

January-February 2014

Land and Lives: Home and Property in Tower Hamlets

Archivist Mark Ballard reports on our latest project....

I started at Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives in November as archivist for the Land and Lives Project, which is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Our aim is to make the archives' collection of over 8,000 "deeds" for properties throughout the Borough more readily available and to improve awareness of its research potential. These documents survive in large numbers from the 17th century onwards, beginning when Stepney was still a largely rural area of market gardens and naval industries, and reflecting a process of urbanisation and ever-denser housing until the 20th century.



Mark Ballard
Project Archivist, *Land and Lives*

The main object of the exercise is to re-process the information about the deeds, already recorded in great detail on index cards, so that it can function as a catalogue which will be searchable online, but one also reflecting more clearly the archival origins of the records. We are seeking the help of eager volunteers for the indexing process: the more of you we can recruit, the more detail we will be able to make available online! If you have a special interest in a certain area of Tower Hamlets, whose previous history or occupants you would like to know more about, it is quite likely we will have some deeds for it, so you would be finding more about it in the course of helping us. Strictly speaking, not all the records in this part of our collections are title deeds, though they have been regarded as such in the past. In fact there are also additional records lurking here for the manors, parish vestries, improvement commissions, and metropolitan boroughs which formerly governed the present Tower Hamlets Borough area, which will enhance the recognised archives that we already hold for them.

We are also planning several activities around these records, including an exhibition, and workshops for schools and adults to encourage their use. We hope you will want to get involved. We will ensure their permanent survival by having them all repackaged in new acid-free materials: another major task for which voluntary assistance will be welcomed!

We will begin recruiting for volunteers in March-April so watch this space for more information!

LGBT History Month

**February
2014**

Rainbow Hamlets, the borough's principal LGBT advocacy organisation, is programming a varied cultural programme for this year's LGBT History Month.

Find out more details of this and other events here:

www.rainbowhamlets.org

We at Local History would like to recommend Rose Collis's show **Trouser-Wearing Characters** at the Gallery Café, Bethnal Green, at which you can expect to be entertained by tales of real-life historical characters—masculine women and feminine men—in a mixture of spoken word and song, accompanied on the banjo.

Also keep an eye on www.ideastore.co.uk as more events are added at individual Idea Stores and libraries.

Upcoming Events

LGBT History in Tower Hamlets: What's in the archives?
Thursday 13 February, 6.30-7.30pm

A showcase of our material reflecting LGBT history in Tower Hamlets, including books, pamphlets, photographs, press cuttings, newsletters, archival materials and ephemera, all held at the council's local history library & archives. Read press cuttings relating to local campaigns against Section 28 and events such as the 200,000-strong Pride celebrations in Victoria Park in 1995, to C18th reports about Mary East who lived and worked as a publican in Poplar as a man named James How. A talk by staff, addressing the problems of collecting LGBT material and the way such material has been catalogued in the past, will be followed by a chance to browse these collections first-hand.

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives
Free, no booking required

Local Lives in the Queer Metropolis: Talk by Dr Matt Cook
Friday 21 February, 6:45 – 8:45pm

This talk and discussion with Dr Matt Cook, Senior Lecturer in History and Gender Studies at Birkbeck, University of London, and Birkbeck Director of the Raphael Samuel History Centre, explores three little-known histories of queer men in London and offers an enriched perspective on post-WW2 queer culture in the capital. This is one of a series of talks delivered in conjunction with Birkbeck University as part of the Big Ideas Programme. For more information, see <http://www.ideastore.co.uk/assets/documents/misc/big-ideas.pdf>.

Idea Store Whitechapel
321 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1BU
Tel: 020 7364 4332
email: ideastore@towerhamlets.gov.uk

LGBT History at The National Archives
Thursday 20 February - Sunday 16 March

This exhibition, on tour to Idea Store Canary Wharf, was created by The National Archives to illustrate the interactions of the UK government with the LGBT community over the ages. Included is a map of LGBT archive collections across the UK, excerpts relating to the trial of Oscar Wilde in 1895 and a timeline interpretation of national LGBT history.

Idea Store Canary Wharf
Churchill Place, London E14 5RB
Tel: 020 7364 4332
email: ideastore@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Upcoming events

Holocaust Memorial Day East End 2014

Each year Tower Hamlets Council works with Jewish organisations to host a range of events commemorating the Holocaust. The theme this year is *Journeys* and across the borough there are a variety of events on offer from heritage walks, exhibitions and talks from January 24 to February 4.

For details of the programme, visit www.towerhamletsarts.org.uk

Our contribution this year is a talk on our current exhibition of the WW2-era paintings of local Jewish philanthropist Rose L. Henriques.

Stepney in War & Peace exhibition: Curator Talk

Thursday 30 January
6.30 - 7.30pm
THLHLA

Join art researcher Sara Ayad for an exploration of the paintings in our collections which depict the borough during the Blitz, and the extraordinary achievements of artist Lady Rose L. Henriques.

Entrance is free but please book your place by emailing localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk or calling 020 7364 1290 during our opening hours.

Oral History Excerpts from our collections now online!

Since 2010 Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives has initiated several oral history projects. The recordings created were showcased in exhibitions hosted at the library in a specially constructed listening booth. These clips have now been uploaded to our website and are available to stream. (<http://ideastore.co.uk/local-history-online-oral-history>)

[After You've Gone: East End Shopfronts, 1988](#)

Alan Dein's photographs of East End shopfronts were taken in 1988 when many Tower Hamlets streets were on the verge of dereliction. Alan, an oral historian and Radio 4 broadcaster, lived in Stepney at the time and decided to capture the diminishing, decaying local shops on film, many of them relics of the area's once flourishing Jewish community. These oral history clips of former shop owners and customers shed light on life in the borough from the 1950s through to the 1980s. An exhibition booklet containing many of Alan's photographs can be purchased from the library.

[Oral histories of the Bengali East End](#)

These oral histories tell just a few of the stories of the Bengali East End. Here three people recollect life in the borough during the 1970s and 1980s and the part each played in community organizing and anti-racist protest.

[Mapping the change: Old Ford Voices & Island Memories](#)

As the landscape of Bow has been altered forever by new development, the archive captured some voices of local people reflecting on life, work and play during the last century in Fish Island and Old Ford. Funded by Heritage Lottery Fund as part of Hackney Museum's [Mapping The Change project](#).

[Somali Oral Histories](#)

Our ground-breaking exhibition 'Don't Just Live – Live to be Remembered', examining the history of Somali migration to Tower Hamlets, was hosted in March 2013 at Oxford House. Produced by Idea Store in partnership with Kayd Somali Arts & Culture and Mayfield House Day Centre, the exhibition presented oral histories of influential and inspirational residents as well as the collections of Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives to tell the story of the borough's Somali history. A booklet version of this exhibition is available on request from the library.

Upcoming event

Family History and Reminiscence Session

John Scurr
Community Centre
1a Bekesbourne St
London E14

**Wednesday 5
February**
2- 4pm

Older residents are welcome to attend this free, drop-in reminiscence session based on historical images from our collection.

There will be a presentation by archive staff on researching your family history and tips on using the free, library edition of www.ancestry.com

Nearest station:
Limehouse

New Archives acquisitions: Personal papers

Pearl Binder

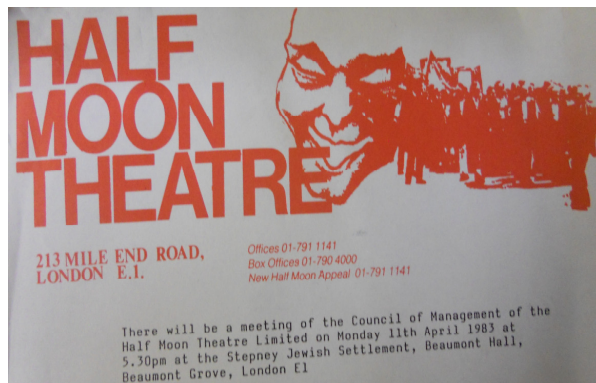
We are very pleased to have received as a gift from members of her family, the papers of Pearl Binder (1904-1990), author, playwright, stained-glass artist, lithographer, sculptor and a champion of the Pearly Kings and Queens. For many years she lived in Whitechapel. The papers consist of correspondence, research notes and illustrations relating to her book "The Pearlies—a social record" published in 1975.



Pearl Binder (right) with Rosie Springfield, Pearly Queen of Stoke Newington

Leon Rogers, MBE, JP

In November we were very grateful to receive the personal papers of Mr Leon Rogers. Mr Rogers' gift deposit primarily relates to his involvement with the Half Moon Theatre, Stepney, during the 1970s-1980s but also includes personal accounts relating to the Bernhard Baron Settlement and the Brady Clubs.



Extract from an agenda for a Half Moon Theatre Council of Management Meeting, April 1983

Mr Rogers was involved with the Half Moon Theatre firstly as an intern (at the Alie St premises) and subsequently as Chair of the Board of Governors (at the Mile End Road premises). The Half Moon was in the forefront of political theatre in London, and many current day performers started their careers at Alie Street.

The Half Moon Theatre records include documentation, such as, Mr Rogers' copies of agendas and minutes of meetings of the Board, in addition to publications and publicity material (e.g. production programmes; press cuttings and other ephemera) relating to Half Moon Theatre productions. There is also a copy of his dissertation about the Half Moon Theatre (April 1980) which includes a history of the founding of the Half Moon and Mr Rogers' observations of how the theatre was run in the late 1970's.

Please note that the full archive of the Half Moon Theatre Company is held by Royal Holloway Archives, University of London. Further information about these records can be found on the catalogue of the Royal Holloway Archives (<http://www.rhul.ac.uk/archives/home.aspx>).

Recent Events

Taking East London's Pulse, Thursday 16 January 2014



Ross MacFarlane, (Research & Engagement Officer, Wellcome Library) speaking at the *Taking East London's Pulse* event.

We hosted 'Taking East London's Pulse' on Thursday 16 January. 40 people attended the event about the new website and resource, London's Pulse (<http://wellcomelibrary.org/moh/>) created by the Wellcome Library. This website contains digitised and fully downloadable Medical Officer of Health reports for London, 1848-1972.

Attendees enjoyed talks by the Wellcome Library's Ross MacFarlane and Borough Archivist, Malcolm Barr-Hamilton. They also had the chance to browse health-related records from Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives' collections, including minutes; photographs; pamphlets; plans and hard copies of the Medical Officer of Health reports. The event was a great success and we look forward to working in partnership with the Wellcome Library on future projects.

Archives for London Seminar 'Rising in the East : Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives' Thursday 7 November 2013

In early November we took part in the Archives for London monthly seminar series (<http://www.archivesforlondon.org/>) by hosting a talk here about our service and collections. Archives for London is an advocacy organisation representing the diverse range of archival institutions in London, their staff as well as keen users.



THLHLA's public reading room

The seminar was arranged into two halves with Heritage Manager Tamsin Bookey talking to the attendees about the history of the service, its integration with Tower Hamlets' Idea Stores and recent and upcoming engagement projects, and Borough Archivist Malcolm Barr-Hamilton providing an introduction to our extensive collections.

Recent events (cont'd)

'Explore Your Archive' **Saturday 16 November 2013**

As part of the 'Explore Your Archive' campaign, promoting the wealth of treasures on offer in the nation's archives, Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives delved into its own archive to produce a fascinating variety of materials for visitors to its Open Day on Saturday 16 November.

ARCHIVE EXPLORED



Heritage Officer Natasha Luck spoke about Places of Worship records

Over 40 attendees enjoyed archive film screenings, talks and family activities. Delights on show included the oldest document in the borough's collections, a property deed for four acres of meadow in Old Ford, Bow, dating from 1384. For campaign information, see www.exploreyourarchive.org and for more details on delving into our archive collections, visit www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history.

Current exhibition

Stepney in War & Peace: the paintings of Rose L. Henriques

Co-hosted by the Jewish East End Celebration Society, our current exhibition is a rare opportunity to see highlights from our collections of paintings by the Jewish philanthropist Rose L. Henriques (1889-1972) which reflect life in the old borough of Stepney before, during and after the Blitz.

A small exhibition catalogue by art researcher Sara Ayad, who kindly offered her professional research skills as a volunteer to curate this exhibition, will be launched on Thursday 30 January when Sara will give a free talk about Rose's work at 6.30pm.

The booklet is illustrated in full colour and will be on sale for £5.

The exhibition will be on view until 6 March, so you have ample time to plan your visit!

Please make sure to check our opening times.



Workrooms for the Elderly, oil on canvas, Rose L. Henriques, c1954

Coming soon....

Staff are currently hard at work putting together our next *exhibition Where I Belong* which will look at the histories of Black and Asian women in Tower Hamlets. This exhibition will showcase the oral histories collected for the archive by our current heritage skills trainee Majeda Begum.

The exhibition and a series of related events will launch in mid-March as part of Women's History Month.

Picture of the month

This month's picture is from a lovely collection of personal photographs, copies of which were kindly donated to us by local resident Mr Melvyn Reeves.

The photographs deposited include images of Cable Street School; Jane Street (demolished 1961); Harry Gosling School, Fairclough Street and Central Foundation Girls' School, Spital Square.



Coronation Party held on Jane St, Stepney, June 1953.
[LHLA reference : MR/2/5]

Opening Times

Tues: 10am-5pm

Wed: 9am-5pm

Thu: 9am-8pm

Fri: closed

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

Sun, Mon: closed

PLEASE NOTE: we will be closed on Easter Saturday (19 April)

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

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277 Bancroft Road
London E1 4DQ

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

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Library Learning Information