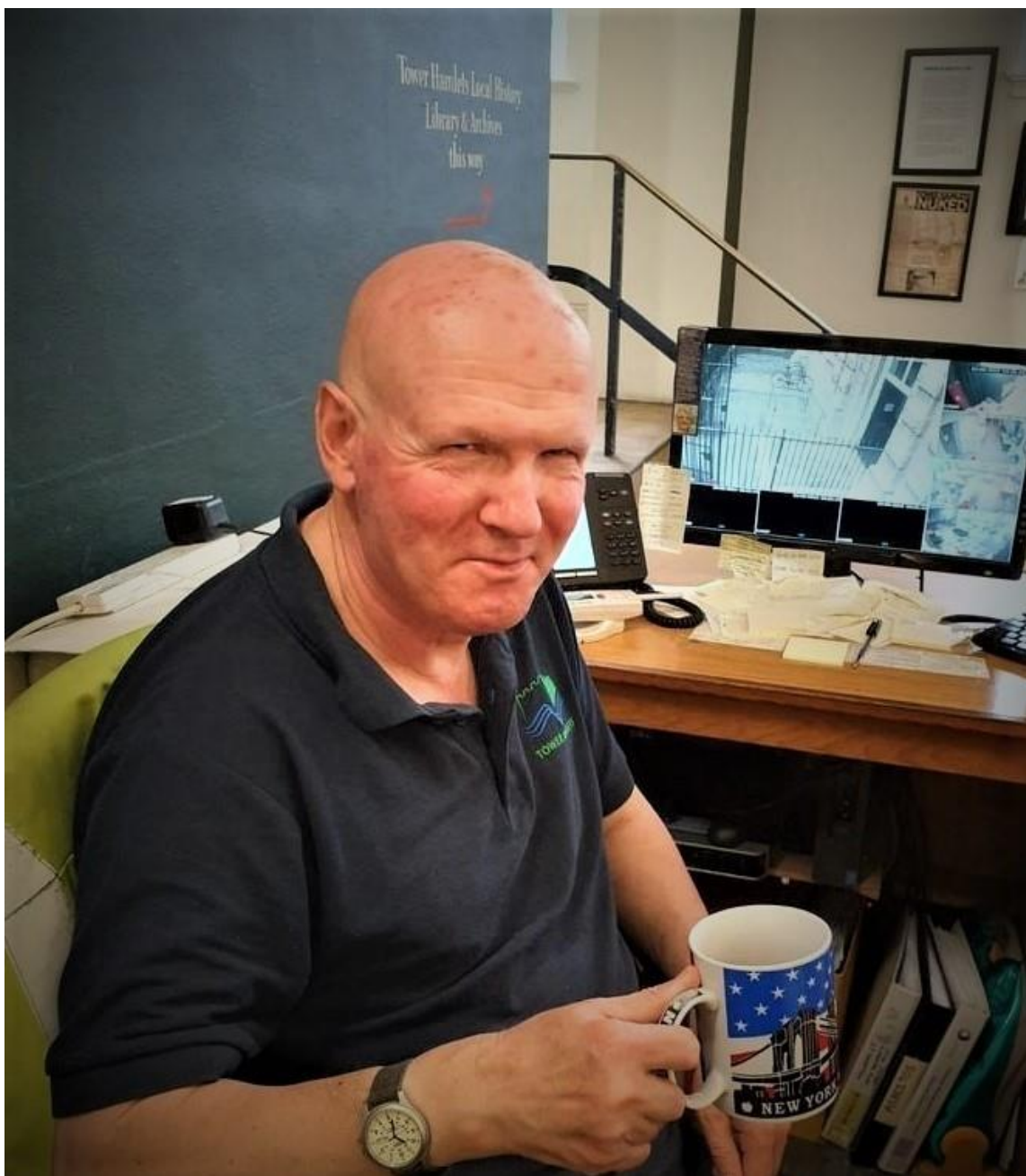


Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



Tim pictured sitting on the reception desk at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

In memory of Timothy 'Timmy' McCarthy

3 January 1956 – 27 January 2021

We are shocked and saddened to share the news that our colleague Tim McCarthy passed away suddenly last week.

Tim began working at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives as a part-time Facilities Assistant in 2013, and since then has spent weekday mornings on ground floor reception as a key member of our Facilities Management team alongside Terry and Keith. This trio of lovely chaps came to join us eight years ago following the closure of the Bethnal Green Centre for adult education where they had had a similar role.

Tim was born in Queen Elizabeth Children's Hospital in Bethnal Green, and was a lifelong resident of the borough of Hackney. Timmy was Irish by descent and visited relatives in Ireland with his brother Tom every year. He loved creative pursuits, attending weekly painting and print-making courses. He also spent decades treading the boards, appearing in performances at Hoxton Hall in the early 1980s, and most recently at the Arcola in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*.

His duties at work included greeting visitors to the library and distributing the post to staff when it arrived. His daily knock on the door of the office was always a lovely interlude – he would say hello and tell us his news – usually Arsenal's latest predicament or info about a new art exhibition or theatre show he had coming up.

Timmy loved his food and was never more thrilled than at the prospect of a meal out with the team for Christmas or another occasion. We will miss him a great deal. Read on for more photos and staff memories of this wonderful soul.

Donations to the [British Heart Foundation](https://www.britishheartfoundation.org/) are welcome in Tim's memory. We have set up a page for online donations here which will go direct to the charity:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/timothymccarthy>



Keith remembers...

"I've known Timmy since I started at Bethnal Green Adult Institute in 1987 as the school keeper. Tim was part of the team. He was very quiet, but over time, with help and support from lots of people, he became more confident. There was a lot more to Tim when you got to know him.

He loved the theatre, films, country and western music, especially Daniel O'Donnell. He did line dancing and also joined the gym at Bethnal Green Centre where he did weightlifting. He made many friends there. He had a vast collection of autographs which he had collected over

the years. I named him 'Stage Door Timmy' which we had a laugh about.

Tim had a wry sense of humour, he loved a joke, and was a fan of Arsenal FC. Tim loved his food and a nice cup of tea. He was a lovely man and I will really miss him."



Terry says....

"There are too many memories of Tim throughout the years I have worked with him.

But one thing comes to mind... In any mini-drama or crisis at work, Tim would just shrug his shoulders and say,

"Oh well.... Calm down, calm down...relax! Shall we have a cup of tea?"

Wise words, I wish I'd listened to Tim more!"

Genova, our Heritage Trainee, sums it up:

"I met Timmy when I started as a volunteer back in 2017 and he always made me feel at home. I was always nicking biscuits from the FM staff's kitchen and Timmy would catch me at it and say, with a wink in his eye, 'and that's the way the cookie crumbles'

Timmy lived his life to the full as best he could, nothing held him back. He had more hobbies and was a member of more groups and clubs than anyone I'd ever met. His stories and updates on his past-times from theatre, to camping to his love of art and painting never ceased to amaze me. The last time I spoke to him a couple of weeks ago we had a good old chat, and despite his health he was upbeat and positive about learning new skills and continuing with his amazing artwork.

He is and will always be an inspiration. I often spoke to others about him as I admired his story and positive outlook so much.... I will miss him dearly, and Bancroft Road will never be the same without him. There is no one like Timmy."





This teapot and teacup is a lovely example of Tim's prolific painting output. He took regular art classes and exhibited in group shows around Tower Hamlets and Hackney every year.

Collections highlight: the changing high street



Composite photograph (P34255) created by combining two separate images held in our collections. Produced by Phillip Marriage.

This evocative panorama shows the north side of Whitechapel High Street in circa 1890.

In the centre of the image is a timber-framed, double-gabled building which at the time housed the businesses of Richard William Dermott, watchmaker (formerly premises of The Old Black Lion) and William Wright, photographic studio. Within ten years this building would be demolished to make way for the Whitechapel Gallery which opened in 1901. The gap in the terrace is the site of 77-80 Whitechapel High Street, the cleared lot ready for the building of the Passmore Edwards Library, also known as Whitechapel Library, which opened in 1892. The chimney visible behind it was part of the Whitechapel Board of Works Refuse 'Destructors' Plant in George Yard (now Gunthorpe Street).

This panorama (P34255) was created in 2018-2019 by Philip Marriage who managed to seamlessly blend together this panorama using two photographs in our image collection (P07171 and P28697). A big thank you to Philip Marriage for gifting the image to us. We also hold an alternate version annotated by him to share research on the buildings, businesses and other organisations featured (P34257).

You can explore more of our photographs in our [Digital Gallery](#) but due to copyright restrictions (and time! and money) we cannot put everything we hold online. There are over 36,000 images in our collection and you can read descriptions of what we hold by searching our [online catalogue](#).

LGBTQ+ History Month

Talk: *The Queer East End: introducing our collections*

Thursday 25 February | 5.00-6.30pm | Free | Online event

At this event we will use our collections to uncover a sample of Tower Hamlets' LGBTQ+ histories. Join us to see stunning paintings and sketchbooks by postwar Stepney artist Cornelius McCarthy, as well as more recent materials from the Tower Hamlets campaign against Section 28. We will go all the way back to the C18th and explore the case of Poplar's "female husband", publican James How, who was born Mary East.

This event is organised by ELOP in partnership with Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives.

FREE EVENT via Zoom. To reserve your place please email: lgbtforum@elop.org
You will be emailed the joining instructions prior to the event.



Montage of LGBTQ materials from THLHLA collections.

Things to watch and read online

If you've missed any of our recent online events, we're delighted to report that you can now watch recordings of them on [our YouTube channel](#) at your convenience!

Subjects of our 2020 online events programme (to name but a few!) include

- The Matchgirls' Strike of 1888
- Black presence in the East End
- An introduction to our huge and complex collection of historic building plans

[Click here](#) to check out these talks and everything else that's on offer on our YouTube channel, including digitised films and videos from our collections which have been uploaded this year.

[Our website](#) has also been updated regularly throughout lockdown with additional content including a range of new user guides to our collections - these have been arranged by theme. [Click the links in the red box on the right to expand the list.](#)

Recordkeeping support for local organisations



Are you a local business, charity or sole trader based in Tower Hamlets or with a strong connection to the borough? We offer heritage support for local businesses and other organisations affected by lockdown and the ongoing pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown has created unprecedented problems for local organisations. You may be using this time as an opportunity for reflection and administrative catch-up; you may be faced with the prospect of major changes to your work; you may even be threatened with permanent closure.

Local charity Play Association Tower Hamlets (PATH) recently deposited their records with us. The Trustees had taken the sad decision to close PATH in autumn 2020, the organisation having suffered from long-term waning of wider political commitment and the devastating

effects of the pandemic were a further blow.

THLHLA was contacted about the archive in October, and few more phone calls and emails later, the records were secured for posterity. PATH Play Development Manager Eleanor Image delivered four large boxes of material to Bancroft Road at lunchtime on 22 January 2021 (**pictured above**). The collection comprises minutes, files, annual reports, promotional publications, posters and leaflets, digital photos and a roll of fabric signed over the years with messages of support! We have here the social history of play in Tower Hamlets throughout the first two decades of the 21st century.

If the current crisis has caused you to identify records at risk of destruction, or records which could be preserved to reflect the history of our borough, we would like to hear from you. We can sign post you to professional guidance to support you during this crisis, from identifying actions to help you manage your records, to the potential transfer of historical material to an archive repository including our service. For more information email us at localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk or head to <https://ideastore.co.uk/recordkeeping-guidance-coronavirus>

Contact us

Contact Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

We are currently closed to the public due to national government restrictions, and our staff are working from home without access to the collections onsite. We hope to re-open our appointments system and welcome back readers when lockdown is eased, but before then we may still be able to help you with your enquiry via email, so feel free to contact us:

- Email us: localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk

- Visit our website: <http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history>

Stay Connected with Idea Store on social media:

