

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



80 years ago: the Hughes Mansions bombing




Today, 27th March, marks the 80th anniversary of the Hughes Mansions disaster, when 134 people were killed when a V2 rocket hit the buildings in Vallance Road, Stepney.

Many of the Hughes Mansions' residents were Jewish, including the Veltman family who lived at number 49. Phyllis Veltman was only a week away from her 19th birthday when she was killed in the attack

along with her mother Annie. Her father Morris, a tailor's machinist, survived.

With thanks to the Cohen family, we now have in our collection Phyllis' ration book, which shows stamps from local Jewish businesses, and Morris' membership cards for local workers' societies.

More information about the Veltman family archive can be found on our online catalogue under [P/VEL](#). Thanks to Nikita Frost for cataloguing this collection.

MINISTRY  OF FOOD

RATION BOOK

JULY 1943 ISSUE

Surname VELTMAN

Other Names Phyllis

Address 49 HUGHES MANSIONS
(as on Identity Card)
VALLANCE RD. E.I.

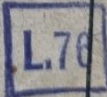
IF UNDER 18 YEARS

State date of birth (Day) 2nd (Month) APRIL (Year) 1926

NATIONAL REGISTRATION NUMBER DVAE 7 4

P.B.1 GENERAL

IF FOUND RETURN TO



FOOD OFFICE

W 332004

P/VEL/1/6

You can explore these items, along with and other examples of our and under-used collections about World War Two in Tower Hamlets, at a special East End History Club, taking place on the anniversary of VE Day.

East End History Club: VE Day Special

Thursday 8 May | 5.30pm-7.30pm | Free - drop in

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Our archivists will select highlights from our collections for you to explore in the Education Room. Drop in, have a cup of tea and meet others with similar interests. This is an opportunity to browse archives documenting what was happening in the borough during WW2 in an informal, unstructured session. Suitable for ages 14+, children must be supervised.

Exhibition closing soon



Exhibition | until Thursday 3 April | Free entry

Venue: Tower Hamlets Town Hall, 160 Whitechapel Road, E1 4BJ

The exhibition has been extended for a final week! [Communities of Liberation](#) is a new public exhibition bringing to light Black experiences in Tower Hamlets during the transatlantic Slave Trade.

The exhibition is based on the research and creative work of six local residents who have used Tower Hamlets' archive collections to tell stories of the lives of Africans who lived in the East End between 1567 and 1802. These include...

- o Sabinah, transported from Jamaica, who found refuge in Whitechapel
- o Pompey, a trumpet player in Bethnal Green
- o Ann, a "Negro maid" in Limehouse who escaped from her captor

The exhibition features artwork, poetry, podcasts, and creative writing, as well as the archival sources which inspired the Co-Producers.

Researched and created by the [Communities of Liberation team](#), in collaboration with Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives.

Supported by Historic England and Tower Hamlets Council.

Book launch

Thursday 3 April | 6.00pm-8.00pm | [Book your free place](#)

Venue: Tower Hamlets Town Hall

The exhibition has been turned into an A4, full colour, 50 page book! Come and pick up your free copy at this launch event which is also the closing night of the exhibition.

We're delighted to welcome **Dr Montaz Marché** who will lead attendees through some of the stories and histories of African people rediscovered through the Communities of Liberation project. She will highlight the rich and more intimate understanding we can gauge of African presence in Tower Hamlets and their relationship to their environments throughout the early modern period.

NB this event has been rescheduled due to a double-booking at the Town Hall.

[Find out more](#)

Our current exhibition: The Brady Clubs



Exhibition | until Saturday 21 June | Free

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

The Brady Boys' Club opened in 1896 in the heart of London's former Jewish East End and by 1925 the Brady Girls' Club was established, moving to purpose-built facilities in Hanbury Street E1 in 1935. Together, the Brady Clubs provided youth facilities and expanded the horizons of largely underprivileged young people for over 80 years.

The Brady Clubs: A Legacy for the Future is an immersive exhibition that explores the immense impact of youth provision on both the individuals concerned and society at large. The Brady Club's legacy stands as testament to the profound impact such initiatives can have and serves as an appeal to government, policymakers, community leaders, and the public to recognise the indispensable role of youth services in shaping positive life trajectories.

Throughout the exhibition, visitors are given the opportunity to engage with the Brady Club experience: through digital links to podcasts and stories, by listening to music, playing games, dressing up, and sitting in the canteen environment to read youth-generated Club magazines and examine Brady Club holiday albums.

Film event

Thursday 27 March | 5.00-8.00pm | Free

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

5.00-6.00pm Curators Susan Andrews and Anna Perceval will be offering a personalised tour of the exhibition.

6.00-8.00pm A screening of a short film '*We Are The Brady Girls*' based on the videoed oral histories of former Brady Club members, highlights the importance of youth work for the development and life chances of young people and offers vital lessons for how society provides opportunities for young people today. This will be followed by a screening of recently rediscovered and unseen original footage from the late 1950s - early 1960s.

The screening will be followed by a Q&A with film-maker Susan Andrews, Emeritus Reader in Photography at London Metropolitan University, and researcher Anna Perceval, Trustee of the Bradians Trust.

Tickets for this event are free, but strictly limited, so please book in advance.

[Book your place](#)

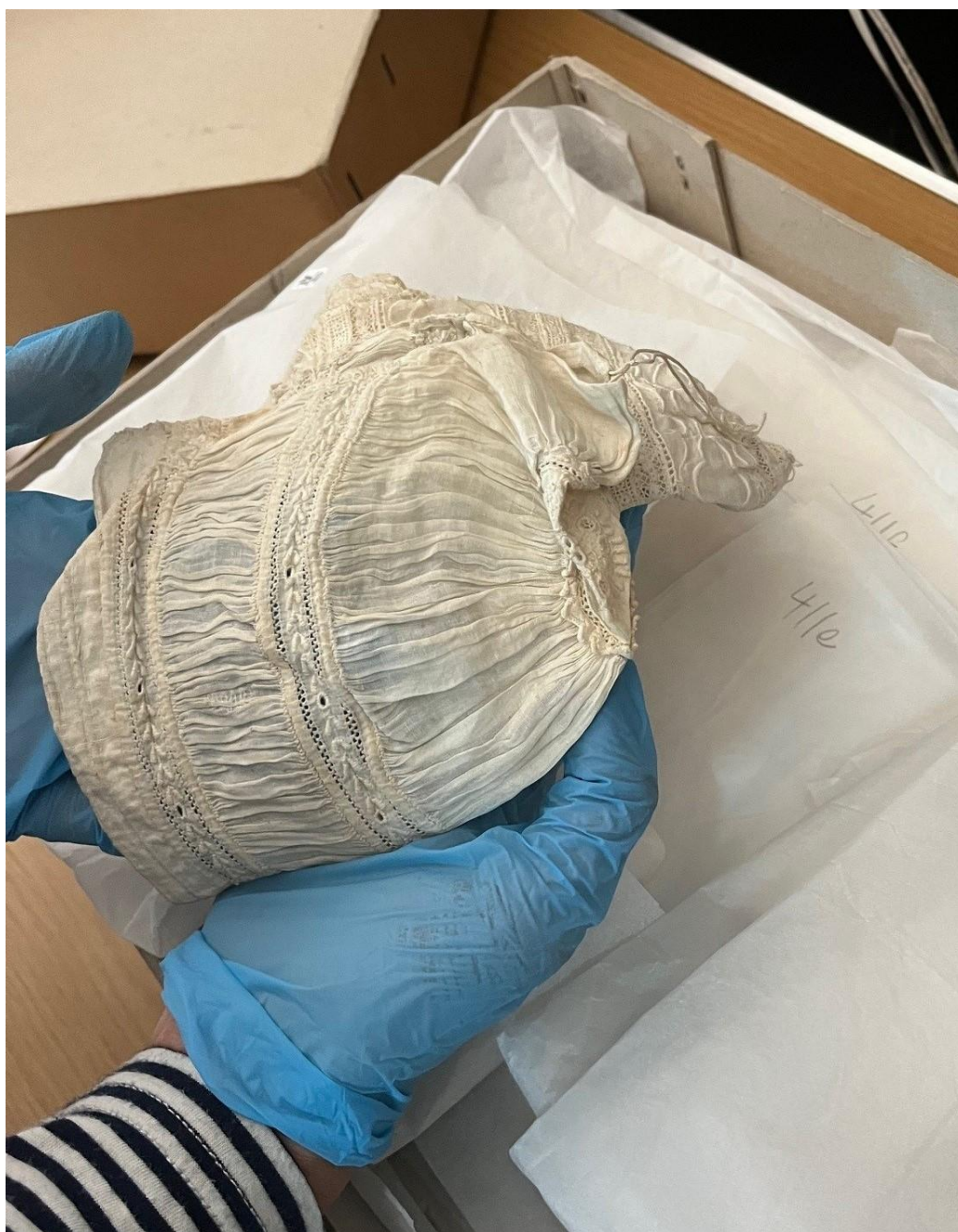
More events to tie in with the Brady Clubs exhibition are being finalised - watch this space for further details!

Collections news

The history of commercial market gardening in Tower Hamlets came to an end in the 19th century, but the growing of fruit and vegetables for home consumption has persisted into the 20th century, mainly in

the form of local allotments. The records of Prospect Walk Allotments Association cover the period from the Association's foundation in 1979 to 2023. The Archives received a first deposit of the Association's records in 2005 (catalogued as S/PWA), and a second deposit was made at the end of 2023. The collection includes meeting minutes, grant records and other papers which document the work of this still-thriving local association. The second deposit of records was accessioned as TH/10459, and it has now been roughly sorted and boxed up, awaiting full cataloguing.

Update on our stocktake closure



We closed temporarily from 24 February until 7 March to focus on stocktaking our collections and changing exhibitions. The team made some great improvements to our storage areas and the preservation conditions of our library, image and archive collections, including (but not limited to!):

- Robert and Debbie completed a move of books within the Reading Room to make more shelf space, cleaning the shelves as they went
- Andrew and Richard completed the stocktaking of our paintings and framed pictures
- Sanjida, Genova and Richard started re-housing our Museum Collection into improved packaging. They completed 2 shelves worth of textiles and trade/industry items, including the lace bonnet pictured above.
- Annette and Debbie audited the locations of materials held on three of the strongroom stacks and in other stock rooms in the building

Thank you for your patience during our temporary closure. For context, our strongroom ran out of shelf space in 2005, and for the last 20 years we have been managing as best we can, using the vacant rooms available in our building. This requires a lot of proactive risk mitigation and creative thinking by staff as we seek to protect the collections against the issues presented by our very large, listed, 164 year old library.

We are crossing all our fingers that our long wait for capital investment will soon be over and that approval of funding for an extension to the building - which will house a fit for purpose, energy efficient archive strongroom - may be forthcoming.

60 years of Tower Hamlets Council



On Tuesday 1 April 2025, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets celebrates its 60th anniversary. The borough we know today was formed, and we said goodbye to our three predecessor boroughs – Bethnal Green, Poplar and Stepney – which were brought together to form Tower Hamlets.

60th Anniversary Archive Stall

Monday 31 March | 10.00am-4.00pm

Venue: Tower Hamlets Town Hall

We are holding a stall in the main entrance lobby of the Town Hall on Whitechapel Road jointly with colleagues in the council's Democratic Services department. Drop in if you'd like to check out examples of copies of documents from the borough's own archive. You can also have a chat with staff and learn more about both services, which together ensure that council decisions and activities are recorded for posterity.

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets was formed on 1 April 1965 to replace the three Metropolitan Boroughs of Bethnal Green, Poplar and Stepney. Having operated separately since November 1900, Metropolitan Boroughs were abolished as part of the major reorganisation of local government in London that followed the passing of the 1963 London Government Act.

The records of all of these defunct boroughs are held at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, and their predecessor local authorities before them - dating back to 1598!

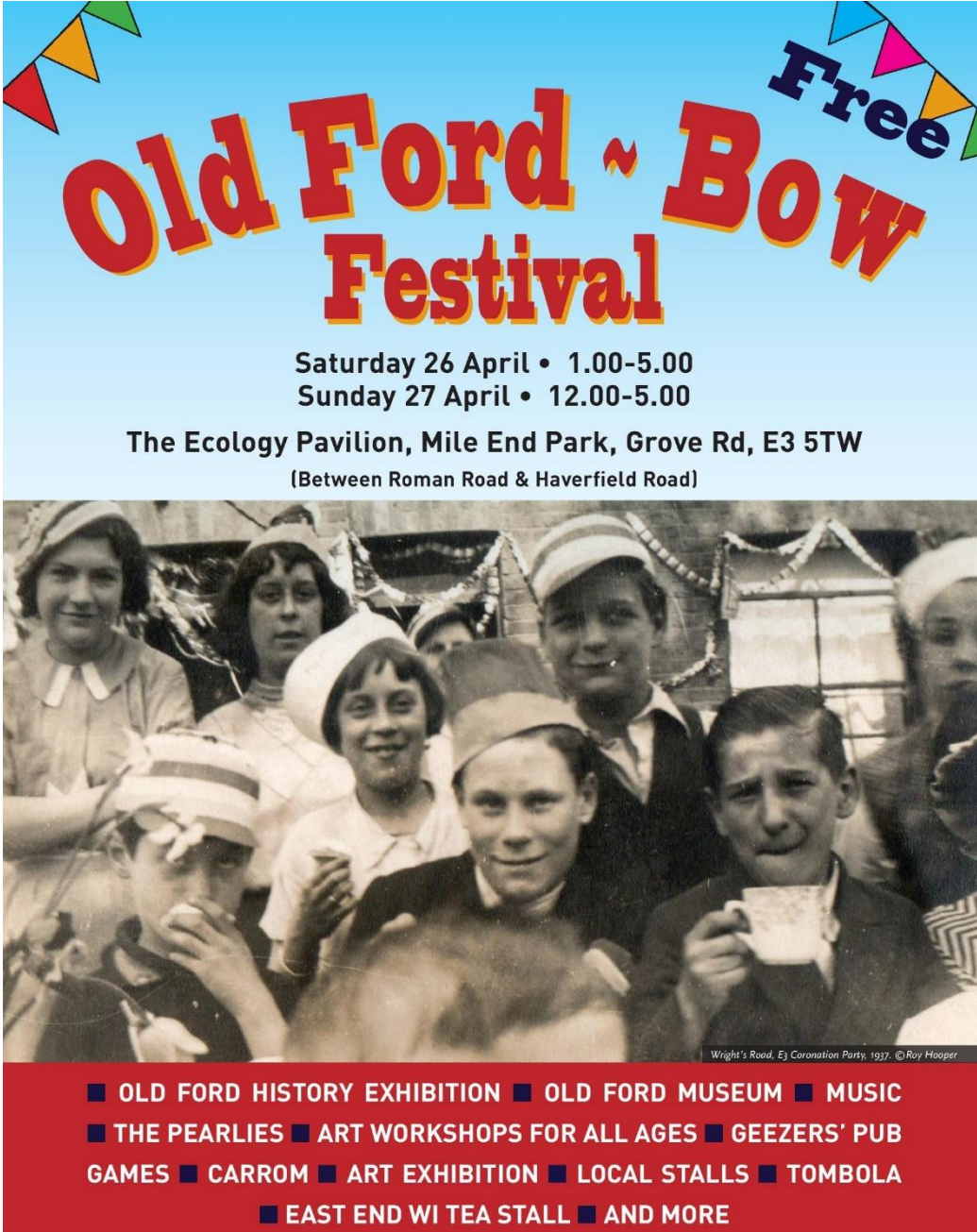
The three boroughs each became recognised districts in the newly created London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Statistics from 1965 show that the new borough comprised 4994 acres (just under eight square miles) with a population of 206,080. The 2021 Census recorded a population of 310,300 - an increase of over 50% in the last 60 years.

Pictured above is the first Town Hall used by the unified borough - the former Bethnal Green Town Hall at Patriot Square, off Cambridge Heath Road - now a luxury hotel.

Old Ford ~ Bow Festival

We at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives will have a stall at the **Old Ford ~ Bow Festival** taking place over the last weekend of April at the Ecology Pavilion, Mile End.

This is the finale of the latest [Bow Geezers](#) project which has been developed over the last year, funded by Clarion Futures and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Over 60 oral histories have been captured and included in an exhibition which will be on show at the festival, along with a free book and map.




Free

Old Ford ~ Bow Festival

Saturday 26 April • 1.00-5.00
 Sunday 27 April • 12.00-5.00

The Ecology Pavilion, Mile End Park, Grove Rd, E3 5TW
 (Between Roman Road & Haverfield Road)



Wright's Road, E3 Coronation Party, 1937. © Roy Hooper

- OLD FORD HISTORY EXHIBITION ■ OLD FORD MUSEUM ■ MUSIC
- THE PEARLIES ■ ART WORKSHOPS FOR ALL AGES ■ GEEZERS' PUB
- GAMES ■ CARROM ■ ART EXHIBITION ■ LOCAL STALLS ■ TOMBOLA
- EAST END WI TEA STALL ■ AND MORE

Parent/Carer & Under 5s Session

Friday 2 May | 10.00-11.30am | Drop in, no booking required

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Come along to our regular Parent/Carers & Under 5's meet up and explore historical records on the famous East End. May's event will have a VE Day theme.

These regular monthly sessions are a chance to meet other parents, enjoy a cuppa and look through our unique collection of maps,

photographs, newspapers, pamphlets and much more with your little ones. Toys will be available for children ages 0-5 with a mini kiddies' brunch and refreshments including tea & coffee.

Limehouse history walk

Join Andrew Parnell ([East London On Foot](#)) for a guided walk of Limehouse on Sunday 13 April. Tickets are £15.

[Full details here](#)

New mural to open in Sidney Street

Regular readers may be aware of the brilliant **Whitechapel Stories** project that has been developing a community mural in Sidney Street. It is due to be unveiled on Saturday 12 April.

[Find out more](#)

Tower of London call for WW2 memories

"On 6 May 2025 the Tower of London will be marking the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War with a commemorative display of poppies.

To mark the opening of this installation we would love to hear the memories that our local community groups have from London in the Second World War.

If you, or you know any one you know has memories of this time, please do [share them here](#). These memories will then form part of the narrative that is shared around this display at the Tower of London.

All answers will be anonymised, but if you would like to be contacted for more information on your answers, please do leave your name and email address on the form."

If you have any queries, please contact communities@hrp.org.uk .

Get in touch with us!

- Email us: localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk
- Visit our website: <http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history>
- Phone (answered during Reading Room opening hours only):
020 7364 1290

Reading Room opening hours

- Tuesday 10.00am-4.30pm
- Wednesday 10.00am-4.30pm
- Thursday 10.00am-7.00pm (late opening)

First and third Saturdays of every month:

- Saturday 10.00am-5.00pm

That's the following Saturdays coming up:

- Saturday 5 April
- Saturday 21 April
- Saturday 3 May

Exhibition opening times are: 10am-5pm Monday-Friday, plus the Saturdays and Thursday evenings noted above. On Monday and Friday lunchtimes, the exhibition will be closed for lunch between 1 and 2pm.



TOWER HAMLETS



Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, 277 Bancroft Road,
London E1 4DQ

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