

**Kingsley Hall and the Lester Archive**  
**(available to the public at Bishopsgate Library**  
<https://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/content.aspx?CategoryID=1750> )



**1. Muriel Lester (1883-1968)**

Muriel and her sister Doris moved to Bow in 1908. From the late 1920s onwards, while Doris held the fort in Bow and later Dagenham, Muriel spent most of her time abroad, campaigning for peace as Travelling Secretary for the International Fellowship of Reconciliation.



**2. Muriel and Doris Lester in Retirement**

For the last years of their lives the sisters lived in Loughton. Their home on the edge of Epping Forest, which they called Kingsley Cottage, has a local blue plaque commemorating the sisters.



**3. Kingsley Lester 1877-1914**

Kingsley was Muriel and Doris's younger brother. He moved to Bow to join his sisters in their work but died in Muriel's arms in 1914 after an operation. With financial help from their father, the sisters bought a disused chapel as a base for their activities. It was named Kingsley Hall as a memorial to him.



**4. Brick-laying Ceremony at the New Kingsley Hall, July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1927**

As Kingsley Hall's work expanded, funds were raised for new buildings. The present Kingsley Hall building and Children's House nursery school (1923) were designed by Charles Cowles-Voysey, as was the nursery school at Kingsley Hall Dagenham. In the ceremony shown here, bricks were laid by famous supporters to represent the ideals of Kingsley Hall. Here, novelist John Galsworthy is laying the brick of Literature and actress Sybil Thorndike the brick of Drama. Muriel Lester stands between them.



**5. Kingsley Hall, Powis Road, Bromley-by-Bow**

Opened September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1928. The building contains a large multi-purpose hall, used for lectures, performances, social events and church services (with Muriel officiating). On the first floor was the Club Room and small 'cells' on the roof housed residents and volunteers. Gandhi stayed in one of these when he came to England for the 1931 Round Table Conference on Indian independence.





### 11. First Report of Children's House, 1924

Children's House was Doris Lester's domain. She was a trained teacher who wrote many lively articles on the education of young children and their lives in the East End. She believed that through being given the freedom to learn through play and through thinking for themselves, children would become independent and co-operative adults who could resolve conflicts without war.



### 12. Children's Orchestra at Kingsley Hall, Dagenham

The conductor was Jerry Saville, who first took up the baton aged three. The Saville family has had links with both Kingsley Halls for three generations.



### 13. Start of a Seaside Outing

A charabanc waits outside Children's House, ready to take mothers and children to Southend. The Lesters believed that East End people had the right to have contact with nature. Kingsley Hall regularly organised camping trips to Epping Forest for local children.



Gandhi at Kingsley Hall during his stay in 1931, with George Lansbury and children from Children's House. The little girl at left front wearing glasses is Cynthia Parrott, whose mother took the photograph.