

# New year, new events!

## Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



### Happy new year! Here's what's coming up...

Here at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives we've got a fantastic range of free events planned for January and February, a number of which have been programmed to tie in with our current exhibition **Unite and Resist: Protest and Activism in the East End, 1970-2000**, now in its last few months!

**Radical Roots**, a bumper day of family history talks inspired by this theme, was trailed before Christmas in the last edition of this newsletter but the eagle-eyed amongst you spotted an unfortunate typo in the date field, for which our apologies. Please read on for the corrected version and full line-up of speakers!

Further on in this newsletter you can also find out how we are marking Holocaust Memorial Day and read our farewell to a colleague moving on to pastures new.

Thanks for all your support in 2019!

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# UNITE AND RESIST!

PROTESTS IN

THE EAST END

1970 - 2000

EXHIBITION



## Unite & Resist! Exhibition programme

**Exhibition Tour: Unite and Resist!**  
Thursday 16 January, 6.00-7.30pm

Join our Archives Manager Emma Harrold for a special tour of our current exhibition which she curated, showcasing recently catalogued or deposited archives in our collections relating to local activism.

The exhibition spans famous and some less well-known local campaigns from the period 1970-2000, including the Stepney School Strike in support of sacked poetry teacher Chris Searle, and the anti-racist movement that was galvanised around Brick Lane in 1978 following the brutal murder of Altab Ali.

The exhibition also highlights archives created by groups such as Tower Hamlets CND, Women Unite Against Racism and Spitalfields Market Under Threat (SMUT) which sought to prevent the redevelopment of the historic fruit and vegetable market. The tour is free but space is limited and must be booked in advance via [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

**Talk: LGBT Resistance in Tower Hamlets**  
Thursday 13 February, 6.00-7:45pm

In 1988, Section 28 of the Local Government Act banned local authorities from 'promoting homosexuality.' Activist Paul Barlow, as part of the Tower Hamlets Lesbian and Gay Campaign Group, campaigned against its introduction and lobbied the local council to not enforce it. The introduction of Section 28 galvanised the British gay rights movement, resulting in the rise of successful lobbying groups such as Stonewall, which was founded in Tower Hamlets. Join Paul as he discusses the legacy of these campaigns and the necessity for similar work to continue today

Archives reflecting the local campaign against Section 28 are on show in our current exhibition which will be open for viewing until 8pm.

This talk is free and booking is not required – just turn up! Doors open 6.00pm and the talk begins at 6.30pm. This event is presented as part of Tower Hamlets LGBT History Month.

**Creative workshop: Protest! Make a placard**  
**Saturday 15 February, 11.00am-1.00pm**

Join local activist Julie Begum for this free, family-friendly workshop in which you will create a protest placard on your choice of theme. This workshop is suitable for all ages, and children must be accompanied by an adult. All materials will be provided, including a selection of visuals from the archives to use as inspiration and of course, tea, coffee and biscuits. Booking is required, please email: [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk).



**Radical Roots: Saturday 18 January**

We have lined up a fantastic array of talks by historians and genealogists for this family history day on the theme of tracing your rebellious ancestors. Spanning the broad heritage of East Enders past and present, the histories to be revealed range from Jamaican slaves to striking Match Girls and Somali seamen. There will also be activities for children by way of an artist-led zine-making workshop. For the full programme, see below, and don't forget to save the date!

- **Radical Roots: Researching rebels in your family history**

- **Saturday 18 January, 11am-4pm**

The event is free, and you don't have to book - just turn up and drop in for the talks that interest you.

## Researching rebels in your family history: Event programme

### 11.00 | A Beginner's Guide to Family History & Researching Rebellious Ancestors

Want to explore your family's radical roots but unsure where to begin? This talk will cover everything you need to get started. Topics covered will include interviewing relatives, finding clues in family documents and photographs, tracking down and interpreting birth, marriage, death and census records, plus an introduction to sources for researching rebellious ancestors.

*Led by Robert Jones, from Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives*

### 11.00 - 13.00 | Family zine-making workshop

Join Celeste Bell, daughter of punk icon Poly-Styrene to capture your family history in a zine and learn more about artist Celeste's own journey of finding out about her Somali East End roots. Suitable for ages 8+.

### 12.00 | Researching your Somali Family History

Do you want to find out more information about Somali ancestors but not sure where to start? Join Kinsi Abdulleh from Numbi Arts who has supported many such enquiries, using her knowledge of extended family networks in the East End and other dockland areas in the UK in which the first generation of Somali seamen working on British ships came to settle.

### 13.00 | The Matchgirls Strike of 1888: Perspective of a Local Girl, Sarah Chapman

The Match Girls Strike of 1888 brought the women and girls working in a factory Bow to national attention. Sam Johnson will discuss how she discovered the involvement of her great-grandmother Sarah Chapman, one of the workers at the factory and a resident of Stepney. Join us for this inspirational tale of bringing an unsung heroine to light.

### 14.00 | A Black & British History: Jamaican Slaves Who Abolished Slavery

In this talk, Paul Crooks will implicate his ancestors in Jamaica's Baptist War - which ultimately brought the British system of slavery to its knees. Paul will reveal what he researched about the forgotten history of 'The Jamaican slaves who abolished slavery'.

*Led by Paul Crooks, Author of Ancestors and A Tree Without Roots*

### 15.00 | Writing your Family History

Based around a couple of examples of privately published family histories, this session will encourage people to be ambitious with the results of their research – don't just research your family history, write it too! Almost all families have interesting stories waiting to be uncovered: protesters, strikers, ne'er do wells – you just need to find an angle and you can create a readable piece of work that is so much more than a list of names and dates.

*Led by Andrew Lewis, from Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives*

PLUS! We are delighted that some of the movers and shakers in the East End family history world are hosting their own stalls - including the East of London Family History Society, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, and the Friends of Island History Trust.

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## Even more upcoming events

### Holocaust Memorial Day 2020

#### Workshop: Antisemitism and Film

Thursday 30 January, 6.30-7.45pm

In partnership with [UK Jewish Film](#) we're hosting a free film workshop as part of Tower Hamlets Council's annual Holocaust Memorial Day programme. Join us for a free, participatory workshop exploring how film can perpetuate or challenge the age-old hatred that is antisemitism.

The session will consider this question through a fascinating selection of film clips dating from the 1900s right up to the present day. Led by Rachel Burns, Education Manager at UK Jewish Film, the session is based on the highly regarded film-based workshops designed to combat antisemitism that UK Jewish Film is currently bringing to inner London schools.

There will also be a display of materials illustrating the East End's proud history of anti-fascist protest from our collections. For other events taking place locally to mark Holocaust Memorial Day, [please click here](#).

Doors open at 6.00pm and the event will begin at 6.30pm. All are welcome but spaces are limited. To reserve your place please email us at [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk).

### **East End History Club Saturday 1 February, 2.00-4.00pm**

It's back for 2020! If you're curious about what sort of materials we hold here, or fancy a little browse without necessarily having a specific research query in mind -- come along to East End History Club, our free, bi-monthly, informal collections browsing session.

The format is simple – we select a sample of materials from our collection and lay them out in our ground floor Education Room ready for you to (carefully) rummage through. There will be historic photographs, maps, newspapers and archival documents relating to different subjects. Previous sessions have covered activism, housing, health, immigration, work, school, leisure and much more! The themes and material selected changes with every session. You can have a look through whatever interests you, and chat to staff and other visitors over a cuppa.

The event is free, suitable for adults and children (11+). No need to book - just drop in! However if you would like to bring a large group, please do contact us in advance as this may be better arranged separately.

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## **Goodbye to Natasha!**



In December we were sorry to say goodbye to Natasha Luck who has worked in the role of Heritage Officer (Archives) here since 2011. A trained archivist, Natasha joined us at a time when Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives had commenced a period of rapid growth and development. Her time here spanned periods of closure for major building works, including the replacement of the roof and redecoration of the interior spaces - requiring collections moves aplenty - plus the expansion of our event and exhibition programme. After eight years in post (with a year-long maternity break!) Natasha has now taken a new job cataloguing the archives of the Actors' Benevolent Fund.

We are grateful to Natasha not just for her diligence in helping readers with their enquiries and for her commitment in representing us in the council's internal information governance network, but also for the work she put in to acquire new archives for us, and the collections she catalogued. These include the archives of Poplar Methodist Church, whose presence in the area dates back to 1776, and the papers of local businesses such as Sneath engineers and Chalk timber merchants. Natasha also took on responsibility for our oral history collections, which included liaising with community heritage groups carrying out oral history interviews eventually to be transferred here for permanent preservation. She also supervised the work of many volunteers and work placements.

Natasha also delivered talks and tours, always keen to take opportunities to showcase our collections such as that provided by the annual Explore Your Archive national campaign. In 2015 she also curated two major exhibitions we hosted here - a display of archival material marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (working closely with Malcolm Barr-Hamilton, then Borough Archivist); and a very popular exhibition of photographs of

Poplar in the early- to mid-twentieth century by the brilliant photographer William Whiffin, a postcard set of which is now available at a discounted price!

It was also Natasha who discovered, one fateful January morning in 2016, that a section of the ornate plasterwork ceiling in the Reading Room had collapsed overnight, bringing a hundred years' of dust with it and precipitating our third closure in eight years for urgent building works!

A Tower Hamlets resident herself until recently, her passion for the borough's amazing history always shining through, we will miss Natasha's conscientiousness and helpfulness and we wish her all the best in her new role!

## Opening hours and contact details

**Monday:** 9am-5pm for exhibition only

**Tuesday:** 10am-5pm for exhibition and Reading Room

**Wednesday:** 9am-5pm for exhibition and Reading Room

**Thursday:** 9am-8pm for exhibition and Reading Room

**Friday:** 9am-5pm for exhibition only

**First and third Saturdays of every month:** 9am-5pm for exhibition and Reading Room

Feel free to contact us with any enquiries:

- [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk)
  - 020 7364 1290
  - <http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history>
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