

# PECKHAM TIMELINE

**ROMAN AD 43-410**  
Evidence of Roman settlement in the area

**1086**  
Domesday Book records 'Pecheham' as having 1 villager and 3 small-holders

**1724-26**  
Daniel Defoe describes 'the pleasant villages of Peckham and Camberwell with some of the finest dwellings about London'

**1826**  
Peckham branch of Grand Surrey Canal opened

**1863**  
Rye Lane Chapel moves to its current location

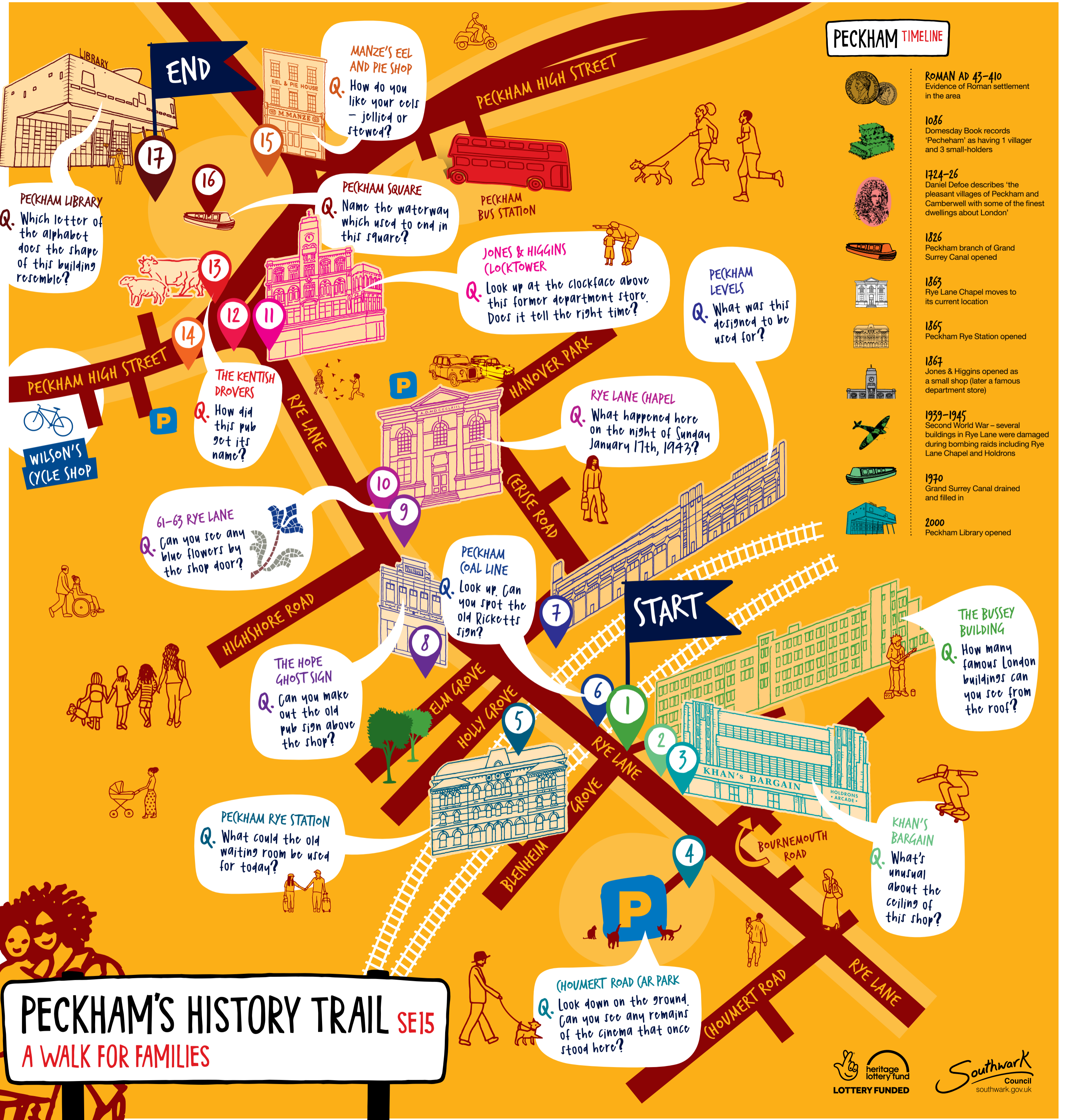
**1865**  
Peckham Rye Station opened

**1867**  
Jones & Higgins opened as a small shop (later a famous department store)

**1939-1945**  
Second World War - several buildings in Rye Lane were damaged during bombing raids including Rye Lane Chapel and Holdrons

**1970**  
Grand Surrey Canal drained and filled in

**2000**  
Peckham Library opened



# PECKHAM'S HISTORY TRAIL SE15

## A WALK FOR FAMILIES

**THE BUSSEY BUILDING**  
Q. How many famous London buildings can you see from the roof?

**KHAN'S BARGAIN**  
Q. What's unusual about the ceiling of this shop?

**(HOUMERT ROAD CAR PARK)**  
Q. Look down on the ground. Can you see any remains of the cinema that once stood here?

**PECKHAM LEVELS**  
Q. What was this designed to be used for?

**JONES & HIGGINS (LOCKTOWER)**  
Q. Look up at the clockface above this former department store. Does it tell the right time?

**RYE LANE CHAPEL**  
Q. What happened here on the night of Sunday January 17th, 1943?

**PECKHAM COAL LINE**  
Q. Look up. Can you spot the old Ricketts sign?

**THE HOPE GHOST SIGN**  
Q. Can you make out the old pub sign above the shop?

**PECKHAM RYE STATION**  
Q. What could the old waiting room be used for today?

**61-63 RYE LANE**  
Q. Can you see any blue flowers by the shop door?

**THE KENTISH DROVERS**  
Q. How did this pub get its name?

**PECKHAM SQUARE**  
Q. Name the waterway which used to end in this square?

**MANZE'S EEL AND PIE SHOP**  
Q. How do you like your eels - jellied or stewed?

**PECKHAM LIBRARY**  
Q. Which letter of the alphabet does the shape of this building resemble?

# PECKHAM'S HISTORY TRAIL

SE15

A WALK FOR FAMILIES

PECKHAM TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

www.peckhamheritage.org.uk @PeckhamHeritage

## WELCOME TO PECKHAM

Walking along Peckham's busy streets, it's hard to imagine that this bustling south London neighbourhood, where people have come from all over the world to make their home, was once just a tiny village of a few hundred people surrounded by farmland. Peckham has a long history. Over the years, the old streets around Rye Lane, Peckham High Street and Peckham Hill Street have seen many changes. Industries, communities, waterways, places of worship, cafes, pubs, housing estates, shops and places of entertainment have come and gone.

It's still a bustling and ever changing place – the narrow pavements burst with shoppers and commuters, and roads, once jammed with horses and carts, now pulse with cars, buses, lorries and cyclists. Yet, despite all the changes, even a short walk around Peckham can reveal clues as to what it was like here in days gone by.

The walk outlined on this map has been designed for families to enjoy together, as an adventure. It takes in some of Peckham's oldest and finest buildings, hidden treasures and celebrated landmarks. On the map there are things to look out for and a few teasers for you to answer along the way. The walk should take a minimum of 30-40 minutes but you're advised to make time to allow for diversions as Peckham is full of interesting nooks and corners, cafes, market stalls and shops selling goods from across the globe.

So enjoy this colourful corner of London but take great care crossing the road. And do share with us photos of any gems you discover! @PeckhamHeritage #Peckham

→ The Peckham History Trail begins on Rye Lane, less than a minute's walk away from Peckham Rye Station. Where Rye Lane meets Blenheim Grove is a zebra crossing. Directly opposite it is a narrow covered alleyway that leads to our first stop on the trail, the Bussey Building.

### 1 THE BUSSEY BUILDING (133 Rye Lane)

Hidden away behind Rye Lane's shop fronts and railway arches is one of Peckham's greatest assets – The Bussey Building. In Victorian times this was the site of George Bussey's sports factory where most of the cricket bats and roller skates made in Britain at that time were produced. The factory closed sometime after World War 2 and the building went into decline but in recent years this impressive five-storey building has been given a new lease of life. It now houses many artists' studios, cafes, theatres, faith groups, galleries and workshops.

It's hard to miss the murals and graffiti on the courtyard walls. They are examples of street art. Artists have sprayed or painted large, often very detailed pictures, directly onto the outside walls of the building.

If you have time, and don't mind climbing stairs, walk alongside the Bussey Building until you come to a door with 'B-Stairs' written above it. Climb the stairs to the top floor. On the right hand side is a rooftop cinema and, to the left, a cafe/bar where accompanied children are welcome before 7.00pm. If you've managed to walk all the way up to the top your reward is a pigeon's eye view across London's spires, towers, rooftops, parks and domes.

Before you head back to Rye Lane take a walk into the Bussey Building yard. This is a surprisingly large space with many buildings now used by small businesses of all sorts. Notice the brightly painted walls and the chimney stack with the word RONS set out on it in white bricks. Once upon a time this chimney stood much taller and bore the name of Holdrons, one of Peckham's grandest department stores.

→ Go back along the alleyway onto Rye Lane and turn left.

### 2 KHAN'S BARGAIN (135 Rye Lane)

What was part of Holdrons is now home to Khan's Bargain, a large and colourful shop well known in Peckham for selling everything from mops to mousetraps. Take a peek inside. When you are about halfway through the store, look up at the dramatic curved 'vault' ceiling built in the 1930s containing many tiny windows.

→ Exit Khan's and turn left.

### 3 HOLDRONS ARCADE (135a Rye Lane)

Holdrons closed in 1949, just after World War 2, but the name lives on in Holdrons Arcade. This corridor of small independent shops includes Peckham Vision, an organisation that tells local people what's happening in Peckham and how to get involved.



→ Exit the Arcade and head left along Rye Lane towards Bournemouth Road. On the opposite side of Rye Lane you'll see a concrete archway with pictures on it. Cross the road and head under the arch, as if you were going into the car park.

### 4 HOUMERT ROAD CAR PARK (Opp. Bournemouth Road)

During the 1920s there were no less than 5 cinemas on Rye Lane. The largest was the Tower, which stood on the site of this municipal car park from 1914 to 1956. Its vast tower rose 30 meters into the air (imagine 7 double decker buses piled on top of one another) and could be seen for miles around. Inside, the cinema was like a palace. It had a sweeping staircase, velvet seats, a fountain and an air raid shelter. The Tower also had its very own ghost. A hooded figure was said to float in front of the cinema screen before mysteriously disappearing into the walls!



As you walk back towards the concrete archway leading to Rye Lane, look down at the walkway. The eyes peering up at you out of the concrete were part of the original decor of the Tower cinema.

→ Exit under the archway and turn left. Cross Blenheim Grove. The entrance to Peckham Rye Station is on the left hand side.

### 5 PECKHAM RYE STATION (Station Way)

With the arrival of the railways in the 1860s, the then quiet suburb of Peckham was connected with Victoria and London Bridge Stations for the first time. Before then, travellers into the city had to go by stagecoach, which was slower and could be dangerous as the roads were stalked by highwaymen.

In the station forecourt (as you face the station entrance) take a look through the ground floor windows on your left for a glimpse of a staircase leading up to the former 'First Class Waiting Room'. From the 1920s to the 1960s, this impressive room was used as a billiard hall (a hand painted sign pointing to the entrance is still on the wall. Look up and you'll see it).

The best view of the old waiting room is through the windows on Platform 3. This magnificent long-lost room has stood empty for almost 60 years. In recent years the windows, walls and splendid high arched ceiling have been lovingly restored in the style of the original building. It's occasionally used for public talks and exhibitions.



→ As you leave the station turn left past the restaurant on the corner. On Holly Grove turn right to get back on Rye Lane and then cross over using the crossing. Turn right up Rye Lane and continue under one railway arch.

### 6 PECKHAM COAL LINE

Just before the next railway arch on the right is a yard with various stalls. Pause for a moment and take a look at the cobbles under your feet – a reminder that once upon a time horses were stabled here. Now look up towards the railway line. Can you see the remains of an old sign which displays 'Rickett'? In the 1850s this yard was what was known as a 'coal drop', a place where coal was dropped from the railway line above and stored in the railway sidings. There are plans to transform this derelict railway line into a raised tree-lined park connecting Rye Lane with Queens Road. (For progress on this project to www.peckhamcoalline.org)

→ Turn right back on Rye Lane, walk under the railway arch and past the crossing. Peckham Levels is on your right.

### 7 PECKHAM LEVELS (95A Rye Lane)

What is this building? You can see that it's a cinema, and also that it looks like a car-park. But there's much more inside. Now called Peckham Levels, as well as home to Frank's Café – famous for its views of London – the building is a hub of small businesses and creativity. Its upper floors are open to the public so you can go and explore how this former Sainsbury's car park has been adapted for 21st century use.

### 8 THE HOPE GHOST SIGN (above 66 Rye Lane)

Apart from shopping and cinemas, Rye Lane was famous for its numerous pubs. If you look across the road above the shop at 66 Rye Lane you will see the ornate sign for The Hope public house, built in 1861.

### 9 61-63 RYE LANE

As you pass by this shop look for the blue flowers in the tiles by the entrance. This shop used to be a branch of Sainsbury's and the mosaic you can see in the shop doorway would have covered the entire floor of the original store.

### 10 RYE LANE (HAPEL) (59A Rye Lane)

This large white building, the Rye Lane Chapel, was originally built close to Peckham Rye Station, but was moved to this spot in 1863 to make way for the railways. A plaque on the right of building will tell you what happened here (on the night of) 17th January 1943.

→ Walk to the end of Rye Lane, towards Peckham Library and at the junction with Peckham High Street turn to face back down Rye Lane and look to your left.

### 11 JONES & HIGGINS (CLOCKTOWER (above 3 Rye Lane)

The large ornate building with the clock tower is what remains of the Jones & Higgins department store which used to stretch along Rye Lane. It opened in 1894 and stayed in business until 1980. For 35 years, the distinctive clock above the shop told the time as 7.35, but in 2015 the clock was cleaned and carefully restored and has told the correct time ever since.



→ Turn to your right and look up to the second floor of the building on the corner, you'll see a plaque.

### 12 HANOVER (HAPEL)

The Hanover Chapel was on this site from 1717 to 1920. There's an article dated 4 November 1865 from the South London Press that states that Reverend Sella Marin, a former slave from the United States, addressed a meeting at the Chapel on the living conditions of the 4 million recently freed slaves following the abolition of slavery.

→ Now turn in the opposite direction to face the Kentish Drovers pub.

### 13 THE KENTISH DROVERS (71-79 Peckham High Street)

Until the 19th century this junction was a stopping off point for 'drovers' or stockmen who herded sheep and cows through Peckham from the county of Kent to Smithfield Market. This pub has 'crossed the road!' Until the 1960s a pub of the same name was next to the Jones & Higgins building.



→ Next turn round and cross over Peckham High Street at the crossing and then look back over the street to the buildings on your right.

### 14 1700s BUILDINGS

The junction of Rye Lane, Peckham Hill Street and Peckham High Street dates back to the 1700s, when Peckham was a rural community. The shops opposite might not look very exciting, but behind them, some of the buildings date back to this time. The tallest one (no. 58) is listed, which means it is protected from being pulled down.

→ You might decide to take a short detour along Peckham High Street to Wilson's cycle shop (no. 32). Wilson's has been trading in Peckham since 1870 and is one of Peckham's oldest businesses.

→ From The Kentish Drovers walk along Peckham High Street past the library and at the traffic lights follow the road around to the left.

### 15 MANZE'S EEL AND PIE HOUSE (105 Peckham High Street)

This is another of Peckham's oldest shops. Pie and mash and jellied or stewed eels have been served in this restaurant since 1927. Look inside and note the marble table tops and tiled walls. If you eat here, you will be helping to keep alive the tradition of eating pie and mash, the staple food of working class Londoners since the 1700s.

→ Just past Manze's, take the turning on the left which leads out onto Peckham Square.

### 16 PECKHAM SQUARE

In 1826 the Peckham branch of the Grand Surrey Canal was built, linking the village of Peckham directly with the River Thames. Coal, tiles, bricks, timber and other goods were carried along the canal by flat-bottomed boats known as barges. In 1972, when London's docks were moved downriver to Tilbury, the canal was filled in and the Surrey Canal Walk and this modern square were built on the available land.



### 17 PECKHAM LIBRARY (122 Peckham Hill Street)

The last stop on our walk is one of Peckham's landmark buildings – the Peckham Library. In 2000 this L-shaped building – designed by architect Will Alsop, and containing over half a million items – was awarded the Stirling Prize, British architecture's highest honour. Most importantly, it is well-used and much loved by local people.

The library offers great views of the local area, and on the 4th floor there is a sculpture of the head of Dr Harold Moody, who came from Jamaica in 1904 to study medicine. After being denied jobs in hospitals because of racial prejudice, in 1913, he set up his own GP practice in Peckham. In 1931 he formed the League of Coloured Peoples which campaigned on race equality and civil rights. Dr Harold Moody was named in the 2017 100 Great Black Britons list.

Find out more: Southwark Heritage – Cuming Museum, Art Collection and Local History Library and Archive  
[www.heritage.southwark.gov.uk/about](http://www.heritage.southwark.gov.uk/about)

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