

A walk down Petticoat Lane

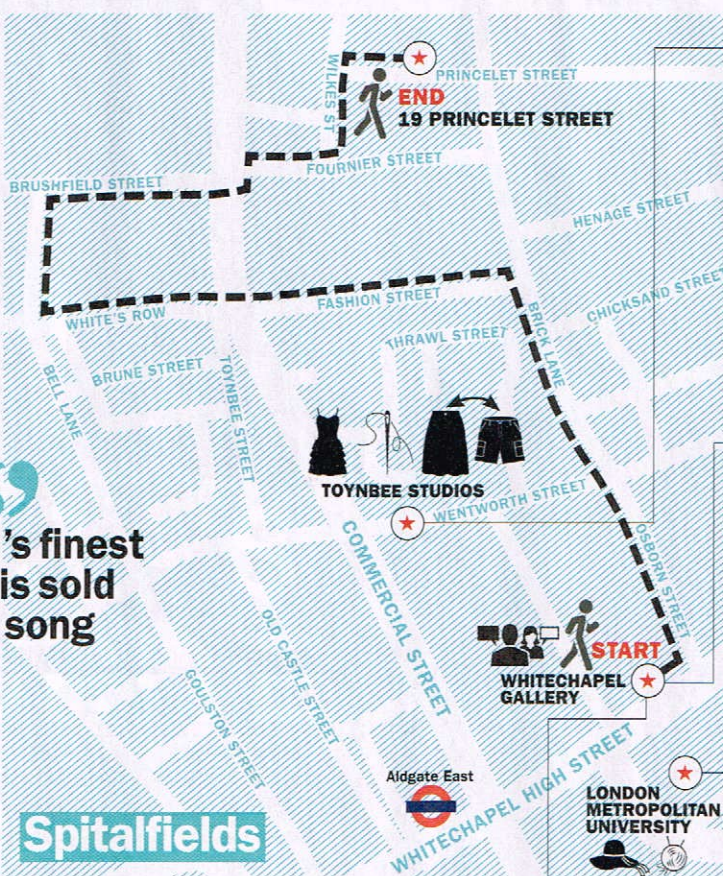
Spitalfields hasn't always just been a home to financiers and chains. **Katie Dailey** previews a fashion festival that reminds us about the area's history in textiles, and gets us excited about the rag trade again

Now that Spitalfields' old market is populated by Leon and Giraffe, and its main street features an Office shoe shop and a Nandos, it's hard to imagine a time when the area was the engine room of the British clothing industry. But you don't have to look far for reminders of its eighteenth-century glory – starting with the street names, which read like a textiles manual – from Threadneedle Street to Petticoat Lane and straight up Fashion Street. You'll no longer find Huguenot silk weavers working on the top floors of Hanbury Street (where the buildings on one side of the street are higher than the other, to give garment workers more light to work), but you will find Crescent Trading, where London's finest cloth is sold for a song, still servicing much of Savile Row.

This weekend, the former life of Spitalfields is celebrated in a festival of fashion making, seeing and doing. It's organised by Hubbub, a London sustainability charity. Alongside informative events such as a 'From Huguenots to Hipsters' walking tour of the area, there are workshops in knitting, hat-making and mending. A big swapping session allows you to shop and declutter for free, and a pop-up shop selling only locally made fashion will revive a little of your faith in the creative handiwork of the East End. Over at the Whitechapel Gallery, the Empathy Museum hosts a 'Human Library', at which you can take a seat alongside workers from all areas of the industry and listen to them rabbit on about their work. You could be listening to a Primark sales assistant; you could be listening to an 80-year-old fabric merchant. One thing's for sure – you'll have a better and more fulfilling afternoon than a chainstore shopping session can offer.



ON Petticoat Lane in the 1960's and (right) today



London's finest cloth is sold for a song



FROM HUGUENOTS TO HIPSTERS

A walking tour from the Whitechapel Gallery archives to 19 Princelet Street – an eighteenth-century Huguenot home rarely open to the public. The walk will school you in the area's rich textile heritage, from a time when that involved a lot more than painstakingly distressing denim.

Whitechapel Gallery, meet outside main entrance. Sat May 9, 11am-2pm. £6.



SWAP

Trade clothes you're bored of for someone else's at this budget-friendly clothing exchange. Artsadmin, Toynbee Studios. Sat May 9, noon-5pm. £2. No booking required.



STITCH AND FIX WITH HEBA

Seamstresses Heba have spent 25 years making clothes at their Brick Lane HQ. This handy session teaches you how to fix up your fashion, from raising hems to mending zips. Artsadmin, Toynbee Studios. Sat May 9, 1pm-2pm. £5.

POP-UP SHOP

For one day only, buy locally made fashion from an assortment of designers from the area. Artsadmin, Toynbee Studios. Sun May 10, 11am-5pm. Free.



EMPATHY MUSEUM'S HUMAN LIBRARY

Have a one-to-one with the sellers, shop assistants and true characters behind the UK's flourishing fashion industry at this quirky session, Whitechapel Gallery. Sun May 10, 2pm-5pm. £3.



TENDER LOVING CLUTCH WORKSHOP WITH WOOL AND THE GANG

The cool kids of craft, Wool and the Gang, teach you how to make a neat little bag out of old T-shirt scraps. Cass Faculty of Art. Sat May 9, 11am-1pm. £10, booking required.

HATASTIC WORKSHOP

Got a wedding to go to this summer? Even novices can make their own hat from reclaimed materials. Cass Faculty of Art, London Metropolitan University. Sat May 9, 10am-noon. £7.