

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



Welcome to our new newsletter!

Hello everyone and sorry for the long delay between newsletters - we have had some teething issues with the new post-GDPR mailing list software but hopefully this email should reach everyone who wants it!

There's lots catch up on, so apologies for the meaty length of this newsletter. First up and most importantly we must draw your attention to the Numbi takeover of our current exhibition [The Women's Hall](#) throughout August. [Numbi Arts](#) is a Somali-led cultural organisation in Tower Hamlets which curates events, exhibitions, creative workshops, texts and other happenings reflecting on the histories and cultures of the (East) African diaspora in London and around the world. In the events listed below, Numbi's artists explore different elements of diaspora history - in particular Black women's roles and activism in the East End, past and present. All events are free but as Numbi is volunteer-run, donations (to the group directly) are appreciated.

For the month of August, the Women's Hall exhibition space is also host to the Numbi Aqal Mobile Archive, a structure inspired by the traditional Somali dwelling which has been designed to exhibit word and image. The contents of the Aqal will be added to by Numbi artists and participants over the course of the month. Numbi volunteers are also working in the Cost Price Restaurant during the residency, so come down and enjoy a tasty Somali maraq (stew)!

[Numbi events listings \(scroll down for other Women's Hall events\)](#)

Engaging the Archive

Thursday 16 August 12:00 - 3:00pm

Numbi Archive is an ongoing, decade-long living archive. Engaging the Archive invites the public to explore the Numbi Mobile Archive and participate in an arts-based exploration of items in the collection. This will be followed by a group discussion reflecting on the role of archiving in our communities, who can we harvest from a living archive and what agency archives hold. This event will be facilitated by Deqa Abshir, a Somali-Kenyan artist and educator based in Nairobi. Deqa is currently a master's student in Expressive Arts Therapy at the European Graduate School. Her multifaceted approach to facilitation will create the space for some interesting discussions around the larger topic of memory.

Facilitator: Deqa Abshir. [Book your free place here.](#)

Heritage Walking Tour: Hidden Women

Saturday 18 August, 10:00am - 12:00pm

This walk will take audiences through and around locations that have been the site of innovative, revolutionary and important actions by women from a wide range of backgrounds, which have subsequently been forgotten or erased. The walk will culminate with lunch at the Cost Price cafe. Alana Jelinek is Tower Hamlets artist and writer who

writes about the role and value of art in society at the University of Hertfordshire.

Facilitator: Alana Jelinek. [Book your free place here.](#)

Studio Pop Up and Photo Scanning Session

Thursday 23 August, 5:00 - 7:30pm

This workshop is a drop-in portraiture session inspired by Malick Sidibe and Seydou Keïta. It will explore and question the Black image in the West, whilst also creating a dialogue through stories, images of self, places and text that form up identity. We encourage participants to both bring old family photos to be archived, objects, forms of technology, cultural/native clothing, documents and be willing to have their photograph taken by our resident photographer. The portraiture studio will be set up in the space for a session directed by Anisa Nuh-Ali. A conceptual artist, she interrogates and explores the intersections of race, religion and gender. Her practice heavily involves research and archiving. Nuh-Ali has a BA in Fine Art and divides her time between Sheffield and London.

Facilitator: Anisa Nuh-Ali. [Book your free place here.](#)

Dreaming Safe Spaces

Thursday 23 August, 6:00 - 7:30pm

This workshop will be exploring dream spaces as sites of resistance through creative engagement. Participants will be guided through meditative exercises as a way to connect to memory of safe, and captivating sounds and imagery, this will be followed by a creative exercises using art materials to capture the essence of the dreaming exercises. The workshop will conclude with a brief reflection and the participants will have the opportunity to include their creative work in the Numbi archive. Charity Mwaniki is a Numbi resident artist. She studies Architecture and is interested in creative art that is community engaging.

Facilitator: Charity Mwaniki. [Book your free place here.](#)

Kathleen Wrasama: Black British Women Activists Talk

Thursday 30 August, 5:00 - 7:30pm

The names and stories of black women are conspicuously absent from the history of East London. Kathleen Wrasama is one of the few the archive can provide. Taken by church missionaries from Ethiopia as a child before the First World War, she found a home in East London as a part of the Somali sailors' community. Join us as we explore the life of Kathleen and the black women the archives are unable/unwilling to speak about.

Facilitator: Hudda Khaireh. [Book your free place here.](#)



Hustle and bustle at the Women's Hall

Back in May, our exhibition space was transformed into a recreation of the headquarters of the East London Federation of Suffragettes a hundred years ago in Old Ford Road, Bow, and it's been non-stop Suffragette-a-go-go ever since! See below for events which have been scheduled for the coming month, some by our staff and some by our Events Collective volunteers. In addition to the listed events, exhibition tours are offered every first Saturday of the month at 1pm and we can also take group bookings by appointment. More events will be announced in the next newsletter!

The latest issue of *The Women's Hall Dreadnought*, a free newspaper produced entirely by our volunteers, has just been published and is available to pick up from the library now. It contains articles about the East End suffragettes and their world by our volunteer researchers and information about the forthcoming Norah Smyth exhibition at Four Corners.

The pay-what-you-can cafe ('Cost Price Restaurant') is doing a roaring trade, thanks to the efforts of our catering volunteers. The cafe, in the middle of the exhibition space, is open during the hours below and offers light meals on a donations/pay-what-you-can basis. All food is sourced from Fare Share, a charity which re-purposes unwanted supermarket food.

- Wednesdays: 12.30-2.30pm
- Thursdays: 12.30-2.30pm and 5.30-7.30pm
- Saturdays (1st and 3rd of the month): 12.30-2.30pm

Next month's events at the Women's Hall

Thursday 30 August, 6.30 – 8.30pm

Battling Belles of Bow

Guided walk with Rachel Kolsky!

Led by Sylvia Pankhurst who chose east London as the starting point for her campaign for women's suffrage, East End women were key to the success of the Suffragette movement. Seeing the plight of the working women and mothers, she also established a creche, restaurant and model toy factory in Bow. Join Rachel Kolsky, prize-winning tour guide and author of *Women's London* and follow in Sylvia's footsteps. **BOOKING ESSENTIAL** - please email localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Thursday 6 September 7.00 – 9.00pm

Preach Like Pankhurst, with Naomi Paxton:

Activism Speaker Training for the Modern Suffragette

Calling all women with something to say! Even when you know EXACTLY what you want to get across, it's not always easy to talk to a crowd. We want to ensure that today's East End activists can preach their message with the same gusto as our suffragette foremothers. You're invited to join a friendly, informal public speaking workshop to learn how to use various techniques to hammer home whatever's on your mind. All ages welcome, no booking required - just turn up.

Thursday 13 September, 6.30 – 7.30pm

Indian Suffragettes: Female Identities and Transnational Networks

We are very pleased to welcome Dr Sumita Mukherjee looks at the activities of Indian campaigners for the female vote – in Asia, Europe, USA, Britain and other parts of the British Empire, and how they had an impact on campaigns in the Indian subcontinent. In the context of her new book, she discusses the experiences of the Indian suffragettes who travelled around the world to lobby the British parliament, attend international women's conferences, and conduct speaking tours to gather support for Indian women. Dr Mukherjee will demonstrate the ways in which the suffrage movement was a truly global enterprise, not solely confined to Britain or America, which involved and affected women from a range of diverse backgrounds. Chaired by Julie Begum.

Note: Rather a lot of people are down as attending this event on Facebook, so we have set

up Eventbrite bookings in an attempt to manage this. Newsletter subscribers will have until lunchtime Monday 13 August to [book their place here](#), then we will post the Eventbrite link in the Facebook event.

Saturday 15 September, 10.00am – 1.30pm

Was Your Ancestor a Suffragette? Family History Day

Get help researching your ancestors and find out more about the women's suffrage campaign in London's East End at this free family history event. A variety of talks will take place throughout the morning – including one from special guest speaker Vicky Iglkowski, Principal Records Specialist (Diverse Histories) at The National Archives. Visitors will also have the chance to browse stalls and displays. Please bring your own laptops or tablets to access online family history resources. Tea, coffee and biscuits provided.

Saturday 15 September, 2.00 – 4.00pm

East End History Club Suffragette Special

A special edition of our regular East End History Club, exploring women's lives in Tower Hamlets throughout the twentieth century. These sessions are ideal for those who are curious about local history and want to find out more. There's no need to book, just drop in. Tea, coffee and biscuits provided.

Thursday 20 September, 6.30-8.00pm

Iron In Her Soul: An evening of pants, poverty and periods

Join us for an evening of talks, object handling and activism as we explore menstrual education, historic underwear and period poverty. In collaboration with [Historic Royal Palaces](#) and period poverty charity [Gals Go With The Flow](#), this event aims to acknowledge the lack of historic information on how women dealt with their periods as well as highlighting the issues that face modern women today, including misinformation and inaccessible sanitary products. Highlights of the evening will include:

- A look at the historic underwear collection from Kensington Palace
- Conversations and talks from experts and our in-house researchers
- Creating sanitary packs to give away in an activism workshop

Who were the
East End Suffragettes?

**THE
WOMEN'S
HALL**

30 May - 20 October 2018

Free exhibition & events

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

www.womenshall.org.uk

The British Newspaper Archive comes to Tower Hamlets

Good news for all you historical sleuths! The British Newspaper Archive is now available to search for free in Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, as well as in all other libraries and Idea Stores across the borough.

This premium subscription website contains millions of digitised, fully-searchable newspaper pages from the British Library's historic newspaper collection, and is an essential resource for local and family historians. Some titles of particular interest to East End researchers include:

- The Woman's Dreadnought (1914-1924)
- Tower Hamlets Independent and East End Local Advertiser (1866-1910)
- East London Observer (1857-1928)

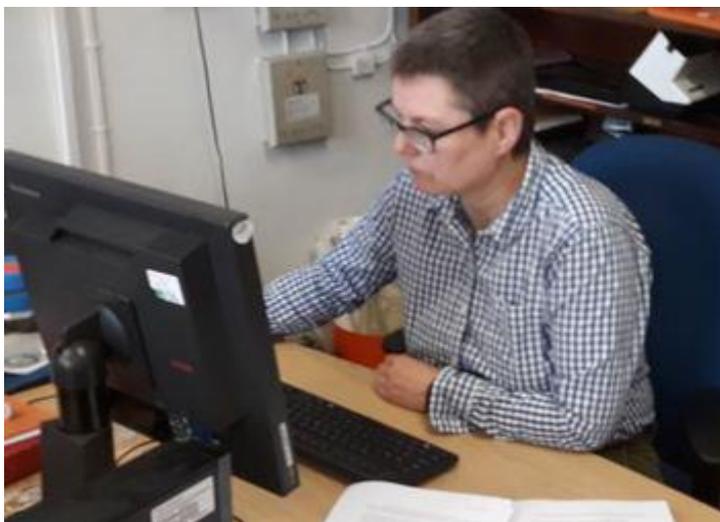
The website is accessible via the Public PCs in our reading room at any time during our opening hours, and a member of staff will be on hand to help you get started.

Job vacancies

2018 has been a year of upheaval for us so far, as three members of our team of six have left or are leaving. News on their incoming replacements will follow in the next issue. However, thanks to generous funding from Tower Hamlets Council we are currently advertising two additional fixed-term posts to help the archivists clear a large backlog of uncatalogued material.

These two new roles are **Heritage Co-ordinator** who will work continuously on the Reading Room desk dealing with public enquiries and assisting with collections management tasks; and **Cataloguing Archivist**. Both roles are intended for people with prior experience of archive/local studies work and are fixed term until March 2021. Please visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/jobs and search for the job titles above for more information.

Archives cataloguing update



From April to May we welcomed Kat Hubschmann (pictured above) to the team for an archives cataloguing placement. We host the placement for a fortnight every year during which we take in a postgraduate student from the UCL Archives & Records Management MA course to help them gain experience of being part of an archives team, cataloguing original archives from our collections.

Kat worked on cataloguing the records of the **St Katharine and Shadwell Trust**, dating from 1990-2013. The Trust supported a great variety of local community and voluntary groups and organisations and the archive includes all grant requests received over the period of its existence. The majority of the records are now available to be viewed in our Reading Room, under the collection reference I/SKS. We are grateful to Kat for all her help with cataloguing this collection.

Work is also now complete on the cataloguing of 35 oral histories recorded as part of the **Poetic East End** project. These interviews were undertaken in 2016-2017 by Shanghati Literary Society, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. [The project](#) website describes how these testimonies reveal the rich history of poetry writing in the East End from the 1960s to the 1980s.

"Poetry has always played an inseparable part of Bengali life transcending across class, religion, age and gender. Through increasing accessibility of the poems and the life of poets, the project hoped to reveal the rich history of a community that is still underrepresented in the British heritage spaces. The project has also documented the memories of the original members of Basement Writers and its creator, the radical teacher, Chris Searle, who was at the forefront of building cohesion and empathy between the

diverse youths of East London.'

Search the reference O/PEE on [our catalogue](#) for more information, or visit us to listen to the audio of the interviews and read the transcripts and summaries which were created by the project volunteers to accompany the recordings.



New East End history books

We've added some exciting new titles to our local history library collection this month, including two new books about the borough's musical heritage. *Let the Good Times Roll: My Life in Small Faces, Faces and The Who* is the new autobiography by Stepney-born drummer Kenney Jones, and Vivi Lachs's *Whitechapel Noise* explores the Jewish immigrant experience in the late 19th and early 20th century through Yiddish song and verse. Other highlights include *Trading in War: London's Maritime World in the Age of Cook and Nelson* by Margarett Lincoln, *The Battle of Brick Lane 1978* by Bangladesh Youth Front founder member A.K Azad Konor, and Rachel Kolsky's collection of women's history walks *Women's London: A Tour Guide to Great Lives*.

For those of you tracing your family history we've two new guides to Irish genealogy by John Grenham and Chris Paton, as well as *Tracing Your Merchant Navy Ancestors* by Simon Wills, *Discover Your Ancestors' Occupations* by Laura Berry and Andrew Chapman, and Gill Rossini's *Same Sex Love 1700-1957*, the first guide to researching the history of same-sex relationships aimed specifically at family historians.

As usual, all our reference books are free to consult in our reading room at any time during our opening hours.

Aldgate East: my neighbourhood

Our friends at Four Corners have begun a new project celebrating Aldgate East, its people, cultures and history, its past and present. There will be local history walks, archive research and photography. It is open to anyone who lives or works in the local area and runs from now until summer 2019.

Interested in volunteering or participating? Call 020 8981 6111 or

email aldgateeastproject@fourcornersfilm.co.uk

Aldgate East My Neighbourhood is run by Four Corners, Alternative Arts and Swadhinata Trust. It is funded by London Borough of Tower Hamlets Community Cohesion Pilot Programme.

Save the date!

The tenth **Writeidea Festival**, Tower Hamlets Council's unique free reading festival, will take place at Idea Store Whitechapel over the weekend of 16 - 18 November and as usual we have curated a local history strand for your delight. On Saturday 17 November, **John Boughton** will present his critically acclaimed history of social housing *Municipal Dreams* and **Melanie McGrath** will discuss her latest book *Pie and Mash Down the Roman Road*. **Suresh Singh** will be in conversation with Stef Dickers (Bishopsgate Institute) regarding his forthcoming book *A Modest Living: Memoirs of a Cockney Sikh* and **Jay Bernard** will perform their award-winning multimedia piece *Surge: Side A*. Full details on each speaker will follow in the next newsletter. Everything is free to attend and tickets will be released soon! Sign up to the Idea Store mailing list to be kept informed.

On Open House weekend in September there is a special event at **St Matthias Community Centre**, Poplar which is celebrating its 25th anniversary as a centre providing essential support and services for local residents. The Grade II* listed church building was originally established as a chapel for the East India Company in 1654. Activities will include:

- Saturday 22 September, open 3pm-7pm, with a BBQ and Bollywood dancing
- Sunday 23 September, open 11am-5pm, with more dance and the planting of a cherry tree by the Queen's Lieutenant at 4pm

There will also be an exhibition on show entitled 'From Red Dragon to Nemesis' produced by Brick Lane Circle, and includes a model of the East India Company Ship, Falmouth.

Finally, as part of the Survey of London project, the first ever **Whitechapel History Fest** will be held from Friday 25 - Sunday 27 October. Malcolm and Tamsin will both be giving short talks about collections held here relating to Whitechapel and there are many renowned speakers discussing the historic communities and buildings of the area. [Visit the website here to book your ticket.](#)



Opening hours

Monday: 9am-5pm (exhibition only, shut Bank Holidays)

Tuesday: 10am-5pm

Wednesday: 9am-5pm

Thursday: 9am-8pm

Friday: 9am-5pm (exhibition only)

Saturday*: 9am-5pm (*first and third Saturdays of the month only)

Sunday: closed

Saturday opening

We are open 9am-5pm on the first and third Saturdays of every month, for research in the reading room and exhibition viewing. That's the following Saturdays coming up:

Saturday 18 August

Saturday 1 September

Saturday 15 September

Contact us

Don't reply to this email as it's not a real inbox, but do send us your enquiry using the contact details below:

Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

[277 Bancroft Road](#)

[London E1 4DQ](#)

Phone: 020 7364 1290

Email: localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Visit our website

www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history

Search our online catalogue

www.THcatalogue.org.uk
