



Wh'appen? Black Music in Tower Hamlets

Exhibition | First floor landing | until 21 February

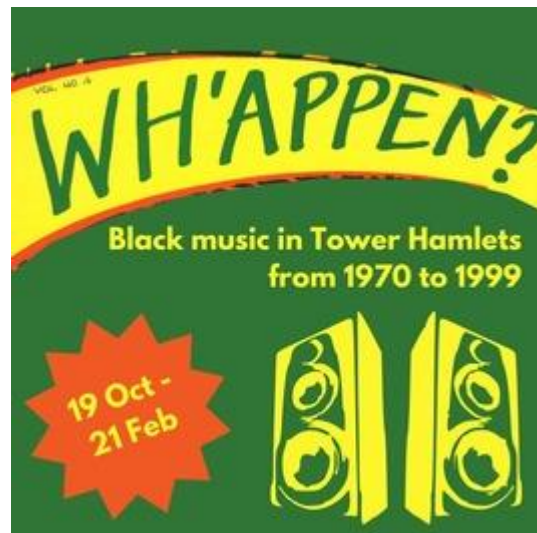
This small exhibition at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives explores the intersection between space, place, fashion, and music in Tower Hamlets' Black music scene. Through youth clubs, bands, blues/shubeens (house parties), festivals, and people, we aim to uncover the diverse ways the community 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 - check out our opening times at the bottom of this newsletter.



Cockney Rebels exhibition and events

Check out the events below which have been programmed as part of our current exhibition Cockney Rebels.

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. Check opening times before visiting. **More events coming in the new year!**



East End Music on film, 1963-1975

Saturday 16 November | 2.00pm-4.00pm | [Book your free place here](#)

The 1960s saw an outpouring of musical talent from Tower Hamlets. Driven by the interconnected worlds of theatre, popular music and film, local musicians and singers had a strong sense of community and East End identity.

This event will screen a series of short archive documentaries on performers including Queenie Watts, Kenny Lynch, Lionel Bart and Georgia Brown who helped shape the popular vision of what the East End was. These films reflect the culture of music in Tower Hamlets, and how the performers navigated their identity as 'Cockneys'.

This event is curated and facilitated by **Bea Moyes**, who is a Film Producer and Researcher, specialising in working with research-led film and public history. She is an Associate Lecturer at Birkbeck College, University of London, and CEA CAPA.



Queenie Watts, singing landlady of Poplar

The Life & Times of the Music Hall and Marie Lloyd

Saturday 7 December | 2.00pm-3.30pm | [Book your free place here](#)

Join historian **Danny Wells** as he explores Music Halls of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. This illustrated talk celebrates the rambunctious nature of the entertainment, with characters such as Champagne Charlie, Little Tich, the 'coster comedian' Gus Ellen, George Robey-the 'Prime Minister of Mirth' and Vesta Tilley. And we mustn't forget the much-loved Marie Lloyd, both the 'Queen of the Music Hall' and of the double entendre.

Both of these events take place in person at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives and are listed on our [What's On page](#).

Black History Month

Communities of Liberation

Talk: Thursday 31 October | 12.30pm

Venue: Tower Hamlets Town Hall, Whitechapel

Marking the end of a busy Black History Month, we will have a stall at the council's [Black Excellence in Business event](#) on Thursday this week. The event runs from 11am to 5pm in the Grocers Wing.

At 12.30pm, in Grocers Wing 3, Genova Messiah and Tony T will be giving a short presentation of work-in-progress on the Communities of Liberation project, which explores everyday African presence in the East End of London from in the 16th and 17th centuries. [Book your place here.](#)



Writeidea Festival 2025

Friday 22 - Sunday 24 November

Venue: Tower Hamlets Town Hall

[Writeidea Festival](#), East London's free festival of books and reading, returns in November, this time in a new venue - our spectacular new Town Hall in Whitechapel.

Staff from Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives will have a stall on Saturday and Sunday, selling a range of duplicate second hand local history books. Come and chat to us! [Book your tickets now](#) and check out the full list of authors, including Jah Wobble, Sarah Wise and the Gentle Author. All events are free.

In the footsteps of the East London Group

Creative workshop | Saturday 2 November | 2.00-4.00pm | £5/£3

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives Education Room

Expanding on themes from Bow Arts' current exhibition, [In the footsteps of the East London Group](#), join Bow Arts and THLHLA staff to delve into the archives to gain a deeper understanding of the historical, social, and political context surrounding the sites and buildings featured in some of the East London Group's most iconic paintings.

Using a range of creative mediums, you will work closely with selected archival materials to dream up and map out your own mixed-media heritage walks through collaging, drawing, sketching, mark making, and photocopying source materials of interest.

By re-interpreting the archives through creative responses, we will connect the dots between sites of interest in the paintings of the East London Group and the streets and scenes of east London we know today.

All art-making materials will be provided – no experience with archives is necessary!

[Book tickets here: £5/£3 concs.](#) *This event is organised in partnership with Bow Arts.*



East End History Club: Parent and Baby Edition

Friday 8 November | 10.00-11.30am

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Come along to our new 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 - eg 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 - email localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk for further information. No booking required.

Bethnal Green cuttings collection catalogued

When Tower Hamlets Local History Library was established after the merger of the three boroughs in 1965, we inherited a large collection of newspaper cuttings from Bethnal Green Library. Organised alphabetically by subject, these press clippings were assiduously collated by library staff during the early to mid twentieth century, but never catalogued. So while they have been available to researchers in our Reading Room ever since, the Bethnal Green cuttings have remained a comparatively under-used resource.

Thanks to the efforts of volunteers, a spreadsheet listing the subjects in the collection and their date ranges was created, and we are delighted to announce that these descriptions are now available to search on our online catalogue.

To browse the full list of all 1,540 subjects covered in the Bethnal Green cuttings, head to the **Advanced Search** page of our [online catalogue](#) and enter *LCXBG** in the **Reference Number** field. The collection is particularly strong on notable local people, about whom we may not hold much information elsewhere.

So, whether you're looking up boxing, the Brady Club, or the Boundary Estate, be sure to check out this fascinating collection on your next visit.



Examples from the Bethnal Green press cuttings collection

News from our friends

Job vacancy - Arts & Heritage Producer

Oxford House is recruiting an **Arts & Heritage Producer** to deliver our heritage and cultural programme. It includes a brand new 2-year Heritage Fund project, 'Made in the East End'.

We are looking for someone who can build on 7+ years of heritage activity at Oxford House since 2017, having completed a major capital refurbishment of our Grade II listed building and developed a reputation for exciting participatory and co-designed projects.

Follow the [link](#) and read the [job pack](#) here! Closing date for applications is 21 November.

Job vacancy - Borough Conservation Officer

Our colleagues in the Planning department of Tower Hamlets Council are currently [recruiting a Conservation Officer](#). The closing date is 24 November.

Friends of Island History Trust 2025 calendar

The ever-popular Friends of Island History Trust calendar 2025 is now on sale! As usual, it features an array of images from the 1940s to the 1980s celebrating life on the Isle of Dogs. Pop into our Reading Room to purchase one for £9.



Advance notice of two week closure



Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives will be closing for two weeks at the end of February 2025 for our annual stocktake.

This is a dedicated period of staff time behind the scenes to consolidate collections storage and optimise the available space within the building while we wait for the council to approve capital funding for the much-needed restoration of this Grade II listed building, including an extended archive strongroom to be built onsite.

The closure will run from Monday 24 February until Friday 7 March inclusive. This means we will not be open on the first Saturday in March as we normally would. We apologise for any inconvenience this will cause. We will reopen to the public on Tuesday 11 March.

Our next book sale

As a reward for reading this far, YOU can be among the first to know that we will be holding another second-hand book sale on Saturday 7 December. Save the date! More details to follow in the next newsletter.

Contact us

- Email us: 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 2 November
- Saturday 16 November
- Saturday 7 December
- Saturday 21 December (*the last day of opening before Christmas*)
- Saturday 4 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.
