

Feb-March 2025

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



Announcing two new exhibitions



Communities of Liberation

African peoples in London's East End | 1567-1802

Exhibition | Saturday 1 March - Saturday 29 March | Free entry

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

We invite you to discover untold stories of Black lives 300 years ago in London's East End. [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.

The exhibition will be on show between 1 - 29 March in the new Tower Hamlets Town Hall, located between reception and the Grocers Wing. It will be open to the public Monday to Friday, 9am to 6.30pm.

All are welcome at the launch event which takes place on Saturday 1 March at 2.00pm. [Book your ticket here!](#)

And if you're going to the [Tower Hamlets International Women's Day event at the Town Hall](#) on Saturday 8 March, arrive in time to catch a short talk about Communities of Liberation at 11.30am and visit our stall.

Plus!

Extended opening hours and more special events tying in with the exhibition will be announced soon. Watch this space and follow us on social media to keep up to date!

[Find out more](#)

Next up at Bancroft Road...



Exhibition | Friday 14 March - 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 will be 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.

The Brady Clubs

A LEGACY
FOR THE FUTURE



Your invitation to the private view

Thursday 13 March | 6.30-8.30pm | Free

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives are delighted to be partnering with the [Brady Archive](#) on this exhibition, which will be hosted in our entrance hall. Our newsletter subscribers are invited to the private view, taking place on Thursday 13 March.

[Book your place](#)

Last chance to Rebel

We are now in the last week of the [Cockney Rebels exhibition](#)! The last day to catch it is Friday 21 February, and the closing event, [Cockney Rebels](#), is fully booked! Please check our opening times (at the bottom of this email) before travelling.

From 'The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green' to 'Bonkers', the people of London's East End have always appreciated a good tune. Our unique history, shaped by its connection to the river as a source of inspiration, work and migration has produced an extraordinary musical legacy, spanning everything from folk songs and sea shanties to music hall, jazz, punk, the Asian underground and grime. Featuring over a hundred rare items selected by staff from the collections of Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, **Cockney Rebels: Popular Music in Tower Hamlets, 1624-2003** is a major new exhibition exploring how our borough and its people have inspired and shaped popular music, both locally and globally, over four centuries.

The *Cockney Rebels* book is now available - online sales coming soon but meanwhile you can pick up a copy for £12 from the archive or your local Idea Store or library.

Annual closure of the Reading Room

We will be closed to visitors between **Monday 24 February and Friday 7 March**. Staff will be carrying out vital annual stocktaking and work on our collections including:

- Re-housing our smaller museum collections in acid free tissue paper - this will ensure items are protected in the long term
- Surveying the size and condition of boxed and bound collections with a view to their packaging requirements - important preparation for a planned renewal of our strongrooms
- Stocktaking the boxes and volumes on strongroom shelves - for location control

We will also be taking down our current exhibition and installing the new exhibition, launching in mid March!

The Reading Room will close to the public on Thursday 20 February and reopen on Tuesday 11 March.

Isle of Dogs WW2 history talk



Sunday 23 February | 12.00-2.00pm | Free, [booking required](#)

Venue: Idea Store Canary Wharf

Rescheduled from last month, join Deborah Levett from [Friends of Island History Trust](#) for this illustrated talk featuring personal photographs and reflections of Islanders who experienced the effects of war at first hand. Suitable for ages 15+.

[Book here](#)

Narratives of Time ন্যারাটিভস অফ টাইম

Launch event | Friday 21 February | 7.00-9.00pm

Venue: Brady Arts & Community Centre, 192-196 Hanbury St, E1 5HU

This new project seeks to capture the rich evolutionary history of Bangla Natok (Bengali drama) in East London through oral history and research. It will explore theatre, storytelling, playwriting, and community progression in East London from 1963 to 2013.

Find out how you can get involved at this launch event. Project participants will explore how small group of people kept Bengali drama alive when they first migrated to London, and community experiences such as racism, decline of local industries, the closure of the docks, resistance, and rising unemployment. Refreshments provided.



[Book your place](#)

The Cockney Yiddish podcast

Launching today, **The Cockney Yiddish Podcast** uncovers the vibrant yet little-known Jewish popular culture of London's East End. Spanning seven episodes—six in English and one in Yiddish—the series brings to life newly unearthed songs, stories, and voices from the 1880s to the 1950s, offering a fresh perspective on immigrant life in London.

Yiddish was the language spoken by Jews from Eastern Europe before the Second World War. When tens of thousands of Jewish migrants arrived in London escaping poverty and pogroms, they brought Yiddish with them, leading to the development of a rich Cockney-Yiddish culture in the East End.

Hosted by historians [Professor Nadia Valman](#) and Dr Vivi Lachs from Queen Mary University of London, the podcast delves into the fascinating intersections of Cockney and Yiddish cultures. Special guests include Michael Rosen, Miriam Margolyes, David Schneider, and musicians from [Klezmer Klub](#) and Katsha'nes, who add depth and personal experience to the storytelling.

[Have a listen](#)

25th Anniversary of Swadhinata Trust

Mela | Wednesday 3 March | 3.00-6.00pm | Free

Venue: BLOC, ArtsOne, Queen Mary University of London

Since November 2000, the Tower Hamlets based [Swadhinata Trust](#) has been promoting Bengali history and heritage amongst young people and to all communities in the UK. To mark their 25th anniversary the Trust and Queen Mary, University of London are co-hosting a vibrant celebration of Bengali culture and history, with short film screenings, an archive exhibition, a quiz and board games. There will also be comedy performances and free pamphlets, flyers and past publications of the Trust will be available.

As this event is taking place during Ramadan, an Iftar will be hosted after 6pm where attendees are welcome to break their fast with delicious free Bengali food.

[Book your place](#)

500 years of Irish women in Tower Hamlets

Talk | Saturday 15 March | 2.00-4.00pm | Free

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

In the long history of London, the city's oldest and largest foreign presence comprised people born in Ireland and those of Irish descent (until the late nineteenth century). However, what's all too often overlooked is that this history is HERstory too.

To mark Women's History Month we are delighted to welcome **Breda Corish** who will be exploring the women of Ireland - *Mná na hÉireann* - in Tower Hamlets. A canter through five hundred years of herstory will take us from an Irish noblewoman living in the sixteenth-century Tower of London to the twentieth-century daughter of Irish immigrant workers on the Isle of Dogs, meeting lodging-house keepers, Famine refugees, nuns, strike leaders, suffragettes and local politicians along the way.

[Book your place](#)

Call for public transport memories

Did you, or do you know someone that used to work on public transport in Tower Hamlets? Whether on the buses, trains, DLR or in any public transport role in the mid to late C20th.... If you are comfortable being recorded, we'd love to hear from you. We're collecting oral histories, memories and recollections to be preserved in our collections and featured in an upcoming exhibition and educational workshops. Please get in touch! If you're not sure your story fits the criteria, please still get in touch via email and we will be happy to chat!

CONTACT: localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Make sure to include 'TRANSPORT ORAL HISTORY' in the subject heading.

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

First and third Saturdays of every month:

- Saturday 10.00am-5.00pm

That's the following Saturdays coming up:

- Saturday 15 March
- Saturday 5 April

Please note: the building will be CLOSED for annual stocktake between Monday 24 February and Friday 7 March inclusive.

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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