtually unbroken run of Royal Academicians ever since. Mark Gertler's "Merry-go-round" and Anthony Ayrton's "Rear View, Spitalfields" are on permanent display at Tate Britain. Gilbert & George, Tracy Emin, Chris Ofili, Rachael Whiteread and countless other luminaries of the contemporary British Art scene live and work locally. At Brick Lane turn left.

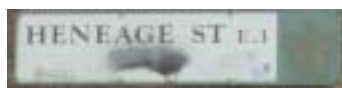
7) Daniel Defoe

Daniel Defoe writes of a track, deeply rutted by carts bringing bricks from brick works at the north end of Brick Lane, to rebuild the city after the great fire. The quality of the brick earth here had been recognised by the Romans, who dug extensively. Brick Lane has been the high street of many settlers to the area; in the early 18th century government officials complained that none of the local French Parish Servants (i.e. local government officials) spoke English. During the later 19th century Yiddish would have been the lingua franca of Brick Lane. Now Bangladeshi voices fill Brick Lane as the one of the 43 different languages spoken in the Spitalfields Ward (in Tower Hamlets as a whole, 75 different languages are spoken). There is no reason ever to go hungry on Brick Lane, at the top end the bagel shops are a reminder of the Jewish influence on our diet. In the early 19th century the Jewish tradition of frying fish and small pieces of



bread met the Huguenot tradition of frying fish with an accompaniment of pieces of fried potato. Jewish cooks substituted potatoes for bread and Charles Dickens records eating fish and fried potatoes bought locally. Curry has now replaced fish and chips as the national dish of choice. Asian seamen of the East India Company cooked on board ship and, with many of those ships coming into the London Docks, brought curry to the East End. It is also worth noting that the first known advertisement for the sale of chocolate in England was from a house in Spitalfields. We are now half way through our walk and those seeking liquid

refreshment may find it at The Pride of Spitalfields on Heneage Street to the right, a pub close to an 18th Century brewery complex, the chimney of which can still be seen from the street. Spitalfields was popular with brewers as there is a large artesian well under Brick Lane. The Truman Brewery further up Brick Lane brewed beer from 1666 to 1989. Passing Christ Church School on the left, notice the plaque recording it's removal from the Churchyard at the Commercial Street end and stop at the corner of Brick Lane and Fournier Street.



8) The London Jammie Majid



The London Jammie Majid, the local mosque, has occupied this building since 1976, however, looking up to the sundial on the Fournier Street frontage reveals the date 1743 when the building was erected as Neuve Eglise, the new French church. The French Huguenots who made up the congregation were Low Church Protestants, followers of Calvin, they wished to worship in a simpler way to that offered by Christ

Church. In 1809 it was leased to the London Society for Promoting Christianity Among The Jews. The building was known as the "Jews Chapel". Failing to convert local Jews to Christianity in large numbers, in 1819 the building became a Methodist Chapel. Spitalfields had long been a centre for non-conformists, Baptists, Quakers and Methodists, John Wesley had preached the first covenant sermon at the Black Eagle Street Chapel off Brick Lane. John and Charles Wesley's mother, Susanna, was born in Spital yard. The Methodists stayed until 1897 when the building was leased to the Machzike Hadath Community who created the principal Jewish synagogue of the area there. They created schoolrooms on the roof and there were always enough men present to form a minyan (10 men), the necessary requirement for a service to take place, their boast was that they were open from dawn to dusk. In 1976 it became the mosque that we see now. This building has always catered for the spiritual needs of the local community, in French, English, Hebrew and now, Arabic. There can be few buildings that have witnessed such versatility and 39 Fournier Street stands as a symbol of change for which this part of East End is famous. The exterior of the building remains as it was built in 1743, a classical building very much of the day and quite different to Christ Church at the other end of Fournier Street, built in the Baroque style and finished in 1729.

9) Fournier Street



Fournier Street is named after George Fournier, a wealthy local benefactor; it was originally Church Street, laid out as part of the Wood Mitchell Estate, Princelet, Hanbury and Wilkes Streets. Mr Woods and Mr Mitchell, lawyers of Lincolns Inn and Middle Temple, developed the estate between 1718 – 1728. Fournier Street survives as one of the finest complete early 18th century streets in London.

10) Walk to numbers 2 and 4

Number 2, the Minister's House was built to designs by Nicholas Hawksmoor, the architect of Christ Church beside it. The house was built in 1726-9, the original estimate for work being £800, the final cost was £1,456 8s 10d. A very modern house in its day, it was built in accordance with building regulations laid down in the City of London to prevent the spread of fire and has its windows set back 9 inches, a full bricks depth, back from the façade. This gives the house a very strong presence. Compared to its neighbours the stone door case is very simple, again adding strength to the overall design, it remains the Minister's house for Christ Church and has never had any other use. This would not be unusual in many parts of the country but it is a rarity in Spitalfields given its propensity for change and its differing religious inhabitants. Miss Isobel Barker, aged 92 in 2002, a Sunday school teacher at Christ Church, was in her youth described by a friend as one of only two Christians living in Spitalfields!



11) Number 4 Fournier Street



Number 4 Fournier Street was built in 1726 by Marmaduke Smith, a local carpenter, as his own residence. A very handsome house; it contains within it possibly the country's first mahogany staircase. The front of the house is framed by 2 brick pilasters, and the door case, more typical of the period than Hawksmoor next door, has brackets carved with ears of wheat and scallop shells. The scallop shells refer to the pilgrim badge of St James and are the early 18th century equivalent of "welcome" on the doormat. Notice that the windows are set back 4 1/2 inches, half a brick's depth, from the front of the building, unlike the contemporary norm at number 6 – flush frames. Could it be that Mr Smith wanted to do something different but was not brave enough to follow Hawksmoor's lead at number 2 and so, made a classic British compromise and went half way. In 1750 it was occupied by Peter Campert, a weaver of "striped and plain lutestring Mantua and tabby". Textile merchants specialising in denim and stretch fabrics currently occupy it.



12) Christ Church Spitalfields



A "50 New Churches Act" church of 1711, was finished in July 1729 having cost £40,000 to build. It was the church of the new parish of Spitalfields, created from the old parish of St Dunstan's Stepney. Queen Anne had been concerned that, in the rapid growth of London in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, few churches were being built. An act of parliament was passed in 1711 allowing for 50 new churches, of which, only 12 were built. Six were by Nicholas Hawksmoor, an assistant of Sir Christopher Wren. Of Hawksmoor's 6 churches Christ Church is his masterpiece, one of the finest Baroque churches in Europe. It owes its magnificence to the commissioners concerns that Spitalfields was a hot bed of religious dissent. The first Baptist Chapel in England had been built in Spitalfields in 1612 and there were many Low Church French Protestants settling in the area. The church has a fine interior and, arguably, one of the finest church organs in the country, Handel's favourite, built by Richard Bridge of Shoreditch. Christ Church was condemned and closed in 1957 for 30 years until an extensive programme of restoration began. In June of each year an international music festival takes place here, the church is open Monday to Friday 12-1pm and on Sunday for church services.

13) Spitalfields Market, Brushfield Street



Cross Commercial Street via the pedestrian crossing from the front of the Ten Bells pub, Christ Church originally had one bell, bells were added as competition started with St Brides Fleet Street over who had the finest peal of bells. When the church commissioned its tenth bell the pub became known as the Ten Bells. Christ Church now has 12 bells. Spitalfields Market was originally a mixed market with both live stock and fruit and vegetables. A panel over the entrance is inscribed "Spitalfields Market rebuilt by Robert Horner during the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, 1887". Robert Horner started his career as a market porter and in 1875 purchased the market and franchise. Rebuilding cost Horner £80,000. In 1920 the Corporation of London purchased the freehold from him for £284,500 The market moved in 1992 to Temple Mills in the Lea Valley and this building is now used as a crafts and organic food market, busiest on Sundays when it competes with Brick Lane, Columbia Road and Petticoat Lane markets. At the western end of the market is the site of the old priory, St Mary Spital, where the remains of the charnel house may be seen.



14) At number 42 Brushfield St.



At number 42 Brushfield Street may be seen the boundary mark of the old artillery ground, mentioned in number 2 above, while another boundary, that of the City of London and Tower Hamlets, exists a few metres further on, the tall buildings of the city marking a different pace and history.

At the end of Brushfield Street turn left for Liverpool Street Station.

