



# Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



Autumn 2015

## Upcoming Events

### East End Backpassages: '56 of 365'

Thursday 8 October 2015, 6.30-7.30pm  
Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

Join award winning local writer and stand-up tour guide [Alan Gilbey](#) as he presents a sneak preview of his next project - creating an appropriate piece about local history for every day of the year! Mixing the personal with the historical, poems with songs, it will gradually evolve into an epic performance as Alan uncovers lesser-known stories and reflects on life in Tower Hamlets today.



Alan Gilbey in action

Joined by Cerys Hogg on keyboards and Toni Davey on voice and pearly buttons, Alan will preview the first two months of this year-long project tonight - and you'll get to choose which stories you hear! Free - but please book a place via email or phone using the contact details at the bottom of this email.

"Alan Gilbey is the real thing, a genuine Eastender who knows his material intimately and an extraordinary performer and writer" - Rachel Lichtenstein

### History Hoppers

Wednesday 21 October 2015, 2.30-4.30pm  
Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

Come along to our monthly, drop-in History Hoppers group, where participants will have the chance to explore and discuss a variety of library and archive material relating to the history of the local area, including photographs, newspaper cuttings and maps. Refreshments provided. Free, no booking required. Additional History Hoppers dates can be found on our [website](#).

## Black History Workshop

Thursday 22 October 2015, 5.30-7.30pm  
Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

An informal, drop-in session which will give participants the opportunity to explore a variety of library and archive material from our collections, including books, photographs and letters, relating to the experiences of black people who have lived in the borough during its history. Free, no booking required. Tower Hamlets Council's full programme of events being hosted as part of Black History Month 2015 can be found [here](#).

## The Stepney School Strike and Basement Writers

Thursday 12 November 2015, 6.00-7.30pm  
Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

In 1973, the pupils of a Tower Hamlets school walked out to show support for Chris Searle, a student teacher who had been sacked by the governors for publishing a collection of their poetry. They refused to go to classes, marched to Trafalgar Square and made national headlines. Tonight Chris returns to the East End. Join BBC Radio 4 broadcaster Alan Dein as he chats to Chris, followed by readings by former members of the Basement Writers, the pioneering community arts group later formed by some of his pupils. Free, but booking required via [Eventbrite](#). Part of the [Globe Road Poetry Festival](#).



National press coverage for the Stepney school strike of 1973.

## The Writeidea Festival

Friday 13 - Sunday 15 November 2015  
Idea Store Whitechapel

Our staff have curated a day of talks relating to East End heritage on Saturday 14 November at Idea Store Whitechapel as part of the annual Writeidea Festival. Come along and listen to acclaimed biographer Jean Moorcroft Wilson speak about war poet Isaac Rosenberg or Sarah Glynn on British Bengalis and East End Radicalism, among others. We will have a stall with exhibitions and books for sale from the Friday night (featuring Iain Sinclair on the London Overground) and all day Saturday.

The Writeidea Festival has been running since 2009 and is part of the Idea Store programme of free book-based activities for adults and children which are aimed at getting more people to read. All events are FREE, but you must book a place. Further details and the full festival programme can be found [here](#)

## Explore Your Archive: Photographic collections

**Saturday 21 November 2015, 2-4pm**  
**Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives**

A drop-in session with Malcolm Barr-Hamilton, Borough Archivist, exploring the range of photographic collections in our archives. These will include further examples from early 20th century Poplar Borough Photographer William Whiffin, faded Jewish shopfronts of the East End photographed by Alan Dein in the late 1980s, street scenes featuring African seamen lodging on Cable Street in the 1950s and contemporary images of the borough taken in the Olympic year. Explore Your Archive is a national campaign taking place every November to publicise access to archives. Check out other events taking place near you [here!](#)

And finally, a plug for this special event from our friends at [Magic Me](#):

## Speak as you Find

**Friday 30 October - Sunday 1 November 2015, 3pm daily**  
**The Centre, Community Hall, 32 Merchant Street, London, E3 4LX**

Come and explore the many stories that describe life in Tower Hamlets. Perspectives vary because of our life experiences, our ages and stages, and it is out of this cacophony that Magic Me has created *Speak as you Find*. Moving through the building you will encounter connections and disharmony, whispers and shouts, all deeply rooted in the lived experience of our community performers, before sitting down to tea, cake and a huge community conversation.

*Speak as you Find* has been created by older and younger people from Tower Hamlets working with artists from Magic Me, the UK's leading innovator in intergenerational arts, as part of the [Rooms with a View](#) project.

[Booking required](#): general admission: £8, concession: £6. Ticket price includes tea / coffee and homemade cake.

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## Our Current Exhibition

Our current exhibition launched a few weeks ago and celebrates the photography of William Whiffin (1878-1957), a pioneering visual chronicler of the early twentieth century. Whiffin's powerful, evocative, and sometimes playful images are among the finest photographic documentation of London's East End ever produced, and are among the most popular and well-used items within our collections. The exhibition runs until Saturday 21 November and a wide range of events is now under way to tie in with it.

For the full programme [see our website](#).

## **East London Street Photography Photo Forum Panel Discussion**

**Thursday 1 October, 6:30 - 8:30pm**  
**Four Corners**

[Four Corners](#) presents a Photo Forum discussion at their gallery space on Roman Road, Bethnal Green. Sarah Ainslie, Susan Andrews, David Hoffman and Ed Thompson discuss their differing approaches to street photography in East London, past and present. Free entry, refreshments provided

## **Walk: Whiffin's Poplar**

**Saturday 3 October, 1:00 - 3:00pm**  
**Meet outside All Saints DLR Station**

Join us on a guided walk around Poplar, the area depicted in many of William Whiffin's photographs. Focusing on East India Dock Road and the surrounding area, we will explore how Whiffin captured both extraordinary and everyday scenes through his work. Free, but FULLY BOOKED - waiting list only. Email: [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) / Telephone: 0207 364 1290.

## **Talk: Early Photography Techniques**

**Saturday 17 October, 2:00 - 3:30pm**  
**Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives**

[Four Corners](#) presents a talk on the early photography techniques used by Whiffin and his contemporaries and their reuse by contemporary photographers. [Antony Cairns](#) will give an overview of Whiffin's glass plate techniques, and [Almudena Romero](#) discusses tintype, albumen and other early photographic processes, with reference to their own contemporary approaches. Book a free place [online here](#).

## **Talk: Photographers of the East End**

**Thursday 29 October, 6:00 - 7:30pm**  
**Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives**

Join [Mike Seaborne](#), former Curator of Photography at the Museum of London, for a fascinating talk on the work of Whiffin and his contemporaries, photographers who worked in the East End between 1900 and 1939. Included will be John Galt, Norah Smyth and Cyril Arapoff.

## Talk: Chris Dorley-Brown: Revisiting Whiffin's East End

Thursday 5 November, 6:00 - 7:30pm  
Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Chris Dorley-Brown works in collaboration with artists, filmmakers, curators, groups and individuals in a variety of cultural contexts, primarily outside the art gallery. He has been building up a photographic archive of life in his home borough of Hackney for over ten years. As part of the Whiffin's East End exhibition, Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives invited Chris to revisit Whiffin's work, exploring sites and subjects depicted in the exhibition and using his own contemporary photographic approach to capture and create a new archive of Whiffin's East End. In this talk, Chris will discuss and present the results of this project.



Ocean Estate, Stepney, 2015  
Photographer: Chris Dorley-Brown

Chris' work will be on display at Idea Store Whitechapel from 9 - 22 November 2015. He will also give a version of this talk as part of the Writeidea Festival at Idea Store Whitechapel on Saturday 14 November at 3pm.

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## George Lansbury portrait

We are pleased to have received on loan from members of the Lansbury family, a splendid portrait of George Lansbury, former Mayor of Poplar and Leader of the Labour Party. In early September the Mayor of Tower Hamlets John Biggs formally accepted the portrait, painted by John Flanagan in 1921. The picture shows Mayor Biggs, left, with Elizabeth Hall-Marshall, a member of the Lansbury Memorial Committee, and Nigel Whiskin, Lansbury's great-grandson.

The 2015 Lansbury Memorial Lecture will be given by Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury between 2002-2012, on the subject of Religion and Politics, at Queen Mary, University of London on Wednesday 18 November at 6pm. Tickets for this FREE event can be booked [here](#).



Mayor of Tower Hamlets John Biggs (left) with Elizabeth Hall-Marshall, member of the Lansbury Memorial Committee and Nigel Whiskin, great-grandson of George Lansbury at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, Friday 4 September

## Recent Events

### Drawing Black Lives workshops

From 28 - 30 July 2015, Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives hosted a series of workshops as part of the Drawing Black Lives project, which was run in partnership with visual artist Rudy Loewe and The Equiano Centre, UCL. During the workshops, a small group of young people explored the different stories and experiences of black people who lived in the East End of London from the 1920s to the 1950s, using a variety of library and archive material. Based on their own historical research, each participant then designed and produced a comic page about one of the people, events or themes uncovered.

On Saturday 14 November at 3.30pm, Rudy Loewe will discuss the project and present the published comic as part of the Writeidea Festival, held at Idea Store Whitechapel. Further details about the festival and a full programme can be found [here](#).

### Stroke Association group visit

During early August, members of the local Stroke Association group visited Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives to take part in an art workshop. Participants enjoyed the visit, which involved using a variety of art materials to create work inspired by a range of photographs and maps from our collection.

If you would like to find out more about bringing a group to visit us, or to see if we can come and visit you, contact us via [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) or call us on 0207 364 1290.

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## Touring & Upcoming Exhibitions

### Land and Lives

**Idea Store Bow**  
**Until Friday 2 October 2015**

The Land and Lives pop-up exhibition is currently on display at Idea Store Bow until the end of September and you can also catch it at Tower Hamlets Town Hall, Mulberry Place, Poplar, from 23 November until the end of the year.

Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives currently holds a collection of over 8000 title deeds and the Land and Lives exhibition illustrates how such title deeds can be used to study the local history of an area and the individuals who lived there, from the medieval period up to the 20th century, using Bromley-by-Bow as an example.

### News International Dispute Exhibition

**1 December 2015 - 11 February 2016**  
**Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives**

The News International Dispute began on 24 January 1986, when Rupert Murdoch, owner of four of Britain's leading newspapers, sought to move production from Fleet Street in central London to Wapping. This led to a strike by the print unions, who fought to save thousands of jobs and the basic rights of workers to organise in defence of their conditions. In 2011, the 25th anniversary of the year-long strike and dismissal of 5500 workers was marked by the creation of a new exhibition which presented the workers' story of the dispute and provided a political context.

We are pleased to be hosting this exhibition at Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives from December until February. It will coincide with the 30th anniversary of the strike and be accompanied by a number of free public events. Further details to follow..

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## Picture of the month



The Queen's Theatre, Poplar High Street,  
c1930 Photographer: William Whiffin

This month we have selected a photo currently on display in our extremely popular **Whiffin's East End exhibition**.

A hall at the rear of the Queen's Arms pub eventually became this quaint music hall. Alterations took place in 1867 and it was named the Oriental Theatre and after further changes in 1873 it became the New Albion. By the 1890s it was known as the Queen's. The clientele consisted of local residents, workers and visiting seamen. The theatre was bombed twice in the Second World War. Unlike many other suburban theatres, the Queen's continued throughout the 1940s and 1950s as a place of live entertainment but was closed by 1956. By 1964 the London County Council owned the site, on the north side of Poplar High Street between the junctions with Preston's Road and Robin Hood Lane, and it was developed for housing.

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## Opening Times



Tues: 10am-5pm  
Wed: 9am-5pm  
Thu: 9am-8pm  
Fri: closed  
Sat: (1st & 3rd of the month): 9am-5pm  
Sun, Mon: closed

## Contact Us

Send us your enquiry via email, phone or letter at

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Visit our website at

[www.ideastore.co.uk](http://www.ideastore.co.uk)

