

FROM CABLE STREET TO BETHNAL GREEN: a musical walk through East End history

London's East End is alive with the generations that came before us. People from across the globe have shaped this neighbourhood, and brought with them countless stories and their ancestral culture. The Grand Union has devised a brand new show – and reinvented the 'promenade performance'! - in the form of a walk directed by scanning QR codes and an interactive map. Following the map, you will discover the culture, heritage and historic landmarks of our part of the East End. A special selection of videos from the Grand Union Orchestra's acclaimed music theatre shows will be your companion and personal guide - the perfect pandemic pastime!

Videos animating this promenade relate some extraordinary stories and political or historical events - tales of refuge and liberation, of protest and sometimes violence. With music by Tony Haynes and performed by the Grand Union Orchestra, they are drawn from our shows spanning over 15 years, with local people of all ages among the performers, and many of them filmed in venues and locations you will discover on the trail.

An ingeniously designed interactive map will guide your walk, which is about 5km. At each stop, you will discover a QR code to be scanned with your smartphone, which will link you to a YouTube video of a performance of an appropriate piece of music from our repertoire. The map also contains descriptions revealing the story behind each landmark, its significance, and its relation to the musical material. Alternatively, you can also take the journey from the comfort of your own armchair, using the interactive map as your guide and informant, linking you directly to each piece of music.

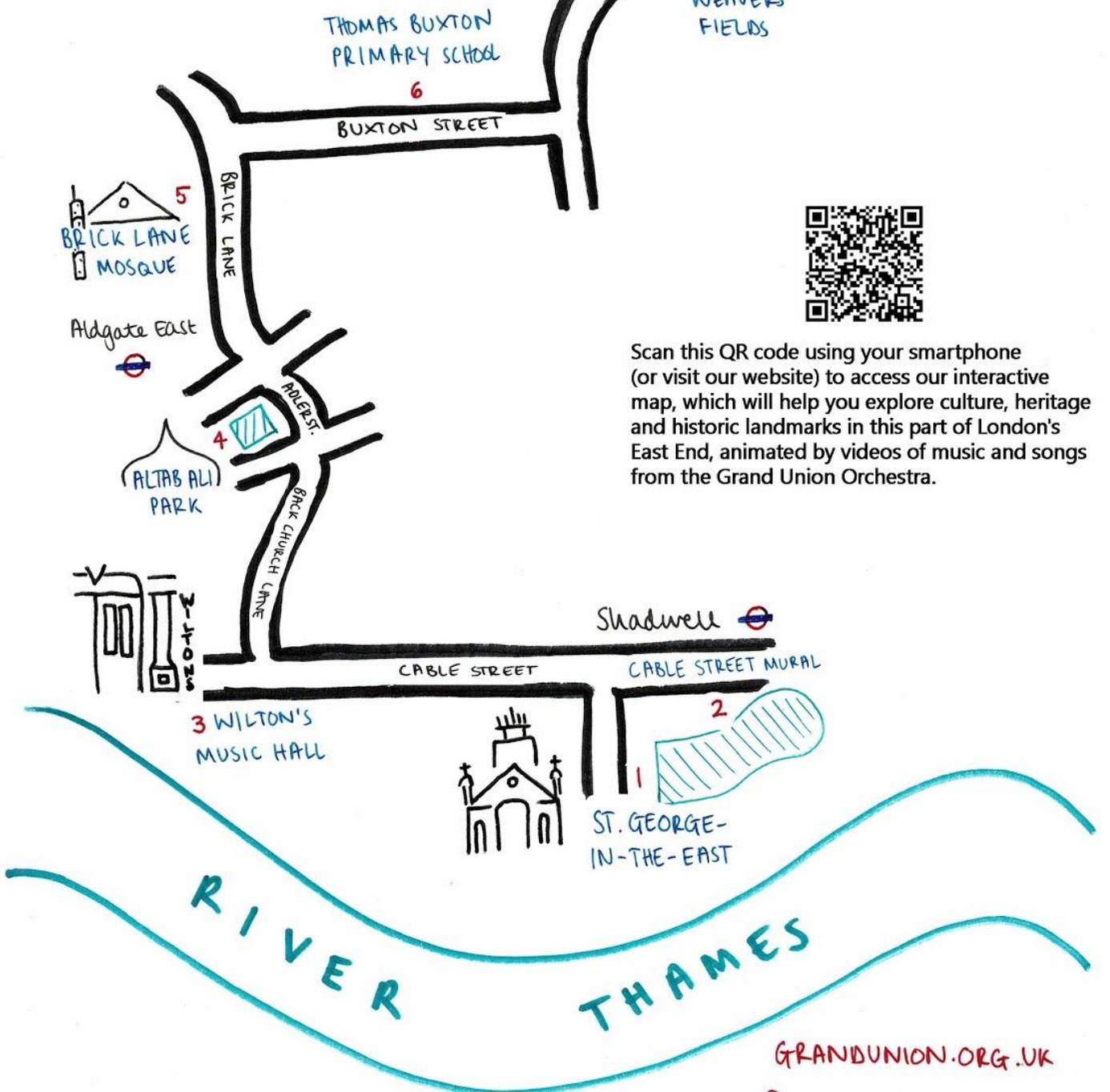
Enjoy discovering some of the hidden features of our wonderfully colourful neighbourhood, accompanied by the unusually dramatic music of the Grand Union Orchestra. You can access the interactive map by scanning this QR code, or by clicking [here](#).



GRAND UNION ORCHESTRA

FROM CABLE STREET TO BETHNAL GREEN

A musical walk through East End history



Scan this QR code using your smartphone (or visit our website) to access our interactive map, which will help you explore culture, heritage and historic landmarks in this part of London's East End, animated by videos of music and songs from the Grand Union Orchestra.

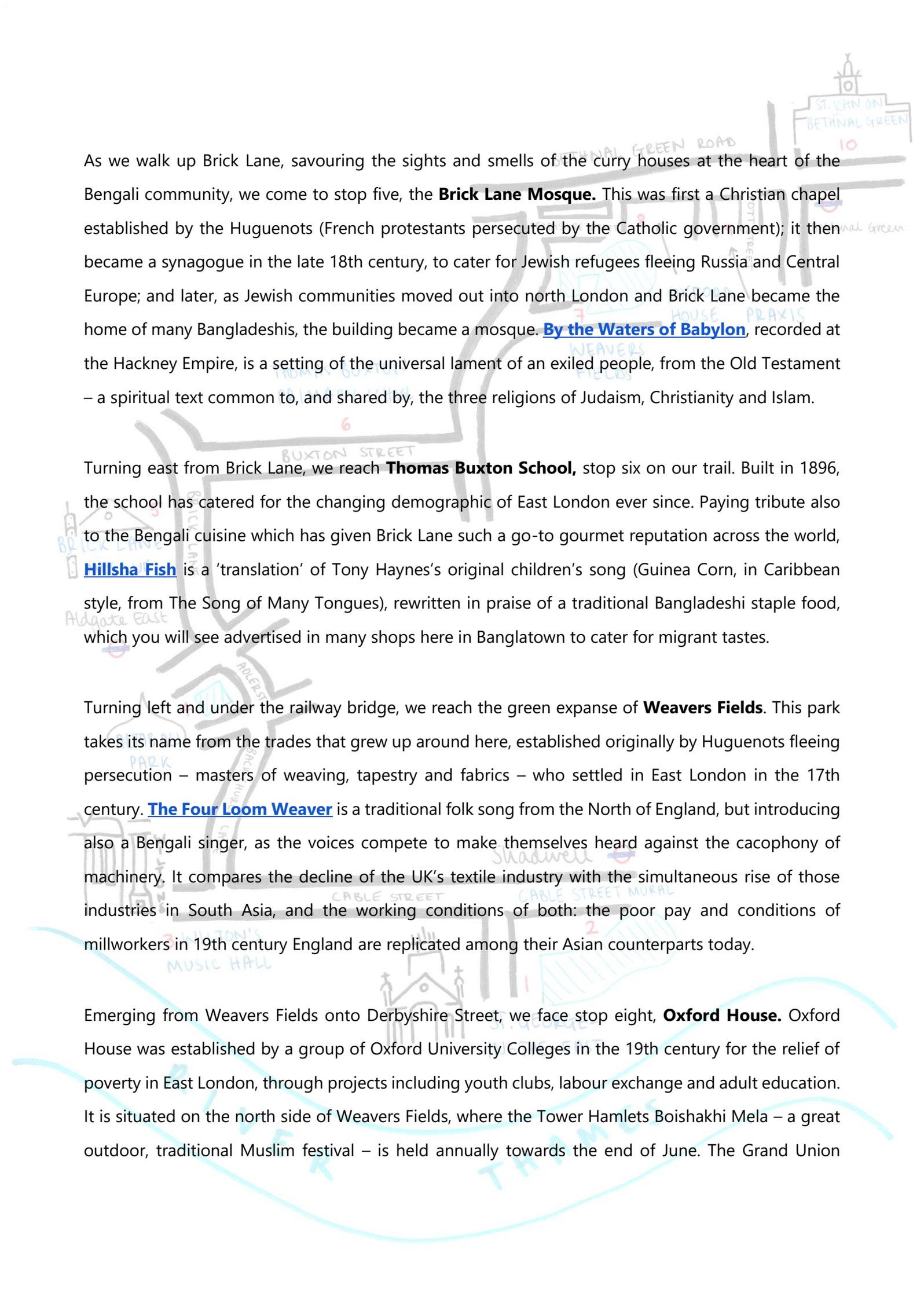
From Cable Street to Bethnal Green: locations, videos and information

We begin our trail at **St. George in the East**, one of Nicholas Hawksmoor's six famous London churches. This urban parish off the Ratcliff Highway was once at the heart of London's growing industrial dominance, savagely bombed during the Second World War. Listening to [I Live in the City](#), you can visualise the hustle and bustle of a modern multicultural city, the energy of the diverse people who build and serve it, give it character and identity, and fill it with life and light – especially the younger generation. (The lyrics come from an anthology of poems by local children gathered by Stepney school teacher Chris Searle.) This performance was filmed at the Hackney Empire Theatre in 2015.

Now walk through the churchyard, and you'll come across the **Cable Street Mural**, stop number two on our trail. This mural commemorates the powerful popular protest that forced Oswald Mosley and his British Union of Fascists (known as the Blackshirts) to abandon their march through the streets of East London, intimidating the long-established Jewish population. The Battle of Cable Street took place in 1936, but the days of fascism are still not behind us: [The Beast is Back](#) tells the story of the Battle, and warns how right-wing populism is on the march again not only in East London, but right across Europe. It was filmed at Rich Mix in Shoreditch for the 80th anniversary of the Battle in 2016.

Turning the corner into Cable Street, we soon reach stop number three, **Wilton's Music Hall**. This 19th century building is one of the world's last authentic Victorian music halls. The Grand Union Orchestra has performed many successful shows here over the years, and this song was recorded there in 2017. [The Freedom Fighter](#) is set in the bitter civil war that eventually gained Bangladesh independence from Pakistan in 1971. It dramatises vividly the traumatic experience of a guerrilla soldier, and the emotions of his wife at home, fearing she may never see him again.

Walking up Back Church Lane past the warehouses - a reminder of how London's prosperity grew through the shipping trade - on to Adler Street, and into **Altab Ali Park**, stop four, we step into the heart of Whitechapel. This park is a memorial to the young Bangladeshi textile worker murdered by a gang of skinheads from the National Front in 1978. This piece, [Lalon Ki Jat](#), is based on a song by the well-known Bengali poet and *baul* singer Lalon Shah in the 19th century; the lyrics are essentially humanist, asserting that all people are born equal, regardless of religion, caste or skin colour.



As we walk up Brick Lane, savouring the sights and smells of the curry houses at the heart of the Bengali community, we come to stop five, the **Brick Lane Mosque**. This was first a Christian chapel established by the Huguenots (French protestants persecuted by the Catholic government); it then became a synagogue in the late 18th century, to cater for Jewish refugees fleeing Russia and Central Europe; and later, as Jewish communities moved out into north London and Brick Lane became the home of many Bangladeshis, the building became a mosque. [By the Waters of Babylon](#), recorded at the Hackney Empire, is a setting of the universal lament of an exiled people, from the Old Testament – a spiritual text common to, and shared by, the three religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Turning east from Brick Lane, we reach **Thomas Buxton School**, stop six on our trail. Built in 1896, the school has catered for the changing demographic of East London ever since. Paying tribute also to the Bengali cuisine which has given Brick Lane such a go-to gourmet reputation across the world, [Hillsha Fish](#) is a 'translation' of Tony Haynes's original children's song (Guinea Corn, in Caribbean style, from The Song of Many Tongues), rewritten in praise of a traditional Bangladeshi staple food, which you will see advertised in many shops here in Banglatown to cater for migrant tastes.

Turning left and under the railway bridge, we reach the green expanse of **Weavers Fields**. This park takes its name from the trades that grew up around here, established originally by Huguenots fleeing persecution – masters of weaving, tapestry and fabrics – who settled in East London in the 17th century. [The Four Loom Weaver](#) is a traditional folk song from the North of England, but introducing also a Bengali singer, as the voices compete to make themselves heard against the cacophony of machinery. It compares the decline of the UK's textile industry with the simultaneous rise of those industries in South Asia, and the working conditions of both: the poor pay and conditions of millworkers in 19th century England are replicated among their Asian counterparts today.

Emerging from Weavers Fields onto Derbyshire Street, we face stop eight, **Oxford House**. Oxford House was established by a group of Oxford University Colleges in the 19th century for the relief of poverty in East London, through projects including youth clubs, labour exchange and adult education. It is situated on the north side of Weavers Fields, where the Tower Hamlets Boishakhi Mela – a great outdoor, traditional Muslim festival – is held annually towards the end of June. The Grand Union

Orchestra was commissioned in 2009 to create a suite of pieces show-casing well-known artists from Bangladesh. **Milon Hobe** is one of them: it features the hugely popular singer Sumi from Dhaka in another song by Lalon, but set against a powerful West African rhythm and jazz big band riffs.

The penultimate stop on our trail is **Praxis**, an organisation in Bethnal Green which has long worked to support migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. The universal experience of being a refugee is encompassed in **The Refugee**, charting the physical, emotional and social turmoil, the multiple barriers to travel, and the continual challenges they face. This song, sung here by Croatian Maja Rivić at Wilton's Music Hall, is a testament to this experience, a mother doggedly trying to protect her children, until they can be reunited with their father...

As we reach the busy junction at Bethnal Green, the imposing **St John Bethnal Green** looms ahead for the last stop on our trail. This is the only church designed by the famous Regency architect Sir John Soane. A gloriously light and generously-proportioned building, it sits at the heart of Bethnal Green, and has long been the home of the Grand Union's big participatory projects created with local communities. Returning to the spirit with which we began this journey, **I Ain't Goin' Dere No More** celebrates the corresponding musical glories of a multi-cultural society – featuring youth brass band, school jazz orchestra, African drummers, steel pan group, sitars, santours, tablas, strings, flutes and mixed percussion, solo singers and youth choir – in a paean to peace and equality with words in Caribbean dialect by St Lucia-born poet and writer Valerie Bloom.

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3 WILTON'S
MUSIC HALL



ST. GEORGE-
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RIVER

THAMES