

# Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



## Everything is different, nothing has changed

[Exhibition and events](#) | until 23 November

Last week saw the launch event for the first ever exhibition of sound art here at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives. Inspired by the amazing collections of oral history and archival audio held in our collections, the entrance hall hosts installations by three sound artists - **Alastair Levy**, **Emily Peasgood** and **Syma Tariq**.

Produced in collaboration with researchers at Queen Mary, University of London, *Everything is different, nothing has changed* uses archival audio to offer new interpretations of Tower Hamlets' past, focussing particularly on the experiences of Jewish and Bengali/Bangladeshi migrants living here during the twentieth century.

Each artist in this show takes a different approach to the archive, but recurring themes of home, memory, dislocation and protest resonate across their work. Surprising, playful and reflective, they make magic with recorded sound, bringing the past and the present up close to one other.

Scroll down for images of the installations and details of the events programme including a special audio edition of East End History Club this Saturday.



*An exhibition visitor listens to Syma Tariq's work 'Delay Lines'.*



*Alastair Levy's sound work 'My Home on Morgan Street' is housed within a decommissioned microfilm reader.*



*A partial view of Emily Peasgood's installation 'When We Were Young'.*

## Events programme

To tie in with the exhibition we have a programme of exciting, free events lined up, which you can book now online. Details below! All events take place in person here at the archives unless otherwise mentioned, and you can book your free place on [our Eventbrite](#).

### East End History Club: Voices in the archive!

**Saturday 2 September, 2-4pm**

Join our librarian Robert Jones in exploring materials related to our sound collection. There will be a talk about the types of sound recordings held at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives and an opportunity join us for a selected listening session.

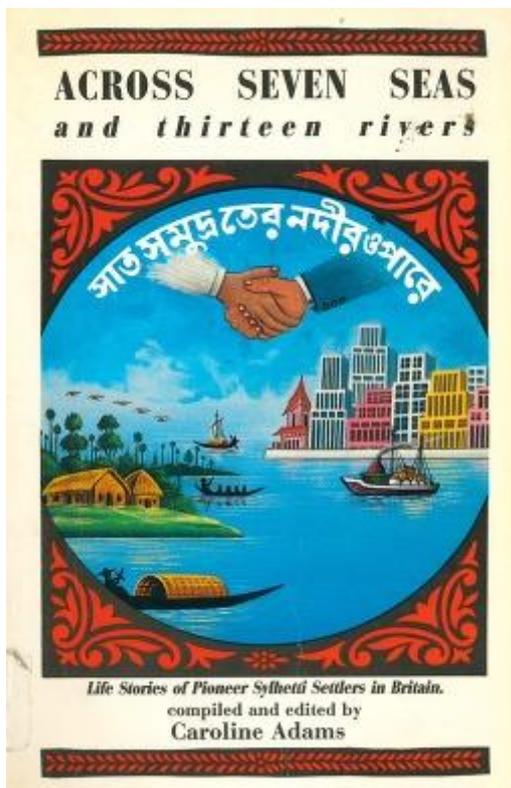
[Book your place here - East End History Club](#)

### Un/making narrative: a conversation on grassroots organising with Nijjor Manush

**Thursday 7 September, 5-7pm**

The making and unmaking of narrative has been key to the anti-racist, social and housing justice battles won and lost around the East End over the last century. This informal conversation with Dr Fatima Rajina and Tasnima Uddin, founding members of the Bangladeshi/Bengali-led campaigning and solidarity group Nijjor Manush since 2017, connects the historical themes of Syma Tariq's audio artwork *Delay lines* with a focus on the narrative challenges, complexities and tactics involved in the group's ongoing activism. They will speak particularly about grassroots organising within the Save Brick Lane campaign.

[Book your place here - Un/making narrative](#)



## Nawab Ali: An Extraordinary Life

Saturday 16 September, 2-4pm

This workshop will centre around a transcript from an oral history interview made by the writer Caroline Adams. The interview's subject was a Bengali immigrant to the UK called Nawab Ali who arrived here in 1939, just before the start of World War II. His story is extraordinary and reflects the richness and hardships of the lives of immigrants to this country and the East End specifically. Participants will be invited to read sections of the text and edit together their favourite parts of Ali's story for further discussion in an informal group setting. The workshop will begin with an introduction to Alastair Levy's exhibited work *My Home In Morgan Street* (2023).

[Book your place here - Nawab Ali](#)

## How Writers Remembered the Jewish

### East End with Nadia Valman

Thursday 28 September, 6-7.30pm - ONLINE EVENT!

After World War II many East Enders permanently left the neighbourhoods where they had grown up. For Jews whose parents and grandparents had arrived in the East End in the Victorian period this also signified the end of the vibrant Jewish community life that had developed here in the first part of the twentieth century. In this **online talk** Professor Nadia Valman (QMUL) discusses how Jewish writers remembered their childhood in the East End of the 1930s.

[Book your place here - How writers remembered the Jewish East End](#)

### Listening to the Jewish East End: A guided walk

Sunday 8 October, 11am-2.00pm

Explore London's Jewish East End with Professor Nadia Valman and Dr Vivi Lachs of Queen Mary, University of London, who present a free guided walk through East London's Jewish past based on their Arts and Humanities Research Council project on English and Yiddish literature and song of the East End from the 1880s to the 1950s. \*RESCHEDULED DATE\*

[Book your place here - Guided Walk](#)

### Re-sounding the East End

Thursday 16 November, 6.30-8pm

Join us for a discussion with curators and historians Nadia Valman, Tamsin Bookey, Rehana Ahmed and Alan Dein responding to the three sound art installations that form *Everything is different, nothing has changed* in the context of the East End's social and public history. This event is part of the [Being Human Festival](#).

[Book your place here - Re-sounding the East End](#)



*A bundle of papers relating to the 1987 Gor Hoi festival (series ref I/THI/B/15)*

## Volunteer spotlight

by Bea Moyes, summer 2023

"Since 2021 I've been lucky enough to volunteer at the Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives as I complete a postgraduate qualification in Archives and Records Management. Richard, Rob, Annette, Sanjida and the whole team here have been incredibly generous and kind enough to share their expertise, and allow me to follow them in managing, preserving and providing access to these incredible collections. I can't thank them enough for all their support and all the knowledge they've imparted, and for the opportunity to have hands on experience of archival work.

There is so much I've learnt and been able to put into practice. I particularly enjoyed cataloguing the fantastic archive of Peter Gibson relating to Adult Education in Tower Hamlets. This includes photographs, letters and promotional materials from the Gor Hoi Summer Festival, run by the South East Asian Arts Project in 1987 when Gibson was Head of Area Docklands for the Tower Hamlets Adult Education Service. The records shed light into this spectacular event at Shadwell Basin which included performances on a floating stage by the Vietnamese community.

I've also been involved in necessary appraisal and re-packaging of collections in the archive strongroom, which has taught me so much about the processes involved in making these archives accessible and preserving them for future generations.

As I complete my studies, I'll sadly be finishing my stint with the archive, but I can't recommend enough the invaluable experience I've had as a volunteer. If you're thinking about it, do get in touch with the team. You'll gain such a valuable insight into all the important work that the archivists are doing behind the scenes to preserve and provide access to these collections. The care and knowledge of the archivists at Tower Hamlets has been a considerable inspiration to me, as I know it is to many others too."

**Editor's note** - we are hugely grateful to Bea for all her hard work and wish her all the best in her archive career!

We welcome enquiries from potential volunteers. Tell us what you would like to get involved with - it's possible we may be at full capacity but if so, you can be added to our waiting list. For more information, visit:

<https://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history/about-us/volunteering>

### More about Gor Hoi:

'Gor Hoi' ("Crossing the Water") - was a spectacular outdoor summer festival at Shadwell Basin. It was put on by the South East Asian Arts Project as part of the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) and ran for three weeks, 15 July - 1 August 1987. The event incorporated a specially built floating performance stage constructed over the water and brought together musicians, dancers and performers from Britain, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand and Vietnam as well as involving the local community. To consult these records in our Reading Room, please search our online catalogue for the reference I/THI/B/15.

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives is grateful to the late Peter Gibson and his partner Hanelle Levine for facilitating the deposit of this collection and others.

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## Contact us

- Email us: [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk)
- Visit our website: <http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history>
- Phone (answered during 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

First and third Saturdays of every month:

- Saturday 10.00am-5.00pm

That's the following Saturdays coming up:

- Saturday 2 September
- Saturday 16 September

- Saturday 7 October
- Saturday 21 October

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.

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