



Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



May 2017

Event this Saturday! Chris Searle and friends present: From *Stepney Words* to *Isaac & I*

Saturday 20 May, 2.00-4.00pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Isaac and I: A Life in Poetry

Chris Searle



We are delighted to be hosting a special event to launch the first part of Chris Searle's autobiography, to be published in May by [Five Leaves](#). Chris is a teacher, poet and activist who found himself on the front pages of the newspapers in 1971 when his pupils at Sir John Cass Redcoat School in Stepney went on strike in protest at his sacking. His crime, in the eyes of the school governors, was to have published a book of the pupils' poetry, *Stepney Words*, which spoke less than favourably about their life experiences.

Isaac & I is the story of how Chris came to teach in Stepney and the story of the school strike, which became a national news story. Having moved to North America and the Caribbean in the 1960s he was witness to the civil rights movement and the emergence of Black Power. Inspired by these experiences and his long-term muse, the Jewish war poet Isaac Rosenberg, Chris settled in Stepney determined to inspire his underprivileged pupils with poetry. Their words spoke a plaintive truth about their lives and the inequality they faced as

working-class children in the early 1970s East End.

This event will be hosted by Alan Gilbey ([East End Backpassages](#)) and will feature some of the original school poets reading their work. Chris will share his passion for Isaac Rosenberg, and special guests including Alan Dein, Dan Jones and others will reminisce about this eventful moment in 1971 which affected so many local people. There will be copies of *Isaac & I* for sale. We expect this event to be popular so come early! Free - no booking required.

Mapping the Hamlets

Our most visited exhibition... ever?

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives holds a collection of over 4000 historic maps. This exhibition features more than thirty of these, most of which have never before been displayed. Many are unique to our collection and others will only be found in a select number of libraries.

Maps represent a vital source for answering a wide variety of enquiries: for local and family history or for legal research or land redevelopment. We are fortunate in that, as a result of abutting the City of London, parts of the present-day borough are covered by large-scale mapping dating back to the sixteenth century.

The map collection is a working library collection, not a museum collection, put to continual use by scholars and researchers and stored for decades in vertical suspension chests. This has taken its toll on many items within it. Despite this, we have chosen to display only original maps in this exhibition - not digitised copies.

Maps have been made for many purposes, and we present this selection of maps in four categories:

- Estate maps - these are unique and often manuscript, depicting land and buildings owned by a particular person, family or company
- Maps showing areas as administered by (usually now defunct) local authorities which preceded the formation of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets in 1965
- Maps plotted for a specific theme, eg sociological research, public transport, civil defence
- Printed maps - taking the example of Spitalfields to show cartographic and geographical development from 1676 to 1996

In addition to the maps from our collection on display, the exhibition also features a very large, work-in-progress scale model of London in 1840. The london1840.com website includes more details about this fascinating project, led by Andrew Byrne.

As always, a programme of free events accompanies the exhibition - please see below for details or on our [website](#). Though we will share some of the exhibited images on social media, the exhibition doesn't photograph very well due to glare from the room's lighting so we thoroughly recommend visiting in person! Please check our opening hours below and if you'd like to see more maps, visit our reading room on the first floor.

This exhibition was curated by Borough Archivist Malcolm Barr-Hamilton, with valuable assistance from volunteer Anusha Mistry. Framing and installation by Jackie Lyall.



Mapping the Hamlets

Exhibition: 15 April - 23 June 2017

Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

Mapping the Hamlets Events programme

Guided walk: Mile End New Town
Tuesday 30 May, 6.00-8.00pm
Meeting point: Aldgate East tube (Whitechapel High St/north side)

Exhibition curator and Borough Archivist Malcolm leads a guided walk around the former Hamlet of Mile End New Town, an obscure administrative area adjacent to Spitalfields which ceased to exist in 1901. The walk will be illustrated using copies of historic materials from our collection. **FULLY BOOKED.** If you have previously booked and aren't able to come, please let us know so we can release your place to the waiting list.



Section of a map from Booth's *Life & Labour...* (1899-1900) showing licensed premises, schools and places of worship

Talk: Charles Booth's Poverty Map
Thursday 1 June, 6.00-7.30pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

We're delighted to host historian Sarah Wise to give a talk on Charles Booth's Poverty Map of 1898-99. An early example of social cartography, each street is coloured to indicate the income and social class of its inhabitants. Free, no booking required.

Family activity: Map-making
Friday 2 June, 10.00-1.00pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Come along to this half-term workshop where you'll get the chance to create your own map of the local area, inspired by photographs and maps from the archives. Led by artist Virginia Hawke, this workshop is for children between the ages of 5 and 10 years accompanied by a parent or carer, although younger and older siblings are welcome. Free, [advance booking required.](#)

Going digital: mapping family histories in Whitechapel with the Survey of London
Saturday 3 June, 1.00-4.00pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

The [Survey of London](#) host informal talks about recording family histories in Whitechapel, followed by a workshop about how to add yours to their interactive online map. A full programme is available [here](#).

Exhibition guided tour
Saturday 3 June, 11.00am - 12.00noon
Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Find lengthy text captions a bit overwhelming? This free guided tour of the exhibition is for you. Its curator Malcolm Barr-Hamilton will talk through each map on display. Free, but a small group is essential so please phone or email to book a place.

Guided walk: St George In The East
Tuesday 13 June, 6.00-8.00pm
Meeting point: Shadwell Overground station

A guided walk exploring the Parish of St. George-in-the-East, led by Borough Archivist Malcolm Barr-Hamilton, using historic maps and other resources from our collections. **FULLY BOOKED:** if you have booked a place but can no longer come please let us know. NB the Overground station and DLR stations are different.

Talk: The LCC Bomb Damage Maps

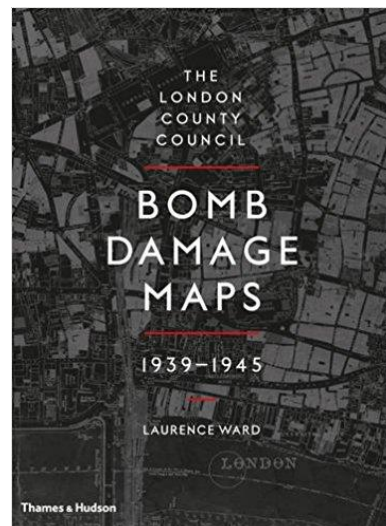
Thursday 15 June, 6.30-7.30pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Join Laurence Ward, Head of Digital Services at the London Metropolitan Archives, for an illustrated talk on how the terrible damage caused by World War Two air raids was recorded by the London County Council's bomb damage maps. Free, no booking required.

Talks: 18th and 19th century London, by map and model
Thursday 22 June, 6.15-7.30pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Borough Archivist Malcolm Barr-Hamilton discusses Gascoyne's 1703 map of Stepney, the most significant map ever produced in terms of Tower Hamlets' history; and Andrew Byrne talks about his work-in-progress model of [1840 London](#) also displayed in our exhibition. Free, no booking required.

Please book a place for those events which require it by emailing localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk or call 020 7364 1290 during working hours. Let us know any access needs.



New events for June!

Family History Day

Saturday 17 June, 10.30am-4pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

How are you getting on with that family tree? Want to get some help from experts, or meet up with others tracing their East End ancestry? Come to our free Family History Day where there will be help provided in using online sources such as the census and parish registers. Stalls from East End history groups - including the [East of London Family History Society](#) - will be present, as well as a lineup of talks and workshops on different aspects of researching family history. No need to book - just drop in.

Film night: Whitechapel 1968

Thursday 29 June, 5.30pm-7.30pm
Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

In collaboration with the Survey of London we are delighted to present a screening of two contrasting documentaries featuring Whitechapel, both of which were made in the 'year of revolutions', 1968.

Georgia Brown: Who are the Cockneys Now? is a very personal look by the singer and actress Georgia Brown, returning to her childhood haunts in Whitechapel. She reflects on her own Jewish heritage and that of the area (including the Brady Club) and looks at the changing character of Whitechapel, which she celebrates as a place that has always welcomed immigrants. It features interviews with Lionel Bart, who she went to school with, Vidal Sassoon, the writer Wolf Mankowitz and the legendary Tubby Isaacs, the jellied eel man, and many other locals. There are evocative scenes of Petticoat Lane, Old Montague Street, Whitechapel Road, Black Lion Yard and Hessel Street and the streets just north of Wentworth Street, including her old school in Deal Street, much of which was soon to be demolished for redevelopment.

The London Nobody Knows, filmed in the same apocalyptic year, is described as a 'trippy documentary', presented by the actor James Mason. It is not just about Whitechapel, but includes a major segment about it, an outsider's view in contrast to Georgia Brown's.

[Click here to book your free place.](#)

Saturday opening

We are open 9am-5pm on the first and third Saturdays of every month, for research in the reading room and for viewing of the Mapping the Hamlets exhibition. That's the following Saturdays coming up:

- 20 May
- 3 and 17 June

History Hoppers

History Hoppers is a monthly chance to get together and have a chat, reminisce and a browse of selected local history collections over a cup of tea and a biscuit.

Next dates are Tuesday 30 May and Tuesday 27 June - drop in any time between 11.30am and 1.30pm, no need to book.

Opening hours

Monday: 9am-5pm (exhibition only)

Tuesday: 10am-5pm

Wednesday: 9am-5pm

Thursday: 9am-8pm

Friday: 9am-5pm (exhibition only)

Saturday*: 9am-5pm (*first and third Saturdays of the month only)

Sunday: closed

Contact us

Send us your enquiry via email, phone or letter at

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