

# Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



## Cockney Rebels: the book!



Just in time for Christmas, we are thrilled to announce the publication of **Cockney Rebels: Popular Music in the East End, 1624-2003**.

Extending across 68 lavishly illustrated, full colour A4 pages, this expanded book version of the exhibition includes articles by Alan Dein, Andrew Lewis and lead curator Robert Jones. Yours for the bargain price of £10, it also includes the key to 'who's who' in the exhibition poster.

The book is currently at the printers (an artist's impression is above) and will be on sale from **Saturday 7 December**. We hope to have online sales possible but this is highly unlikely before the New Year, so come on down to the library to get your copy. We are also taking phone orders.

Please [check our opening times](#) before visiting or calling! The last day of opening before Christmas is Saturday 21 December.

Special credit goes to designer Andy Hemming for his brilliant work, and our local history librarian Rob Jones for an epic research, writing and editing job.

ISBN: 978-1-0369-0612-2

## The exhibition continues

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From 'The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green' to 'Bonkers', the people of London's East End have always appreciated a good tune. Our unique history, shaped by its connection to the river as a source of inspiration, work and migration has produced an extraordinary musical legacy, spanning everything from folk songs and sea shanties to music hall, jazz, punk, the Asian underground and grime. Featuring over a hundred rare items selected by staff from the collections of Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, **Cockney Rebels: Popular Music in Tower Hamlets, 1624-2003** is a major new exhibition exploring how our borough and its people have inspired and shaped popular music, both locally and globally, over four centuries.

Free entry, on display until 21 February 2025.

The feedback from exhibition visitors has been fantastic, with over 1,000 people attending so far. We also had some great publicity thanks to the lead curator (our local history librarian Rob Jones) appearing on the BBC London Robert Elms show! Next week's talk by historian Danny Wells on music hall is fully booked, so watch out for some final events taking place in the new year.

[Visit the exhibition](#)

## Our book sale is back!

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**BOOK SALE!**

Saturday 7 December  
10am - 2pm

Social history,  
biography,  
politics, fiction  
and more...

**CASH ONLY!**  
£2 Paperbacks  
£5 Hardback

Calling all East End history fans, second hand booklovers  
and bargain hunters - our book sale is back!

**Saturday 7 December | 10am-2pm**

**Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives**

The early bird catches the worm! Our ever-popular sale of duplicate withdrawn local history books is back. Pick up a hot-off-the-press copy of our new Cockney Rebels book, the 2025 Friends of the Island History Trust calendar, and grab some unique bargains at the same time.

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## Don't miss Wh'appen

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This small exhibition at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives explores the intersection between space, place, fashion, and music in Tower Hamlets' Black music scene. Through youth clubs, bands, blues/shubeens (house parties), festivals, and people, we aim to uncover the diverse ways the community recollect Black music in the borough from 1970-1999.

With contribution and research from local residents **Keira Blasse** and **Nick Friday**, this exhibition narrates an intimate story of memory and joy through Black music culture and heritage in Tower Hamlets.

- Do you remember what you wore to house parties in the 80s?
- What record shops did you go to for the latest tunes?
- Was there a favourite sound clash you remember? Come and share your stories with us.

The exhibition has been curated especially for the first floor landing space at Tower Hamlets History Library & Archives, outside the Reading Room. Free entry.



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## East End History Club: Parent/Carer and Under 5's Edition

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Friday 6 December | 10-11.30am

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Come along to our version of East End History Club designed especially for parents and carers to attend with their under 5s. It's a chance to meet other parents, enjoy a cuppa and browse our collection of materials, including maps, photographs, newspapers, which illustrate the amazing history of London's famous East End. Toys for children aged 0-5 will be provided, along with a mini kiddie brunch, tea, coffee and biscuits.

Free entry, limited places. No booking required.

### East End History Club: Parent & Under 5's



Fri. 4 Oct.  
Fri. 8 Nov.  
Fri. 6 Dec.  
10am-11:30am

Tower Hamlets Image Collection  
P12195 Mothers Arms Toddlers 1917

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## Bangladesh Victory Day

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Saturday 14 December | 12pm-4pm

Mulberry & Bigland Green Centre

We will have a local history stall at the upcoming Victory Day Mela taking place at Mulberry & Bigland Green Centre. This is a fun-filled day for families, with live music, workshops, henna, food and more. Bring your kids, siblings, cousins, grandparents and parents!

**NIJJOR MANUSH**

**14/12/24**  
**12-4PM**

**VICTORY-DAY MELA**

A FUN-FILLED FAMILY DAY MARKING  
BANGLADESH'S VICTORY DAY!

**MULBERRY AND  
BIGLAND GREEN  
CENTRE, E1 2JP**

**HENNA  
FOOD  
STALLS  
LIVE MUSIC  
WORKSHOPS**

 **NIJJORMANUSH@GMAIL.COM**

 **@NIJJORMANUSH**

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## News from our friends

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### Job vacancy

An exciting opportunity to lead a new heritage project, [Bengali Drama: Narratives of Time.](#)

### **Petticoat Lane memories sought**

London Historic Buildings Trust is looking for stories of Petticoat Lane to contribute to the Petticoat Lane Heritage Trail. The trail will be made up of physical installations around the area, with links to further online content made up of research conducted by local people. Stories and memories will be recorded by one of the Project Oral Historians, and will add further narratives and personal stories to bring information about the past to life.

Get in touch if you:

- Have a connection to Petticoat Lane
- Want to contribute to the history of this ever-changing area
- Feel comfortable having your voice or written words shared online in the digital Heritage Trail site
- Have a spare 1-2 hours to take part in a recording session

We are looking for people of all ages, walks of life and backgrounds to take part to ensure that we capture stories that represent this diverse and vibrant area. We are particularly excited to hear stories of young people, migrant voices, disabled stories, LGBTQ+ memories and those who consider themselves to be newcomers to the area in addition to long-time Cockney residents. If you are unsure or have any questions, please get in touch with Laura Owen, the Heritage Trail Project Officer, at [hello@lauraowen.co.uk](mailto:hello@lauraowen.co.uk) to find out more information and sign up to take part.

### **New research into the Robert Milligan statue**

Available to read for free online, check out this fascinating [article by Dr Georgie Wemyss](#) about the contested history of the statue of Robert Milligan in which our collections feature.

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## **"The Godfather" of the reference library**

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Earlier this month we were amazed to receive a visit from a family historian with a special link to our building. Paul Peterken, pictured above, is the great-grandson of Mr **H.G. Peterken, J.P.** of Three Colt Street, Limehouse, who was a long serving public servant for Stepney during the late 19th and early 20th century.

As Chairman of the Libraries Committee for the new Metropolitan Borough of Stepney, he "materially assisted in securing the Carnegie donation to build the Borough Reference Library at Mile End" - the beautifully ornate room which is our present day Reading Room! So great was his influence that Cllr Peterken was referred to at the official opening as "the Godfather of the Reference Library".

Cllr Peterken had many roles over the years and received a special commendation for his work on the scene of the 1917 Upper North Street School air raid in which eighteen Poplar schoolchildren were killed. Read more about his long life of public service in our press cuttings collection, of which an example is below, taken from the East London Observer in 1935. Thank you to Paul for allowing us to include this story, and his photo, in our newsletter.



# J.P.'s Golden Wedding

Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Peterken

E.L.O.  
15/6/1935

## Fifty Years in Limehouse and Poplar

On Thursday, Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Peterken, of 63, Three Colt Street, Limehouse, celebrated their Golden Wedding and were the recipients of many congratulatory messages.

They were married on 13th June, 1885, at Poplar Wesleyan Church, where both were in the Choir, and they have seven sons and daughters living and nine grandchildren.

This makes the third successive golden wedding in the family, Mr. Peterken's grandparents and also his father and mother attaining this notable anniversary. In each case the husbands are eldest sons and all have lived in Poplar, where for over 100 years the family have carried on the well-known printing business of that name. They came from Inverness to Limehouse in 1662, and are practically the oldest family in the district. Mr. and Mrs. Peterken have lived in Three Colt Street for 49 out of their 50 years of married life.

Mr. Peterken, who was appointed a Justice of the Peace for the Tower Division in 1924, has done much public work in Stepney, which he commenced by being a member of the old Limehouse Vestry. For 9½ years he was on the Limehouse District Board of Works, before the Stepney Borough Council came into existence, and for 19 years he served as an elected Councillor on the Council for the Limehouse South Ward, representing the Ratepayers and Municipal Reform Party.

As Chairman of the Libraries Committee, he materially assisted in securing the Carnegie donation to build the Borough

Reference Library at Mile End. His work in this connection was recognised at the opening of the Library, when the late Dr. Stanley Atkinson informed the Duke of Argyle at the opening that Mr. Peterken was the "Godfather" of the Reference Library. He has at different times been Chairman of the General Purposes and the Works Committees, also being the Stepney Council representative on the Metropolitan Water Board and on the Lee Conservancy Board.

Mr. Peterken has always taken a great interest in education, and is a manager of nine local schools, Nos. 3 and 4 Groups, Thomas Street Central School and Limehouse Church School. With the exception of the Church School he is Vice-Chairman of each body of local school managers.

During the war, Mr. Peterken was an Inspector of the Special Constabulary at Limehouse, and in that capacity he did between 1,200 and 1,300 duties in the four years and three months of the war. Together with eight other men, he was specially commended for work performed in the first daylight air raid at Poplar, when many children were bombed and killed.

Quiet and modest by nature, Mr. Peterken never seeks the limelight, but he is popular with all business men and those who work with him for the public good, among whom he has gained a reputation for dependability, good sense and integrity of the highest order.

Thursday's anniversary was celebrated by a family gathering at his residence, and was a happy culmination to a useful and fine life.



MR. H. G. PETERKEN, J.P., AND MRS. PETERKEN.

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## 16 Days of Activism

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**16 Days of Activism** is an international campaign to challenge violence against women and girls. It runs every year from 25th November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10th December, Human Rights Day. You will see staff across Idea Stores and libraries wearing white ribbons in solidarity with victims and survivors of domestic abuse and other forms of gender-based violence.

Idea Stores are running a number of events to raise awareness, including film screening, a book club discussion, and a new women's group.

[Find out more](#)

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## Get in touch with us!

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- Email us: [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk)
- Visit our website: <http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history>
- Phone (answered during Reading Room opening hours only):  
020 7364 1290

### Reading Room opening hours

- Tuesday 10.00am-4.30pm
- Wednesday 10.00am-4.30pm
- Thursday 10.00am-7.00pm

First and third Saturdays of every month:

- Saturday 10.00am-5.00pm

That's the following Saturdays coming up:



- Saturday 7 December
- Saturday 21 December (*the last day of opening before Christmas*)
- Saturday 4 January
- Saturday 18 January

**We will be closed for Christmas between Monday 23 December and Wednesday 1 January inclusive.**

Exhibition opening times are: 10am-5pm Monday-Friday, plus the Saturdays and Thursday evenings noted above. On Monday and Friday lunchtimes, the exhibition will be closed for lunch between 1 and 2pm.



**TOWER HAMLETS**



Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, 277 Bancroft Road,  
London E1 4DQ

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