



Our Bengali Heritage

We welcomed Shahera Begum to the team in April 2011. As part of the unique training programme *Opening Up Archives*, co-ordinated by The National Archives and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, she is one of thirteen trainees based in archives and record offices across England. The year-long full-time traineeship is designed to equip Shahera with specialist skills, knowledge and on-the-job experience to go forward into a career in archives and heritage.

Working in partnership with Bengali heritage organisation, Swadhinata Trust, Shahera's main activities focus on engagement with the Bangladeshi community. The Bangladeshi community make up the largest ethnic minority population in Tower Hamlets and have played an important role in shaping the borough.

One of Shahera's roles is to help fill gaps in Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives' collections by acquiring materials that reflect the Bangladeshi community's presence here. A number of organisations and individuals have been influential in determining Bengali history in Tower Hamlets in the twentieth century. So far, she has successfully made a number of visits and obtained records relating to some of these organisations and individuals. Shahera hopes to expand on this as her traineeship progresses, which will culminate in an exhibition in March 2012 showcasing the new collections.

Tower Hamlets is steeped in Bangladeshi culture and heritage, particularly around Brick Lane and its surrounding areas. The vicinity saw a large influx of Bangladeshi immigrants into the area, sometimes referred to today as Banglatown. Shahera has been researching and pinpointing specific places with Bengali connections in and around Brick Lane that made a significant

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contribution to contemporary British culture from food to politics and architecture. The findings will be presented as a guided walk led by Shahera on 10 September. To book a place, check out the summer walks programme featured later in this newsletter.

Over the summer, Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives will be hosting Swadhinata Trust's exhibition called *Freedom*, which celebrates the 40th anniversary of the independence of Bangladesh. Shahera has been working towards the development and installation of the exhibition, whose photographs illustrate the activities in Bangladesh during the 1971 war and also the reaction and impact on the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets.

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives already holds a small collection relating to Bengali history across a number of formats. Another aspect of Shahera's work is to collate references to all of the Bengali-related materials housed here, including the archives newly acquired by her, and produce a user guide to the Bengali collections at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives. This will be freely available in print and online in spring 2012.

The reader's view



Name of Visitor: Mr Caton

Travelled from: Hornchurch

Is this your first visit here? Yes.

What is the purpose of your visit?

I have been researching my family history for almost 3 years now, and today I have come here to continue my searches.

How successful has your visit here been?

Initially I came to find out the locality of the streets my ancestors lived at. Albert Street and Brunswick Road which were in Poplar do not appear in the modern A-Z maps, and I didn't have a clue where they were situated.

Here you have a large map collection of various dates and I found the streets of interest. Comparing maps of different periods I found out more information about the streets - some were renamed and others were demolished. Studying the large and detailed OS maps has been fascinating! I found out why some streets were demolished which was to make way for bigger roads. It all requires a bit of 'detective work'...

How useful have you found our collections?

I found the collection of street photographs very constructive to use alongside the maps. Studying the photographs and maps together helps to pinpoint the locations and provides more information about how the streets looked, so I have a clearer image.

Will you visit us again?

Most certainly! I have so much more to discover – I will need to spend at least a whole month here to get the most out of your collection.

Any other comments?

The staff here are very helpful.

“doing family history requires detective work”

“The East End is a vibrant and multi-culturally diverse part of the capital.”

Walks

Take part in these popular guided walks led by Malcolm Barr-Hamilton, the Borough's Archivist and Shahera Begum.

Each walk is about two hour's duration. Copies of old maps and illustrations are supplied. There is a limit of 20 places on each walk and tickets [£3.00] must be obtained in advance. Children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

Goodmans Fields

Thursday 21 July 2011, 7pm

Led by Malcolm Barr-Hamilton

The Goodmans Fields district of Whitechapel takes its name from Roland Goodman who farmed the area in the early sixteenth century following the dissolution of the monasteries. In the seventeenth century the Lemman family developed Goodmans Fields for building and created Lemman Street, Prescott Street, Alie Street and Mansell Street. The Goodmans Fields Theatre opened in Lemman Street in 1729. In 1741 the acclaimed actor David Garrick made his debut as Richard III at the Goodmans Fields Theatre, then in Ailie Street. An influx of Germans into the district in the eighteenth century saw the establishment of St. George's German Lutheran Church, which still stands.

Poplar Social Housing

Tuesday 16 August 2011, 7pm

Led by Malcolm Barr-Hamilton

By popular request, Malcolm Barr-Hamilton is repeating this tour which formed part of our 'Story of London' festival programme last October. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Festival of Britain and the tour will start at the Lansbury Estate which acted as the "Live architecture" exhibit for the festival in 1951. The tour will also take in Erno Goldfinger's Balfron Tower of 1965-7 and the controversial Robin Hood Gardens estate.

The Bengali East End

Saturday 10 September 2011, 3pm

Led by Shahera Begum

The East End is a vibrant and multi-culturally diverse part of the capital. The tour will offer an insight into the significant contribution made by the Bengali Community to contemporary UK culture from food to politics and architecture. It will explore influential places such as Altab Ali Park, Shahid Minar, London Jamme Masjid, Kobi Nazrul Centre, Bangladesh Welfare Association and many more that have played an important part in shaping Bengali history in an area that has undergone many changes to accommodate the different faiths of communities.

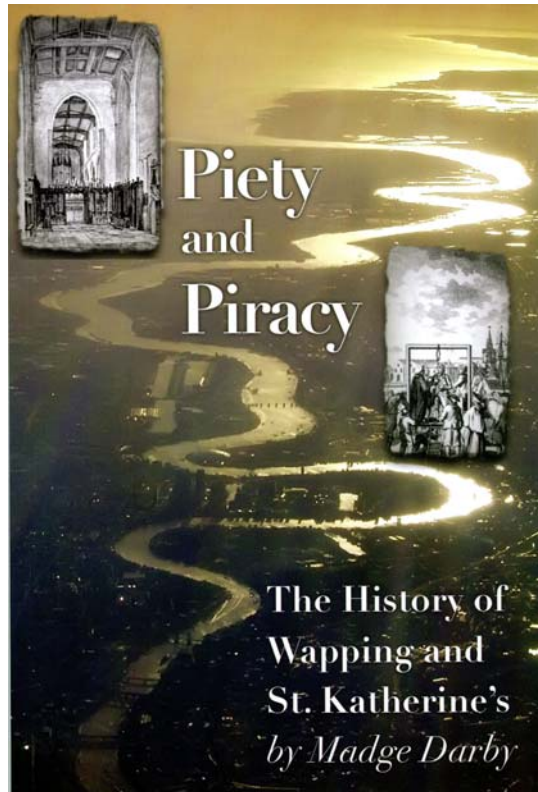
For a full programme and ticket application:

<http://www.ideastore.co.uk/public/documents/walks2011a.pdf>

New books for sale

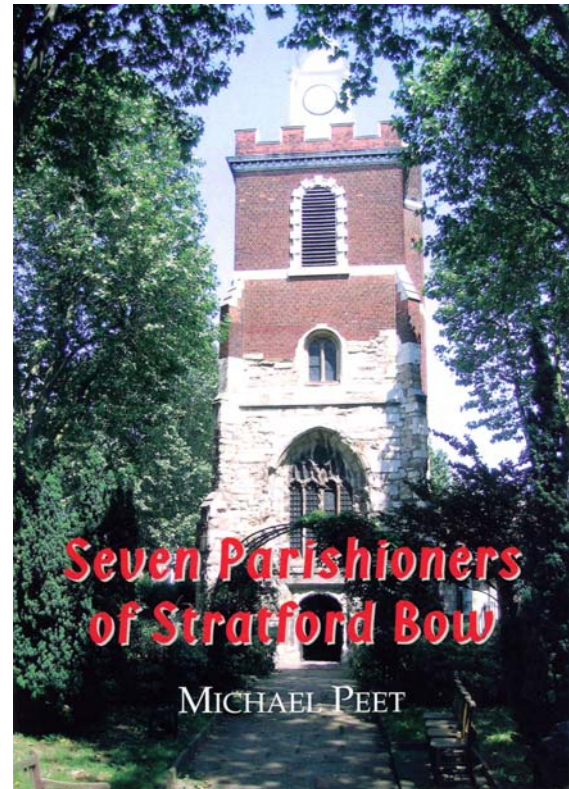
Two new books for sale at the Local History Library and Archives:

“Piety and piracy: the history of Wapping and St Katherine’s” by Madge Darby. Published by the History of Wapping Trust; £9.95



It is as long ago as 1988 that Madge Darby’s “Waeppa’s people: a history of Wapping” was published and it has been out of print for many years. “Piety and piracy” greatly extends the coverage of the original volume and is much more profusely illustrated (including many in colour and some from the collections of the Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives). Wapping-born Madge Darby traces the history of Wapping and St Katherine’s from Saxon times to the present day. A “must” for the bookshelves of anyone with an interest in East End history!

“Seven parishioners of Stratford Bow” by Michael Peet. Published by Bow Church; £7.50



We were saddened to hear of the death earlier this year of Michael Peet, Vicar of Bow, and a regular user of the Local History Library and Archives. Thankfully he was able to complete this gem. The book is far more than the title suggests. The author uses the framework of examining the lives of seven individuals – one for each century of the church’s existence – but builds it into a very readable history of Bow church and the community it serves. Engagingly written and with many well-chosen illustrations the book includes a guide to the church fabric, and as a celebration of the 700th anniversary of the founding of Bow Church in 1311, this could not be bettered.

Picture of the month:

The White Horse public house, 9-11 Poplar High Street, 1935



This shot by Poplar photographer William Whiffin shows a Truman's brewery dray outside the building which was erected in 1927-8 but there had been a tavern here called the White Horse since 1690 or earlier. The pub's claim to fame was that in the mid-eighteenth century the licensee was a woman, Mary East (1715-1780), who lived as a man called James Howes and lived "as man and wife" with a woman friend. The pub was pulled down a few years ago to make way for a housing development. However the remarkable inn sign in the form of a horse made from lead on a post thought to date from the early to mid eighteenth century survives.

Freedom exhibition

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives is proud to present Swadhinata Trust's *Freedom* exhibition, which will be on show in our entrance hall during this summer. Swadhinata Trust is a Tower Hamlets-based organisation working to promote Bengali history, heritage and culture amongst the younger generation and to a wider audience. The *Freedom* exhibition collates photographic images from photographers Anwar Hossain and Abul Lais Shyamal relating to the



War of Independence of Bangladesh. Coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the liberation of Bangladesh in 2011, the exhibition explore the themes of struggle, hope and love, both in Bangladesh and in Tower Hamlets.

BOOK NEWS

Stepney: Profile of a London Borough from the Outbreak of the First World War to the Festival of Britain, 1914-1951 by Dr Samantha Bird. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. £49.99

Samantha Bird carried out much of her research for this book at Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives. This book is the first single volume history of Stepney in modern times. It provides a vivid and yet scholarly portrait of the borough situated in the heart of the East End.

News snippets

Filming took place at the library during June for a forthcoming episode of *Who Do You Think You Are?* The local celebrity tracing their family history used census records with the help of the borough archivist. More about this visit when the episode airs later this year!

A group of Sociology students from Minnesota spending two weeks in London studying housing were fascinated when Borough Archivist Malcolm Barr-Hamilton took them on a tour of social housing schemes in Poplar in May.

Our event for Local and Community History Month in May was a sell-out when members of the public got the opportunity to discover and handle the unique collections we hold here.

Talks by Malcolm Barr-Hamilton on local and family history for Adult Learners Week in May at Idea Store Canary Wharf and Idea Store Chrisp Street proved popular.

In This Year...700 years ago

In This Year...celebrates the anniversaries of historical events, whilst showcasing items from the collection of Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives.



Licence to build a chapel serving Bow was granted by the Bishop of London in 1311. The new chapel of St Mary, Stratford-le-Bow, offered accessible alternative to the more distant parishioners of St. Dunstan's in Stepney, whose road in winter was often impassable due to flooding. At the time it was built, the new Chapel formed part of Stepney parish but in 1719 it was consecrated as Church of its own independent parish, extending across Bow to Old Ford. The earliest surviving parts of the building were 15th century, but these received severe bomb damage in 1941.

Now widely known as Bow Church, and giving its name to the nearby DLR station, the building is depicted here in an engraving made by S. Rawle in January 1806 that featured in "European Magazine".

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

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idea
Library Learning Information

OPENING HOURS

Monday: **Closed**
Tuesday: 10 - 5
Wednesday: 9 - 5
Thursday: 9 - 8
Friday: **Closed**
Saturday: 9 - 5
(fortnightly)
Sunday: **Closed**

We will be open
on Saturday 23 July
and alternate Saturdays
thereafter, ie:

6 and 20 August
3 and 17 September
1, 15 and 29 October
5 and 19 November
3 December