



Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



November 2017

Explore Your Archive

Join us for a programme of FREE events during the week commencing 20 November, hosted as part of the annual [Explore Your Archive](#) campaign, which aims to showcase the best of archives and archive services in the UK and Ireland.

**ARCHIVE
EXPLORED**

Explore Your Archive: Introduction to the Archives

Want to visit the archives but not sure where to start? If so, come along to one of our free introductory sessions, during which we'll give you a tour of our reading room and explain how to search for relevant material using our online catalogue and subject guide. Sessions last approximately 30 mins and booking is required. Please call 0207 364 1290 or [email](#) to reserve your place.

Upcoming sessions:

Tuesday 21 November: 10.30am

Wednesday 22 November: 10am

Wednesday 22 November: 3pm

Explore Your Archive: Spitalfields Walk Friday 24 November, 10am-12 noon

Join archivists Malcolm Barr-Hamilton and Shahera Begum for this walk exploring the history of Spitalfields, inspired by material from the archives. Free, booking required. Please call 0207 364 1290 or [email](#) to reserve your place.

Explore Your Archive: Spitalfields Collections Friday 24 November, 2:00 - 4:00pm

Browse a range of library and archive material relating to the fascinating history of Spitalfields, from the 1600s onwards, including maps, photographs and the newly catalogued Spitalfields Project papers. Active during the 1970s and 80s, the Spitalfields Project coordinated the activities of local organisations and provided additional funding in order to tackle deprivation. It is a wonderful resource for a pivotal period in Spitalfields' history. This session is free and no booking is required – just turn up!



Exhibition: *A necessary fiction*

inspired by black radical activism in the 1930s East End



5 October 2017 - 20 January 2018

Our current exhibition, *A necessary fiction*, displays new artwork by ceramicist **Basil Olton**. Thanks to funding from the Arts Council, Canary Wharf Group, the RMT and other trade unions, the exhibition responds to the untold history of anti-imperialist black activism in interwar London. The artist was inspired by Chris Braithwaite, also known as Chris Jones, a resident of Stepney, trade unionist and founder of the Colonial Seamen's Association who worked and organised in the East End during the 1930s and 1940s. We recommend reading the free [booklet](#) which features two essays written to accompany the exhibition.

To run alongside the exhibition, we've organised a programme of free public [events](#). These have so far included a panel discussion on the politics of exhibiting, with Dorothy Rose du Boulay (grand-daughter of Chris Braithwaite), Michael McMillan and Basil Olton, exploring the role of collections, exhibitions and institutions in the construction of knowledge. A [podcast](#) is available for those who missed the event. We also hosted a number of half-term workshops for families, including one during which children created their own collage protest banners.

Some more events for the new year are being planned. The next event will be:

Talk: Love and loss in mid-century multicultural Stepney
Thursday 7 December, 6:30 - 7:30pm

Join Dr Rob Waters (University of Sussex) for this talk focusing on local educationalist Edith Ramsay, who lived and worked in Stepney during the 1940s and 1950s and became deeply involved with the transnational lives of Stepney's African, Caribbean and South Asian populations. The letters in her archive (held here at THLHLA) reveal lives disrupted by war, illness and poverty, but also give an intimate insight into convivial life and love in Stepney, and its identity as a historic multicultural centre. Free, no booking required.

Writeidea Festival 2017

Friday 17 - Sunday 19 November 2017
Idea Store Whitechapel

We're looking forward to this year's Writeidea Festival. Now in its ninth year, Tower Hamlets Council's unique and free reading festival will include talks by a wide variety of authors, including a local history strand programmed by yours truly.

Speakers include:

- **Julian Woodford** on his book 'The Boss of Bethnal Green', which uncovers the breathtakingly appalling life of Joseph Merceron (1764–1839), gangster and corrupt magistrate, who accumulated enormous wealth while presiding over the creation of the poorest slums in Regency London.
- **Clive Coward** on Nigel Henderson's photographs of London's East End between 1949-1953 (pictured).
- **Christine Wagg** on the pioneering social housing built in East London by American merchant banker and philanthropist George Peabody.
- **Gillian Tindall** on 'The Tunnel Through Time', her book on the historic route of the East London Line.
- **Jerry White** on 'Mansions of Misery', his biography of the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison



For more information and to book tickets, visit the [website](#).

East End History Club



Saturday 17 March 2018, 2:00 - 4:00pm

This is a new regular drop-in browsing session, moved to a Saturday by popular demand. You'll have the chance to browse through old photographs, maps, newspapers and archival documents relating to a range of popular subjects, such as housing, health, immigration, work, school, leisure and much more!

These sessions are ideal for those who are curious about local history and want to find out more. There's no need to book, just drop in. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided. Suitable for adults and children (11+).

Upcoming dates:

Saturday 2 December 2017, 2:00 - 4:00pm

Saturday 3 February 2018, 2:00 - 4:00pm

Bengali Innovators of Toynbee Hall exhibition

There's still time to see Toynbee Hall's fascinating exhibition titled 'Bengali Innovators of Toybee Hall', which will be on display on our first floor until **Saturday 18 November**. Since the 1970s the Bengali community have contributed greatly to the work of Toynbee Hall. In partnership with Central Foundation Girls School, Eastside Community Heritage and Heritage Lottery Fund, Toynbee Hall has sought to capture the stories of the key influencers in the Bengali community who were involved in shaping Toynbee Hall's services from the 1970s to today through an oral history project. To find out more, please visit the [website](#).



New accessions to the Archives

We have received a number of new accessions to the Archives. These include: a small collection of records relating to Braithwaite House Tenants Association, Abbott Road, Poplar, from the 1980s, consisting of Martin Young's records about Braithwaite House Tenants Association such as photographs of events/outings, publications and administrative papers (our ref: S/MIS/23).

We also received a Patent issued to Andrew Paton Charles, of the firm Paton and Charles, High Street, Wapping, dated 1862 (our ref: B/MIS/52) from National Museum Wales. This is pictured below. Both of these accessions are now catalogued and available to view in our reading room.



Other significant accessions we received include the oral history recordings from 'The Poetic East End' project (2015-2017), deposited by the Shanghati Literary Society. Further information about the project and the recordings can be found on their

[website](#). We also took in some records of St John's Church of England Primary School in Bethnal Green. Both of these accessions will be catalogued in due course.

Cataloguing update

We are very pleased to announce that the Spitalfields Project Papers (1970s-1980s) are now fully catalogued and available to consult in our reading room (our ref: I/SPP). The Spitalfields Project coordinated the activities of local organisations and provided additional funding in order to tackle deprivation. It is a wonderful resource for a pivotal period in Spitalfields' history.

The collection includes: administrative records (including that of Project administrative bodies: the Steering Group, Consultative Committee, and the Spitalfields Local Committee), financial records regarding grants and funding, correspondence, project monitoring and reviews, records relating to project schemes, research and engagement with local and community groups, and records relating to relevant local authorities (London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Greater London Council and the Inner London Education Authority). We have programmed a special event (see above) for Explore Your Archive week to showcase examples from this collection and highlight its value for research into the history of Spitalfields.

Welcome Rob!

"Hello! I'm Rob, the new full-time Heritage Officer (Library) for Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, following Melanie's departure for Guildhall Library. I started work here a month ago and am thoroughly enjoying getting to know the people, history, and written resources of this fantastic borough, which has been at the heart of so many pivotal events in our city's story. In particular, I'm fascinated by how the area has been shaped by centuries of immigration and how its diverse communities have played a leading role in the struggle for workers' rights, the women's suffrage movement, and the fight against fascism. My job here will involve collecting and organising the published heritage of Tower Hamlets and making it accessible to the public.

I'm originally from Derbyshire but have lived in south London since 2012. After graduating from library school in 2010 I worked in a variety of public, academic and specialist libraries, including at Manchester City Council, Salford's Working Class Movement Library, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the London School of Economics, and University College London. More recently I have worked as a local studies librarian for a number of other London boroughs, including Hillingdon, Southwark and Lewisham. Some of the projects I particularly enjoyed working on in these roles included delivering a three-part family history course for the public, and producing an exhibition on the Battle of Lewisham. As someone with a longstanding interest in local and family history I'm looking forward to discovering more about our unique collections here at Tower Hamlets and developing new ways for people to engage with them."



Volunteers wanted!

... for our **Information Index** project! The librarians who worked here at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives before the computer age used to record information about local buildings, events and individuals on a card index. These cards were continually updated with references to books, archives or articles as the librarians came across new information within the collections. We are now seeking volunteers that can help with typing up what is written on these index cards into an Excel spreadsheet so it is more easily searchable. Ideally, you would be able to commit for 4 hours a week until the end of the task. There is also potential to work from home! For more information please [email](#) Shahera Begum, Heritage Officer (Archives).

Hackney Archives is also looking for people who are passionate about history and heritage to assist them with a photography project. They hold a collection of 150,000 negatives captured between 1952 and 1979 by RA Gibson's photography studio. The Gibson collection records the people of Hackney as they got married, worked, celebrated and mourned and offers a unique insight into life in this diverse London borough over a 27 year period. Over the next two years, Hackney Archives will be digitising the collection so that it can be made publicly available and are looking for volunteers to help them with this process. Volunteers will gain experience of caring for a historic photography collection, supporting a large scale digitisation project, creating increased access to collections, researching social histories and using a variety of ways to engage the public with archive collections. If you have at least 3 hours per week to spare, Hackney Archives would love to hear from you. Please visit their [website](#) where you can find a short film about the collection and an application form, or [email](#) them if you would like more information.

Christmas gifts



Season's Greetings to all of our readers! The Christmas shoppers among you may be interested in a brand new arrival: hot off the press, the the Friends of the Island History Trust's 2018 calendar - packed full of historic photographs of the Isle of Dogs, it's available now at the archives for just £6!

We also have a large selection of publications for sale including maps, postcards and books, many of which would make excellent stocking fillers! Not forgetting this lovely organic tote bag! Come and browse or find further details on our [website](#).

Opening Hours

Monday: 9am-5pm (exhibition only)

Tuesday: 10am-5pm

Wednesday: 9am-5pm

Thursday: 9am-8pm

Friday: 9am-5pm (exhibition only)

Saturday*: 9am-5pm (*first and third Saturdays of the month only)

Sunday: closed

Saturday and Christmas Opening

We are open 9am-5pm on the first and third Saturdays of every month, for research in the reading room and exhibition viewing. That's the following Saturdays coming up:

Saturday 18 November

Saturday 2 December

Saturday 16 December

Saturday 6 January

Saturday 20 January

We will be closed for Christmas from Friday 22 December to Monday 1 January inclusive. So, your last chance for a pre-holidays visit will be before **8pm on Thursday 21 December**.

Contact Us

Send us your enquiry via email, phone or letter:

Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

277 Bancroft Road

London E1 4DQ

Phone: 020 7364 1290

Email: localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Visit our website

www.ideastore.co.uk

Search our online catalogue

www.THcatalogue.org.uk



