



# Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



July 2016

## Our latest exhibition and events programme

### Radical Housing in Tower Hamlets

20 June - 22 September 2016

Exhibition and Events

at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



was enjoyed by all.

From the rent strikes of the 1930s to the squatting movement of the 1970s and the formation of the first housing co-operatives, the fight for decent and affordable housing has a long history in London's East End. Our upcoming exhibition will provide an overview of tenant action in Tower Hamlets, highlighting some of the key events and movements which have taken place over the last 100 years.

Our successful exhibition launch on Thursday 7 July (pictured below) drew a large crowd and included a fascinating talk by Mike Tyrell, Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets Community Housing, on the history of tenant activism in the borough and his favourite 'housing radicals'. Visual artist Rudy Loewe led a creative printmaking workshop on 2 July focused on housing and protest, which



We still have the following FREE events coming up as part of the programme:

**Walk: Social Housing in Poplar (only 1 place left)**

**Tuesday 26 July 7.00-9.00pm**

**Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives**

Join Borough Archivist Malcolm Barr-Hamilton for a walk exploring the history of social housing in Poplar. Limited space, advance booking essential.

**Talk: East End Immigrants and the Battle for Housing**

**Saturday 6 August 2.00-3.00pm**

**Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives**

Academic and architect Sarah Glynn will talk about the struggle of Jewish and Bengali immigrants for housing during the 1930s and 1970s respectively. Just drop in, no need to book.

**Talk: Setting the Record Straight Housing, Politics and the Archive**

**Thursday 18 August 6.30-7.30pm**

**Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives**

Elena Carter, archivist, explores how housing activists create and use archival resources to create a useful past. Just drop in, no need to book.

**Film screening: Goodbye Longfellow Road**

**Saturday 17 September 2016, 2:00 - 3:30pm**

**Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives**

A free screening of rarely seen 'Goodbye Longfellow Road' (1977, 78 mins), a documentary originally broadcast on ITV, telling the story of the residents of a Stepney street. Declared a slum in the 1930s, earmarked for demolition in 1943 but still inhabited in the 1970s: what happened when the bulldozers finally moved in? No booking required.

## Other events coming up ....

**Lost in the Archive seminar**

**Thursday 14 July 2016, 6.30-9.30pm**

**Bow Arts Trust, 183 Bow Road, E3 2SJ**

Still some spaces left on this evening seminar taking place **TOMORROW** led by Ben Cranfield, Lecturer in Cultural Studies at Birkbeck, with Tamsin Bookey, Heritage Manager at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives. Part of the Bow Skills CPD programme, the event is aimed at artists (and others working in the arts) who are interested in the use of archives for creative practice. It will cover practical and theoretical issues relating to curating archives using material from our collections as a starting point. Tickets are priced between £6-£12. For more information and to book,

[click here.](#)

### **History Hoppers**

**Wednesday 20 July 2016, 2.30-4.30pm**

#### **Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives**

Come along to our monthly drop-in History Hoppers group, where participants will have the chance to explore a variety of items from our archive collection relating to the history of the local area, including photographs, old newspapers, letters and diaries. Refreshments provided. Free, no booking required.

Upcoming History Hoppers dates:

Wednesday 17 August, 2.30-4.30pm

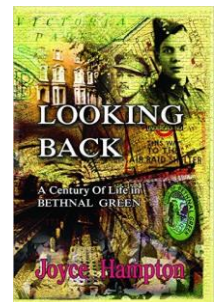
Wednesday 21 September, 2.30-4.30pm

### **Talk: Looking Back - A Century of Life in Bethnal Green**

**Saturday 3 September 2016, 2-3pm**

#### **Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives**

Join author Joyce Hampton who will discuss her book 'Looking Back: a century of life in Bethnal Green', which is both a family memoir and an exploration of the area's fascinating history from 1862 to 1962. Free, no booking required.



Preparing shrines in Rook Street, Poplar, in readiness for the Catholic procession, c.1920

### **Talk: The Irish East End**

**Saturday 1 October 2016, 2-3pm**

#### **Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives**

Save the date! Rescheduled from April: join Professor Bronwen Walter, Emerita Professor of Irish Diaspora Studies at Anglia Ruskin University, for this illustrated talk on the history of Irish people in London's East End, focusing on the mid-nineteenth century to the 1960s. Free, no booking required.

### **Writeldea Festival 2016**

**Friday 11 - Sunday 13 November 2016**

**Idea Store Whitechapel**



Save the date! Once again, Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives has curated a day of talks relating to East End heritage as part of this year's Writeidea Festival.

Our day is **Saturday 12 November** and it features five speakers on different aspects of local history. Laurence Ward discussing the London County Council bomb damage maps, which represent a key record of the raids on London between 1939 and 1945. Sarah Wise presents a complex picture of life in notorious slum the Old Nichol, and Roger Mills will talk about the fascinating history of Cable Street (coinciding with the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street). Finally, Georgie Wemyss will discuss political acts of resistance by Indian Merchant Seafarers between the wars which have hitherto been excluded from historical narratives, and Dan Cruickshank will tell the story of Spitalfields where he has lived for the past four decades.



The Writeidea Festival is part of Idea Store, Tower Hamlets Council's innovative library, learning and information service. The festival has been running since 2009 and is part of the Idea Store programme of free book-based activities for adults and children which are aimed at getting more people to read. All events are FREE. Further details and the full festival programme, including many other authors and events. can be found online : <http://writeideafestival.org/>.

## A voice from above

The works to restore the Reading Room ceiling are delayed and we now expect not to re-open until September. Though most of the plaster restoration and repair has now been completed, cosmetic repairs and redecoration are still needed. Master plasterer Glynn Tebbutt shares a report from the ceiling void....

"Just a brief account of our progress so far.

Unfortunately our works are going to take a little longer than we had first anticipated due to discovering that more repair work was urgently required to consolidate and make secure the extremely fragile plaster fabric of the reading room ceiling.

On our initial survey of the reading room ceiling our surveyor unfortunately only had the luxury of a localised work platform and was hampered by the roof space void being totally covered in wood boarding and insulation material. Apart from the obvious section missing a large area of decorative plaster, the other areas requiring attention seemed to be several areas of loose flaking paint (which can be caused by modern paints being used over the original lime based paints) which was deemed to be part of the decoration package.



The hole in the ceiling has now been filled by a new plaster panel identical to the one that fell out. Its mould was cast from the facing panel on the opposite side of the skylight which was still intact.

On closer inspection, facilitated by a complete access platform, the plaster behind the loose paint was discovered to be in an advanced state of decay. In fact, the canvas re-enforcing fabric that was used during the construction of the original plaster cast was totally perished. I imagine that this was caused by many years of water ingress possibly caused by the old leaking roof system that I am informed was thankfully replaced approximately 2 years ago. The good news is that the main damage is now fully repaired and aside from decoration is now complete. I have taken a few photographs (above). I am very happy with the repair and hope you agree?

On a personal note I feel honoured to have been given this opportunity to return this fine example of plaster art to its intended former glory.

Kind regards,

Glynn Tebbutt  
Master plasterer."

## Temporary reading room service

Full details of the reopening of the reading room will be shared as soon as they are confirmed. In the meantime we are continuing to take appointments for you to consult the vast majority of our collections at the following times in our temporary reading room on the ground floor:

Tuesdays and Wednesdays: 10:00-13:00 and 13:30-16:30  
Thursdays: 13:30-16:30 and 17:00-19:30

In addition we will be open for appointments on the following Saturdays (10:00-13:00 only):

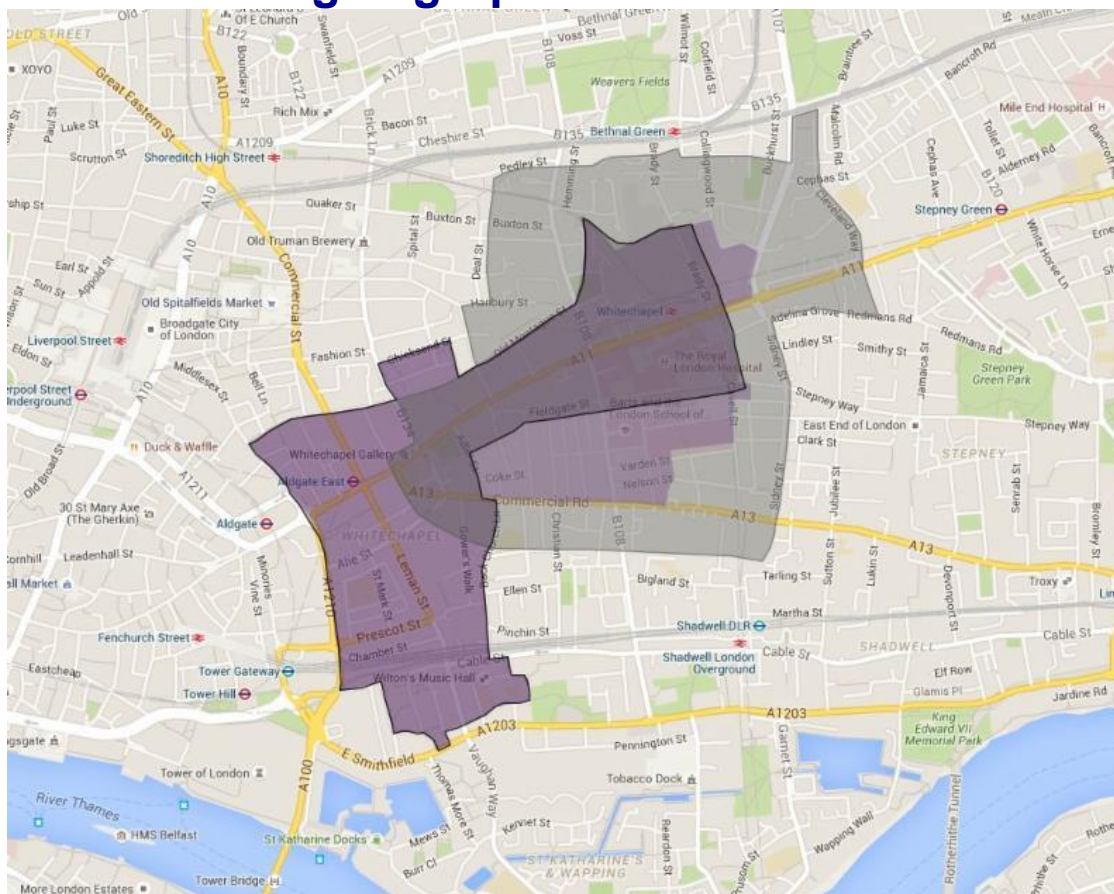
July 16  
August 6  
August 20  
September 3

When booking an appointment, readers can book up to six individual items from across the following categories and must cite the references for requested material at least 24 hours prior to their appointment:

- Books
- Pamphlets (individual, or all at a given classmark)
- Archive file or item
- Photographs (individual, or all at a given classmark or street name)
- Folder of press cuttings (classmark)
- Bound newspapers/periodicals
- Periodicals on microfilm

Please refer to our online catalogue to obtain references and search the collections, and download the subject guide or classification scheme (available under the What's in the Catalogue? tab) for a list of all available subjects and classmarks. Please e-mail [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) or call 020 7364 1290 during office hours to book an appointment.

## Deeds Cataloguing Update



Map of the Survey of London Whitechapel study area shown in purple

"Our long-term project to modernise and adapt the card index to some of THLHLA's most valuable historic records, the deeds collections, into an archive catalogue searchable online started in 2013 as part of a project funded by Heritage Lottery Fund called *Land and Lives*. By the end of 2014 all the deeds for Bromley-by-Bow and many of those for Bethnal Green, Bow and Whitechapel had been recatalogued in full. In keeping the project going since the funding for that project ran out, the ongoing participation of volunteers has been vital - in inputting data from the index of nearly 8,200 cards onto our archive database, and re-packaging the deeds in acid-free materials. As far as the data-inputting is concerned, seven volunteers have contributed immense amounts of careful work, working steadily through the cards since Easter 2014. We are grateful to all, but especially Isobel Watson and Judy Joseph, who this month crossed this particular finishing line!

The work is not over, however, because the information in the index cards is not ideal in every respect. The property for which the deeds record ownership can often be located more precisely than it was in the cards, and the relationships between the records have until now been obscured. My former role here as *Land and Lives* Project Archivist has received a shot in the arm through Arts & Humanities Research Council funding. This has come about through our partnership with the Bartlett School of Architecture at UCL, which is now home to the long-standing Survey of London project. The Survey is the standard work of reference to the local history and architectural landscape of many London communities. Many of you will be familiar with its authoritative volumes on Bromley, Spitalfields and Poplar, which are indispensable reading for planners, environmentalists, architectural scholars and local historians, and it has now turned its attention to Whitechapel. The Survey is now supporting me to continue



(re)cataloguing those of our deeds which relate to Whitechapel for a fixed period of time, as our holdings for this area provide an essential resource for the Survey's authors as they explore the history behind present buildings. The study area is shown in purple in the map above: it is slightly larger than the parish boundary of Whitechapel which is marked with a black line.

Whitechapel has seen many waves of immigration and emigration in the past, and is again undergoing many pressures as a result of its proximity to the City of London. For this reason the Survey authors are keen to invite local residents, businesses and anyone with an interest in the area to visit their website and share their insights, memories, or knowledge of particular sites. For background information on the Whitechapel project, please visit <https://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/architecture/research/survey-of-london/whitechapel>

From September 2016 there will be an interactive map on the Survey's website which members of the public will be invited to explore and contribute to. We will tell you when it goes live in a future Newsletter."

- Mark Ballard, archivist

## New staff member: Paul Smith



Please join us in welcoming our newest staff member, Paul Smith. Paul is a local resident and is the second person we have hosted on a placement as part of [The Tower Project's](#) apprenticeship scheme with Tower Hamlets Council. Paul started in March and will be here for a year. He has very good IT skills and even built his own computer.

He is currently adding photos collected by the Island History Trust and deposited with us a few years ago to our online Digital Gallery. You can see the images after they have been uploaded by going to our [website](#), and browsing the gallery via the tag **Isle of Dogs (Island History Trust)** or by doing a search for 'island history trust'. He's already uploaded hundreds of images, but with a collection numbering well into the thousands, it will take him several months to add the rest.

## Twitter competition

As many of you are aware, we are now on Twitter as @LBTHarchives. We have been tweeting images of some of recently digitised 35mm slides. These have proven to be very popular and started some great conversations, so we thought we'd run a little competition: to invite readers to share their best personal photos of the borough with our readership.



To enter, please email us a copy of the photo and we will tweet it with the hashtag #THPhotoComp. We will post the entries as we receive them between now and the end of July. The tweet with the most likes and retweets by 31 July will win a prize. So send us your photos, and get your friends and family to follow us. We can include your name in the tweet or not, just let us know which you'd prefer.

If you don't have a photo to send in just search for the tag #THPhotoComp and vote for your favourites with likes and retweets.

## We have wifi!!

It is our delight to announce that there is now free wifi available across all of the public areas of our building! This is part of an upgrade of the public PC network and wifi across all of the Idea Stores and libraries in Tower Hamlets.

## Contact Us

Send us your enquiry via email, phone or letter at

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