

Vivian Archer

The legendary Newham Bookshop's manager



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Vivian was the daughter of Jewish refugees who arrived in Britain having fled the Nazi regime in Germany. When Vivian and her sister were children they were surrounded by books. Their father was a great reader. He took them to a bookshop in Hampstead in North London every week to choose a book for themselves. Vivian enjoyed reading Russian and French classics and was fond of poetry.

After college, Vivian studied drama for three years at the Central School of Speech and Drama. Her successful acting career lasted for 10 years. Then Vivian worked in bookshops called Paperback Centres located in Glasgow and on Green Street in Newham. When these shops closed, Vivian became the manager of the Newham Bookshop, which at the time was part of the Newham Parents' Centre. She has now done this job for over 30 years.

The Newham Bookshop has held many events with famous authors such as Zadie Smith, and it now organises its own book events at venues like the Wanstead Tap. Many renowned local West Ham footballers such as Trevor Brooking were great supporters of the bookshop. They attracted long queues of fans outside for autographs and photos.

Vivian reads several books a week, but firmly believes that if you don't like a book you shouldn't force yourself to read it until the end. She describes the Newham bookshop as a centre for ideas and a community asset. For three decades, Vivian has played a crucial role in making sure that Newham Bookshop caters to the ever-changing needs of the local area.