



# EAST END HOWLER

— East London's FREE Working Class News Sheet —

For  
Community  
and  
Solidarity

## TAKE BACK WANSTEAD FLATS!

The Metropolitan Police have asked the City of London Corporation (trustees for Wanstead Flats and the rest of Epping Forest) for permission to build a temporary Olympics operational base on the Flats (with an 11 foot high solid barrier, housing 80 horses and 12,000 police in a day) for 90 days in 2012. For the plan to go ahead, a law that has protected the Forest since 1878 (itself the result of a successful community campaign) must be amended. Thousands of local people have complained that this would set a dangerous precedent for the future, and demanded to know why the Flats site was chosen.

The Save Wanstead Flats campaign called a mass community picnic on the site on September 5th. Despite a grey day, around 200 hundred people turned up to enjoy their green community space, share food and drink, and show their opposition, not least by grilling Paul Thompson, the City of London Corporation representative who was there. He told locals that the site was chosen because it was the cheapest (at £170,000), but that he wouldn't reveal the other possible sites on the grounds of 'commercial sensitivity' (even though it's our money, as taxpayers, that is being used!). The campaign has also

collected several thousand signatures in a matter of weeks as a way of building opposition to their plans. The police have been conducting a PR spin 'consultation' exercise (at a cost of £49,000), consisting of a travelling exhibition, and asked the campaign to send down a couple of representatives to a meeting, an offer which the campaign (sensibly) turned down, inviting them instead to a public meeting on October 6th. 300 people turned up, filling the hall, and subjecting the Metropolitan Police and the City of London Corporation to a barrage of informed and intelligent questions covering accountability, cost, the environment, security and traffic. Unsurprisingly, the vote on the proposal held at the end of the meeting was unanimously against.

The next mass action is a 'Beating of the Bounds' – a traditional community event to mark the boundaries of land owned and used by the community (to show the size of the proposed security base site). *We'll be taking back Wanstead Flats on Sunday November 21st at 2pm – bring your family and friends, see you there!*

Get involved in the Save Wanstead Flats campaign – come to our meetings, lobby your councillors and MPs, and visit our website at [www.savewansteadflats.org.uk](http://www.savewansteadflats.org.uk)

## This land is ours!

Join us for 'Take Back Wanstead Flats' on 2pm on Sunday 21 November. The Save Wanstead Flats campaign plans to use wooden stakes and tape to mark out the boundaries of the proposed police base on the Flats, in order to show just how much space it will swallow up in 2012. Maps or drawings can never make as much sense as..... seeing its massive size for yourself but we'd prefer not to wait until construction starts and it's too late to stop these plans.

As you can see from the publicity, the message behind this event also harkens back to the historical opposition by local people to enclosure of the Flats. We hope people will see this as an opportunity to come along and celebrate in their own way our right to enjoy our open spaces – although it is late November, so we do recommend that people wrap up warmly!

Leaflets available to download from <http://scr.bi/9sZkfy> and A3 posters from <http://scr.bi/9AgXOE> - please ask local shops and businesses to put up a poster, or stick one up in your window (but no flyposting please, as it gets some of us in all sorts of trouble!)

NOTICE: LOCAL CITIZENS ARE INVITED TO

### TAKE BACK WANSTEAD FLATS



IN CELEBRATION OF OUR RIGHTS AS  
CITIZENS TO ENJOY THE GREEN AND  
OPEN SPACE ON WANSTEAD FLATS,  
GATHER UPON THE SITE THE POLICE  
WISH TO CLOSE OFF IN 2012 AND HELP  
TO ENCIRCLE ITS BOUNDARIES

ON SUNDAY THE 21st OF NOVEMBER  
FOR ONE DAY ONLY\*

\* AT LEAST FOR NOW

### THIS LAND IS OURS!

FROM THE HOUR OF 2PM • ALL ARE WELCOME

FAIRGROUND AREA • WANSTEAD FLATS • OFF CENTRE ROAD

Enquiries to: SAVE WANSTEAD FLATS • [www.savewansteadflats.org.uk](http://www.savewansteadflats.org.uk) • NOT FOR FLYPOSTING





# Report from Mass Community Picnic

The weather for the Mass Community Picnic, organised by the Save Wanstead Flats campaign, was predicted to be fine and sunny. But as I walked up Woodgrange Road towards the Flats at lunchtime, the sky was leaden and I could feel the occasional spot of rain. There was no way of knowing how any people - if any - would show up to what had been billed as an opportunity for local people, concerned about plans for a police operational base on Wanstead Flats, to meet neighbours from around the area who share their concerns about defending common land that belongs to all of us.

At 12.30pm there were about ten of us, but I need not have worried. Small groups of people soon appeared from every direction, bringing their blankets and food, whilst at around 1.30pm, a large group of cyclists from Forest Gate showed up in procession. There was a good turnout too from the local churches and a number of the schools and a good mix of residents from Forest Gate, Leyton and Wanstead. The children's banner-making area, organised

by a friend from Godwin Road, came up with some funny and brilliant placard designs.

I heard some rather wild speculation about the overall numbers, but a rough headcount at about 2.15pm suggested 350 picnickers, which is fantastic achievement for what was fairly autumnal afternoon.

Paul Thomson, the Superintendent of Epping Forest, was also there and to give him all due credit, he stayed to debate with local people despite a pressing engagement in Chingford for the Epping Forest Festival. I'm pretty sure he felt he had little choice at times though. One of my friends said the impromptu public meeting that had surrounded him was like a 'gherao', an Indian protest tactic from West Bengal that involves surrounding a politician or employer and refusing to let them leave until their demands are met or their questions answered! However, Paul kindly confirmed that the City of London Corporation would definitely provide representatives for the residents' public meeting that took place on Wednesday 6th October - this convinced the Metropolitan Police to stop beating around the bush and they turned up as well.



**COUNTER OLYMPICS NETWORK (CON)** is a network of groups and individuals who have come together to organise against the London Olympics. Our aim is to use the spectacle of the Olympics to strengthen existing organising on local issues like housing, privatisation and surveillance. We want to highlight the unique problems that the Olympics bring to London and how it affects struggle more generally. We want to use the Olympics to our advantage, not by buying a ticket or buying into the false legacy promises, but by using this opportunity to bring people affected by the games together.

We will be holding regular monthly organising meetings and public socials. The next meeting will be Tuesday 9th November, 7pm at Durning Hall in Newham (Earlham Grove, E7 9AB).

The first social event will be held on Friday 26th November in LARC (62 Fieldgate Street, Whitechapel) from 7pm. There will be speakers, films, music and drinks. Please check our website for more details.

**WEBSITE:** <http://counterolympicsnetwork.wordpress.com/>

**EMAIL:** [counterolympicsnetwork@aktivix.org](mailto:counterolympicsnetwork@aktivix.org)



# SAVING THE FLATS *(part 2)*

## The Wanstead Flats campaign of 1946

*This article has been reproduced with the kind permission of Eastside Community Heritage - <http://www.hidden-histories.org.uk/wordpress/>*

In March 1946 the decision was made by West Ham council to make an application under the Town and Country Planning Act to compulsory purchase 163 acres of Wanstead Flats between Capel and Aldersbrook roads, the majority of which lay outside of the borough boundaries. This land would be used for the building of homes to house around 7000 people. West Ham council noted that the London County Council (LCC) had already made applications for land in Chingford and Chigwell for housing outside of its boundaries. West Ham council were influenced by the idea of self contained cottage estates located away from heavy industry. There had been a move of population from the more heavily damaged areas in the south to the north of West Ham and the open land of Wanstead Flats was an obvious target for development

The West Ham proposals were opposed by the City of London Forest through the Epping Forest Committee, Sir Frank Alexander as Lord Mayor of London wrote personally to Bevan criticising the proposals which were also opposed by the all neighbouring local councils.

A spirited local campaign was organised with Stanley Reed, a West Ham schoolteacher and Lakehouse Estate resident, acting as secretary of the Wanstead Flats Defence Committee. This organised a broad based coalition of over 160 organisations including trade union branches, religious groups, political parties and sports organisations who came together to oppose the proposals. The committee organised public meetings, house canvassing, letter writing campaigns and lobbied local politicians

The campaign also cut across party political allegiance with Leah Manning the Labour MP for Epping being a vocal opponent of the proposed developments and presenting Parliament with a 60,000 signature petition against the plans. Mrs. Manning spoke at many meetings against the proposals and attacked the plans during a Parliamentary debate as "vandalism."

Alicia Reed, the wife of Stanley Reed who was interviewed in 2007 about the campaign remembers:

"Leah Manning [MP]... said she was going to sit down in front of the bulldozers and was very outspoken".

Lewis Silkin, Minister for Town and Country Planning, and a former Chair of Planning for the LCC, established a public inquiry into the compulsory purchase. This opened on the 2nd December 1946 at West Ham Town Hall, Stratford (now the Old Town Hall). It lasted 4 days and at times was punctuated by acrimonious exchanges. Amid catcalls from the public gallery the West Ham Town Clerk described the inquiry as a battle between "haves and have-nots." This was followed by cries of "shame!" when Wanstead Flats was described as an "unattractive open space."

Following the inquiry (the deliberations taking place during the coldest winter of the twentieth century, locally Alexandra Lake froze) the decision was made in April 1947 to reject the application. However Silkin did accept that the compulsory purchase was not "ultra vires" (beyond the power) and the 1878 Epping Forest Act did not exempt the land from an attempt to compulsory purchase it.

West Ham Council went on to embark on a comprehensive redevelopment programme across the borough which Stanley Reed documented in his film "Neighbourhood 15". Mr. Reed was elected onto Wanstead and Woodford council as an independent councillor for Park Ward and later went on to become the director of the British Film Institute. He later wrote that:

"My part in the saving of Wanstead Flats is the single achievement of my life of which I am unreservedly proud." West Ham and East Ham councils jointly prepared proposals for development in the Pitsea and Laindon areas of Essex, although ultimately the development was undertaken by the Basildon Development Corporation.

The proposals by East Ham council for permanent development for schools by on Manor Park Triangle were eventually rejected following a public inquiry in the early 1950s

For Wanstead Flats, the City of London established a joint committee with West Ham, East Ham, Wanstead and Woodford and Leyton councils to look at development of Wanstead Flats on modern lines which produced some proposals which were implemented during the 1950s and is still widely used today.

This episode in the history of the area highlights the tension that existed and still exists today between preservation and development. Certainly, Wanstead Flats was a designated open space and was described as such in the Abercrombie's Plan for London. However it is also true that West Ham was attempting to follow guidance to separate housing from industrial development.

An illustrated talk and exhibition is also available that was produced as part of a Eastside Community Heritage project "Field of Dreams" funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. An event to debate the housing proposals of 1946 will be held as part of the Leytonstone Festival.

**The first part of this article appeared in issue number 7 of the East End Howler.**





# NUCLEAR TRAINS AND THE OLYMPICS!

"Nuclear Trains" carry highly-radioactive cargoes across London. Each week such trains travel on the North London between Stratford and Hackney Central through the Olympic site. They are carrying containers of nuclear fuel rods from the nuclear power station at Sizewell in Suffolk up to the Sellafield nuclear plant in Cumbria where the deadly plutonium and uranium they contain is separated.

## THESE CARGOES ARE DANGEROUS

- As a result of a terrorist attack or serious accident the flasks could break open, releasing highly-radioactive material that would blow for miles in the wind and kill thousands of people in a built-up area like Stratford.
- Such a terrorist attack on a nuclear train in the vicinity of the Olympics would thus create a "terrorist spectacular", which makes the trains a very tempting target.
- Ask your MP or local Councillor to try to get these trains stopped from going on the line through the Olympic site until at least the Games are safely over.

## JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

Join our campaign by sending a request for more information to **Stop Nuclear Trains through the Olympic Site!**  
c/o Nuclear Trains Action Group, 162 Holloway Rd, N7 8DQ - Telephone: 020-7607 2302  
e-mail: [david.lrcnd@cnduk.org](mailto:david.lrcnd@cnduk.org) - Web site: [www.nonucleartrains.org.uk](http://www.nonucleartrains.org.uk)

## THE RADICAL EAST END

**Saturday November 27th**

### ANARCHISTS, SOCIALISTS, SQUATTERS AND STRIKERS

A trip around "the narrow, crooked streets", by-lanes and alleys of the East End. **THRILL** as we visit the site of the Sugar Loaf pub, famed for its weekly anarchist meetings that tempted "poor flies into the trap". **GASP** as we visit the sites of the first organising attempts among Jewish workers and the scenes of mass strike meetings. **SOB** as we see the soup kitchens which fed the poor and hungry.

**Your pulse will race** when we come upon the site of the Russian Social Democratic Party, where the split between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks first emerged. **You will gaze in wonder** at the door through which Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin all went. **Your heart will beat loudly** when you gaze upon the place where two Latvian revolutionaries held off armed police and Guardsmen for many hours.

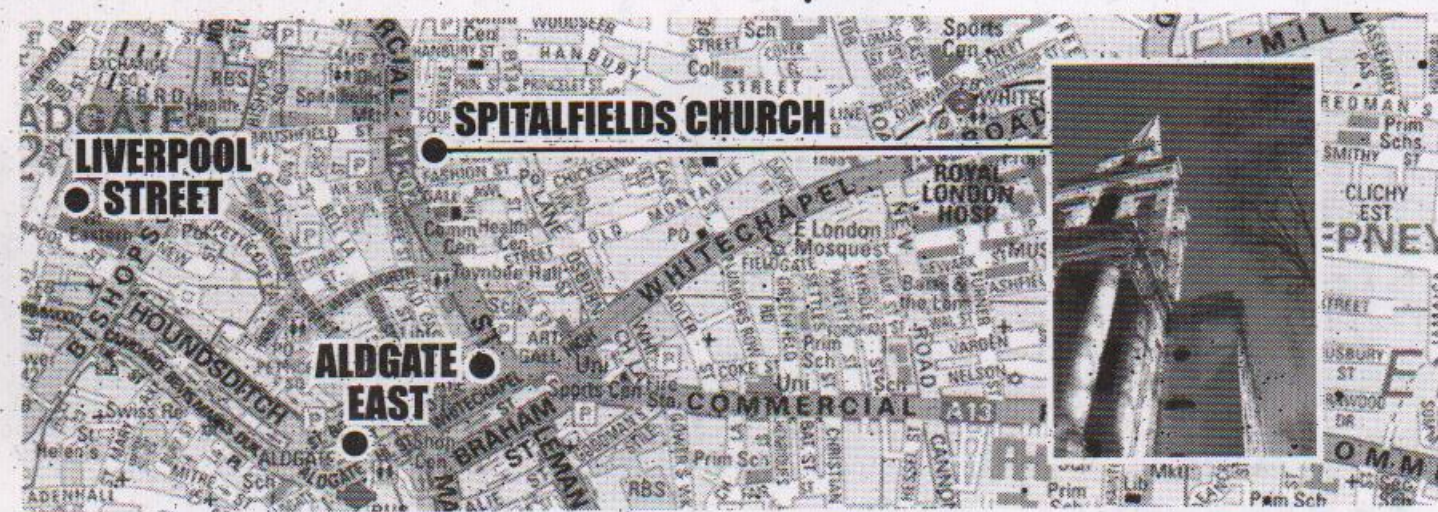
**You will be awestruck** by our visits to the two great Anarchist clubs of the East End, home of many speeches, plays and musical diversions **and you will mutter in outrage** when you hear about the brutal attacks by the police on the Anarchists there. **You will wonder** at the streets which were squatted lock stock and barrel in a confrontation with the authorities **and you will be intrigued** by the building which housed one of the several free schools in the East End dedicated to enlightened education.

So let a seasoned anarchist veteran introduce you to all the rich and unknown history of the East End.

**Meet at Spitalfields Church on Commercial Street at 1pm.** Bring stout walking shoes. Time for questions and a finish at a café.

Nearest tubes - **Liverpool Street or Aldgate East.**

Six pounds waged, three pounds unwaged. All proceeds to East London's radical voice the East End Howler.



## ACTION EAST END FILM CLUB

Action East End is showing a series of films about East London which portray working class life in our neighbourhoods.

### IT ALWAYS RAINS ON SUNDAY

A great Ealing studios film about working class life in Bethnal Green just after World War Two. This film made in 1947 is an unsentimental look at bleak post-war society with its poverty and frustration. A great and under-recognised classic of British cinema.

**Sunday December 5th at 4pm**



### BRONCO BULLFROG

Another great film about working class life in East London, only very recently being acknowledged as a masterpiece. All the actors are non-professional, mostly drawn from the working class community of Stratford and mostly filmed in the flats, cafes and bomb sites there. Made in 1969.

**Sunday January 9th at 4pm**



### A KID FOR TWO FARTHING

Joe is a young boy who lives in Whitechapel. He becomes convinced that through the mythical powers of a unicorn, he can grant the wishes of his mother and friends. Joe searches endlessly and finally discovers his unicorn—which turns out to be just a goat with a misshapen horn. A gritty but dream-like look at the Jewish working class community of the East End in the 1950s.

**Sunday February 6th at 4pm**



All films at the London Action Resource Centre, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1. Nearest tubes Aldgate East and Whitechapel. Refreshments available. All films will be followed by discussion. Membership on door - £5 waged £2.50 unwaged.

## ABOUT ACTION EAST END



The East End Howler is produced by Action East End. We are a small group of local residents keen to highlight issues not taken up by popular media. All of this, as so much in this life, costs money...and surprise surprise we're not millionaires! So please donate a small amount for each copy of the Howler you take.

If you like what we're doing and feel like doing more, please send an email to: [actioneastend@googlemail.com](mailto:actioneastend@googlemail.com)

We will add you to our mailing list and keep you informed of our latest activities. Alternatively if supply us with an address we will send you a paper copy of our news letter and a free East End Howler through the post.