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# **Future heritage - naming Royal Docks places and spaces**

**A collection of stories, memories and  
ideas shared by local people during  
three online workshops in March 2021  
to help name places and spaces across  
Royal Docks.**

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# Introduction

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Throughout March Street Space devised and delivered a series of workshops to help name places and spaces across Royal Docks through sharing both intimate and epic stories from the past, present and future.

As the first project of its kind at Siemens Brothers Way it holds importance for setting the tone and paving the way for things to come! Through carefully devised conversations we sparked interest, built momentum and began to create meaningful connections within the local community towards future street naming projects in the area.

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# Unearthing the Past

**9th March 2021  
6:00pm-7:30pm**

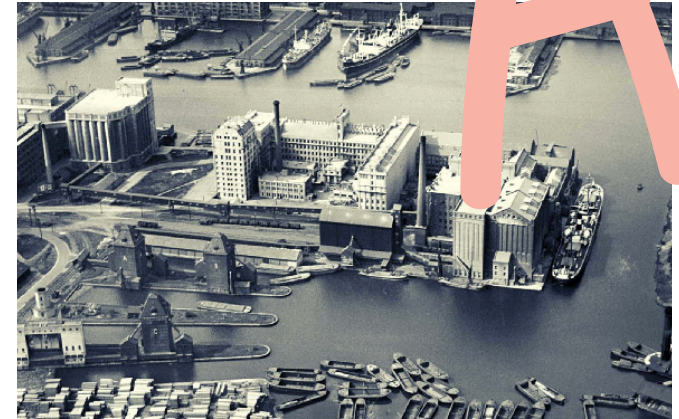
During our first event we were joined by local organisation RDLAC and the popular Royal Docks History Club who took us on a journey to explore the past of the Royal Docks area. Seeking to surface stories that resonate with people in the local community we asked people to share what they know (or don't know!) about the history of the area and think about how we might harness the past to inform the future.

**Hosted by Street Space in collaboration with RDLAC and the Royal Docks History Club**

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# The Pioneering Port

"The Mauritania, bringing that in was such a difficult task, I think there was three inches either side to get the boat through, there wasn't much space at all. Bearing in mind in those days, they didn't have the technology that we've got now to get these ships through."



**"At one time they were the biggest enclosed Dock system in the whole world and they were also at the forefront of technology."**

"The Royal Victoria opened in 1855 in an area, which as someone mentioned before, had previously just been marshland. It was huge news when it opened with a long list of innovative features for example it was the first Dock to be made to accommodate the big steamer ships although it could still welcome some sailing vessels. It was the first to use hydraulic power to operate the gates, the locks and the machinery and it was one of the first with direct links to the railway network. The Dock was an immediate commercial success, it could accommodate all of the biggest steam ships in London and by 1860 it was already taking over 850 000 tonnes of shipping every year. It also became well known for specialising in trading grain, meat fruit and coal. It had dedicated facilities including an orange warehouse for almost one acre - I don't know how many oranges you can put in there - but a lot of oranges."

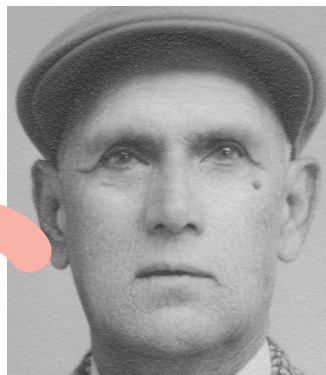
## Seafarers & Ships

"I love the idea of celebrating Seafarers... celebrating the different kinds of jobs at Royal Docks because that's a talking point for future residents that might not have known that they existed. Dockers, Stevedores, Lightermen. Tally Clerks, Dock Masters."

**"I'd like to commemorate the thousands of BAME seafarers that arrived at the Royal Docks in the last 150 years. A few dozen of them are buried in Newham in unmarked public graves. Newham is a diverse place - it would be great to have these diverse seafarers celebrated here too."**

"What about the cargo, we all know about the sugar, that story is still very much here but all kinds of stuff was brought in wasn't it so it would be quite interesting to research. Particular cargos went to particular Docks I assume."

"Elephants were definitely brought through, they were brought by circuses and shipped over in quite large numbers. They brought all kinds of live stock, monkeys, we all had tortoises."



"My grandfather Mahomed Gama arrived at the Royal Victoria Dock during the First World War on 8th December 1917 on the P&O Khiva and stayed there for a month and departed on the Khiva in January 1918 to transport American troops from New York to the UK. He made four voyages on the Khiva. He received the British War Medal and the Mercantile Marine War Medal for war service. I never knew this until I discovered a old wooden box from my late grandmother's belongings and came across pension letters in the box, as part of her claim she had sent his two War medals to the UK."

**"IT'S GOOD TO HAVE  
REINFORCEMENT  
THAT OUR ANCESTORS  
WERE THERE,  
REPRESENTATION  
ALWAYS HELPS."**

// UNDER THE STREET NAME IN PLACES LIKE PARIS THEY OFTEN INCLUDE AN EXPLANATION ABOUT WHY IT IS CALLED WHAT IT IS. IT WOULD BE GREAT IF PEOPLE COULD NAVIGATE THE HISTORY OF THE DOCKS BY READING THE STREET NAMES."

## Sensory Sensemaking

"When we were children, each school adopted a ship and then we would go to the ship for activities for tea."

**T** "Growing up in the Docks, our Geography was first hand because that's what you did. The teachers would say what boat's in today, we'd look at the flag and think about where it came from, so really from a very early age our geography experience was great because it was first hand experience. We would see all the guys coming off the ships, they would walk around the area, we would follow them as children and try to speak to them. Or to try and make them understand what we were saying but we certainly learnt about the world because of the boats coming in, literally, on our doorstep. We could look out of our classroom window and see the flags on the boats and we'd get the globe and say 'this is where this boat is from' and 'this is where this boat is going to'. It really was great!"

"There's the ship horns! The ships used to talk to each other using the shiphorns. You used to hear the shiphorns in the docks. You could always tell if there was a stranger in the port because it had a slightly different sounding horn. I used to wait for my grandfather to come home, if I heard something different on the wind, and ask if there was a different boat come into the Docks. Shiphorns could bring back lots of memories."



**"The Docks really were a sensory experience, the smells, the sounds, even the tastes. The Seamen used to come off the boats from all around the world would bring little goodies for the children. We learnt a lot about the world that way..."**

# Celebrating the Present

**15th March 2021  
6:00pm-7:30pm**

For our second event we were joined by Custom House Bookshop to embark on an exploration of what's happening in the present of the Royal Docks area. Seeking to surface what's to be celebrated, we asked local people to share nuggets of knowledge and think about how we might celebrate the present long into the future.

**Hosted by Street Space in  
collaboration with Custom House  
Bookshop**

# Riches of the Royal Docks

**"We may be  
economically  
deprived, but  
we are not  
deprived.  
We have got  
one of the  
most diverse  
cultures in the  
world."**

"We have got the most remarkable Grime artists. Grime is a music that the media always portrays as a terrible, anti-social, crime-ridden thing. It's something that I think we should be very proud of. Grime is the voice of our young people telling their story, in their voice. It is incredibly imaginative. It is the Jazz of today and yet we don't see people talking about that."



"Everytime people mention Custom House, the words deprived, poor, crime-ridden are mentioned. I'm really proud to tell people that a local secondary school could typically have up to 100 languages being spoken and that is nothing to be ashamed of, that is something which we should hold our heads up in pride and talk about how is it that such a small area can produce so much. Today we are producing, for example, do we know that Custom House has the best Athletics and Fencing Clubs? We have got wonderful authors, artists, living here producing the most amazing pieces of work. Our talent is unimaginable."



**“One of my favourite meals for example is Peasepudding with West African Sweet Potato and Faggots - nowhere else would you think that is a normal dish but it’s just the normal thing you have here.”**

“Originally I’m from Sierra Leone in West Africa, my partner is Irish Jewish, my sons best friend is Polish. While he was growing up he wasn’t even slightly interested in our culture and our heritage, because he was busy learning Polish and speaking Russian words and he’s now learning Mandarin in school and he sees all of these cultures as his own. He’s totally comfortable in all of these cultures because of where he comes from and these are the sorts of things that we need to be stressing that makes us unique. And these are the things that we need to talk about, where we can meld the pride we have of our past with the pride of what we have today.”

“Over the centuries, London has had riots - Brixton, Tottenham, Hackney - yet Newham has never had these sort of riots and I’ve always found that fascinating. It does make me wonder if it is because of the way we meld our different cultures together. We have a transcultural community. I’ve spoken about the different languages being spoken, the foods being eaten, nobody just eats the food from where they come from.”

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“FAGGOTS AND PEASEPUDDING IS A GOOD OLD FASHIONED EAST END MEAL, AND THE COCKNEY WAY OF SPEAKING HAS MANY CONNECTIONS WITH JEWISH WORDS, WHICH IN TURN HAS LINKS WITH RUSSIAN WORDS.”

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"LAST TIME I WAS BY THE ROYAL DOCKS I WENT TO A CAFE RUN BY A MAN FROM NIGERIA - HE'S SELLING SUSTAINABLY MADE CHOCOLATE BARS FROM NIGERIA AND I REALLY LIKED THAT THIS IS LINKING INTO THE TRADE THAT USED TO COME INTO THE DOCKS FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD - BUT SUSTAINABLE FOR THE FUTURE."

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## International & Interconnected

"We've got ships, cable cars, trains, cars, boats, planes - we're well connected both locally and internationally."



**"The area continues to be a place of arrivals and with arrivals comes diversity."**

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"One of the things that Custom House does today, which it always has, is invite people in. We have City Airport which is still doing the same thing. And when people come into Custom House they're always surprised at the welcome they get. When I moved into Custom house, I knew no-one, it was meant to be temporary and virtually, everyone I knew, who knew about Custom House were appalled that I was choosing to move there. What I found, when I moved there was a welcome that was almost unreal, my neighbours came over and told me about the bins, where the local shops are, I had so many people come to look after my son when I was ill. And that's a sort of community that we have today."



# Shaping the Future

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**20th March 2021**  
**2:00pm-3:30pm**

During our third and final event we launched into the future to explore the hopes and ambitions of young people. Working with the next generation we discussed how we might create a hopeful, inspiring and inclusive future at Royal Docks, through the naming of spaces and places in the area.



# Addressing Challenges

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**“We need to raise visibility to some of the challenges we face, make people aware, talk about them more, make them visible rather than hide them.”**



“I would name the street names after outlying problems in society like how there’s racism in society now more than ever. You could name some roads Black Lives Matter Drive. Or even when it comes to womens safety during the night you could name it after that. Stuff that is really affecting us and people in the community. It could be named after that.”

“We could try the Floyd Everard Street, it’s kind of like bringing something international local, something that happened within the UK also. I was looking at ideas like family, so that people could feel as if when they live on their street they feel like a community as opposed to people who just live next to each other. Like synonyms of family, because just calling something family street sounds a bit weird.”

## Success Beyond the Suit

"When you look out of the window, when you look around the Docks what you see is a community where success is more diverse and what you can see gives you more inspiration and aspiration in the area for what can be achieved."

**"Success doesn't have to look like what we're used to seeing as an average white man in a suit from the City and actually what we're looking to see is these different types of success that reflect the diversity of the area so that you're able to see yourself reflected in a successful way and that's what we hope the future will look like."**

"We spoke about how the area is developing, we might have more businesses and organisations coming so we want to have businesses and opportunities to live, grow-up, work and stay in the area. We spoke about some of the small businesses and how we might attract some of the bigger businesses to come back to the area and have that option so you could leave school at 16 and get a job in the Dock area and stay in the Dock area. So in 100 years time we'll have people that live and work in the area because it is viable for them to do so."

"We also discussed the people. Mums need to be recognised because they really do run the world. All women. This pretty much echoed the fact that everyone could do something that can help the world, you can be an ordinary person, but you can as sure as hell change the world."

**"EVERYONE CAN DO SOMETHING TO HELP THE WORLD - YOU CAN BE AN ORDINARY PERSON - BUT YOU CAN SURE AS HELL CHANGE THE WORLD."**

"WE SPOKE ABOUT HOW THE AREA IS DEVELOPING, WE MIGHT HAVE MORE BUSINESSES AND ORGANISATIONS COMING - WE WANT MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO LIVE, GROW UP, WORK + STAY IN THE AREA."

## A Land of Opportunity

"Royal Docks will become better connected both locally and globally, it will become a leader in sustainability, it will become more well known both locally and globally. It will become an iconic place for both people and technology. It will become a lot more unified, people will come together. It will become a land of opportunity."

**"Things are going more east and London is expanding so we can imagine that this could be the new center of London, a place where you could imagine that things could happen."**

"One of the ideas that we had is that we wanted the Royal Docks to be this area where it's like the American dream where this is the place that you come, where things happen, its a place where you can imagine that this is where things are going to happen for me. This is where people go, this is where people come to and things happen. That's what we hope it becomes. It's almost like a hidden gem in London not a lot of people know where it is, or what it is but from being a local person I feel like it could be an area where that could happen."

"The area will become a real Beacon for lots of things, for lots of our hopes for the future which are more social equality, better living standards, more opportunities in all aspects. We see the Royal Docks as a place where you can really trial and test technology and modern forms of transport and all kinds of different things and it could lead the way, as this new part of London and get it's identity that way. Particularly, being a place for people. Already its a place where a lot of people live and an awful lot more will live with the new housing that is coming."

"The Royal Dock Yard - where you go to imagine - this stuck out to me because it creates a place that people can imagine living in and working in where they were brought up."

## Street naming principles

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Alongside collecting stories, themes and ideas to inspire future names for spaces and places at the Royal Docks, we've collated seven simple principals to guide future naming projects. Each principal has been developed in response to the thoughts, desires and priorities of local people.

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1

**Inspire pride  
in people and  
place**

2

**Represent the  
under-  
represented**

3

**Create catchy  
& curious  
names**

4

**Tell stories  
on the streets**

5

**Celebrate  
the ordinary**

6

**Co-create  
and add colour**

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# **Future heritage - naming Royal Docks places and spaces**

**A message from Street Space:**

**A special thanks to each individual who contributed their thoughts to the workshops alongside local groups who helped to facilitate the conversations: RDLAC, Royal Docks History Club, Custom House Bookshop & Delia Barker.**

**First hand, we have experienced the passion, energy and interest of the Royal Docks communities, generously lending their time to be a part of shaping their local area. We have been truly inspired by the people we have met and are excited to see what's to come in the future of the Royal Docks.**

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