



Gary Arber at Arber & Co, Roman Road, Bow

Developing our archives

While the library is closed to the public for building works we are able to progress important collections-related work which it is more difficult to undertake when staff are busy serving the public. We are developing our archives collections, focussing particularly on business archives holdings. Business archives are valuable as they can provide an important record of trade, employment, personal and professional relationships and social activity in an area. The records generated by a business have enormous potential for future audiences as they are useful for a wide range of research purposes, including academic and family history research.

We began the process of developing our business archives collections by identifying a number of businesses that have been established for some time in Tower Hamlets which have made a significant contribution to life and work in the area. Initial contact has been made with these businesses resulting in several meetings between Local History archives staff and business owners, such as, with Mr Arber (of the printing company, W.F. Arber & Co. Ltd, Bow) and with Mr Tyrone Walker-Hebborn (of Genesis Cinema, Mile End). Discussions have been fruitful and some archive material has already been transferred to the Local History Library & Archives as a result of this activity. We are very encouraged by the progress being made in this area and hope it will lead to more interaction with local businesses and future deposits of important business records into our archives.

Building works update

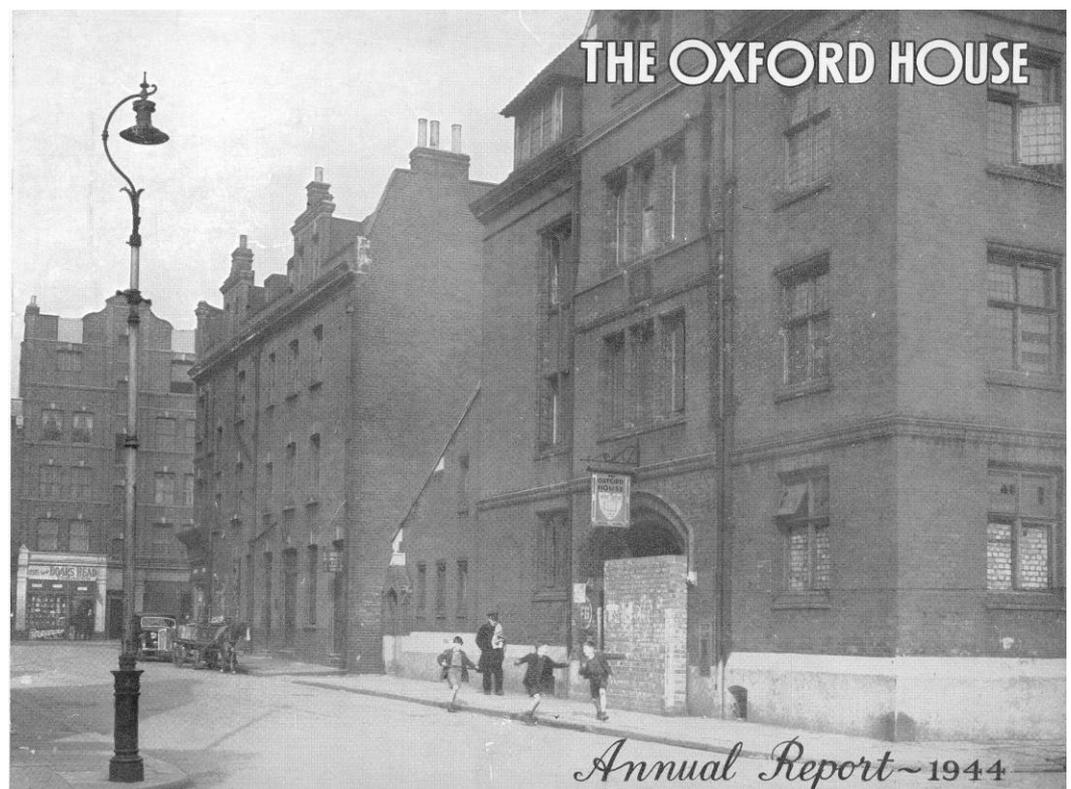
The Library's lift shaft has been extended and the installation of the new accessible lift is almost complete. Unfortunately the re-roofing of the building has not yet got underway due to delays incurred in obtaining permission to erect scaffolding for the temporary roof on neighbouring land. Works are being prioritised so that the roof over the Reading Room will be completed first, enabling us to re-open to the public before the project as a whole is complete. Our latest estimated date to re-open is therefore March 2013.

Archives Volunteer Opportunity

We are seeking a volunteer to help us with a project in conjunction with Oxford House, Bethnal Green. Historically, Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives has had a relationship with Oxford House which led to the deposit of records relating to the institution dating from 1886-1979. The institution has developed and changed over time and we are now in the process of renewing our relationship with Oxford House and developing new links with them to ensure the effective capture and preservation of the institution's core records created from 1979 – present and into the future.

For the initial stage of this process we require a volunteer to commit to assisting us for one day a week, based in Oxford House. The role of the volunteer will be to compile a comprehensive list of Oxford House records from the early 1980s onwards, including the types of records currently being generated by the institution. This list will enable Oxford House and Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives to reach a better understanding about the type and quantity of records held and will help inform any future deposit decisions, agreements and potential transfer and access arrangements. In addition to this, there is likely to be an opportunity for the volunteer to help with later aspects of the project, such as, acquisition, appraisal, repackaging and the cataloguing of Oxford House records onto our CALM database. The later work would be undertaken at Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives premises in Bancroft Road. This project offers an excellent opportunity to gain experience of archives work for a local authority and to gain practical skills in archival listing, appraisal, acquisition and cataloguing. Please note that travel expenses within London will be reimbursed.

Please send any expressions of interest in this volunteer role by email to Natasha O'Neill, Heritage Officer: natasha.o'neill@towerhamlets.gov.uk or call: 0207 364 1290 for further information.



The cover of Oxford House's Annual Report from 1944



An appreciative audience at Somali Week Festival, Oxford House

Somali Week Festival

The annual Somali Week Festival was held on 19-28 October at Oxford House, Bethnal Green. Hosted by Kayd Somali Arts & Culture, the festival is a core part of Tower Hamlets' Black History Month programme and presents the best of Somali arts and culture, old and new, with poets, artists and musicians arriving from Somaliland to entertain local London audiences. Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives was invited to make a presentation about our *Opening Up Archives* project to collect the Somali history of the East End. Simeera Hassan, heritage skills trainee based at the library, introduced her work on the project to several hundred people on two occasions during the festival to a great deal of interest and enthusiasm.

The Write Idea Festival



The Local History stall at David Long's 'Murderous London' *Write Idea* talk at Idea Store Whitechapel

The LHL&A team have enjoyed setting up camp at the many local history themed talks and discussions at this year's free *Write Idea* reading festival, programmed by Idea Store.

Featuring a variety of maps and booklets for sale, along with free local history walks leaflets and staff expertise, the stalls were a popular addition to these unmissable events.

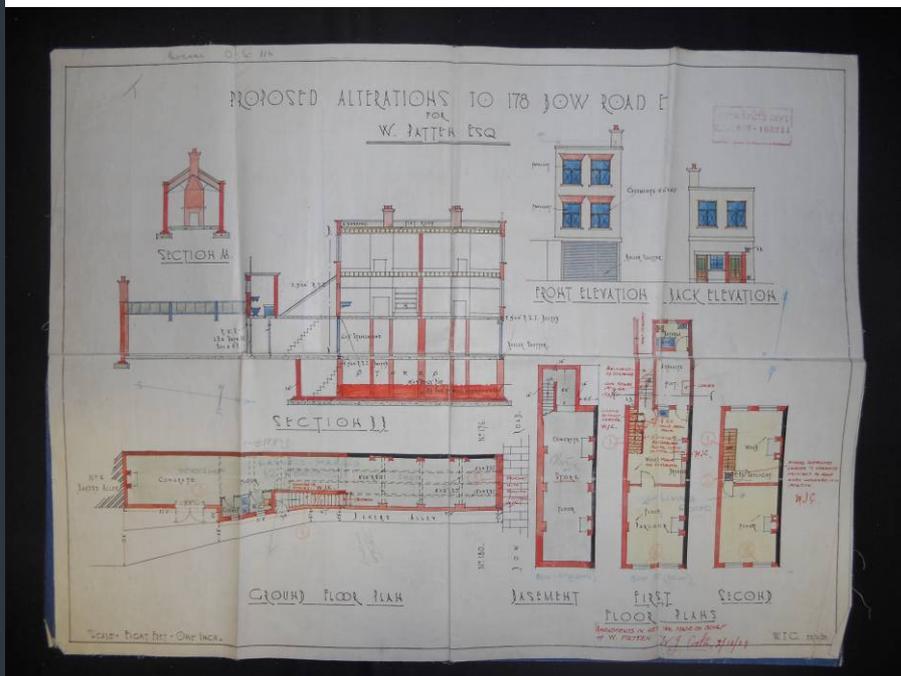
Building Control Files: project update

In the last newsletter we mentioned that work on sorting through the Council's recently acquired collection of 35,000 Building Control files had begun. This work is still progressing steadily and providing a fascinating insight into the building and development in the borough over the last 110 years.

A large proportion relate to the ordinary changes people have made to their houses and businesses – extensions, garages, new shop fronts and signage. Buildings have also changed as technology has progressed, inside bathrooms have replaced outside toilets, pramsheds have become garages, stables have been converted, and railway arches transformed into car repair shops. Many of the renovations from the middle of the 20th century relate to bomb damage from the Second World War and attempts by householders to repair or rebuild their properties. Where streets were completely destroyed or older housing was cleared to make way for new residential developments, the building files reflect the new blocks and estates, along with their commercial developments of shops and markets. And in turn, some of these have now been demolished and replaced.

Often, the changes of occupation at an address reflect the social history of the area. A small business making clothes and hats may have become a

Jewish draper's shop, which then turned into a furniture store, and maybe later a 'fish-frying shop', before becoming a Bengali restaurant. Changes of use and occupation are very common, with houses converted into shops, pubs into flats, old industrial



Architectural plans for 1929 adaptations to a house on Bow Road, taken from a Building Control file

warehouses into artists' studios and housing. Tower Hamlets is an area rich in listed buildings of architectural and social importance, including churches, pubs, houses, wharfside warehouses, factories and some of the earliest social housing. Maybe some of the new glass and steel high-rise developments in Docklands and the city fringe will soon be treasured as much?

Upcoming events

Island History Day

Cubitt Town Library, Strattondale Street, E14 3HG

Saturday 24 November
10am - 6pm FREE

Join us for this jam-packed schedule of free local history events about the Isle of Dogs, which include a guided walk, an Ancestry.com family history workshop, a reminiscence session and talks from local experts Henry Bradford, Eve Hostettler and Mike Seaborne.

Light refreshments will be provided. Plus: stalls from The Jewish East End Celebration Society, The Swadhinata Trust, Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives and more.

For further details and the list of scheduled activities, please see:

http://www.ideastore.co.uk/en/articles/cubitt_town_library_new_events_november_december

Allan Grice Author Event



Allan Grice, London fireman during the 1970s

Cubitt Town Library, Strattondale Street
E14 3HG

Thursday 29 November
6pm FREE

Allan Grice, author of 'Call the Fire Brigade', the funny and deeply moving memoirs of a London fireman, will be talking about his book which recounts his most memorable experiences as a frontline member of the London Fire Brigade working in the East End, with its myriad commercial premises, brooding Thames-side warehouses, seedy tenements and colourful cosmopolitan community.

Four Corners Today and Yesterday Exhibition

Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, E2 6HG

1 December 2012 - 3 January 2013 FREE

The Four Corners Photo Friends photography group have been working together for several years capturing different aspects of their east end. This exhibition explores Roman Rd (formerly Green St) from the 1940s to the present, bringing together the group's present day photographs of the shops and owners with their own older photographs and those found at Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives. Also showing are photographs taken for Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives which compare Noel Gibson's East End 1970s paintings with the present day.

Please see <http://www.oxfordhouse.org.uk/> for opening times.

Interested in Black women's history?

In December 2012 we will begin recruitment for our third paid annual traineeship in heritage skills. The focus of next year's placement is the heritage of Black and Asian women in Tower Hamlets. We will be recruiting a trainee to work in partnership with the Bethnal Green-based organisation Black Women's Health & Family Support to collect histories and curate an exhibition about Black and Asian women in Tower Hamlets. Please keep an eye on www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/jobs for further information.

This scheme is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund under *Skills For The Future* and co-ordinated by The National Archives.

Christmas Caption Competition

Newly found among the records of Poplar Methodist Church which are currently being catalogued, can you come up with a caption for this photo? Email your suggestions to localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk by January 3 2012 to be in with a chance of winning a copy of Jack Dash's autobiography *Good Morning Brothers!*



Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Bancroft Library
277 Bancroft Road
London E1 4DQ

Tel: 020 7364 1290
Email: localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Web: www.ideastore.co.uk

idea
Library Learning Information

Currently closed for
building works,
reopening spring 2013