

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



Business as unusual

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives is closed temporarily due to the Coronavirus crisis, but we are still working hard behind the scenes - to answer your local history enquiries, put more digital content from our collections online, and also get on with lots of work improving our catalogue and collections management.

In line with government guidance, all the members of the team are working from home and the building is closed. This means we can't access the collections on your behalf, but if you have an enquiry do please email us! We can give general advice, point you in the direction of other possible sources, and possibly locate relevant information in items from our collections which have been previously scanned and saved (and thus are accessible to us from home). Please note we are only contactable via email - our phone line is not currently operational, so send details of your enquiry to localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

We're also working on a way to take payments from people wishing to purchase copies of digitised photographs from our collection, and we're testing different ways to host a programme of local history events and workshops digitally too over the coming months. Watch this space!

Read on for details of the digital materials we are putting online, accessible via the internet 24/7 free of charge, and news of our upcoming COVID-19 collecting project with opportunities to volunteer!

We've got a new YouTube channel



Explore hours of rare archive films and videos of Tower Hamlets on our brand new YouTube channel! We've been busy going through our moving image collection, much of which has been digitised by London's Screen Archives, and selecting films to share with you. Highlights include:

- Amateur footage of Tower Hamlets Carnival from 1979
- A fly-on-the-wall documentary from 1985 showing a day in the life at Stepping Stones Farm
- Three episodes of Dogs Life, a wide-ranging video magazine produced for Isle of Dogs residents in the mid-1980s

More content is being added as and when we can gain the necessary copyright clearances. We've also created a chronological playlist, 'The East End on Film', which collects together the best archive footage of London's East End from other YouTube channels like British Pathé and London's Screen Archives.

If you would like us to share more archive films from our collections, you can help make that happen by subscribing to our channel at the link below, liking and sharing our videos and leaving a comment.

<https://bit.ly/2KJmAux>

Happy viewing!

Life During Lockdown: COVID-19 Collecting Volunteer Project



Although we are currently closed to the public, we'd like to *invite you to help us* document the impact of the virus and the lockdown measures in place on local residents and organisations based in the borough.

This volunteer project for Tower Hamlets residents is an opportunity to help us capture and record people's experiences of life during this extraordinary period so that they may be preserved within our archives and serve as a learning resource for future generations.

You can help us build up a visual record of life in the borough during lockdown by taking photographs of locations close to where you live on your daily walk or trip to the shops. **Your main concern should always be your own health and safety so please only consider taking up this project if you are sure this can be done without putting yourself or others at risk.** If you are able to do this while adhering to social distancing rules, we are interested in photographs featuring any of the following subjects:

- Parks and shops
- Public spaces and landmarks
- PPE in use
- Social distancing measures
- COVID-19 signage
- Rainbow drawings and murals
- 'Clapping for carers'
- Religious observance, e.g. Ramadan activities such as iftar
- Anything else you notice which illustrates the impact of COVID-19 in your area and local people's responses to it

If you're interested in helping us and want to know more about this project head over to our website: <https://bit.ly/2ytyer4>

In addition, we will also be inviting members of the public to participate in a digital collecting project and online survey in the near future. This will be open to anyone who has been

visiting the borough for work or due to their essential caring responsibilities, as well as LBTH residents and will be announced in a forthcoming newsletter.

Free access to Ancestry



**Discover genealogy,
family trees and
family history
records online.**



The image shows a collage of three overlapping screenshots of the Ancestry website. The central screenshot features a large green speech bubble that says "FREE TRIAL" and a "NEW RELEASED WWII POW RECORDS" banner. The background of the entire graphic is a faded image of three people's faces.

Our reading room may be temporarily closed but there's no reason why your family history research need ground to a halt. In fact, there's never been a better time to begin your genealogical journey.

If you are a registered Tower Hamlets Idea Store user, for a limited time you will now be able to access our subscription to Ancestry Library Edition for free from your own home! All you need to do is head to the page below, click on the large Ancestry Library Edition link, then enter your library card number and PIN when prompted:

<https://bit.ly/2w1IZRa>

Ancestry is the world's largest online database of family history records, and is particularly good for those tracing London ancestors. Some useful digitised record sets include:

- Tower Hamlets Cemetery Registers, 1841-1966
- London Selected Church of England Parish Registers, 1558-1875
- London Electoral Registers, 1832-1965
- London City Directories, 1736-1943

Don't forget we have a number of free digitised archive records for family historians available on our website:

<https://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history-collections>

Happy hunting!

Staff changes



In January we bid goodbye to cherished colleague **Emma Harrold** who has taken up a new post as Museum Archivist at the Natural History Museum. In her 18 months as our Archives Manager, Emma made a huge contribution with a lasting impact. She instigated key improvements to the ways our collections are stored, launched our first apprenticeship and also curated the very popular **Unite & Resist!** exhibition which had just been extended when lockdown hit. We trust that West London is deserving and appreciative of her many talents!

We were delighted to welcome **Richard Wiltshire** as our new Archives Manager. He started in post in early April under lockdown conditions! Like all of us working from home he has plenty to get stuck into, though is looking forward to getting into the building and his hands on the collections when it is safe to do so....!

Richard has joined us after 18 years at [London Metropolitan Archives](#) where, as Senior Archivist, he managed collections as significant and diverse as those of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, the Standard Chartered Bank, Earls Court and Olympia, and the Rukus! Black LGBTQ+ Archive.

Richard is a trustee of the Business Archives Council (BAC), a charity which promotes access and preservation of business records, and took a lead role on behalf of the BAC in the successful [saving of the internationally important Thomas Cook archive](#). In his spare time, he loves researching his family history, tending his allotment, bird and nature spotting and stamp collecting. Welcome Richard!



Contact us!

Even though we're closed, you can still talk to us and access our collections. There's a lot on our website, <http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history>, and our social media channels too

Facebook: [Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives](#)

Twitter: [@LBTHArchives](#)

Instagram: [@towerhamletsarchives](#)

And we're waiting for your emails, with our inbox monitored during normal working hours
Monday-Friday: localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Stay updated with local
coronavirus information:
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/coronavirus



- Stay home
- Protect the NHS
- Save lives

Coronavirus updates and advice for residents

Tower Hamlets Council is supporting the nation's efforts to stop the spread of coronavirus, while running our most critical services and supporting our residents, including those that are vulnerable.

We are regularly publishing advice for residents, local businesses and more at www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/coronavirus

We are also sharing updates with our subscribers in regular emails, and publishing stories on social media using **#TowerHamletsTogether**.

Sign up to our 'health and wellbeing - coronavirus' newsletter to get regular updates delivered to your inbox.