

Mile End and Stepney Squares Walk 19th October 2016

The St Dunstan's and Stepney Green ward, with a population density of >18,000/sq.km., is estimated to have London's highest proportion of people in social grade E. At Stepney Green secondary school 80% of students are eligible for free school meals and 98% are from the Sylheti-speaking Bangladeshi community.

Mile End Station Opposite the station is **Onyx House**, designed by Piers Gough, which stands in the footprint of Essex House which flourished 1891-1905 as the Guild of Handicrafts inspired by William Morris.

Southern Grove - past the former Whitechapel Union Workhouse.

Tower Hamlets Cemetery - opened in 1841, one of London's "magnificent seven" Victorian burial grounds.

The first public cemetery in London was established in 1827 in Kensal Green, a 79-acre site, which had separate chapels for Anglicans and Dissenters. Other landscaped public cemeteries were soon opened at Norwood (1837), Highgate (1839), Nunhead (1840), Abney Park, Stoke Newington (1840), and Tower Hamlets (1841).

Monuments include:

- one to Charles Brown, a flamboyant publican –“the uncrowned King of Limehouse” – whose funeral attracted more than 10,000 mourners,
- local mayor, MP and trade unionist Will Crookes who “lived and died a servant of the people”.
- the Poplar War Memorial remembers the 190 local residents killed in World War II air raids.

Mile End Park was developed between 1952 and 1999 on bombsites.

Regents Canal opened 1820

Solebay Street Sneath Engineering: electrical engineers est. 1898.

Shandy Park is on the site of the East London Cemetery or Beaumont Burial ground, founded by Capt. J T Barber Beaumont as part of housing that he built on his land here. The cemetery closed in 1852; in 1885 it was made into a children's recreation ground maintained by the LCC.

Stepney Gas Works The Commercial Gas Light and Coke Company set up its principal works in Stepney in 1838 and generated coal gas until 1946. As London expanded the Stepney Works was transformed from a tiny site in rural surroundings into a massive industrial complex packed with buildings including in 1864 the world's third largest gasholder. Until 1990 they were used to store natural gas; they were demolished in 2004.

The **Firewatchers Memorial** commemorates the work of firewatchers stationed on top of the gasholders in the early days of the Blitz 1940-41 when incendiary bombs were falling.

The **Ragged School Museum** (opened 1990) is in the building where in 1877 Dr Barnardo opened his Copperfield Road Free School which until 1908 was London's largest "ragged school".

Ben Jonson Road is named after Ben Jonson (1572-1637) dramatist and contemporary of Shakespeare, who acted in at least one of Jonson's plays at the Curtain Theatre, Shoreditch.

The transformation of one of Britain's most deprived neighbourhoods of the massive **Ocean housing Estate** (originally built in the 1950s and housing 6,500 people in 2001) was highly commended in the 2016 Planning and Placemaking Awards, Best Housing category. 800 new homes have been completed and 1,200 refurbished since 2010.

At the south west corner of the shopping parade note the blue plaque where **Dr Barnardo** started his work with the East End Juvenile Mission in 1866.

Leaving Elsa Street for Whitehorse Road note the **Toby Jug ceramics**.

St Dunstan and All Saints was founded in 952; the existing building is mainly from the fifteenth century, although the chancel is 200 years older.

Sir John Cass & Red Coat School was endowed in 1710.

Stepney City Farm was founded in 1979.

Crossrail divides at **Stepney Green**. A ventilation shaft next door to the farm leads down to one of the largest mined caverns in Europe, approx. 50m long, 17m wide and 15m high.

An archaeological dig associated with Crossrail found the remains of Worcester House, a Tudor manor house built c1450-1550, and one of the earliest (1644) purpose-built nonconformist meeting houses in London. Four tomes of bricks from the manor have been donated to English Heritage for use in restoring Britain's Tudor manors and palaces.

Senrab Street is named after its builder – Barnes!

Marion Richardson Primary School is a classic LCC three-decker built in 1907.

The **Troxy** opened as an art-deco cinema in 1933, capacity 3,500: the first film shown was King Kong.

Albert Gardens (formerly Square) was built in the early 1840s.

Arbour Square (1819-1830) Raine's Foundation School (1913 – now Tower Hamlets College) had a shooting gallery in the attic. The north side of the square dates from 1937.

Lady Mico's Almshouses were built nearby by the Mercers Company in 1691 and relocated here in 1976. The former **Arbour Square police station** (where the Kray twins were once held) and Magistrate's court closed in 1999.

Atkinson Clock Tower (1911) was moved here in 1934 from Burdett Road.

Stepney Green developed in the fifteenth century as a street of residential housing off the Mile End Road. The green was flanked by fine houses in the 17th and 18th centuries; some of these survive. For half its length the road is divided by Stepney Green Garden, created in 1872 from a remaining strip of the old Mile End Green.

From the late 19th century, when this had become a strongly Jewish area, self-help dwellings companies built tenement blocks of which the most distinctive is **Stepney Green Court** built in 1896 by the 4% Industrial Dwellings Company. The company, chaired by Nathaniel, Lord Rothschild, built good quality low rent accommodation for the working poor in the East End: profits for shareholders were limited to 4%. These were some of the earliest buildings in the East End to supply hot water on tap to the residents.

Next door the monogram SJS from 1906 for the **Stepney Jewish School** is still on the wrought iron gate.

Two houses on the corner of the access lane to **Beaumont Square** were built speculatively in 1761-63 by Limehouse sugar refiner Joseph Bazeley.

Beaumont Square is named after Barber Beaumont (1774-1841 – see also Shandy Park) who founded the Provident Life Friendly Society. He founded the New Philosophical Institute in the square. After his death the trust from his estate together with the Drapers Company helped to found the People's Palace and the Technical College which became Queen Mary and Westfield College in Mile End Road.

Peter Shore Court is named after the MP for Stepney 1964-97.

Maria Terrace is a fine row of Georgian cottages.

No. 37 Stepney Green is an imposing Queen Anne house. It was built around 1694 by Dormer Sheppard, a slave owner and merchant. It then belonged to Dame Mary Gayer widow of the East India Company's governor of Bombay. It became an institution and was a Home for Aged Jews after 1880. It became a private house again in 1998; it is the oldest house in Stepney.

Dunstan House (1895) on the corner of Cressy Place and Stepney Green is where in 1905 the ringleader of the battleship Potemkin mutiny, torpedo quartermaster Afanasy Matushenko, sought refuge at an anarchist and socialist meeting place. The anarchist and editor Roland Rocker, a key figure in the 1912 East End tailors' strike, also lived here.

Assembly Passage The area running alongside Mile End Road was known as Mile End Green and became known as a place of assembly for Londoners, reflected in the name.

Wickhams (1927-1960s) was known as the Selfridges of the East End. The gap next to the tower results from the refusal of Mr Spiegelhalter, a clockmaker and jeweller, to move out. He was apparently made an offer of “covering the floor with sovereigns” and responded “only if they are stood on edge.”

Originally the Paragon Music Hall, built in 1885, the **Genesis Cinema** was Frank Matcham’s first hall. He went on to design the Hackney Empire, the London Coliseum and London Palladium and Victoria Palace.

A brewery was founded in 1738 that developed in 1897 into **Charrington & Co.** The brewery building, the Anchor Brewery, was on the north side of Mile End Road opposite Stepney Green where the Anchor Retail Unit is now situated.

88 Mile End Road is where Captain James Cook (1728-79) used to live.

The **Whitechapel Mural** (2011) includes Samuel Pepys, poet Isaac Rosenberg, Lenin, Joseph Merrick the Elephant Man. Mahatma Gandhi, the Krays, Edith Cavell and the Queen.

William Booth the founder of the Salvation Army began his preaching here in 1865.

Trinity Almshouses were built in 1695 to house “decayed masters and commanders of ships and their widows”; they are the oldest almshouses in central London.

Soho House’s Dirty Burger and Chicken Shop at **27A Mile End Road** occupies a building erected in 1905 for the Albion Brewery’s engineer.

At the crossroads of Whitechapel Road, Mile End Road, Sidney Street and Cambridge Heath Road, 1 mile from Aldgate and the city wall, stood the **Mile End tollgate** on the London to Colchester road which moved to its present alignment after Bow Bridge was built in 1110.

Recorded in 1288 as *La Mile ende*, the Middle English 'mile' and 'ende' means 'the hamlet a mile away'.

In 1381 during the **Peasants Revolt** Jack Straw, Wat Tyler and 60,000 men camped here.

Vawdrey Close The former Toby Club was established by Charrington’s as a social club.

Immediately after crossing Cleveland Way and turning left towards Coopers Close the Georgian cottages of **Bellevue Place** can be seen from the footpath.

St Peter’s Church, Cephass Street was built 1838 and converted to housing in 2001.

Meath Gardens opened 1894 formerly Victoria Park Cemetery (1842-76). In June 1988 a tree was planted and a plaque set in the ground by the Aboriginal Cricket Association inscribed “In memory of King Cole [Bripumyarrimin], Aboriginal cricketer,

who died of TB on the 24th June 1868". The team played against a young W G Grace.

By the canal towpath are metal sculptures of **Ledley King, a barge horse and Sylvia Pankhurst.**

The **Queens Building and People's Palace** (1887, rebuilt art deco 1937) with an Eric Gill facade.

Mile End Place contains 19th century workers cottages. Beyond the far wall is the oldest Jewish cemetery in Britain, purchased in 1657 after Oliver Cromwell permitted Jews to return to England 267 years after they were expelled by Edward 1.

241 Mile End Road now the Mazahirul Uloom Mosque is on the site of a 16th century house called Frogmorton's and associated with Sir Walter Raleigh.

253 Mile End Road Albert Stern House, now used as residential accommodation by Wueen Mary & Westfield, was a built as a home for elderly Sephardi Jews originating from Spain and Portugal.

Stepney Green Station opened in 1902 on the Whitechapel & Bow Railway. The 2 mile long lone linked the Metropolitan District Railway at Whitechapel with the London, Tilbury & Southend Railway at an above-ground junction at Bow. The line was electrified in 1905.