

OPENING OF RESTORED HISTORIC ALMSHOUSE

One of the Geffrye's historic, Grade 1 listed almshouses has recently been restored and opened to the public, offering a rare glimpse into the lives of London's poor and elderly in former times.

Built in 1716 by the Ironmongers' Company with a bequest from Sir Robert Geffrye, twice Master of the Company and former Lord Mayor of London, the almshouses provided shelter for around fifty pensioners for almost two hundred years. By the early 20th century, Shoreditch had become one of the most overcrowded and unsavoury parts of London, and the Company decided to sell the property in order to relocate the almshouses to a healthier area. Following a petition to prevent the demolition of the almshouses, the buildings were converted to form the Geffrye Museum, which opened in 1914.

The restored almshouse still has most of its internal joinery intact, including its staircase, upper floors, closets and panelling. Two rooms have been furnished to show the living conditions of pensioners in the 18th and 19th centuries. Visitors are able to compare the sparse furnishings and few personal possessions of the generally poor inmates of the 18th century with the rather more comfortable surroundings of the better-off pensioners of the late 19th century. The two remaining rooms and the basement contain displays on the history of the almshouses and on the kind of people who lived there, in the context of philanthropic and social housing in East London.

"The restoration of this almshouse has long been an ambition", says David Dewing, Director. "This is one of a very few almshouses in the country made accessible in this way and will be of unique interest to visitors, who invariably ask for information about the museum's historic buildings and its inhabitants, as well as being of academic interest to architectural and social historians. It will also be a valuable educational resource, for both adults and children, providing an opportunity to compare the middle-class interiors shown in the museum with housing conditions for the poor shown in the almshouse".

The project has been generously funded by the Worshipful Company of Ironmongers, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Jonathan Vickers Charitable Settlement and the Friends of the Geffrye Museum.

The almshouse will open to the public on the first Saturday and first and third Wednesday of each month. Admission is by timed entry at 10.30am, 11.15am, 12.15pm, 2.00pm and 3.00pm. Tickets are £2.00 for adults with free admission for children under 16. Limited visits are possible during the week for groups which have pre-booked. Please ring the museum on 020 7739 9893 in advance of your visit to confirm opening times.

Notes to Editors/...

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- 1) For further details or transparencies, please contact Nancy Loader, PR Officer, on 020 7739 9893 or nloader@geffrye-museum.org.uk.
- 2) The Geffrye Museum presents the quintessential style of English urban middle-class interiors from 1600 to the present day through a chronological sequence of period rooms. The museum is an independent charitable trust, grant-aided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The Trust actively seeks to attract donations and corporate sponsorship to support the museum's services and development plans.
- 3)

Admission:	FREE
Address:	Kingsland Road, Shoreditch, London E2
Tel No:	020 7739 9893/ Recorded Info: 020 7739 8543
Web Address:	www.geffrye-museum.org.uk
Email Address:	info@geffrye-museum.org.uk
Museum Opening Hours:	Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 5pm Sundays & Bank Holidays 12 - 5pm
Closed:	Mondays (unless Bank Holiday) Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day
Travel:	Buses: 149, 242, 243 or 67 Tube: Liverpool St, then bus 149 or 242 Old St (exit 2), then bus 243

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