

November 2014-January 2015

## Out of the Box exhibition

We are very pleased to be launching our next exhibition **Out of the Box** on Wednesday 3 December, coinciding with the United Nations' International Day of Disabled People.

'Out of the Box' is a pioneering project that invited local disabled people to take the lead in bringing archives 'out of the box', exploring them and asserting their own personal local histories through a creative practice of their choice.



An Out of the Box participant explores the collections.  
Photo courtesy of Filmpro/Caglar Kimyoncu

Through a series of workshops, participants followed personal journeys into Tower Hamlets Council's heritage collections, engaging with sound and oral history, handwritten archives on parchment, newspapers, painting and photographs.

Their inspiration, thoughts and findings from their in-depth research is captured in their own artwork: from sculptures and hand-made cushions, to drawings and poems such as Limehouse Lures, "a fictional tale inspired by all the newspaper cuttings I read about Chinatown when it was based in Limehouse." (Rowan, participant).

The exhibition will run at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives until Thursday 29 January. Please check our opening times in advance of your visit.

**Launch: Wednesday 3 December 5pm – 7.30pm**

**RSVP: [info@outoftheboxproject.org.uk](mailto:info@outoftheboxproject.org.uk) | 020 7613 5856 / 079 4451 3590 (voice/texts)**

*"I have gained in confidence to read history, write and paint. I believe albeit in a humble fashion that the sky is the limit."* (Sarah, participant)

Out of the Box will tour Idea Stores and other borough libraries in 2015, with further public events to be announced in the New Year. All venues are wheelchair accessible. An audio description guide for the exhibition will be available. Events will be British Sign Language interpreted and have speech-to-text provision. For details:

[www.outoftheboxproject.org](http://www.outoftheboxproject.org)



Out of the Box is a creative partnership between **Tower Hamlets Council's Local History Library and Archives** and **filmpro ltd**, funded by the **Arts Council England** and supported by **The National Archives - Archiving the Arts** and **One Tower Hamlets**. Follow Out of the Box: [facebook.com/outoftheboxprojects](https://www.facebook.com/outoftheboxprojects) / #outoftheboxproject

# Upcoming Events

**Film Screening: The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition**  
**Thursday 13 November, 6pm**  
**Idea Store Watney Market**

In 1976 Dan Jones, Taploe Johnson and some other budding artists from Stepney submitted their paintings to the Royal Academy's traditional open summer exhibition. What happened next? This great documentary filmed for the BBC at the time gives a behind the scenes look at the RA's decision-making process back then, and the hopes and motivations of regular East Enders with a gift to paint. Introduced with a Q & A by Dan and director Jenny Barraclough.

**Make a Campaign Poster with Dan Jones**  
**Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives**  
**Saturday 15 November, 12 - 4pm**

Following on from the success of our first ever print-making workshop in September, we are hosting an extended four-hour print making workshop with Dan Jones himself on the last day of his exhibition at THLHLA. Try your hand at creating a campaign poster about any local issue past or present that really gets you steamed up. With inspiration on offer via historical campaigns illustrated in our collections, come along and get agitating. Suitable for all ages. LIMITED PLACES, MUST BE BOOKED IN ADVANCE. Email: [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) to book.



Artist Dan Jones poses with Idea Store Coordinator Rugina Mukid at Idea Store Whitechapel's monthly Creative Writing group

**The Write Idea Festival**  
**Friday 14– Sunday 16 November**  
**Idea Store Whitechapel**

The Write Idea reading festival is back with another programme packed to the brim with fresh literary talent, featuring Tariq Ali, Shazia Mirza and Xiaolu Guo. As ever, there is a nod to the local history of Tower Hamlets with the presence of speakers such as popular blogger The Gentle Author, Columbia Road's Linda Wilkinson and former East End publican Eddie Johnson. Places are filling up fast so check out the full listings and book your free spot via <http://writeideafestival.org/events/>. Watch out for the local history stall on Saturday where we will be on hand to answer your questions!



**Community Housing Film Night**  
**Thursday 20 November, 6.30-7.30pm**  
**Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives**

A chance to see two rarely screened films that explore themes of social cohesion and community housing. Free, no need to book.

*The Selby Street Story Project* short film was produced as a record of the Selby Street Story Project, an intergenerational theatre project that took place in Whitechapel in 2013. Weekly creative participatory sessions led to a performance adapted from the traditional Korean folk tale, *The Story Bag*, which was performed locally to a packed house. Participants were aged between 4 and 88. The project was funded by the Community Development Foundation and supported by One Housing Group, Southern Housing Group and the Selby Estate Tenants Association. *4 minutes.*

*14th Floor* was produced jointly by THLHLA and Bow Arts Trust in 2010 to illustrate the pioneering development of social housing in Tower Hamlets from the Victorian period to the present day. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, this rarely screened short documentary includes personal interviews with residents, housing officers, architects and artists (including those residing in the Balfron Tower) - and of course the Borough Archivist. *45 minutes*

**Hop back in time! New History Hoppers group**  
**Wednesday 10 December, 2.30-4.30pm**  
**Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives**

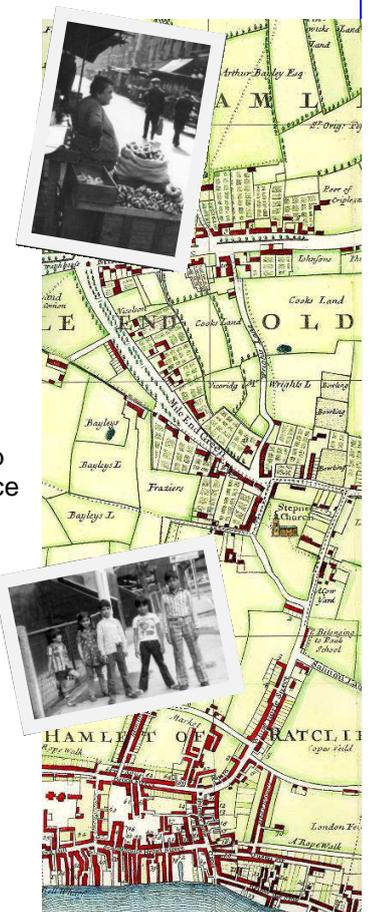
Do you have a passion for old pictures? Fond memories of forgotten streets? Are you curious about archive collections?

Our new monthly History Hoppers group offers adults and children aged 11+ the chance to explore and discuss original historical library and archive sources that help to tell the story of your local area in Tower Hamlets, with a slice of cake and cup of tea to wash it all down!

Interested in a certain subject, area or street? Send us your requests to see particular parts of our collections so we can get material out in advance. Mention 'History Hoppers' in your email to [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk).

**Upcoming History Hoppers dates are:**

**Wednesday 14 January 2015**  
**Wednesday 11 February 2015**  
**Wednesday 11 March 2015**  
**Wednesday 8 April 2015**



## Recent Events at THLHLA

### Queen Mary University students delve into our collections!

On Monday 20 October we hosted a visit from Geography postgraduate students studying at Queen Mary, University of London (QMUL). This is the second year we have worked in partnership with QMUL Archives to offer students a two-part introduction to the wealth of archive resources on their doorstep. The format of the workshop allows a group of students the chance to visit QMUL archives and THLHLA on the same day, to learn about the different collections held in both which are likely to be of relevance to them in their studies.

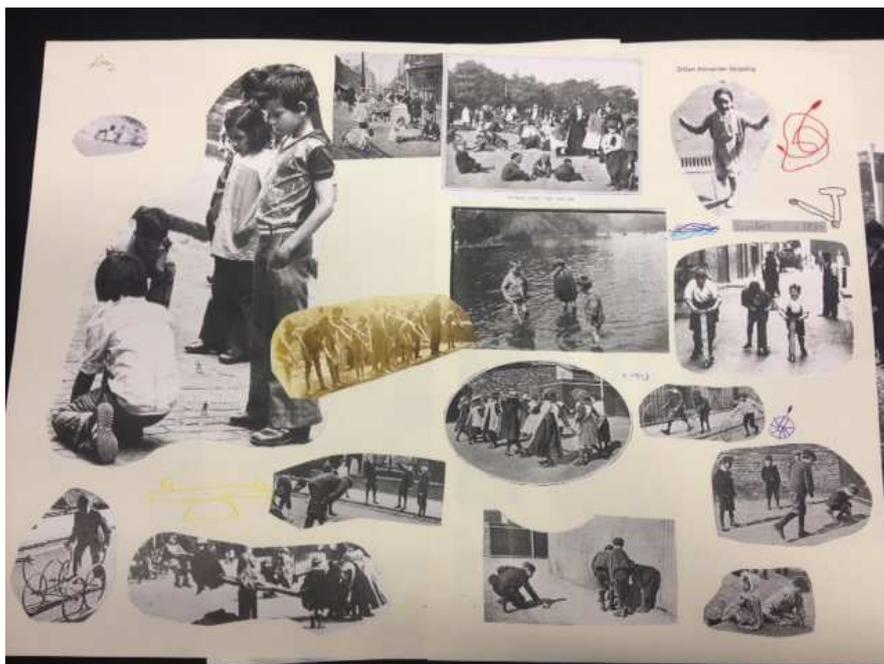
After visiting QMUL archives the students arrived at THLHLA and were given a short introduction to our service and collections. They spent the rest of the session exploring the library and archive collections looking at various maps; pamphlets, images and publications about Queen Mary College, the People's Palace and other parts of borough including photographs from the 'Down Wapping' collection and press cuttings relating to the former Chinatown in Limehouse. They also handled archive records relating to churches; schools; businesses; societies and individuals (including registers; photograph albums; deeds; and World War One Tribunal records) and listened to extracts from oral history interview recordings.



Geography students from Queen Mary, University of London during their introductory session at THLHLA

### Time Travellers visit Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives!

Local children aged 4 to 12 joined film-maker and animator Melissa Rees-Herman in foraging through historical images to inspire backgrounds for their stop-motion animations this October. The children used copies of early 19th century images of Whitechapel, featuring the hay market and old St Mary's church. They designed their own time traveller character, who then, with the help of Melissa's expertise, took a walk back through time!



Background for an animation created by a young attendee of the 'Time Travellers' workshop

## Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain Annual Conference 2014

Heritage Officer (Learning & Participation) Anna Haward had a great time presenting at the well-attended annual conference of the JGSoGB last month, talking to attendees about 'Sources for Jewish Family History at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives'. She managed a few laughs from the c.100 family history fans and received many questions. If you have some of your own, get in touch via [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) or 0207 364 1290.

## Dan Jones exhibition delights visitors

### Our most popular exhibition!

We have been bowled over by the enthusiastic public response to local artist and human rights activist Dan Jones' exuberant paintings and prints, exhibited here from July to November in our longest running and most well-received exhibition.

Comments from the many visitors to the exhibition have been universally positive and include:

*"Absolutely brilliant, have lived in the area since 1982...and have remained here ever since not least because of the activism and vitality shown in these wonderful pictures."*

*"Magnificent panorama of visual history."*

*"The huge, colourful, bustling paintings...are incredible and for me really reflect the busy colourful nature of the east end"*

We are extremely grateful to Dan for organising the lending of his works from his own home and various private collections; his endless creative energies and for presiding over an extensive and varied public events programme that visitors of all ages have enjoyed and benefitted from.

Not had a chance to pop down or want a final peek? The exhibition closes at 5pm on Saturday 15 November, so check our opening hours overleaf and come on down. We still have places left at a couple of free workshops hosted by Dan. See **Upcoming Events** or [www.ideastore.co.uk](http://www.ideastore.co.uk) for further information.

## Dan Jones Events Programme gets local residents' creative juices flowing...

Campaign poster making, lino cut printing, drawing, creative writing and poetry were just some of the pursuits on offer for free to visitors to the varied and vibrant programme of events planned to coincide with this exhibition.

However, most inspiring of all was the presence of Dan himself to give personal insight to the stories behind his pictures and fire up the imaginations of both young and not-so-young. Aided at times by friends such as poet and writer Alan Gilbey, Dan co-hosted over a dozen events with us at THLHLA and at Idea Stores.

Highlights included rare archive footage of the 1973 E1 festival in Stepney as depicted in several of Dan's paintings and prints, in the screening of BBC documentary *Alright, We'll Do It Ourselves*. This featured a Q&A with Dan and the film's director Jenny Barraclough.



'Tower Hamlets marches to save ILEA' by Dan Jones, 1980s

## Idea Store Secondment

Following on from their introduction in our last newsletter, Rudy Lorentz writes:

I can hardly believe that I've been at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives four months now. In the time that I have been here, I have helped to develop and deliver our programme of events to co-ordinate with the Dan Jones exhibition. This has included co-facilitating printmaking workshops with Dan and liaising with school groups. As a result of my secondment, I have been able to create better links between the work that I do at THLHLA and the work that I do in my normal job as Co-ordinator at Idea Store Watney Market - such as the workshops for young people we have now held at Idea Store Watney Market with Dan Jones.



Attendees at the Black History in Tower Hamlets creative workshop, October 2014

As part of Black History Month, I facilitated a day of workshops at THLHLA with another local artist – Evan Ifekoya. The event was called 'Here We Are: Black History in Tower Hamlets Creative Workshops'. In the sessions attendees explored material from the library and archive collections relating to black history in the local area. The workshops looked to extract the examples of black history that were already present but not necessarily visible in the collections.

Prior to Black History Month, I was unearthing and noting where in the collections these moments of black history existed - especially those that are most humanising in first person accounts – such as the numerous oral history recordings, Abdi Haji's autobiography or the books about Walter Tull, Britain's first black footballer. This work has allowed me to gather enough material to now create a pamphlet for future THLHLA users who are looking for black history in the borough. I am now continuing to do the same thing for strands of queer and QTIPOC (queer/ trans/ intersex people of colour) history in the borough. I am very much interested in identifying what is already there and finding a way to highlight it to those who want to find it.

I have really enjoyed working with the team at THLHLA and feel like I have learned a lot through my secondment about the kinds of work that they do and about local history. I hope to continue this link after my work here finishes.

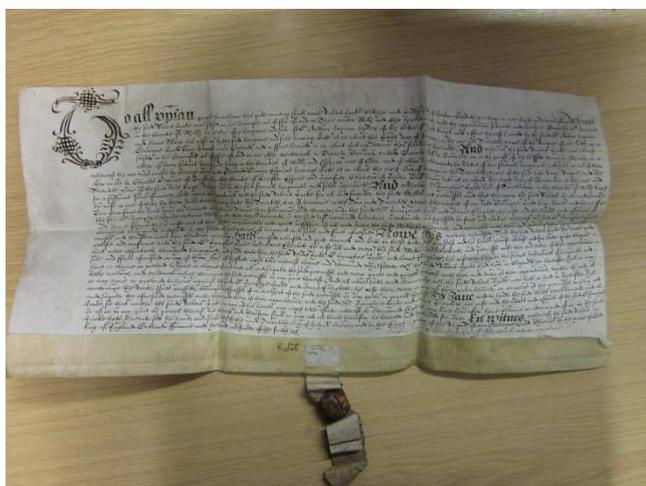
I will also be leading a creative workshop on making QTIPOC histories visible at 'Lines of Dissent', the annual LGBT History & Archives conference taking place at London Metropolitan Archives at 2.30pm on **Saturday 6 December**. There is a special discount to attend my workshop for Tower Hamlets readers, so please contact [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) for more information on how to obtain this.

I will also be organising a QTIPOC heritage day at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives as part of LGBTQ History Month next year, planned for **Saturday 7 February 2015**.

## 'Land and Lives': Bromley-by-Bow

In the last edition of our newsletter, we anticipated that the Land and Lives project would be concentrating on deeds related to Whitechapel for a while. Although we have now completed work on the deeds relating to this area which were transferred to us from Tower Hamlets Council and its predecessors, work on deeds from this area deriving from other, unofficial sources will now be postponed. Due to funding constraints unfortunately we need to reduce the scope of the deeds to be completed before funding for my post runs out at the end of March 2015. Alternative sources of funding are being sought to complete work on the remainder of the deeds in a second phase later in the year.

From October until the conclusion of the project next spring, we are prioritising all records relating to the parish of Bromley St Leonard, now known as Bromley-by-Bow, in the "deeds collection" regardless of source. This is for reasons connected to the project's financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund: it will allow us to run the full range of connected activities that have been planned for the project, but for a specific, more focussed area. As well as the recataloguing and repackaging, next spring there will be an exhibition of some of the Bromley deeds, a free public seminar about the project and the deeds completed thus far, and a written guide to using the collection for researching the Bromley-by-Bow area. In addition, we will be offering local history workshops for schools in or adjacent to the Bromley North, Bromley South and Lansbury wards, in which the deeds will play a part, as they have plenty to tell us about what was happening in this vicinity in the 19th century. If readers have connections with primary or secondary schools from these areas whose pupils may like to participate in a local history project in the spring or summer term next year, please get in touch using our usual contact details. The same goes for community groups or other local organisations.



A title deed from 1632 relating to the Four Mills site in Bromley (ref. P/PLC/3/1/2)

Going still further back, I have now re-catalogued the deeds of the Four Mills site in Bromley, dating from the 17th and early 18th centuries, which show the site being used for watermills, then corn mills, and then cloth beating. A number of powerful or influential men took a stake in it, starting with Sir Arthur Ingram, who would seem to have acquired it with the manor of Bromley in James I's reign. The mills are not to be confused with the Three Mills, on the eastern bank of the River Lea, though one merchant, George Godfrey, owned the leasehold of both for a time. Nor were there always just four of them!

- Project Archivist, Mark Ballard

## Jennifer Brown

It is with regret that we have to report the death of Jennifer Brown in August this year, aged 33. Jenny was Idea Store Information and Website Assistant, but from 2005 to 2009 worked as a Saturday assistant at Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives. Her colleague on the website, Denise Bangs says working in the Local History Library was the “highlight of her week”. Jenny tackled all sorts of tasks thrown at her with enthusiasm and good humour. She was a real pleasure to work with.

## World War One project update

Following a highly successful series of talks and events across the borough over the summer months, organised by our Project Co-ordinator, Gary Haines, we are postponing the launch of our digitised Poplar Military Service Tribunal case register and associated materials (which had been scheduled for 11th November) to allow for some fine tuning of the indexing to ensure that the best quality can be achieved. This will now happen in the New Year (watch this space). Meanwhile anyone suffering from WW1 withdrawal symptoms may like to attend a free conference on WW1 and Pacifism at Idea Store Whitechapel 10—12.15 on Wednesday 3rd December.

## Call for volunteers

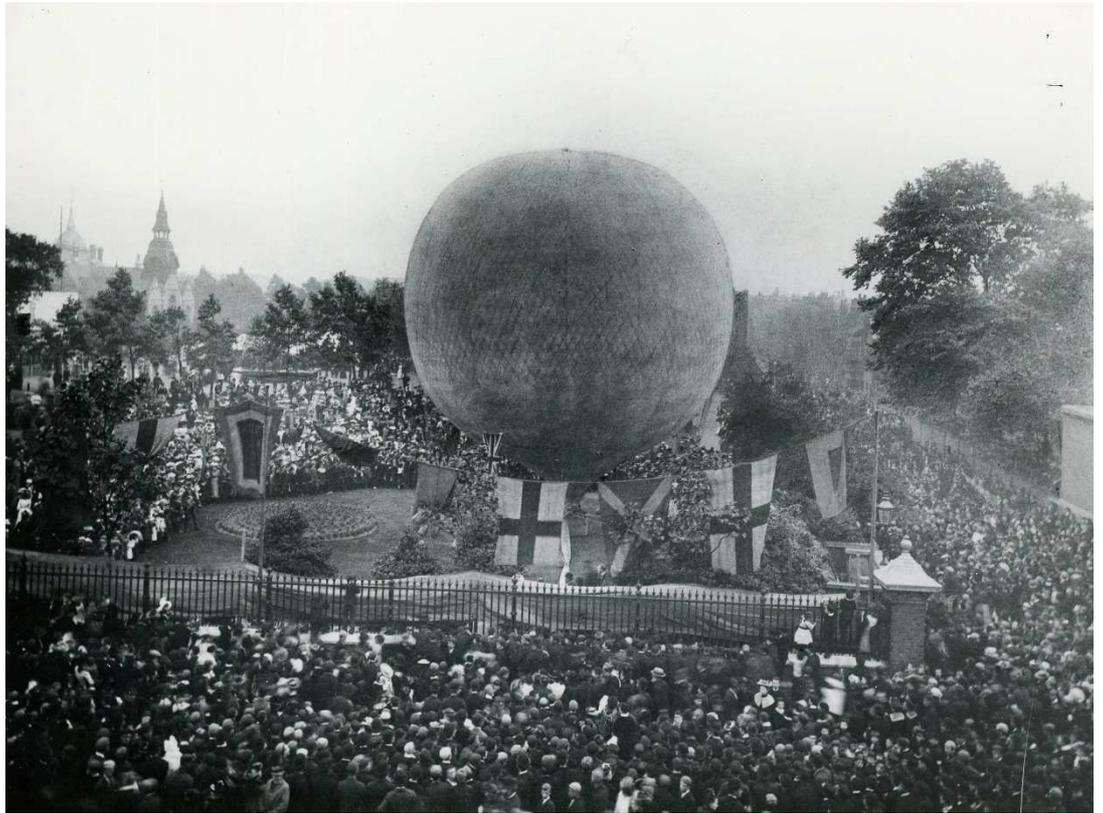
Cataloguing of the pamphlet collection has revealed some exciting finds this past month. After World War II Poplar's Municipal Entertainments put on a series of concerts, plays, entertainment and children's events. The pamphlet collection holds a large series of over 200 posters, handbills and programmes for these events. The events ran from 1948 to 1965 when the Poplar Borough Council became part of Tower Hamlets. We are looking for a volunteer who's interested in local entertainment or theatrical history to help us create detailed records of the entertainers, actors and performers at these events. If you have a few hours to spare a week or a month and would like to be involved in the project please email [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) for further information.

## The answer to your Christmas shopping prayers

We carry a wide range of reasonably priced books and maps that will gladden the heart of any East End history enthusiast. We will also be selling the Friends of Island History Trust calendar for 2015. These are all available for purchase by cash or card during our regular opening hours. mail order is also available.

Take a look here for details of what's on offer: <http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history-shop-publications-for-sale>

## Picture of the month



A balloon ascent from Poplar Recreation Ground during a fête organised by the East London Licensed Victuallers, c.1892. Photographer: William Whiffin.

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