

February - March 2013

## Don't Just Live, Live To Be Remembered: The Somali East End



Dancing at Somali Week Festival, 1994

The first ever exhibition illustrating the history of Somali migration to Tower Hamlets will be hosted in March 2013. Produced by Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives in partnership with Bethnal Green-based KAYD Somali Arts & Culture, the exhibition draws on oral histories of influential and inspirational residents as well as the council's archive collections to tell the story of the Somali East End. These oral histories and new archives have been gathered during 2012-13 by Simeera Hassan as part of her heritage skills traineeship supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and The National Archives. The exhibition also features a striking set of portraits of Somali seamen and community leaders taken by local photographer Sarah Ainslie.

The exhibition runs at Oxford House from 8-31 March 2013 and will subsequently tour to Idea Stores and other venues in Tower Hamlets.

A programme of free public events throughout March is being held across various venues to tie in with this ground-breaking exhibition, including a launch reception on 8 March, Tracing Your Somali Family History IT workshop on 16 March, a reminiscence session with the seamen on 20 March and a film night on 28 March. Check [www.ideastore.co.uk](http://www.ideastore.co.uk) for more information and [www.oxfordhouse.org.uk](http://www.oxfordhouse.org.uk) for exhibition visiting times.

## Who Do You Think You Are? Live Event

For the second year running Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives will be participating at the annual [Who Do You Think You Are? Live](#) family history event. The event takes place from 22-24 February 2013, at Kensington Olympia, London. Visit our stall to buy books, maps and ask us a question!

## Some forthcoming East End History events

The Jewish East End Celebration Society and friends are celebrating the life of author **Wolf Mankowitz** on Sunday 17 February at Sandys Row Synagogue, Sandys Row, Spitalfields. In addition to a discussion chaired by Jewish Chronicle journalist Gerald Jacobs, Wolf Mankowitz's film 'A Kid for Two Farthings' set in and around Fashion Street and Petticoat Lane will be shown. The afternoon begins at 3pm and admission is £10 per person, or £7 for members of JEECS and supporters of Spiro Ark. Book now on Spiro Ark's [website](#) or phone 207 289 6321, or write to Clive Bettington [c.bettington@jeecs.org.uk](mailto:c.bettington@jeecs.org.uk) or phone 07941367882.

The Jewish Museum will be leading two local history walks throughout the Whitechapel and Spitalfields area. Spitalfields: The Story will take place on Sunday 10 February and [Women of Worth](#) will take place on Sunday 10 March, both at 11am. Tickets cost £13 and can be purchased from the box office (020 7284 7384 / [admin@jewishmuseum.org.uk](mailto:admin@jewishmuseum.org.uk))

The Institute of Historical Research will be holding a seminar titled **Whose Home? Jewish migration and local reaction in the East End of London, 1870-1914** by Oliver Betts on 13 February at 5.30pm. Further information can be found [here](#).

Local historian, Gary Haines, will be leading a walk titled the [Women of Bow](#) on 16 March 2013, as part of Women's History Month. The walk coincides with Nunnery Gallery & Carmelite Cafe's exhibition of the work of Alastair Gordon called [Strike](#) inspired by the 1888 Matchgirl protest at the Bryant & May Factory in Bow, which runs until 1 April 2013.

The East London History Society will be holding a free talk at their regular meeting in Stepney on 21 February, titled [Columbia Road - Mangelwirzels to Des-Res](#).

The Bank of England Museum will be hosting a new exhibition, [The Huguenot Legacy](#) from 14 February to 10 May.

Brick Lane Circle are hosting their third annual conference on **Story of Bangladesh and Bangladeshi People, at home and in the Diaspora** at Rich Mix on Saturday 27 April. Email [bricklanecircle@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bricklanecircle@yahoo.co.uk) if you are a researcher or student in this area and would like to participate.

## Outreach Report

In January, Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives hosted four Cockney Heritage research workshops for groups of students from the Idea Store Learning visual arts courses. The students enjoyed presentations from local history staff members and had the opportunity to examine a wide range of maps, photographs and newspaper cuttings as part of their exploration of Cockney culture and heritage. The resulting artwork created by the students will be exhibited as part of Cockney Heritage Festival in July 2013.



Idea Store Learning students admire illustrations at THLHLA

Borough Archivist, Malcolm Barr-Hamilton, also gave a well-received local history talk for Cubitt Town Library's Over 50's group, on the history of Tower Hamlets.

## Cockney Heritage Festival

The first Cockney Heritage Festival is being held in Tower Hamlets during July 2013, organised Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives in partnership with Cockney Heritage Trust. Events already confirmed include a launch at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, a closing night knees-up at Bethnal Green Working Men's Club and a packed schedule of talks, film screenings and exhibitions including work produced by students on Idea Store Learning's visual arts programmes this spring. The festival will take place from 18-27 July at venues around the borough of Tower Hamlets and will explore themes such as cultural heritage (food, entertainment, traditions, work and play, language/idiom). It will also provide a platform for debating and exploring 'what is a Cockney?' There will be reminiscence sessions drawing on the borough's archival collections, events for children and families, screenings of rarely seen archival films and talks about the history of this important and unique part of London. If your group or institution would like to host an event, please contact Ray Sparra Everingham from Cockney Heritage Trust on [ray.everingham@gmail.com](mailto:ray.everingham@gmail.com) before the end of February.

## Archives Collection Development

Work is continuing on the project to develop the Local History Library and Archives' holdings of records created by significant local businesses. One such business is Sneath's, which was established in 1898 and provides electrical and engineering services. In January a member of staff visited the Sneath Group premises in Solebay St and met with Mr John Veness and his mother Christine to discuss the family business. We look forward to building upon this introductory meeting and providing Mr Veness and his family with a tour of the Local History Library and Archives collections in due course. Meetings have also been arranged with some other long-standing family businesses in Tower Hamlets.



Sneath's, Stepney

## Picture of the Month



The Millwall and The Island Horse Omnibus outside West India Dock Station, c.1910

During the 1850s, the first one-horse omnibus began to operate between the Greenwich Ferry and Limehouse, helping to ease heavy traffic congestion on the Isle of Dogs, primarily caused by frequent queues at the Dock bridges. By the 1870s, a number of private horse omnibuses were in operation throughout the island. The bus driver would collect fares through a hatch in the roof of the vehicle. The 'Millwall and The Island' horse omnibus, pictured, served West Ferry Road and Millwall Docks and operated until 16th October 1913, the year during which the London General Omnibus Company introduced motor-bus services.

## Staff news

In January we bade farewell to our temporary Heritage Assistant on the Building Control Files project, Louise Grainger, and our Building Attendant, Awais Butt. We are very grateful for all their assistance at the Local History Library and Archives and wish them both all the best for the future. We also welcomed three new members of staff from the Bethnal Green Centre, Terry, Tim and Keith; who will be assisting us with all aspects of managing the building. Welcome on board!



Terry, Tim and Keith

In other news, in the 2012 Staff Awards Malcolm Barr-Hamilton was awarded Best Manager within the CLC Directorate. Well done Malcolm!

## Building works update

We regret that we have experienced further delays in our current building works. The roof works have not yet started on site due to the unforeseen need to negotiate a legal licence with neighbours to permit the roofing contractors to erect scaffolding on land adjacent to the 1860 part of the building. This process is nearly complete and we expect a February start on site with works to the reading room roof complete first. This would enable us to reopen to the public in late spring. In better news, our new lift is due to be handed over this week making the first floor fully accessible to wheelchair users for the first time. We regret the inconvenience our continued closure causes to patient researchers and remind you that staff continue to provide as much research help as we can to enquiries made by phone and email during our closure.

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