



Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



September 2016

Reading Room reopening!

Drum roll please.... the reading room will be reopening **next week**, from Tuesday 20 September, with a fully repaired, restored and repainted ceiling. So from next week onwards, there will be no need to book an appointment to view the full range of our collections: just turn up. The opening hours are:

Tuesday: 10am-5pm
Wednesday: 9am-5pm
Thursday: 9am-8pm
Saturday: 9am-5pm (first and third Saturday of each month only)
Sundays, Mondays, Fridays:
CLOSED



Thank you for your patience while these works were ongoing.

Blue Pen

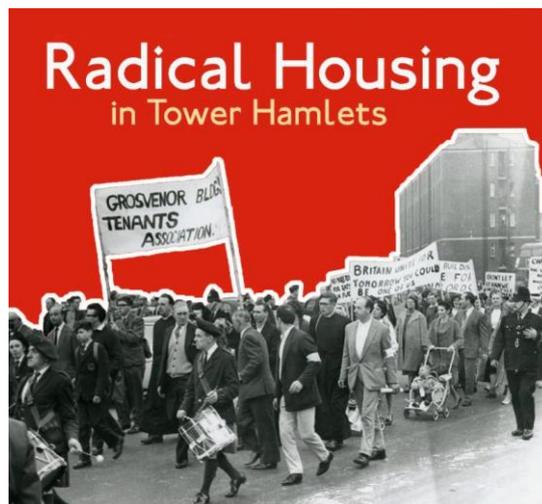
Saturday 1 - Thursday 6 October 2016
Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

[Blue Pen](#) is an experimental short film installation about censorship and the disappearance of dissenting voices, created by local artists. We are hosting *Blue Pen* for one week only in the Entrance Hall, in between our scheduled exhibitions.

The film pays particular attention to the voices of women journalists in conflict zones and is partly inspired by the story of Dorothy Lawrence, a reporter who posed as a man to gain access to the frontline during World War One. "Blue pen" is a casual term coined during this period to describe the heavy edits and careful monitoring of the censorship committee.



There will be an evening event on Thursday 6 October ([First Thursdays](#)) with the film-makers present, and an opportunity to look at our WW1 collections relating to women and conscientious objection. Visit the [Blue Pen](#) website or email localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk for further details.



Last chance to see: Radical Housing exhibition

Our current exhibition exploring the history of tenant activism in Tower Hamlets through our collections will be closing in just a couple of weeks! If you'd like to find out more about the rent strikes of the 1930s, the squatting movement of the 1970s and the formation of the borough's first housing co-operatives, visit before Friday 23 September!

To tie in with the exhibition we have hosted a number of events, including talks, walks and a

printmaking workshop. Our final event as part of the programme takes place this Saturday:

Film screening: Goodbye Longfellow Road
Saturday 17 September, 2:00 - 3:30pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

A free screening of the 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? Just drop in - no booking required.

October is Black History Month!

We are hosting a range of events for Tower Hamlets Black History Month. Pick up a hard copy of the full borough-wide programme here from next week or [view it online](#).

Walk: Black History in London's East End
Saturday 15 October, 10.30am-12.30pm
Location: Whitechapel area: meeting point to be confirmed

Join Perdita Jones for a guided walk exploring aspects of black history in London's East End featuring highlights from our collections. Free, booking essential. Please email localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk or call 0207 364 1290 to reserve your place.

Archive workshop: Edith Ramsay Papers
Saturday 15 October, 2.00-4.00pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

For the first time we are holding a public workshop exploring the papers of educationalist and community worker, Edith Ramsay (1895-1983). Edith was a councillor for Stepney and also served on a Colonial Office Advisory Committee. She was concerned with the issues faced by newly-arrived immigrants in Stepney from the 1940s onwards. Her collection of letters, notes and newspaper cuttings provide a unique window on different stories and experiences of a number of black people living in London's East End during the post-war period. Free, no booking required - just drop in!

Talk: The Black Presence during WW1
Saturday 5 November, 2.00-3.00pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

We are hosting a double-bill of WW1 activities on Saturday 5 November. Join Selena Carty from Black Poppy Rose (www.blackpoppyrose.org) for a talk on how people of African heritage contributed to the war effort. Followed by:

Film screening: The Battle of the Somme
Saturday 5 November, 3.15-4.30pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

Following the talk above, there will be a screening of *The Battle of the Somme* film (approx. 75 mins), a pioneering battlefield documentary that was seen by huge audiences in the UK when it was released in August 1916, barely a month after the events it depicted. Free, no booking required.

An evening of Spoken Word on Multiculturalism, Diversity and Community
Thursday 13 October, 6.00-7.30pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

After a hugely successful show at Hackney Museum in December 2013 and their first successful exhibition launch this year in Coombes Croft Library, North London, writer and founder KG Lester and Hackney based The WordLovers Society will be holding an evening of spoken word on Multiculturalism, Diversity & Community, as part of Black History Month. No booking required. Adults: £5 | Children FREE | Suitable for children aged 10yrs + only.

Other upcoming TLHLHA events

George Lansbury Memorial Walk
Saturday 24 September, 2.00-5.00pm
Location: around Bow

Borough Archivist Malcolm Barr-Hamilton will be leading a walk on behalf of the George Lansbury Memorial Committee, examining the former Labour Party leader's Bow connections. Booking is required: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/george-lansbury-memorial-walk-2016-tickets-26963848597>

Talk: The Irish East End
Saturday 1 October, 2.00-3.00pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

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.

THLHLA book sale!
Saturday 15 October, 10.00am-4.00pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

We have recently finished cataloguing all of our books and pamphlets and as a result have identified a number of duplicate copies which we are withdrawing from our stock and offering for sale. Prices will be reasonable and all money raised will go to a good cause (our Donations Fund, which supports the purchase of new collections). Books on offer cover many different aspects of Tower Hamlets history, including lots of out-of-print titles and some from the nineteenth century. We hope to see you there!

Exhibition launch: Brick Lane Born
Thursday 20 October, 6.00-7.30pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Details of our new Entrance Hall exhibition and accompanying events programme will follow next week, but save this date if you'd like to join us for the launch event...

Our exhibitions on tour

Where I Belong
Monday 3 - Saturday 29 October
Cubitt Town Library

'Where I Belong' is a unique exhibition which explores the stories and experiences of Black and Asian women living in Tower Hamlets, based on oral history recordings and archive material from the collections of Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives. As part of Black History Month, the exhibition, originally created in 2014, will be appearing at [Cubitt Town Library](#) on the Isle of Dogs.

World War One in Tower Hamlets

Our pop-up exhibition 'World War One in Tower Hamlets' which features stories from our archives and was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is on a tour around the borough this year. If you haven't caught it yet, it will next be at:

Idea Store Bow: now until Sunday 2 October

Idea Store Watney Market: Monday 10 October - Saturday 5 November

The WriteIdea Festival

Idea Store Whitechapel
Saturday 12 November

THLHLA is hosting a strand of talks on an East End history theme at this year's [WriteIdea Festival](#), an annual weekend of author events curated by Idea Store for Tower Hamlets, and supported by the Arts Council. Many great writers of fiction and non-fiction as well as children's and young adult authors will be present. Our strand and stall will take place on the Saturday only, and the programme is:

- 1.00pm: Roger Mills, on Cable Street
- 2.30pm: Georgie Wemyss, on Indian seafarers in the East End during the Victorian era
- 4.00pm: Laurence Ward, on the World War Two bomb damage maps
- 5.30pm: Sarah Wise, on the Old Nichol slum
- 7.00pm: Dan Cruikshank, on Spitalfields

All events are free but tickets must be booked in advance. Most events are now finalised and booking is live at www.writeideafestival.org. Do check out the full festival programme, as it is a great lineup. We look forward to seeing you there!



The Battle of Cable Street: 80th Anniversary Exhibition and events

Idea Store Watney Market
28 September - 18 October

On October 4th 1936 the people of East London came out on the streets to resist the fascists marching through their communities. To mark the 80th anniversary of the Battle, an exhibition drawn in part from our collections and organised by the Cable Street Group is being hosted at Idea Store Watney Market. There is an amazing programme of events accompanying the exhibition, including history talks, guided walks, and musical events. The full listing is on the Cable Street Group's website here: <https://battleofcablest80.squarespace.com/events/> and we urge you to check it out!





Collection news

We are very pleased to have been given 32 original black-and-white prints by photographer **Milan Svanderlik** which he took in 1975, mainly in Whitechapel and Spitalfields. In the photographer's words:

"As a relative newcomer to London, and under the influence of the major 'social-documentary' photographers of the day, I photographed these two areas of London, both literally adjacent to the prosperous and fabulously wealthy

'Square Mile' of the City of London. Neglect, poverty and desperation were tangible and, to my eyes, very shocking. The older generations seemed lost in space, with the previous waves of immigrants being replaced by those from the Indian Sub-Continent. Some locals still lived in old tenement blocks and post-war 'prefabs'. One had the impression that the whole place was trapped in a strange time warp. I suspect that most of the children in my photographs would witness the extraordinary transformation of this drab and neglected place into a fashionable and desirable part of London, full of colour, trade, and artists' studios - but this was an area with many dark corners and sharp edges which remain, adding to the character of the place."

From our friends...

A Place We Call Home

Gateway Housing Association are celebrating 90 years in the East End, bringing homes to lower income households, have created a unique exhibition touring Idea Stores. With extensive archive and first - hand accounts, hear from Gateway residents, like Daisy, bombed out during the blitz and who went with her family to live under the railway arches and Deng, Young Mayor of Tower Hamlets whose parents moved from Vietnam. It highlights the unsung heroes who were dedicated to the East End, including Ayub Ali Master who founded The Indian Seaman's League and social reformer Edith Ramsay. The exhibition showcases those who fought for better housing as well as the innovative architects who designed homes like Grade 2 listed Lennox House, opened in 1937. Or find out about the fascinating link between Neville Chamberlain and Queen Margaret Flats in Bethnal Green as well as the important history of other local homes. This timely exhibition gives us a chance to reflect on the vibrant lives and places that make East End: The Place We Call Home. For more information visit www.gatewayhousing.org.uk



Tour dates:

- October 17- 31 at **Idea Store Bow**
- November 7 - December 31 at **Idea Store Whitechapel**
- January 2 - 31 at **Idea Store Canary Wharf**
- February 1 - 28 at **Idea Store Watney Market**

The picture above was taken in 1947 at 32 Bow Road and shows caretaker of the building Alfred Huggins with his wife Flo and daughter - now Mrs Beaumont, who was reunited with the long lost photo after Gateway HA published it in their newsletter.

Survey of London: Whitechapel

The Survey of London, the longstanding project about the history of London's streets and buildings, is now launching an innovative website focusing on Whitechapel. [Survey of London - Histories of Whitechapel](#) is a place to gather and share information about Whitechapel, its buildings and open spaces, including the Survey's own work-in-progress research discoveries. The website will in due course feed into the Survey's book on Whitechapel, to be published as volume 54 in a continuing series of books about London districts.

Contributions from anyone with an interest in or experiences of Whitechapel's places and buildings are very welcome, anything from research findings to reminiscences to photographs or drawings, even clips of film. The map-based website, designed in collaboration with UCL's Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis, will be open for contributions up to the end of 2018. This experimental project is being supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and a range of local institutions, Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives being one of them.

Please [visit the website](#) to check out the research undertaken so far and upload your own content.

LONDON JEWS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

We Were There Too

Does your family have a First World War story to tell? [We Were There Too](#) is a unique cross-community project that will create a permanent digital archive and interactive website to record the experiences and contribution of London's Jewish community during the First World War. A century on, first-hand knowledge has disappeared, and family stories are at risk of being lost forever. The website helps you to create Personal Records to preserve the stories of individual members of your family, alongside scans of photographs, letters and even 3D artefacts. Please [visit the website](#) and look out for communal events across London. Email contactus@jewsffw.london for more information.

New staff members

Emma Harrold (left) is covering the post of Heritage Officer (Archives) during Natasha's maternity leave, and will be with us until next summer. She started work here at the end of July, having recently completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Archives and Records Management at the University of Liverpool. Emma has previously worked at Stockport Local Heritage Library and Archives, and Oxford University Archives. She is currently cataloguing a collection of records related to Morpeth School and will also be involved in outreach activities.

Debbie Smith (right) is our new Heritage Co-ordinator, taking over the post vacated by Mark Ballard. She started work here at the beginning of April having previously worked at Idea Store Chrisp Street for several years. Alongside her administrative and desk duties, Debbie is currently cataloguing our collection of scanned postcards of places and landmarks donated by Philip Mernick, as well as helping to organise our touring exhibitions around the borough.



Crispin Street, Spitalfields, April 1977

Tweeting 35mm slides

Over the past few months we have started to digitise our collection of 35mm slides. We hold over 4,000 such slides, to which the only means of access is a card index, not accessible to the public. Each slide is numbered and captioned. The only use they have been put to was as a source to plunder for illustrated talks by staff. But this had ceased with the introduction of digital projection years since.

Unlike the main series of photographic prints where details of provenance, copyright etc were recorded on the back, the slides are completely unprovenanced. It would seem that many were taken to illustrate talks (perhaps by staff) and some are donations from the public taken either to illustrate talks or for other reasons such as record photography (as in the case of a sequence depicting bollards in Tower Hamlets). They date mainly from the 1960s and 1970s.

Because of problems of viewing the slides it was decided to digitise them before attempting to catalogue. We are fortunate at Tower Hamlets to have a group of enthusiastic volunteers. Using scanning equipment we had already, the collection is now being digitised, the main purpose being to provide surrogates for access, and the original slides are, of course, retained.

It has been gratifying to find that the images are mainly of significant interest. Perhaps the most startling thing is that colour existed in Tower Hamlets in the 1960s - as nearly all the photographic prints we hold from this era are in black and white. As an experiment we have been tweeting selected slides to our 1000+ followers. This has proved popular, especially as the slides are from within living memory, and so they attract comments and sometimes queries as to the factual accuracy of the captions and this can be helpful as, for example the inside of the Blackwall and Rotherhithe tunnels look very similar! Some followers then go on to research current Streetview images of the same location and retweet the images side by side. Why not take a look yourself on Twitter? We're @LBTHarchives.



New arrival

With respect to the centuries-old tradition of Celtic migration and settlement in the East End, we are delighted to report the arrival of **Cillian Luck**, son to Natasha (archivist here) and David (archivist at LMA), newly resident in Tower Hamlets since July.

And finally...

We have run out of space to tell you about our next exhibition - but as a prize for reading this far, you can be the first to know that it showcases an amazing collection of never-seen-before photographs of Spitalfields taken during the 1980s. Some details are live now on the [Photomonth website](#), but watch out for another newsletter arriving in your inbox/spam folder next week with all the info.

Contact Us

Send us your enquiry via email, phone or letter at

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