

SHARED ROOTS IN FAITH

Why the East of London?

Judaism

The earliest known record of Jews in England is in 1066 at the time of William the Conqueror. Jews were found to be useful since they were permitted to undertake jobs which Christians were not, such as money lending. However, in 1290 anti-Semitism was rife and at the order of Edward I, many Jews were massacred. In 1655 Oliver Cromwell (a devout Christian) allowed Jews to return and in 1701 a synagogue called the Bevis Marks Synagogue was built near Aldgate. It remains in use and still stands today as the oldest synagogue in Britain. In 1881 the Czar of Russia, Alexander II was assassinated by revolutionaries, pogroms (violent mob attacks against particular ethnic or religious groups) were launched against the Jewish population in Russia and many sought refuge in the West. 100,000 fled to the UK, and a large proportion settling in London's East End. These Jewish immigrants were not necessarily warmly welcomed, and were forced to live in overcrowded conditions. In the 1930s the Jewish population of the East End again found themselves targeted when Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists rose in popularity. A second wave of immigration came in the 1940s with many Jews escaping persecution and the horrors of war in. Some came to East London, but many chose to reside in the leafier, more suburban areas of North London and Finchley. Many synagogues were forced to close down as the Jewish population moved away however the Nelson Street synagogue, formally known as the East London Central Synagogue, remains.



Brick Lane Synagogue



Islam

As with other immigrants in the East End, many Muslims came as traders and seamen. However, the most notable arrival came in the late 1940s which saw an influx of Bangladeshis, searching for employment and escape from political unrest. In later years, Somali Muslims came to the East End to escape civil war. Whilst Islam was the last of the three faiths to settle in the East End its presence is arguably the most noticeable today. For example, in Brick Lane where Muslims from Bangladesh have brought with them their language; which can be seen on street signs, their cuisine and places of worship - the Brick Lane Mosque; a former synagogue and church. The Brick Lane Jamme Masjid ('Great Mosque') was built in the 18th century and is a grade II listed building – one of the oldest in the East of London. In 1743, the Huguenots constructed the building as a (protestant) chapel. In the late 18th century many



East London Mosque

Jewish refugees settled in London and the building was bought and used as a synagogue, until the Jewish population declined and the building fell into disuse. During the 1970s many Bangladeshis moved to London, and the building was refurbished as a mosque and has been in use ever since.