



A review of *Jewish London*, written by Rachel Kolsky & Roslyn Rawson

This new guidebook to Jewish London published in 2012 by New Holland Publishers has been beautifully put together. The fantastic photographs bring the areas to life and make you want to rush out and visit all of these places. Rachel Kolsky has been a Blue Badge guide in London for over ten years and her walks form a large part of this book with clear directions and maps to guide you. The text is incredibly informative, explaining not only the history of the places, but also of the people who have been most influential in the Jewish Community of London. Some years ago Rachel was commissioned by the Women's Library to put together two walks about famous women living and working in the East End. One was called 'Wonderful Women of Whitechapel', and the other was 'Battling Belles of Bow'. Both of these walks remain hugely popular and some of the women mentioned on them feature in this book. We learn about Miriam Moses, the first female mayor of Stepney in 1931 and the UK's first Jewish female mayor. Then there's Minnie Lansbury, a communist and suffragette, and the first woman councillor for Poplar in 1919; and Stella Isaacs who founded the Women's Voluntary service. You can see a picture of the outside of the Jewish Maternity Hospital (also known as Mother Levy's), founded by Alice Model and opened in 1911. By the 1930s around 800 children a year were born here. The artist, and Auschwitz survivor, Naomi Blake is mentioned, as is the internationally-renowned sculptor Dora Gordine; and Rosalind Franklin, a researcher at Kings College, London, who missed out on a Nobel Prize for Medicine in spite of contributing to the isolation of the double helix of DNA in 1953. There's a classical pianist, Dame Myra Hess, and a 1970s songwriter with top ten hits, Lyndsey de Paul. We also learn about Lily Montagu, co-founder of what is now Liberal Judaism, who wanted women to play an equal role in Judaism.

If all the walking and concentrating on the history makes you tired, then the authors have thoughtfully provided information on cafes and restaurants to stop at along the way. There is also information on the various art galleries and museums that you can visit, and details of all the London synagogues. This is an essential guide to Jewish London, for visitors and Londoners alike, in which everyone will discover something new to them.

We are very grateful to Rachel for donating this lovely book to the Feminist Library!

Reviewed by Cathy Larkin