

Place, space and memory in the old Jewish East End of London:

**An archaeological biography of Sandys Row Synagogue, Spitalfields
and its wider context**

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Key words: buildings archaeology; archaeology of Judaism; post-medieval
London; place and memory

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**An archaeological biography of Sandys Row Synagogue, Spitalfields and its wider
context**

Abstract

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3 Sandys Row (London E1) is the only functioning Ashkenazi (Eastern European Jewish)
4 Synagogue in Spitalfields and the oldest still functioning Ashkenazi synagogue in London.
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6 Located in an area, which from the mid-late nineteenth century until WWII was the centre
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8 of London's Jewish population, it is one of the last surviving witnesses to a once vibrant
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10 and dynamic heritage that has now virtually disappeared. This area has been the first port
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12 of call for refugees for centuries, starting with French Protestant Huguenots in the
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14 eighteenth century, then Jews fleeing pogroms in Eastern Europe in the nineteenth
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16 century followed by Bangladeshi Muslims in the twentieth century. Using a broadly
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18 archaeological analysis based very closely on the sort of practice widely used in church
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20 archaeology, the authors argue that much can be inferred about wider social and cultural
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22 patterns from a study of architectural space at Sandys Row and its associated material
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24 culture. This is the first such archaeological study undertaken of a synagogue in Britain
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26 and offers a new perspective on wider issues regarding the archaeological definition of
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28 religious practice and religious material culture.
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40 **Key words:** buildings archaeology; archaeology of Judaism; post-medieval London; place
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Introduction

“Spitalfields has been floated. It’s delousing itself in readiness for a stock market quotation.

One of nature’s quislings, the area has always been ready to trim its cloth to the fashion of
the moment.’

(Sinclair in Lichtenstein and Sinclair 2000: 6)

In 1968 BBC 2 Television broadcast a programme in a series called *One Pair of Eyes* featuring the Jewish singer Georgia Brown (1933-1992) and composer Lionel Bart (1930-1999). In the episode ‘Who are the Cockneys now?’ Brown and Bart revisited the London East End scenes of their Jewish childhood and found the area had changed. It was now becoming home to a new wave of immigrants from the Indian sub-continent. 1968 was a defining year for race relations in the UK; the year of the Conservative politician Enoch Powell’s infamous ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech that railed against non-white immigration from the British Commonwealth (Whipple 2009). In 1968 the identity of the old Jewish East End (focused upon the districts of Whitechapel, Spitalfields and Stepney) in which Brown and Bart grew up was already diminishing, but in reality the East End of London always was an area of social flux (eg. Lichtenstein 2007; Marriot 2011; Palmer 2000). This was a heterotopic, liminal and transformative space on the eastern margins of the City, where successive generations of immigrants left material traces on the cityscape. As the writer Iain Sinclair notes above, Spitalfields now has taken on yet another identity, that of a gentrified and sanitized place.

Spitalfields has always been a place of layered identity. In the eighteenth century French Protestant Huguenot weavers, feeling persecution in their homeland, settled among the indigenous 'cockneys', and left a distinctive archaeological footprint evidenced by their handsome brick-built churches and houses, and distinctive domestic material culture (Parker 2009; 2011). Then in the nineteenth century large numbers of Ashkenazi eastern European Jewish immigrants arrived (Green 1991) and around the docks small Somali (El-Solh 2010), Chinese (Seed 2006) and West Indian (Banton 1955) communities developed, contributing to a cosmopolitan cultural mix contrasting heavily with what was still a very white, English capital (Kershen 2004 defines the neighborhood of Spitalfields as a microcosm, an area that reflects wider movements in social history, but this is a notion that we challenge later). Heavy bombing by the Luftwaffe in WWII, left the area in ruins, the Jewish community left in droves, after a period of abandonment the area re-invented itself again, as new migrants from Bangladesh and Pakistan began to arrive from the 1950s onwards. East London has now become home to many southern Asian immigrants settling alongside older populations. It was, and remains a heady and vibrant socio-cultural mix (see O'Neill 1999 for a personal and perceptive memoir), and a place that challenges the visitor to embrace shifts in place and identity (Kershen 2004; 2005; Mavrommatis 2010; Roemer 2009). No wonder, then, it has been celebrated in psychogeographic-orientated writings as a place of dystopic possibilities (eg Sinclair 2017), events (Ackroyd 1995) and quixotic individuals (Lichtenstein and Sinclair 2000).

The East End of London has thus always shown a capacity for reinvention, successive waves of settlers adding to the urban fabric (Nanzeen et al. 2016). This paper focuses upon a single archaeological site (a building) that bears witness to one of these episodes. In taking a conventional buildings archaeological approach, and utilizing techniques widely used in church archaeology and memorial recording in the UK, we seek

1 to show how a small place of worship holds up a mirror to wider social developments in
2 London from the nineteenth century onwards. In particular we pay attention to aspects of
3 changing ritual space, patterns in memorialization and discarded material culture to gain a
4 wider sense of the place of this synagogue within the wider social and cultural fabric of the
5 old Jewish East End. Further, this contribution seeks to move the archaeological study of
6 Judaism on from rather fixed and traditional chronological and geographical perspectives
7 (Hachlili 1998; 2001; for a British perspective see Hinton 2003; Isserlin 1996; Marks 2014
8 offers a survey closer to the material described here in terms of chronology), and place it
9 firmly within the context of historical/post-medieval archaeological studies and within the
10 palimpsest of a complex urban setting (eg Hall 2006). Further, we show how community
11 involvement within the project can inform strategies for heritage management and
12 interpretation at the site within the context of the memory of the wider old Jewish East End
13 (Kushner 1991).

32 **Sandys Row Synagogue and its place within the socio-cultural fabric of the Jewish** 33 **East End**

34 Sandys Row synagogue (OS Grid Ref TQ3346381681) is located in a small maze of
35 streets just to the east of Bishopsgate, north-east of the historic boundary of the City of
36 London (figure 1). The building itself has a complex biography. It was originally built as a
37 small place of worship for refugee French Huguenots in 1766 replacing an earlier building.
38 After the Huguenots left in 1786, it was taken over by Universalist Baptists from 1792 to
39 1824 when it was briefly used by the South Place Ethical Society (a secular group) and
40 then by a Scottish Baptist congregation (Stell 2002: 177). In the 1840s a small community
41 of Dutch Ashkenazi Jews from Amsterdam (who had come to London primarily as
42 economic migrants) settled in the area. After initially renting various buildings in the area
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1 they eventually converted the building to their own use. There is an important context to
2 this, however. Invited to take the seats reserved for the poor in the nearby Ashkenazi
3 synagogues, they refused as they wished to worship in their own unique Dutch traditions.
4 This caused a rift within the Ashkenazi community to such an extent that when the Sandys
5 Row synagogue was finally consecrated in 1870, the Chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazi
6 community refused to conduct the service and (very unusually) the *haham* (Sephardic term
7 for the Chief Rabbi) of the Sephardi community from nearby Bevis Marks synagogue
8 performed the rite instead (sandysrow.org 2017).
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20 This Dutch Ashkenazi community was a highly demarcated and distinctive one,
21 focusing predominately upon cigar making, cap making and diamond cutting amongst
22 other trades (Kadish 2006: 10-11). Known by their fellow Ashkenazi neighbours
23 pejoratively as '*chuts*' (Brotmanblog 2014). In 1854 they formed a friendly society (*hebra*)
24 called the *Hevrat Menahem Avalim Hesed v'Emeth* (Society for Comfort for the Mourners,
25 Kindness and Truth) which was originally established as a burial society, but eventually
26 became a fund for raising monies to purchase the building. The noted synagogue architect
27 Nathan Solomon Joseph (1832-1909), who had also designed the Central Synagogue in
28 Great Portland Street (1869) and who was an ardent defender of the smaller synagogues'
29 independence against their larger city neighbours (Jamilly 1955), remodeled the chapel
30 along the lines of the Great Synagogue in Dukes Place.
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49 The synagogue was briefly (1887-1899) the largest of the Jewish congregations
50 forming the Federation of Synagogues. From 1899 there was an agreement with the
51 United Synagogue for burial rights and in 1923 the congregation joined the United
52 Synagogue as an Associate Synagogue and acquired the freehold of the property. By
53 1949 it was independent, although associated for burial purposes with the West End Great
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Synagogue, Dean Street, London W1 (sandysrow.org 2017). The synagogue also acted as the centre for the Secretariat of the Stepney and Whitechapel Traders Association, and the basement used for storage. Nearby Petticoat Lane market was very much regarded as being 'the great Jewish market' and was originally a centre for itinerant Jewish rag trade pedlars (Vaughan 1994: 17). The synagogue remains in use by the Orthodox community to this day, although the focus of Jewish settlement in London as a whole has shifted towards North London in suburbs such as Stamford Hill, and further out in Barnet and Elstree, as well as further East to places such as Redbridge, Ilford and Southend, part of a wider phenomenon of drift and socio-cultural integration (Newman 1985; Waterman and Kosmin 1986). Daily afternoon services (*mincah*) still take place in the building and a small congregation gathers for services every other Shabbat and on high holy days, but it is a far cry from its high water mark in the late 19th-mid 20th century when it served a central religious and social role to a thriving local Jewish community of Dutch origin, and became one of the most distinctive of the capital's Ashkenazi synagogues.

Figure 1: Location of Sandys Row synagogue in East London.

Having considered the history of the building itself, let us now turn to its wider context within the urban landscape of the Old Jewish East End. Memory sites of the old Jewish cultural heritage of this part of East London are diverse and not limited solely to synagogues, although they are the most visible components. Synagogues are central elements of Jewish life, and serve at once as ritual buildings as well as having a strong community focus. They formed crucial nodal points in the rhythms of everyday life of the urban fabric of the old Jewish East End (Vaughan, Sailer and Dino 2016), and nor are they of a uniform spatial design, reflecting different social and economic conditions of the worshippers within them (Glasman 1987). They also embody gendered space, as they are predominantly male ritual spaces where women are only permitted in certain parts of the

1 building. This is an important issue to which we shall return. As we shall see below there
2 are very distinctive unifying architectural elements that inform the use of space within a
3 synagogue building, but (and it is important to note this in the context of the current case
4 study) they do not have to be purpose-built dedicated buildings. There are a number of
5 interesting examples of historic synagogues within the immediate area of Spitalfields,
6 which emphasize this idea of fluidity of ritual space (Nanzeen et al 2016; Kershen and
7 Vaughan 2013).

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18 The present Jamme Masjid (mosque) on Fournier Street/Brick Lane (OS Grid Ref
19 TQ 3385581814) was converted from a Jewish synagogue (the Spitalfields Great
20 Synagogue, or *Machzike Hadath*) in 1976, which in turn, like Sandys Row, had been
21 originally erected in 1743 as a Huguenot Chapel (Alexander 2011; Stell 2002: 116-17).
22 Externally there are few material traces of this conversion process, apart from changes in
23 signage, the addition of female only entrances and a tall free-standing tubular steel
24 minaret. The main adaptations are more evidenced internally, with the creation of a wide
25 haram, or prayer room with a *mihrab* (semi-circular niche indicating the direction of Mecca
26 and thus the direction for prayer), rather than a ritual space crowded with seats. The ritual
27 orientation of the building has therefore shifted, away from the east to the *qibla* (direction
28 of Mecca), roughly a south-eastern direction.

47 **Figure 2: Sandys Row Synagogue: main entrance**

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52 The synagogue at 19 Princelet Street (OS Grid Ref TQ33908185) offers another
53 contrast in the development of ritual space. The synagogue, which was founded in c 1862
54 and in use until the 1960s was built over the back garden of an 18th-century Huguenot silk
55 weaver's house. Internally the building, which is owned by the Spitalfields Trust, is in a bad

1 state of repair. Much of the plasterwork internally is in a poor condition. There are plans for
2 the site to be opened to the public as a Museum of Immigration (reflecting the wider history
3 of the area) when the building's restoration is complete (date unknown). The site is also
4 well known as the dwelling place of the polymathic autodidactic central character of Rachel
5 Lichtenstein's eponymous book, *Rodinsky's Room* (Lichtenstein and Sinclair 2000).
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13 Bevis Marks (OS Grid Ref TQ33398125) is not part of the Ashkenazi Jewish
14 heritage canon, and arguably sited towards the northern boundary of the City of London, is
15 not part of the East End Jewish landscape *per se* but needs to be mentioned here for the
16 sake of completeness of analysis, as it is the oldest synagogue surviving in England.
17 Located some 500 metres to the south of Sandys Row in the northeastern corner of the
18 City, the building dates from 1701. Designed by Joseph Avis, architecturally the exterior
19 'shares features with ...nonconformist meeting Houses' (Kadish 2006: 4) but its interior is
20 based upon the design of the Great Synagogue of the Sephardi community in Amsterdam,
21 its mother community. A brick-built rectangular building, the synagogue is sited within a
22 court as Jews were prohibited from building on public roads. Externally the building shows
23 broad similarities to Sandys Row, the 1766 built L'Eglise de L'Artillerie, in the use of brick
24 and bowed windows. In terms of scale and monumentality, Bevis Marks operates on a
25 different plane to the Ashkenazi synagogues to the north beyond the City boundary,
26 evidencing a longer and more integrated mercantile-orientated settlement of the older
27 established Sephardi communities (Kadish 2004; Rubens 2001).
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52 In addition to the synagogues, either in use, deconsecrated or converted to another
53 ritual use, other buildings contributed the socio-cultural fabric of the Jewish East End. The
54 nearby Jews Free School (located in nearby Bell Lane Spitalfields from 1822 until it was
55 destroyed in 1945 during the Blitz) was established to provide education for the sizeable
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1 Jewish community living in the area with a primary aim of Anglicizing its Jewish pupils by
2 improving English language proficiency among the new arrivals, Yiddish was not allowed
3 to be spoken in the school (Kadish 2006: 15). On Brune Street is a former Jewish soup
4 kitchen (Kadish 2006: 11); this evidences a wider system of intra-community mutual social
5 support. Jewish business names also remain on the sites of some shops, (for example, the
6 C H Katz shopfront on 92 Brick Lane, a former paper bag seller, now a gallery;
7 Lichtenstein and Sinclair 2000: 51ff.) In addition it is also pertinent here to mention a large
8 number of late-nineteenth century wall memorials in the narthex of Christ Church at
9 Spitalfields. These are of course Christian dedications, but the nature of the names and
10 extensive use of Hebrew attest to a slightly different emphasis than would normally be
11 expected. These are memorials to individuals who either converted to Christianity from
12 Judaism or to Christian missionaries instrumental in the process of conversion (Smith
13 1981). The form of language used on the memorials is very distinctive in this regard, and
14 such artefacts furnish material evidence of the politics and poetics of the conversion
15 process (figure 3).
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38 **Figure 3: Memorial stone to the Reverend Aaron Stern, Narthex, Christchurch,**
39 **Spitalfields.**
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45 The foregoing section has delineated the context of Sandys Row Synagogue itself
46 as part of a wider Jewish East End urban landscape, and one, in fact that is rapidly
47 disappearing (Kadish 1991). The notion of an urban palimpsest (as Hall argues for Cape
48 Town in South Africa, 2006) is a suitable metaphor for these layerings of history, and in
49 this paper we argue that the synagogue building itself represents a microcosm of such a
50 socio-cultural palimpsest, and that by approaching the structure using archaeological
51 methodologies, we can understand how the organization of the structure as well as its
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1 associated material culture holds up a mirror to the vibrant social history of the old Jewish
2 East End. The project described herein primarily arose as a collaborative project between
3 author and historian XX and archaeologists and heritage specialists from the University of
4 Winchester (XX and XX).
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10 For some years now, an outline plan has been in place to convert the basement of
11 the Sandys Row synagogue into a heritage centre focusing on the history of the old Jewish
12 East End. As a consequence of this, a small-scale buildings archaeology survey was
13 initiated and an inventory of the contents of the basement was undertaken in May 2016.
14 During the course of this work however (which was conducted with the full support of the
15 Synagogue community), it became apparent that the activity of recording 'rubbish' was
16 yielding some potentially important archaeological ideas and results. Very quickly a
17 material biography of the synagogue emerged through a study of old maps, plans,
18 memorials and discarded material in the basement. The act of clearing the basement as
19 well as the recording of the interior memorials led us into new interpretations of the
20 building as more than just a place of worship, rather a repository of memory.
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40 In the following section, three key categories of archaeological/material evidence
41 are examined. Firstly the fabric of the building itself, mapping structural changes visible
42 through buildings archaeology analysis against old maps, plans and historical documents
43 to enable us to chart the ritual re-orientation of the building (cf Hicks and Horning 2006).
44 Secondly we consider the placement and typology of the commemorative material culture
45 within the building, a category of evidence that explicitly ties the synagogue as a building
46 to the notion of personhood, death and lineage in the cityscape beyond (cf Mytum 2006).
47 Finally, we consider the nature of the pattern of discard of material culture within the
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basement of the building and how this might relate to the social lives of the peoples attached to this building.

Changing ritual space: a buildings archaeology biography

Before we discuss the historical and archaeological analysis of the building itself, it would be useful to look at the present building as an example of Jewish ritual and social space, and to understand the meaning and interplay of the different elements. The brick-built synagogue is entered from the west through a double door just above street level; a sign clarifies the meaning of the building: over the door, painted onto a window is a Star of David and to the right hand side of the door frame is a *mezuzah* (a piece of parchment (*klaf*) with hand-lettered verses from the Torah (Deut 6:4-6,9) secured within a decorated case).

Upon entering the building, stairs lead down into the basement (currently in use as a storeroom) and a male toilet. The basement is also used as a location for the *geniza*, the store room or repository for the worn holy scrolls (*Sefer Torah* which have become *pasull*/unusable, Hebrew language books and papers on religious topics that may contain the name of G-d) prior to their disposal by ceremonial burial. This is a small free-standing brick structure built into the southwest corner of the basement (see figure 4). Stairs lead up from the entrance way to a first floor vestry on the left, which contains the safe where the Judaica (i.e. synagogue regalia) is kept. A door leads ahead into the synagogue itself. The main body of the synagogue is panelled with pine panels of wood; upstairs is a gallery with lines of pews, which is reserved for women, girls, and boys yet to be Bar Mitzvah'd, as is normative in the Orthodox tradition of Judaism. Below, the raised *bimah* structure (a podium from where the Torah is read during services) occupies the centre of the room.

1 The room is flanked by lines of pews for male congregants; unlike a church these do not
2 face forward but face the *bimah* as that is where *Sefer Torah* (the hand-lettered parchment
3 Torah Scroll/s contained in the synagogue Ark) is read from during a service, it is the ritual
4 focus of the building, although the most Holy place is the Ark (*hekhal*, 'Holy Place'), at the
5 east end.
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13 The remainder of the space above at the west front is taken up with a kosher
14 kitchen, a female toilet and on the top floor a flat which is currently undergoing
15 refurbishment. With a limited congregation, it is difficult to maintain the upkeep of what is a
16 grade II listed building. Extra income and revenue streams are always being sought, and
17 as such the synagogue has become a multi-use structure. The basement conversion into a
18 heritage centre is part of this process, as is the renovation of the old caretaker's flat to
19 provide a rental income. In order to understand the developmental history of the building,
20 we started by consulting old maps and plans of the structure. In addition the team
21 undertook detailed internal survey and measurement of the building fabric. Combining
22 these approaches, the following biography of the building emerges.
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40 **Figure 4: floor plan of Sandys Row synagogue. Key: A = Ark; B = Bimah; C= original**
41 **western entrance stairs of the chapel (surveyed by N. Finneran).**
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47 The first building indicated on the site is clearly seen on John Rocque's 1746 map
48 of the area (figure 5 top), and it is indicated as 'French Church', clearly referring to a
49 Huguenot chapel (prior to this map, the area is shown as open fields). What is interesting
50 is that the building indicated on this map is not on the alignment of the current building;
51 rather than sitting within the current footprint, the map appears to show a longer and
52 thinner structure aligned on a north-south axis along Parliament Court. This is an odd
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1 orientation given that the emphasis of a church is usually on the east-west longitudinal
2 axis. This may reflect French tradition translated into the refugee cultural context, where
3 the Huguenot 'temples' (as they were termed) of sixteenth and seventeenth century
4 France de-emphasised the focus upon a single ritual point, such as an altar, and
5 emphasized communality of worship (in fact along the same lines as a Quaker meeting
6 house; Spicer 2002).
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16 **Figure 5: Map regression evidence for the development of Sandys row. Top:**
17 **segment from John Rocque's 1746 map (source: Bishopsgate Institute, London).**
18 **Middle: segment from Richard Horwood's 1792 map (source: Bishopsgate Institute,**
19 **London). Bottom: segment from c. 1870 1: 1056 Town Plan (source: tiles: lond-**
20 **0100700056-1 <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk> downloaded 2017-11-02).**
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30 By the time of the drawing up of Horwood's 1792 map (figure 5 middle) the building
31 is shown as sitting within its current footprint (phase two), during which time it had passed
32 from Huguenot use to varied Baptist groups, and appears on this evidence to have been
33 enlarged somewhat, roughly occupying its present footprint (Kadish 2006: 10). The
34 conversion of the church into a synagogue is evidenced in the first edition of the OS
35 1:1056 Town Plan (1870 iteration) (figure 5 below), where the building is indicated as
36 'Synagogue sitting (sic) as 60'. The building depicted on this map shows that several
37 structural changes have taken place over the last century. For some reason, the map
38 appears to show internal details, displaying clearly the added western range enclosing the
39 flight of steps that afford entry to the ritual space from the porch.. The east end of the
40 building is shown on this map as being perfectly straight along the alignment of Parliament
41 Court.
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1 An account of the consecration ceremony presented in the *Jewish Chronicle* dated
2 11th November 1870 (page 8) broadly supports the cartographic evidence, but raises some
3 additional queries regarding the orientation of sacred buildings. The account notes that the
4 former synagogue structure entered via Parliament Court through a 'miserably contracted
5 entrance' now had a purpose built vestibule range on Sandys Row at the west. Further,
6 the text notes the staircase to the 'ladies gallery' as well as a 'ladies retiring room',
7 implying that gendered segregation within the ritual space was practiced from the start.
8 The account notes that no women were present at the start of the consecration ceremony,
9 only entering after the first speeches. The Ark is described as being at the north-west end
10 of the earlier building, and the entrance in the south-east. This is unusual as the Ark is
11 normally in the east, raising the suggestion that there might have been differing ritual
12 practices among this group of Ashkenazi. A Star of David was added to the stained glass
13 window behind the Ark in its new eastern orientation.
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32 Over the years, the interior has changed from that described in the 1870 account. A
33 light-coloured thin wooden panelling was installed over all internal walls and the wrought
34 iron screens of the *bimah* in the 1950s. The pillars were covered with a marbled plastic
35 effect, and electric rather than candlelight became the norm. This was a relatively cheap
36 solution to help neaten the interior of a building as was by this time becoming only
37 marginally utilized. We were able under supervision to remove a section of paneling to
38 reveal an earlier (probable nineteenth century) wallpaper covering on top of degraded
39 plaster skim directly upon brickwork. Post-War austerity would have played a part in this
40 choice of material, and it offered (superficially at least) the impression of more expensive
41 internal paneling and marble. But the effect is only superficial, it is almost as if the
42 community had standards to maintain, but were unable economically to do so. Having
43 discussed the changing ritual space as evidenced by archaeological, cartographic and
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1 textual analysis, we now turn to another important element of material culture within the
2 synagogue: the archaeology of commemoration.
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5 6 **Memory made material** 7

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10 Commemoration of individuals and events within the human lifecycle are important
11 elements of religious behaviour. Archaeologists in particular have paid close attention to
12 how these memories are made material through the analysis of commemorative culture in
13 churches, for example, but perhaps not so much in Jewish tradition (eg Llewellyn, 1996;
14 Van Dyke and Alcock 2008; Schlunke 2002 *inter alia*). During the course of our work, 164
15 memorials were recorded at Sandys Row; each memorial was photographed and recorded
16 using a pro-forma sheet. The entries were added to a schedule, and databased. We were
17 particularly interested in asking a series of specific questions of this corpus of
18 commemorative culture, viz: (1) who was being commemorated (persons, events); (2) how
19 were they being commemorative (form and material) and (3) where were they being
20 commemorated in the space of the building. Such an analysis, which would be familiar to
21 practitioners of medieval church archaeology in the UK (e.g. Williams 2003) and post-
22 medieval church archaeology in the UK and North America (e.g. Llewellyn 2000), has the
23 capacity to shed light on a great deal of social information, yet, as we have noted above,
24 such an approach has not been attempted within the context of a working synagogue.
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50 **Figure 6: selection of memorial forms from Sandys Row: top, to right of Ark,**
51 **menorah panel; middle war memorial; bottom selection of seat memorials.**
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57 Table i summarises the focus of the commemorative act within the male and female
58 areas of the synagogue. The majority are named individuals, male, female or pairs (most
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1 often parents, rarely grandparents). In many cases the language used is very
2 straightforward, the formula 'in loving memory of X' (the focus of the dedication) and the
3 dedicatees, very often close collateral family members. In rare cases there is an additional
4 line of Hebrew script, and a date, given in the western year and month with its Jewish
5 equivalent. The commemoration of a Bar Mitzvah (a coming of age of age ritual when a
6 boy at around 13 years becomes spiritually responsible for his own actions and eligible to
7 be part of the *Minyan*, the quorum of 10 adult males required in Orthodox Tradition for
8 public worship) is found in nine examples, and again the formula is straightforward: family
9 with name of son and date. Some commemorative plaques give no indication of what is
10 being commemorated, merely the name of the donors (this *may* relate to subscription to a
11 burial society as only members of a synagogue who have paid for this service, were able
12 to be buried in a Jewish cemetery). Multiple individuals (e.g. parents and perhaps a single
13 sibling) are rarely encountered. Wedding anniversaries (two Ruby, two Golden and one
14 Silver) make up another category of commemoration. A change of role (for example
15 "election to the role of Chosen Torah and Chosen Berashi") is found in three examples.
16 There is a single dedication to the Royal family (donated in memory of a named male
17 individual, presumably of significant social or wealth standing in the community), a single
18 birthday (seventieth celebrated by a couple in a single year) and one memorial to a soldier
19 killed in action in World War Two, presented by his parents (figure 6, middle).

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47 **Table i: focus of commemorative culture at Sandys Row Synagogue, London**

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53 Table ii summarises the material and positioning of each type of memorial. The vast
54 majority (118 out of 164) take the form of simple plastic plaques on seats in both the male
55 area below and the female gallery above. The older forms are light brown with plain
56 lettering, the newer white with black lettering but the same font, suggesting perhaps the
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1 implication of equality in death. These bear a range of different dedications (mainly to
2 name individuals, also events and changes of role). The single plaque to the soldier killed
3 in action is noticeably different in using gold lettering (Commonwealth war graves, by way
4 of comparison also indicate their differential status within a cemetery through the use of
5 different material and typography). Two seats have double commemorations, suggesting a
6 longer-lived family link. Wall-mounted candelabra, or menorahs, make up the next largest
7 form of commemorative culture and are dedicated to the memories of individuals. These
8 are found mainly along the walls of the synagogue, flanking the Ark and a single example
9 in the porch. Miscellaneous forms of plaque, glass and a single clock make up the
10 remainder of the memorials. The earliest plaque is found in the outer porch and
11 commemorates the Treasurer Issac Levy, who died in May 1887; both selection of material
12 as well as its positioning suggests the implication of the commemoration of an individual of
13 high social standing in the community.
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32 **Table ii: material and positioning of memorial**

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37 Chairs lend themselves to dedication. This motif is found in English churches,
38 where dedications 'fix' family ownership of pews through the ages; in some cases, the
39 'selling' of pews and seats within church spaces allowed money to be raised to subsidise
40 construction or more simply to buy the requisite number of chairs (eg Buggeln 2003: 50).
41 Beyond the context of the ritual space, the memorial bench is a well-known feature of
42 public spaces (Wylie 2009). At Sandys Row the chair dedications all date clearly from the
43 1950s-1960s, suggesting that this was a measure taken to provide new seats for the
44 renovated synagogue. There are no dedications from the 1970s, 1980s or 1990s,
45 evidencing perhaps the decline of the community, and the sole dedication from the 21st
46 century celebrates an unusual event for an Orthodox congregation: the first Bat Mitzvah
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(the coming of age ceremony for a girl at around 12 years which marks her move into spiritual adulthood) to be held at the Synagogue.

Apart from the marble memorial to Isaac Levy, which is an earlier survival, the other commemorative forms (miscellaneous plaques, menorahs and ritual furniture) all suggest that the process of making memory material was explicitly linked to the provision by the donors of new furniture or decoration within the synagogue. The memorials themselves are very explicitly linked to family and lineage, and also by extension their function within the community too (although it is noted above that there is a large plaque to the left of the Ark which requests prayers for the Royal Family, evidencing the strong community identification with monarchy and country). In few cases the wording is formal, but on occasion a nickname (eg 'Jinny', 'Kitty', 'Mick') makes the memorial familiar, comforting and fixed within what was a small and gradually declining community at the time.

The archaeology of commemoration and Sandys Row thus places a heavy emphasis upon the family, emphasising the centrality of community in the old Jewish East End, yet the temporal spread of them indicates a sadder aspect to this story: a picture of relative decline after the Second World War. Commemorative strategies focus very much upon homogeneity (emphasising equality in death) with a few exceptions; motivation for commemoration also appears to link to the need to refurbish the renovated synagogue, as well as marking the memory of individuals. From the ritual space above, we now move to the basement (the future heritage centre) and a consideration of a quite different category of material evidence.

Hoarding and the holy: material culture from the Synagogue basement

1 We will all be familiar with the behavioral notion of hoarding, the inability not to discard
2 material straight away but perhaps to quarantine it in an intermediate space (shed, attic)
3 owing to the immediate emotional response of jettisoning it, or thinking that the object
4 might yet have some utility (still yet to be revealed; Frost and Gross 1993). The basement
5 area at Sandys Row is a perfect archaeological example of this form of behavior, yet the
6 notion of the archaeology of the hoarder takes on quite a different light when faced with
7 very distinctive demands of Jewish ritual behavior and discard of material culture 'in the
8 right way;' in the spiritually and ritually approved manner.
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20 The basement had been scheduled for clearance in 2017 prior to conversion to a
21 heritage centre focusing on the role of the synagogue in the Jewish East End. This was an
22 opportunity to try to apply an 'archaeological' approach to categorizing the material before
23 it was removed—and in some cases discarded. All material was photographed and
24 recorded, and broad analysis of the material in the basement shows that much of it reflects
25 ritual use for the synagogue (as would be expected) but also as an educational
26 establishment as well as a space with business and commercial links too. Special attention
27 attaches to a large iron decorated chest (dated, according to specialists from the Victoria
28 and Albert Museum to the mid seventeenth century). The chest, which features a
29 substantial locking device, contains a wooden platform with 8 holes drilled into it. It is
30 highly likely this chest contained *rimmonim*, finials (frequently made of silver) used to
31 decorate the *Sefer Torah* as small silver and gold bells were found in the bottom of the
32 chest when it was opened. Frequently shaped to resemble pomegranates (other shapes
33 include bells and crowns as noted here), which were believed to contain 613 seed,
34 *rimmonim* symbolized the 613 commandments (*Mitzvot*) in the Torah. The chest is an
35 unusual find within the context of a synagogue basement (figure 7).
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Figure 7: iron chest from the basement Sandys Row Synagogue. Scale length 50 cm.

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6 A large number of handwritten minute books, documents and archives had already
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8 been moved to the nearby Bishopsgate Institute for conservation and archiving, but a large
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10 amount of printed material remained in the basement. For the most part these were
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12 didactic materials (such as Hebrew language books), subscription forms, correspondence
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14 and publications relating to fundraising events (advertisements within these publications
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16 for local Jewish business allow us to reconstruct the local commercial landscape in the
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18 post-war period). Subscription forms to the Women's Holy Vestment Society add a
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20 corrective to the sense of a male dominated material culture. Furnishings, and material
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22 associated with commerce, such as calculating machines, typewriters and a trolley from
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24 nearby Spitalfields or Petticoat Lane markets, were also recorded and photographed, and
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26 evidence the site's use as a centre for the local traders' association. This material is all
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28 indicative of the multi-functional role that the synagogue played within the local economy
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30 and society.
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40 There was also a great deal of material culture associated with daily ritual life of the
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42 synagogue community in the Basement. It is important to note, however, that this was not
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44 material that had been casually discarded, but was awaiting disposal in the correct ritual
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46 manner (e.g. through burial in a Jewish graveyard; Greene 1992). Such items included old
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48 worn prayer books, and the prayer shawls (*tallit*) and *teffilin*, small leather boxes containing
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50 rolls of hand-lettered parchment inscribed with verses (*Exodus* 13:1-10, 11-16 and
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52 *Deuteronomy* 6:4-9, 11:31-21), worn by male Jews during prayers in accordance with the
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54 Biblical commandments (*Exodus* 13:9 and 13:16 and *Deuteronomy* 6:8 and 11:18); they
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56 are also known by the Greek term *phylactery* meaning 'protection'; figure 8. Material
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1 culture associated with the female members of the synagogue was also present in the
2 basement. Of particular note are the statements and ledger books from the Ladies Society
3 for Providing Holy Vestments, as well as a collection of Holy Vestments.
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8 The provision of Holy Vestments (notably decorated mantles for the *Sefer Torah*)
9 gave, and continues to give, traditional Orthodox Jewish women an intimate connection
10 with the most sacred text, the *Sefer Torah*. Reminiscent of the robes worn by the High
11 Priest in the Temple, the provision of Torah mantles accords with the Babylonian Talmudic
12 injunction (Shabbat, 113b) regarding the commandment of adornment (*hiddur mikveh*).
13 This relates to Exodus 15:2 and the requirement to beautify and adorn items connected
14 with G-d and the name of G-d, as a form of piety (Shachar 1975: 1). The Mantles (Holy
15 Vestments) were made from a variety of materials. A few were made of second-hand
16 materials, with one fashioned from the material that covered the seats of a train. Most
17 however, were made from brocade and velvet, and embroidered with gold thread and
18 silver panels in a variety of designs. Torah Mantles, *Tefillin* bags, *mezuzah* cases, and
19 printed or handwritten synagogue documents are considered in Judaism as accessories to
20 holiness (*tashmishey kedusha*), although they are less potent in terms of sacrality than
21 *Sefer Torah*, *tefillin* (both the cases and the text), and *mezuzah klaf* which have a specially
22 sanctified status (Greene 1992).
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47 The material held in the basement at Sandys Row therefore reflects two very
48 different forms of behavior in relation to the discard process, firstly the curating of secular
49 objects (that reflect the broad use of the building by both genders) and secondly 'delayed
50 disposal' of *tashmishey kedusha* while awaiting proper religious disposal (Greene 1992:
51 31). The material culture is also important for shedding light on wider issues in social
52 history. Printed documents and personal letters, for example, have also helped inform our
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programme of wider memory mapping of the old Jewish East End, often giving the names and locations of long-disappeared Jewish family businesses.

Figure 8: Tefillin with embroidered bag, basement of Sandys Row.

Conclusion: Sandys Row in microcosm and macrocosm

“By then there was little left of the Jewish East End: crumbling buildings, derelict sites, rapidly fading signs. ‘This used to be-----now it is a car park’....’If you look really hard you can just make out the mark of a *mezuzah* here”

(Lichtenstein and Sinclair 2000: 37).

Our work at Sandys Row synagogue has allowed us to take a very archaeological perspective on the material biography of a Jewish ritual building, and has furnished a new view on the material traces of changing ritual space, commemorative behavior and the approaches to the ritual disposal of sacred objects. For one of the present authors (RL) the notion of using an archaeological approach to accessing a rich and multilayered history of the Jewish East End is already well established (see Shanks 2004); Lichtenstein’s ‘excavation’ of the memory of one individual, David Rodinsky was undertaken in his room as well as in oral history research (Lichtenstein and Sinclair 2000). Our research has demonstrated the possibilities of using archaeological methodologies to frame the Jewish *habitus* of the east end of London, its religious, social, cultural and economic framework, in the same manner as other scholars have sought to disentangle notions of identity and material culture (cf Jefferies 2001). Sandys Row synagogue started out as the ritual home for a minority within a minority (the pejoratively-termed *chuts*), and over the years its

1 appearance and associated material culture mirrors the wider fortunes of the Ashkenazi
2 community of the Old Jewish East End.
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6 On the wider scale comes the recognition that this is also a distinctive heritage at
7 risk, and has to be managed and interpreted for future generations (cf Kadish 2001). The
8 new heritage centre at Sandys Row will play a part in helping pin these ghosts of the old
9 Jewish East End in place, making its psychogeography real to a new generation of tourists
10 and urban explorers (Pinder 2001). The 'Our Hidden Histories' oral history project that
11 focused on the old Jewish community of Sandys Row (undertaken by XX) has shown the
12 value of imaginative, integrated and multi-disciplinary approaches to unraveling the
13 complex picture of religious and ethnic identity in large city spaces over the last 100
14 hundred years or so (cf Gardner 2004). This in turn will lead to a more detailed
15 programme of memory mapping, as we combine oral history testimony with GIS-based
16 mapping of old East End Jewish sites on the ground, and make this information available
17 through a range of accessible digital media.
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37 Perhaps more provocatively, our study at Sandys Row, when contextualized within
38 the wider cityscape, allows us to perceive perhaps a very different picture of the
39 organization of Jewish space in the old Jewish East End than is popularly thought. The
40 writer Iain Sinclair, for example, draws our attention to the way that the influential British
41 Jewish social historian Raphael Samuel (1934-1996) viewed Spitalfields: "like Emanuel
42 Litvinoff, he interpreted the area round Brick Lane in terms of the ghetto, he linked it with
43 settlements in Poland and Russia, never with Islington, Hackney or Southwark"
44 (Lichtenstein and Sinclair 2000: 175). For Samuel, he saw "Spitalfields as a *shtetl* (an
45 eastern European Jewish village) of the last days" (Lichtenstein and Sinclair 2000: 177),
46 meaning rather than an integrated and cosmopolitan microcosm as any other London
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1 suburb (as Kershen 2004 noted, see above), we are seeing a Jewish community, layered
2 upon the city scape, and not inhabiting within it. Samuel's very 'bottom up' approach to
3 heritage and social history (e.g. Samuel 2012) focuses upon the immediate family
4 inhabiting and interacting within its neighbourhood rather than the top down metanarrative.
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6 The material culture of Sandys Row synagogue, and its place within a wider framework of
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8 Jewish places in the old East End, very much echoes this concept of a superimposition of
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10 identity upon, rather than embedded within, the cityscape of East London.
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Table i: focus of commemorative culture at Sandys Row Synagogue, London

Type	Number	Example inscription
Named single male individual	54 (c. 33%)	IN LOVING MEMORY OF Reuben (Ruby) Cohen PRESENTED BY His Family (underlined)
Named single female individual	39 (c. 24%)	PRESENTED IN LOVING MEMORY OF FLORA LANE (LAZARUS) BY HER HUSBAND & SONS (underlined)
Parents	35 (c. 21%)	IN LOVING MEMORY OF ROSE & MORRIS SIMONS FROM MILLIE.WOOLF&MAURICE SIMONS
Bar Mitzvah	9 (c.5%)	PRESENTED BY MR.&MRS.JOHN LANE TO COMMEMORATE THE BARMITZVAH OF THEIR SON JON PHILIP 8 th SEPTEMBER 1962 9 th ELLUL 5722
None	8 (c. 5%)	PRESENTED BY MR.&MRS. M.SMITH (underlined)
Multiple individuals	5 (c. 3%)	PRESENTED IN LOVING MEMORY OF AVNER & RIFKA REINSTEIN AND DAUGHTER JANE BY THEIR SON AND DAUGHTER-IN-LAW MR & MRS LEONARD L. REINSTEIN (underlined)
Wedding Anniversary	5 (c. 3%)	THE CANDELABRA PRESENTED BY MR & MRS S.N. MOSCOVITCH & CHILDREN ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR GOLDEN WEDDING ON 22 ND OCTOBER, 1961 (1911-1961)
Change of Role	3 (c. 2%)	PRESENTED BY MR & MRS B. MISKIN & MR & MRS M. SMITH ON THE OCCASION OF

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		THEIR ELECTION TO CHOSEN TORAH AND CHOSEN BERASHIS (underlined) 1963-5724 (Underlined)
Grandparents	2 (c. 2%)	PRESENTED BY GRAHAM SULKIN IN LOVING MEMORY OF HIS GRANDPARENTS (underlined)
Bat Mitzvah	1 (c. 0.5%)	IN CELEBRATION OF SANDYS ROW'S FIRST BATMITZVAH DEBORAH ABRAHAM 19 TH OCTOBER 2002
The Monarchy	1 (c. 0.5%)	PRAYER FOR THE QUEEN AND THE ROYAL FAMILY Decorative line of Bauer Hall sign Two lines of Hebrew text OUR SOVEREIGN LADY QUEEN ELIZABETH. ELIZABETH THE QUEEN MOTHER. PHILIP DUKE OF EDINBURGH CHARLES PRINCE OF WALES AND ALL THE ROYAL FAMILY Six lines of Hebrew Decorative curved line PRESENTED IN LOVING MEMORY OF HARRY MARKS line of Hebrew text BY HIS WIFE AND SON
Killed in Action	1 (c. 0.5%)	PRESENTED TO SANDYS ROW ASS. SYNAGOGUE BY MR & MRS J. LAMPERT <i>In Memory of Our Beloved Son Jacob Who was Killed in Action in Burma June 23rd 1944</i> Line of Hebrew Text <i>Corr. 2nd Tamuz 5704</i>
Birthday	1 (c. 0.5%)	PRESENTED BY

		MR AND MRS. M. WELLER TO COMMEMORATE THEIR <u>70TH</u> BIRTHDAY 1963 5724
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Table ii: material and positioning of memorial

Form	Position	Remarks
Small plastic seat plaques (n. 118)	Seats in top gallery (14); seats in lower section (114)	In two forms: a brown rectangular plastic plaque and recent white plaques.
Wooden plaque with brass menorah above (n. 20)	In outer porch (1); wall mounted along top gallery (7); wall mounted along lower wall (7); to right of Ark (3) to left of Ark (2)	All commemorate named individuals. Eg PRESENTED IN LOVING MEMORY OF MR AND MRS J. HARRIS Two lines of Hebrew BY THEIR CHILDREN
Large marble carved plaque (n. 1)	In outer porch	This tablet was erected by the wardens and committee of the Sandy's Row Synagogue, in grateful recognition of the unwearied and eminent services rendered during a period of 30 years by their late treasurer (larger letters) Isaac Levy, ESQR who departed this life 8 th Iyar 5647-2 nd May 1887 in his 69 th year (all in capitals)
Large wooden plaque (n.1)	Upper Gallery	BAUER HALL (small decorative line) THIS HALL IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE LATE MR LEWIS BAUER AND HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE GENOROSITY OF HIS WIDOW MRS LEAH BAUER & THE BAUER FAMILY (small decorative line)
Clock (n. 1)	Upper Gallery	Presented by Mr and Mrs J. Esterman
Stained Glass (n.1)	Lower wall, north side.	PRESENTED BY MR J. M. ISCHEROWITZ

		A REGULAR & RESPECTED WORSHIPPER
Large wooden plaque (n. 1)	Left of Ark	Prayer to Queen (see table 1)
Red fabric covering on <i>Bimah</i> (n. 1)	<i>Bimah</i>	IN LOVING MEMORY OF BARNETT FREEDMAN Line of Hebrew text PRESENTED BY HIS FAMILY 22 ND TEBETH 5726-4 TH JAN 1966
Scroll case (n. 2)	Left and right of Ark bearing same dedication	Presented in Loving Memory of Solomon Noorden Left hand panel dates in Hebrew Right hand panel 20 th Dec 1957 27 th Kislev 5718 beneath scroll window By his Wife and Children
Plaque with curved top	Right of Ark	IN MEMORY OF NANCY BROOKARSH WHO PASSED AWAY 6 TH IYAR 5715-28 TH APRIL 1955 AGED 43 YEARS Lines of Hebrew text below
Medium-sized plastic plaques	on east-facing wall of <i>Bimah</i> , facing Ark	THE LIGHTING OF THE ALMIMA (underlined) PRESENTED IN LOVING MEMORY OF SOLOMON ENGELSMAN EXECUTIVE OFFICER 1935-1963 (underlined) BY HIS FAMILY (underlined)
Wooden illuminated sign	Left of Ark	IN MEMORY OF NANCY BROOKARSH WHO PASSED AWAY 6 TH IYAR 5715-28 TH APRIL 1955 AGED 43 YEARS
Large white plastic plaque	Left of Ark	In Loving Memory of Phillip Green 1924-1985

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		Bessie Green 1928-1990 Missed by Sonny and Robert Grandchildren Lucy, Gaby and Hannah
Brass plaque	Left of Ark	Five lines of Hebrew
Fabric curtain with gold device and lettering/scroll and floral decoration	On Ark	Scroll/floral decoration Presented by Mr S Paule In Memory of His Parents Two lines of Hebrew

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Figure 1: Location of Sandys Row synagogue in East London.

Figure 2: Sandys Row Synagogue: main entrance.

Figure 3: Memorial stone to the Reverend Aaron Stern, Narthex, Christchurch, Spitalfields.

Figure 4: floor plan of Sandys Row synagogue. Key: A = Ark; B = Bimah; C= original western entrance stairs of the chapel (surveyed by N. Finneran).

Figure 5: Map regression evidence for the development of Sandys row. Top: segment from John Rocque's 1746 map (source: Bishopsgate Institute, London). Middle: segment from Richard Horwood's 1792 map (source: Bishopsgate Institute, London). Bottom: segment from c. 1870 1: 1056 Town Plan, tiles: lond-0100700056-1 <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk> downloaded 2017-11-02.

Figure 6: selection of memorial forms from Sandys Row: top, to right of Ark, menorah panel; middle war memorial; bottom selection of seat memorials.

Figure 7: Wooden chest from the basement of Sandys Row Synagogue. Scale length 50 cm.

Figure 8: Tefillin with embroidered bag, basement of Sandys Row.

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Birthday	1 (c. 0.5%)	PRESENTED BY MR AND MRS. M. WELLER TO COMMEMORATE THEIR 70 TH BIRTHDAY <u>(underlined)</u> 1963 5724

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