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TOWER HAMLETS

eastendlife

THE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER FOR TOWER HAMLETS PRODUCED BY YOUR COUNCIL

In the first of East End Life's series of monthly walks, **Graham Barker** weaves through the historic streets and alleys of Spitalfields, discovering soup kitchens and synagogues, mosques and markets, art galleries and anarchists.

The heart of the old East End

AS you walk in the heart of the old East End, you're following in the footsteps of the many immigrants who have settled here – French Huguenots, Eastern European Jews and most recently the Bengali community. The streets bustle with a rich cultural mix of markets, shops and restaurants.

Exit Aldgate East Tube station by the signs to Petticoat Lane. At street level, cross at the lights and head left to the Nationwide, the start of our walk.

As you stroll along Old Castle Street notice the grey-fronted **Women's Library (1)** on your left. This was once the Goulston Square Wash Houses, opened in 1849 by Prince Albert for "the great unwashed". At Wentworth Street, turn left between stalls selling slinky shoes and colourful African prints. It's especially lively on Sundays.

Follow Bell Lane, then nip first right to the **1902 Soup Kitchen for the Jewish Poor (2)** in Brune Street, founded to help feed the hungry. Retrace a few steps and turn right along Tenter Ground. "Being on tenter hooks" refers to weavers hooking their cloth on tenter frames to dry and stretch it.

At White's Row, zigzag left of the former Sisters of Mercy hostel – you'll pass the inscription WOMEN as you join Artillery Lane. After visiting **Raven Row Gallery (3)**, wander down the atmospheric Artillery Passage. Then right into Sandy's Row, passing one of only four active East End synagogues – once, there were 150.

Go straight ahead along Fort Street into the plaza. There's a fine view of Christ Church – we'll pop in later.

For now, stroll under the large stretched canopy, and straight ahead to the eco-friendly office (4) of **Allen & Overy**. Back outside, steps lead down to the ruins of Spitalfields **Charnel House (5)** – once used to store old bones – and glass 'headstones' opposite.

Next, head left of the orange striped building, down the broad alley. Turn right

by the Stothard Place sign into **Spital Square** and right again to **No 37** around the corner – a panelled 1740s silk merchant's house (6).

Next, head to **Elder Gardens (7)**, a quiet green strip tucked away beyond Carluccios. Walk through both sections and at the end, facing Scarlet, explore ahead inside **Spitalfields market (8)**. This was once London's main wholesale fruit and veg market, now it's the place for funky fashion and scrummy food. There are free loos here too.

Back to Scarlet, then head right, past the Vortex sculpture. Cross Commercial Street to The Golden Heart, popular with the East End art scene. Here we start weaving again – right along the pavement, then first left down flagstoned Puma Court, past shuttered **Norton Folgate almshouses (9)** and weavers' cottages.

Zigzag down Wilkes and Princelet Streets – look out for Huguenot silk designer Anna Garthwaite (No 2), a viola manhole cover marking the Yiddish Theatre (No 6) and mayor Miriam Moses (No 17).

At the end, turn right onto Brick Lane, named after the brick kilns used to help rebuild the City after the Great Fire of 1666. These days it is the heart of London's Bengali community, famed for its curry houses and lively street scene. The 1743 building on the next corner has a colourful history, having been a French Huguenot chapel, a Methodist chapel, a synagogue and, since 1975, the **Jamme Masjid mosque (10)**.

Turn right along Fournier Street, one of London's finest early 18th century streets. Look up at the weavers' attics, sunlit through large windows. Admire too the porch brackets at No 4 carved with St James' scallop shells – a 'welcome' sign of its day.

After exploring inside **Christ Church (11)**, enjoy the wild flowers next door at Itchy Park. A short stroll down Commercial Street then turn first left into Fashion Street, which is dominated by Abraham

Davis' 1905 **Moorish Market (12)**. He'd intended to house 250 shops here, but it didn't really take off. These days it's trendy offices.

Turn right down Brick Lane again, full of vibrant saris and tasty treats. After the Banglatown arch, turn right then left, along the cobbles of Wentworth and Gunthorpe Streets.

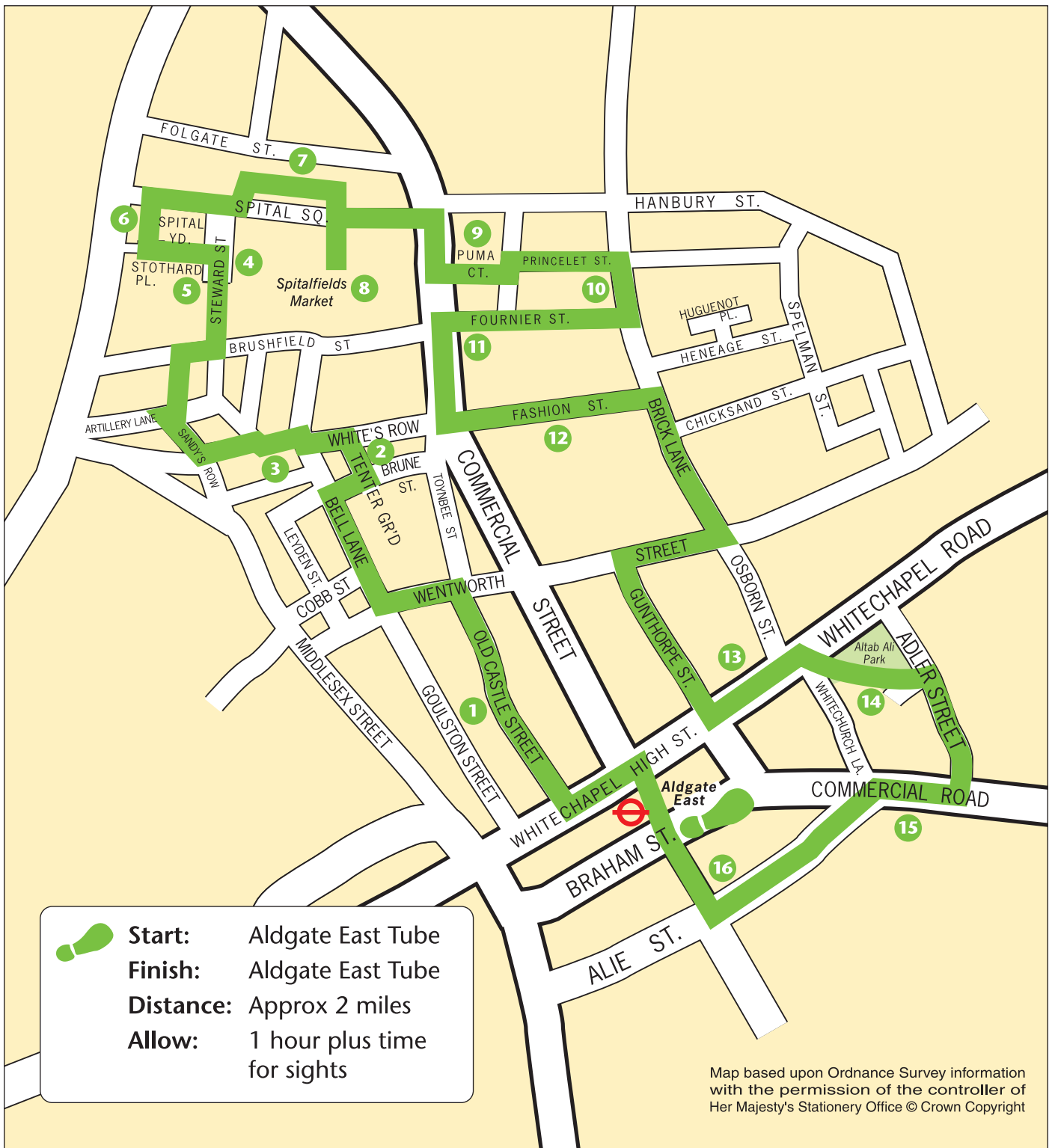
As you emerge onto Whitechapel High Street, you can read about Jack the Ripper. Go through the tiled arch, and peer up at the Star of David over Albert's – once the Jewish Daily News office. Further left, you can nip in and out of the tiny Angel Alley, home of the anarchist mural and Freedom Bookshop.

The elegant Arts and Crafts **Whitechapel Gallery (13)** next door has just been expanded to incorporate the old library. Founded by the visionary vicar, Samuel Barnett, it brought art to the working class East End. As you leave, spot the plaque outside to WWI poet Isaac Rosenberg, who often studied at this 'University of the Ghetto'.

At the pedestrian crossing, cross to the opposite corner and through a wrought iron arch into **Altab Ali Park (14)** – re-named after a young clothing worker killed nearby. The original White Chapel stood here from 1250.

Look right, to the abstract red and white Language Martyrs' monument. Then follow the left-hand path, embedded with metal poetry: "The shade of my tree is offered to those who come and go fleetingly."

At the far corner, pass St Boniface's sleek bell tower and follow Adler Street. Turn right towards the Gherkin, cross Whitechurch Lane, then across Commercial Road at the lights. You'll spot the **Proof House (15)** opposite, where gun barrels were tested, safely outside the old City wall. Walk around The Castle, along Goodman's Stile. Beyond the factories and old red-brick school is **St George's German church (16)**. At the Dispensary next door, turn right to return to Aldgate East station.



The Norton Folgate Almshouses



The Moorish Market in Fashion Street



The splendour of the Raven Row gallery