

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



New exhibition for Women's History Month



Sarah Chapman in her later years. Image courtesy of Sam Johnson

Sarah Chapman, Matchgirl: Uncovering the Story of a Strike Leader

Friday 8 March - Friday 29 March

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives (first floor landing)

Bringing a personal slant to the famous Matchgirls' Strike of 1888, we are delighted to host a new display about local working class girl Sarah Chapman (1862-1945), a resident of Mile End who worked for many years at the factory in Bow. Sarah was among the delegation of factory workers who met with the Bryant and May Directors in July 1888 and courageously argued for better terms and working conditions. Sarah's legacy continues today, but her role has been largely unnoticed until now.

Our display, on show from 8 - 29 March on our first floor landing, illustrates the life of this lesser-known political leader and TUC delegate, and shows how often history may remember the brave acts of one person and forget the actions of another. It has been curated by volunteer Gaby Morris with the support of Sarah Chapman's great granddaughter Sam Johnson and family.

Exhibition Launch

Friday 8 March, 6.00-7.30pm

All are welcome to join us on International Women's Day for the preview of our new Sarah Chapman exhibition, with a welcome from her great-grand-daughter Sam Johnson, a poetry reading by Anne Cooper and storytelling by Sinead O'Brien. Please email localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk to book your place.

Talk: Discovering Sarah Chapman

Thursday 21 March, 6.30-7.45

Sam Johnson, the great-grand daughter of the 1888 Match Strike leader Sarah Chapman and Anna Robinson, Senior Lecturer at University of East London will share their interlinked journeys in discovering the story of Sarah Chapman.

More Women's History Month events

Talk: An evening with Cate Tuitt

Thursday 14 March, 6.30-7.30

Join us for what is bound to be a fantastic discussion of reflection and insight from the first Black female councillor in Tower Hamlets. Cate Tuitt started out as an activist in the 1980s, campaigning to investigate racial discrimination and deaths in police custody. Cate became interested in law when she became a trustee at CAPA (Community Action Police Accountability). At the age of 16 she was the youngest trustee on the board. Witness to many racially motivated attacks and crimes, and noticing that the law did not always bring justice to these crimes, she was inspired to go into local politics, becoming the first female black councillor in Tower Hamlets in 1996. Free, no booking required.

Film Screening: Kathleen Wrsama

Thursday 28 March, 6.00-7.45pm

A participatory session hosted by Numbi Arts, exploring rare film archive and library materials to piece together the incredible story of Kathleen Wrsama who came from Ethiopia via Yorkshire to set up one of the first lodging houses for Somali seamen in the East End and, in the 1950s, helped to establish the so-called Stepney Coloured People's Association.

Doors open at 6pm with the opportunity to have a look at relevant materials from the collections, including the archive of Stepney social activist Edith Ramsay. The documentary screening will begin at 6.30 followed by a Q&A and creative response activity. Free, no booking required.

New image collection available: Whitechapel Gallery photographs from the 1970s



By Natasha Luck, Heritage Officer (Archives)

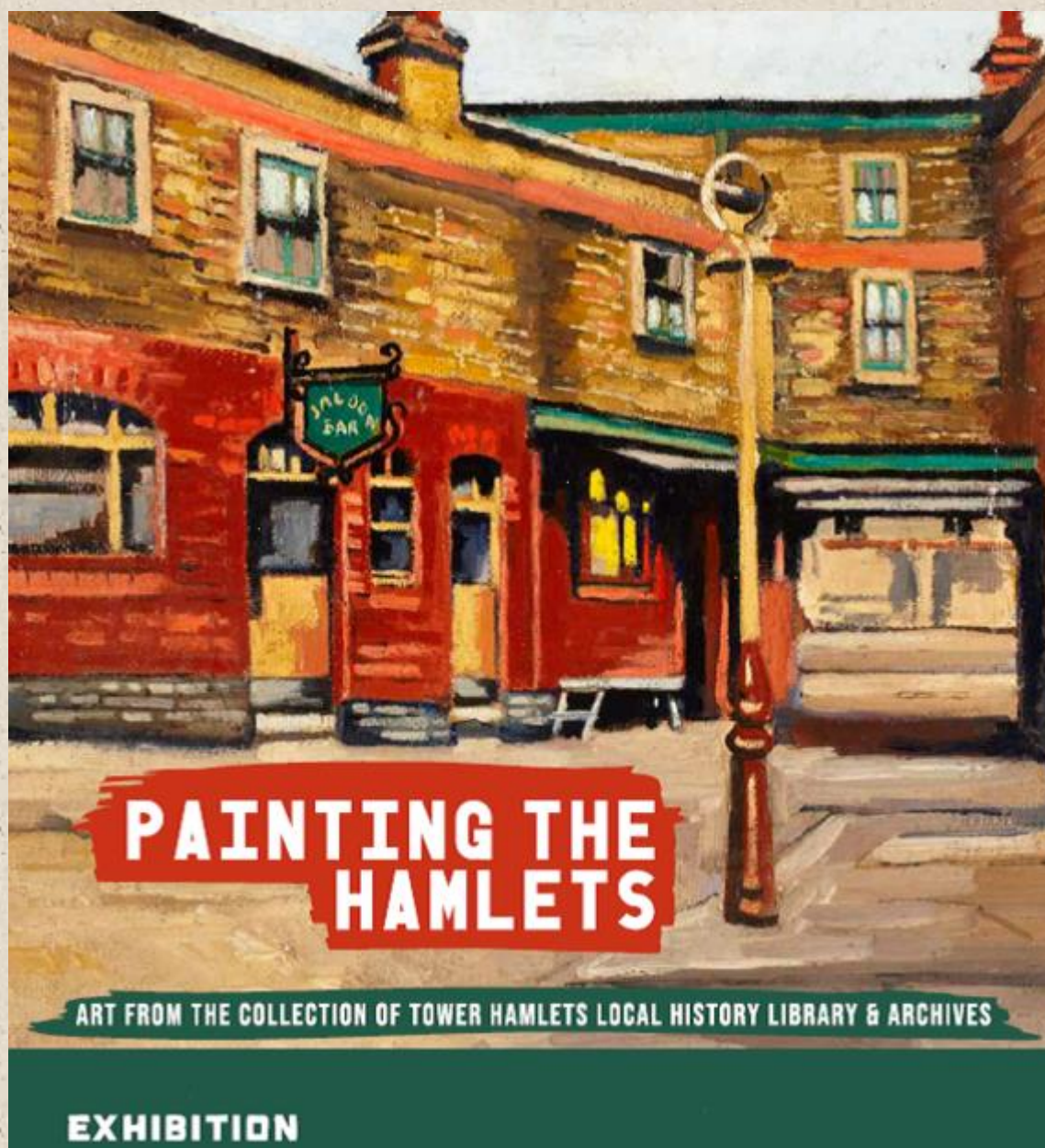
We are pleased to report that work is now complete on a project to make available images relating to the Whitechapel Art Gallery (now known as the Whitechapel Gallery). The project has been ongoing for some time, and thanks to the combined input of staff and some of our many wonderful volunteers, descriptions of 760 images can now be found on our online catalogue, of which 560 have been made live in the past month. Our thanks go out to all those who contributed to the project including former THLHLA team member, Jordan Corbett (who joined us from Tower Project in 2017-2018) and volunteers Dylan Wass and Heather Wilson.

The collection comprises photographs from the 1970s which were either exhibited at or commissioned by Whitechapel Art Gallery, including large mounted prints and also smaller prints, which seem to have been used in exhibitions, or in the development and research for an exhibition. They tend to be documentary photographs focussing on activities and individuals in the local community of the period, and include the noted 'This is Whitechapel' series by Ian Berry of 1972 (WG/1), which were featured in his exhibition of the same name that year.

Some of the most memorable mounted photographs can be found within the series WG/3: Photographs exhibited for the 'Inside Whitechapel' exhibition, Summer 1973. The exhibition was described by the gallery as 'the life of a London Village' and featured the work of Ron McCormick, Chris Schwarz, Leonard Freed, Charles Marriott, Jessie Matthew, David Hoffman, Jill Furmanovsky and Ray Rising, amongst others. The image above of a Suffragette-inspired feminist carnival float outside Bethnal Green Museum is a great example from the WG/3 series, however, unfortunately we do not have any information about who took the photograph. If you recognise this image and know whose work it is please let us know!

Please note that due to their copyright status and oversize dimensions, the images have not been digitised - to see them you will need to visit our reading room and ask to see the originals, giving their reference numbers. To see the descriptions of each image, go our online catalogue <http://www.THcatalogue.org.uk>, then "Advanced search", select the 'Images' repository and search the 'Ref No' field for WG. Each image within a given series has its own description which is displayed when you click the relevant 'Ref No' hyperlinks.

Painting the Hamlets



Our current main exhibition *Painting the Hamlets* has been extended through till the beginning of June. The display showcases works from our art collection which depict landscapes, river views and street scenes in Tower Hamlets. Most of the paintings featured are from the twentieth century and the artists involved include the former Mayor of Bethnal Green and member of the East London Group of artists, Albert Turpin. Works by Doreen Fletcher, Ronald Morgan, Noel Gibson, Rose Henriques, and Geoffrey Scowcroft Fletcher also feature. For the accompanying exhibition programme we have been hosting a series of free events exploring Art and the East End.

A number of new events have recently been added to the programme, please read on for the full list:

Talk: Jewish Artists in East London

Thursday 4 April, 6.00-7.30

Sarah MacDougall from the Ben Uri Gallery joins us to talk about Jewish artists from 1900-1945 who were living, working or inspired by the East End.

The talk will explore the lives of Isaac Rosenberg, Rose Henriques, Pearl Binder and more. Free, no booking required.

Exhibition tour: Painting the Hamlets Curator's Tour

Saturday 6 April, 1.30-2.30

Join Atalanta Kernick, Curator of the 'Painting the Hamlets' exhibition for a guided tour exploring the artists behind the street scenes, and the streets within the paintings. Free, no booking required

Artists' talk: Socially-engaged art practice in Tower Hamlets

Thursday 18 April, 6.30-7.45pm

Visual artists Kinsi Abdulleh and Saif Osmani will explore their socially engaged art practice over many years of working with the Somali and Bangladeshi communities in Tower Hamlets. Through their work, both artists have explored a wide range of issues including race and identity, gender and social justice, space and the public realm, language and cultural heritage. Free, no booking required.

In addition to the above events, we have organised East End Urban Sketching Club, a series of three free painting and drawing workshops led by Idea Store Learning visual arts tutor Ginny Hawke, in which participants will be taught different methods of creating their own street scenes. These are fully booked.

Welcome to new staff



Medha Chotai

"I am the new cataloguing archivist having joined THLHLA in December 2018. My role is to catalogue collections in our backlog so as make them available for researchers. I will be working towards completing the cataloguing of collections such as files originating from Tower Hamlets Council's Building Control department, and the archives of Spitalfields Community Association.

I'm usually found with my trusty trolley in the strongroom stacks, moving boxes, listing records and repackaging items, so I won't be found in the reading room very often.

I have worked in archives since 2014 and graduated from UCL in 2016 with an MA in Archives and Records Management. Working in archives has given me the opportunity to understand the rich and varied narratives and histories that only records can tell you, something that I am keen to make available more widely. In my previous roles I have catalogued archive collections at the National Theatre Archive, Shakespeare's Globe and the London Mathematical Society. I am enjoying the variety of collections and records I work with at Tower Hamlets and look forward to highlighting the rich resource that is available here."

Editor's note: We are absolutely delighted to welcome Medha here full-time on a fixed-term contract until 2021, helping us to address our substantial backlog of archives that are uncatalogued (and therefore currently inaccessible to the public). Her post is funded thanks to a successful internal Growth Bid we submitted to Tower Hamlets Council. We will be posting here when new collections become available for researchers thanks to her work, so keep an eye out!

East End History Club

Saturday 6 April and Saturday 15 June

2.00-4.00pm

Would you like to have a good old browse of our collections but don't know where to start? Come along to our regular bi-monthly drop-in sessions. You'll have the chance to look through old photographs, maps, newspapers and archival documents relating to a range of popular subjects, such as housing, health, immigration, work, school, leisure, parks and places and much more! The selection of material that we get out changes each time.

Teas and coffees provided, suitable for adults and children (11+). Free, no booking required

New books in the library



If you're visiting our reading room this month, we've a range of brand new books for you to peruse. These include reference works on local topics such as Workhouses of London and the South East by Peter Higginbotham, Johnny Homer's East End Pubs, and London's Disused Railway Stations: The East End by J.E. Connor.

New titles of interest to family historians include the Unofficial Guide to Ancestry.com by Nancy Hendrickson and Jayne Shrimpton's How to Get the Most from Family Pictures. We've also

added several new books to our biography section, including Minnie Lansbury: Suffragette, Socialist, Rebel Councillor by Janine Booth. Works on more recent local history topics include London Youth, Religion, and Politics: Engagement and Activism from Brixton to Brick Lane by Daniel Nilsson DeHanas, and Blowing the Lid, a history of the Gay Liberation Front by Stuart Feather which features a chapter on Bethnal Rouge, East London's radical drag queen commune and bookshop.

Design competition for St Matthias Community Centre, Poplar

Local organisations, schools, businesses and residents are invited to take part in a design competition to mark the 25th anniversary of the establishment of St Matthias Community Centre, Poplar. Based in a church building originally founded in 1652 as the chapel of the East India Company, St Matthias Community Centre has been providing essential services for local residents for the last 25 years through its in-house charities Neighbours in Poplar and Splash Arts. Services run from the centre include a nursery, a daycare centre for older people, as well as a night shelter for homeless people during winter.

To commemorate the centre's anniversary - which helped to save the Grade 2* listed church from dereliction - a competition is being held to design a new stained glass window. The design should consist of 6 circles each approximately 780mm in diameter and each circle should explore an aspect of the East India Company's impact on Poplar and the East End. There will be an exhibition of all the designs before one is selected to be fabricated and installed. This is your chance to see your design incorporated into the fabric of a listed building for all to see! Please email Sister Christine at nip65@msn.com to express an interest in participating - either as an individual or as part of a group activity (eg a school class).

Opening hours and contact details

Please do check our opening hours before visiting. They are:

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
- 020 7364 1290
- <http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history>