

November-December 2013

Stepney in Peace and War The paintings of Rose L. Henriques



The Foothills, 'Tilbury', bombed second time. Watercolour on paper, Rose L. Henriques. c1941.

Our new exhibition is a rare opportunity to see highlights from our collections of paintings by the Jewish philanthropist Rose L. Henriques (1889-1972) which launches here on Thursday 28 November at 6.30pm. This event is open to the public and is co-hosted with the Jewish East End Celebration Society.

With her husband Sir Basil, Lady Rose Henriques founded the St George's Jewish Settlement in Betts St, Stepney in 1919. Here, the Henriques developed social welfare facilities and services for the deprived local community ranging from youth clubs to washrooms and open to Jews and non-Jews alike. The Settlement was able to expand into its own new premises in Berner Street in 1929 thanks to funding from philanthropist Bernhard Baron, after whom the building was renamed.

Rose was an avid artist, serving on the board of the Whitechapel Gallery, and the watercolours in our collection are a unique record of Stepney around the time of the Second World War. Focussing on the regular activities and everyday landscapes of the besieged borough, her subjects include the clear-up and triage activities of the Civilian Defence Service, the controversial air raid shelter known as "Tilbury", and scenes of bombed out synagogues and churches. She also painted everyday life at the Settlement building where she and Basil lived.

This exhibition has been curated by staff with the expert voluntary help of art researcher Sara Ayad. A booklet version of the exhibition will be available early in the new year. We gratefully acknowledge the donation of frames by the Imperial War Museum and the provision of additional contextual images by Ian Berry, the Jewish Museum and the Museum of London.

The exhibition runs until 6 March. Please check our opening times before visiting on www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history. A free talk about the paintings and Rose's contribution to the East End follows on Thursday 30 January at 6.30pm with curator Sara Ayad.

For more information about the Oxford & St George's Club Centenary event taking place at the Troxy on 2 March 2014, please visit www.ostg100.co.uk.

London's Pulse: Medical Officer of Health reports, 1848-1972

We are pleased to announce a collaboration with the Wellcome Library on a free public talk Taking East London's Pulse in our Education Room here on Thursday 16 January 2014.

Readers interested in health in the East End should mark this date in their diaries, as we will be welcoming esteemed colleagues from the Wellcome Library to Bancroft Road for a special talk on the newly digitised Medical Officer of Health reports. This will highlight the new website (<http://wellcomelibrary.org/moh/>) which brings together more than 5500 annual reports covering the City of London, 32 present-day London boroughs and their predecessors.

What's in the reports?

The Medical Officer of Health (MOH) reports contain personal accounts by the Medical Officers and statistical data in the form of graphs, tables and charts. Covering a wide range of topics from birth rates to causes of death, the reports offer a rich source of material for public health research. They also cover varying aspects of London life: housing, food hygiene, health services, local trades and industries, to name a few.

Along with the ability to easily compare infectious diseases and mortality rates across several years, the website also offers the ability download and copy all of the data in a variety of formats: HTML, XML, CSV and plain text. And the Wellcome Library have included some short articles about the changing historical contexts and the professional role of the Medical Officers of Health.

Visit our website for further details about this talk nearer the time.

Upcoming Local History Events

Charles Dickens and the Invention of Christmas

Talk and discussion with Nicola Brown, a lecturer at Birkbeck, University of London. This talk takes place on Friday 13 December 2013, 6.45pm at Idea Store Whitechapel.

Israel Zangwill: 150th anniversary of his birth

JEECS will be marking the Zangwill anniversary on 19 January with a dramatised reading of his great work Children of the Ghetto by professional actors and with a professional director at the Jewish Museum in Camden, starting at 2.30. Booking details will be available soon. It will also be staged at other venues later. In the morning, Clive Bettington will be leading a walk themed on Zangwill's East End, leaving from Aldgate tube at 10.30. The cost is £8 (non-members £10). Book on 07941 367 882 or email c.bettington@jeecs.org.uk

LGBT History Month Event: Local Lives in the Queer Metropolis

Talk and discussion with Dr Matt Cook, lecturer at Birkbeck, University of London. This talk takes place on Friday 24 February, 6.45pm at Idea Store Whitechapel.

Collection News

Sketch books of Stepney artist

We are very pleased to have received as a gift a collection of sketch books by Cornelius McCarthy (1935-2009). McCarthy was a painter born and brought up in Stepney. As a boy he attended art classes at Toynbee Hall and at Whitechapel Upper Gallery, exhibited regularly at the East End Academy shows between 1953 and 1960, and later had one-man exhibitions at our own building in Bancroft Road and at Whitechapel Library. McCarthy was one of Britain's leading contemporary painters of the male form.

Many of the early drawings are of East End subjects (the Limehouse waterfront, the three Hawksmoor churches) as well as portraits of family and friends. The later ones focus more on his figure compositions, but Hawksmoor's St George-in-the-East (which he knew from childhood) is a recurring motif



James Pullen Junior in his shop

Records of Pullen's butcher's shop, Bethnal Green

We have received recently some account books and other records of a butcher's shop belonging to James Pullen of Green Street (renamed Roman Road), Bethnal Green, donated by his daughter. These cover the Second World War period and demonstrate effect of rationing on people's diet.

Bryant & May Heritage Project volunteer opportunity

Maximal Learning are putting together an exhibition pulling together this unique history of the Bryant and May factory site in Bow, to be shared with the local community. As a volunteer you will learn skills such as; project organisation/ presentation skills/archive research/team working/oral history interviews.

They have a range of sessions available to attend throughout November and early Dec. Please contact them as soon as possible letting them know your interest at projects@maximalllearning.com or 020 8981 8811.

Where I Belong—Heritage Trainee Update

I am now half way through my heritage skills traineeship and my women's oral history project is starting to take a solid shape now. We have decided to name it Where I Belong as the project raises questions about the concept of home -what and where is home, in the context of so many different personal journeys? With the help of a volunteer I have collected interviews both from Bangladeshi and Somali women, from Black Women's Health and Family Support and the BYM women's centre. The interviews have given me a great insight into the lives of women living in the borough and they have shared so many fond memories that have touched me and have reminded me of the importance of collecting oral histories. These memories can now also be cherished by those who listen to them and will allow the past to live on. I have no doubt that you will feel the same way when you come and visit the exhibition next year. Now that we are approaching the end of the last interviews, the next step is to start planning the exhibition, which I am very excited about, so watch this space! Also, may I just wish you all a very merry Christmas in advance, and I look forward to seeing you all next year. *Majeda*

LGBT History at The National Archives

To celebrate LGBT History Month in February 2014, Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives will be hosting an exhibition that illustrates the impact of the state on the UK's LGBT communities. Created by The National Archives, the exhibition showcases a selection of archive material and highlights the control that government has historically exerted over the basic rights of LGBT individuals.

The exhibition also includes a map, illustrating LGBT collections across the UK and a timeline of relevant historical events.

The dates and location of the exhibition will be confirmed shortly - please visit www.ideastore.co.uk-localhistory for further details nearer the time.

Christmas Caption Competition

Please email your captions to localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk by 31st December 2013. The winning entry will receive a copy of "Good morning brothers!" by Jack Dash.



"Old folks" Christmas party at York Hall, Bethnal Green, 1949.

A Book for Christmas?

We have several recently published local history books now on sale in our bookshop that would make great Christmas presents for the local historian in your life.

New titles include:

Stepney Then and Now by Samantha Bird - This beautifully illustrated book contains black and white and colour photos. £14.99

London's East End then and now by Steve Lewis - This photographic book includes not just Tower Hamlets but also Newham and Hackney. £12.99

Tracing your East End ancestors by Jane Cox - This guide for family historians is a great way to learn about the different sources available for research as well as having an overview of the history of the area. £14.99

Spitalfields Life by the Gentle Author - This book based on the popular blog contains stories both past and present about the Spitalfields area, covering topics such as street life, art, markets, food, immigrant culture, ancient houses and history. £20.00

East End neighbourhoods by Brian Girling - One of our most popular books this year it contains images of the East End arranged into Maritime Neighbourhoods, Traders' Places, Lost Neighbourhoods, Leisure Time and Celebrations and Aspects of East London. £12.99

London's Docklands an illustrated guide by Geoff Marshall - Part guide book part history, this book outlines the historical developments of the docks from Roman times to the present day. £12.99

Battle for the East End by David Rosenberg - This book looks at Jewish responses to fascism in the East End in the 1930s. It gives a detailed history of the campaign against Oswald Mosley's Black-shirts which culminated in the Battle of Cable Street. £9.99

The Annual Hop London to Kent by Hilary Heffernan - filled with over 200 photographs this book gives a history of the hop-picking tradition of London's East Enders. £12.99

Also available are past favourites written by former alumni of THLHLA such as:

Bow and Bromley-by-Bow by Gary Haines. £12.99

Bethnal Green by Gary Haines. £12.99

The East End at War by Rosemary Taylor and Christopher Lloyd. £9.99

The East End at Work by Rosemary Taylor and Christopher Lloyd. £9.99

Books are available for purchase in the library or can be ordered via email or over the telephone. Please note, we can now accept credit and debit card payments over the phone or in person.

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

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Library Learning Information