

March-April 2014

Where I Belong: Oral Histories of Black and Asian Women in Tower Hamlets



Over the last year our heritage skills trainee Majeda Begum has been collecting oral history recordings of local Black and Asian women, as part of her heritage skills traineeship supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and The National Archives.

This exhibition brings together these oral histories in both audio-visual and written form. They are contextualised with images from the THLHLA collections and portraits, by photographer Sarah Ainslie, of the participants and the groups which facilitated the project—BYM Whitchapel Women's Centre, Zacchaeus Project and Black Women's Health & Family Support. Huge thanks to Majeda and the volunteers she has worked with to produce this fascinating exhibition. Please join us for the events below.

Exhibition launch Saturday 15 March, 2-4 pm

Join us for the official launch with Mayor Lutfur Rahman, a panel discussion with project participants chaired by Dr Suzanne Scafe and a range of family activities on offer too. Part of Women's History Month 2014.

Migrant Women's Fashions Thursday 27 March, 4.30 - 6.30pm

To tie in with this exhibition, join us for an intergenerational discussion around the changing fashions of ethnic minority women living in Tower Hamlets, in partnership with Museum of London Docklands.

The **Where I Belong** exhibition runs until **Thursday 12 June**. Visit our [website](#) for opening hours and contact the library to organise a group visit or workshop

Upcoming Events

Open Day – Russia Lane Day Centre

Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives will be hosting a stall in Bethnal Green at the Russia Lane Day Centre's Open Day, which celebrates the opening of the centre's new Therapy and Reminiscence areas. Join us for diverse activities for older people including reminiscence opportunities using historical newspaper clippings from the library's collections and free massage sessions to ensure you leave relaxed and refreshed!

Refreshments available throughout the day. Please RSVP to

Russia.lane@towerhamlets.gov.uk or 0207 364 1203.

Friday 28 March, 10am – 2pm

Women's History Month Author Event: Juliet West

Local author Juliet West, an Islander, will be talking about her first novel 'Before the Fall'. The novel is set in the East End during the Great War.

Tuesday 25 March, 3:00pm – 4:30pm

[Cubitt Town Library](#)

East End Online

Come and join in with this session which explores all the wonderful local history of the East End available to view through Idea Store Local History Online – thousands of photographs and historical documents – all at the click of a computer mouse. We can even help you research your family tree using 'Ancestry' online. Don't worry if you don't know how to use a computer, we'll show you how.

Tuesday 1 April, 10:00am - 12:00pm

[Idea Store Watney Market](#)

The East End's Home Front in World War 1

This year marks the centenary of the First World War. London historian and tour guide Ian Porter looks at how Eastenders coped during the conflict. His talk will be followed by a reading from 'My Dear I Wanted to Tell You' by Louisa Young, which has been chosen as the 2014 title for Cityread London.

Thursday 17 April, 10:00am - 12:00pm

[Idea Store Chrisp Street](#)

Women on the Home Front in World War 1

Ian Porter will be giving one of his interesting talks about London during WW1. The talk will cover the home front and women's role in it, plus events specific to the East End, including the first air raid on London in Poplar; the Silvertown explosion; Silvia Pankhurst's toy factory and creche in Bow; the start of the Save The Children Fund in Bow and the numerous jobs that East End women did for the first time.

Free refreshments provided.

Thursday 24 April, 10:30am - 11:15am

[Idea Store Watney Market](#)

'Taking London's Wartime Pulse'

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives
Thursday 15 May, 6pm-7.30pm

View the health of Londoners during WWI and WWII through the Wellcome Library's online resource 'London's Pulse' and the collections of Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives. Focusing primarily on the East End, we'll show how public health records from the time illustrate cultural trends such as fitness, housing and employment.

Bookings for this free event will be taken by the Wellcome Library (through the Wellcome Collection website). Further information and details about how to book a place will be made available in due course.

Upcoming Events (elsewhere)

"Our Hidden Histories" Project Talk
Bishopsgate Institute
Thursday 20 March at 7pm

This event combines discussion, readings, sound excerpts and film. Writer and local historian Rachel Lichtenstein (Project Manager for *Our Hidden Histories*) will discuss the research so far conducted into the history of Sandys Row Synagogue in Spitalfields, the oldest Ashkenazi community in London. This Heritage Lottery Funded project includes; oral history interviews conducted by volunteers with elderly Jewish members of the synagogue, archival research and exhibition and many other stories. Local filmmakers Phil Maxwell and Hazuan Hashim will conclude the evening by showing the film they have created about the project.

To book tickets and for more information <http://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/event/409/East-End-in-Focus-Synagogue-Stories-An-Oral-History-Project?&Keyword=east+end+in+focus&TypeID=>

Jewish East End Celebration Society Talk
"The Life and Works of Simeon Solomon"
Sunday April 6, Sandys Row Synagogue

Simeon Solomon was born in Sandys Street, Spitalfields, and died in a workhouse in 1905. He was ostracised by the Anglo-Jewish community because of his homosexuality and the homoerotic nature of his paintings. Today he is recognised as one of the greatest painters to have emerged from Anglo-Jewry. The speaker is Frank Vigon, who has been raising money to restore Simeon Solomon's gravestone at the Willesden Jewish cemetery. Also taking part is Professor Carolyn Conroy, of York University who will speak about her plans for a Simeon Solomon fellowship. Tickets are £10 (JEECS members £8), with light refreshments included. Booking is essential. Email c.bettington@jeecs.org.uk or phone 07941 367 882.

“Where Do You Think You Live?” event
The Sundial Centre, Shipton Street, Bethnal Green
Monday 24 March 7.30pm

Where Do You Think You Live? looks back to the 19th century to the establishment of the Jesus Hospital Estate, now commonly known as ‘Jesus Green’, with guest speakers Simon Smith, Jane Porter, Linda Wilkinson and Stefan Dickers.

The Angela Lansbury Film Festival
5-6 April 2014

Some tickets are still left for The Angela Lansbury Film Festival presented in association with Poplar Harca, 5-6 April 2014. Details can be found here: <http://www.poplarfilmresents.com/>.

Best Days of Our Lives—Volunteer Opportunity

Raise Up are running a heritage project, called ‘Best Days of Our Lives’, focusing on the childhood of various communities living in east London today. They are identifying, recording, and engaging with the games, puzzles, toys, rhymes, songs, literature, and clothing between 1950 to 1990 and are looking for volunteers with enthusiasm and dedication to the project theme.

You will be trained in various areas, but most specifically in interviewing and archiving oral histories. Training will be carried out by an external, professional organisation on 16 and 17 April 2014. The project runs until October and Raise Up will need a minimum commitment of two months for one day per week. The project is based in Bow, but remote home working can also be considered. Reasonable travel expenses will be provided.

If you are interested please email a cover letter outlining your area of interest and availability, plus a CV to olivia@raiseup.org.uk or call the office (11am - 5pm) on 020 8981 8811. Further information can be found online - <http://bestdaysofourlivesproject.wordpress.com/>.

Building Control Files Update

We are pleased to announce that in late 2013 our temporary Heritage Assistant Carly Randall, successfully completed the first stage of a multi-part project to appraise and catalogue the records of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets' Building Control Department.

Comprising over 7000 files, the collection records the council's decisions regarding applications to repair, renovate and alter a variety of the borough's public and private buildings. Correspondence, plans and photographs within the collection cover over a century of alterations and repairs to historic listed buildings, such as the Tower of London, Truman's Brewery and the Brick Lane Jamme Masjid, and the construction of new properties including schools, housing estates and religious buildings.

In the future we plan to secure funds to fully catalogue and repackage these files in order to preserve this historically rich collection and make its contents available to the public.

We are very grateful to Carly for all the hard work she has put into this project and we wish her all the best for the future.

Student Placement: "Down Wapping" Cataloguing Project

A collection of some 120 photographs of Wapping (first exhibited at the E1 Festival in 1973) have been catalogued by Goldsmiths student Desmond Felix.

The atmospheric black-and-white photographs were taken by members of the Exit photography collective, including Paul Trevor who deposited the pictures with us in 2012. The pictures capture the unique feel of Wapping on the cusp of a period of great change in the area. Des Felix is a history student on a "History at Work" placement.

The photographs will shortly be available to view in our reading room.



Mrs. Evans and baby Evans with Janet Farrell, Wapping, 1973.

LHLA Reference: DW/1/86

New Image Accessions

Alex Pink Image Collection: 'Then and Now' (Ref: AP/)

We have recently received a fascinating deposit of 52 digital images from photographer Alex Pink, from his 'Then and Now' project. These images have been catalogued and will be made accessible to our visitors and also permanently preserved in our archives for future generations to enjoy.

Mr Pink lives and works in London, and spends his spare time photographing as much as time and energy permits. He is interested in classic street photography, the urban landscape and general city life. 'Then and Now' was a collaborative project between Alex Pink, Spitalfields Life and Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives. The concept of the project was to use historic photographs to inspire contemporary photographs. Firstly, Alex identified suitable historic images from our collections of familiar locations and pubs in Tower Hamlets ('Then'). He then set out to capture contemporary images of the same pub sites and street locations. With pubs in decline, and Brick Lane changing so rapidly, he chose original pictures that would best show these changes and result in his own record of the area in 2013. Three sets of 'Then and Now' images were published on Spitalfields Life in June 2013:

'Alex Pink's Spitalfields: Then and Now':

<http://spitalfieldslife.com/2013/06/17/alex-pinks-spitalfields-then-now/>

'Alex Pink's East End Pubs, Then and Now' and 'More East End Pubs, Then and Now':

<http://spitalfieldslife.com/2013/06/22/alex-pinks-east-end-pubs-then-now/>

<http://spitalfieldslife.com/2013/06/23/more-east-end-pubs-then-now/>

Arts Council Funding Bid Success!

We are delighted to announce the success of a recent bid to the Arts Council. A grant of £16,610 will support the delivery of a new project that aims to use creative approaches to explore and redefine access to archive collections for people with disabilities. It will culminate in an exhibition of new artwork to coincide with Disability Heritage Month in late November 2014. 'Out of the Box' has the support of the One Tower Hamlets team and The National Archives 'Archiving the Arts' programme and will be delivered by us in partnership with local disability arts organisation *filmpro*.

The project will commence with a public Open Day at which prospective participants can learn more about the project and creative process envisaged. Further participation is free of charge and will involve attending special sessions led by disabled artists, the first engaging with library and archive materials and the second developing a artistic response to them. We welcome anyone with a physical or learning disability to join us on our creative journey! Watch this space for more information!

Recent Events

Family History workshop at John Scurr Community Centre

Heritage Officer Anna Haward recently visited John Scurr Community Centre in Limehouse to train staff and clients in the use of family history website www.ancestry.com. Attendees enjoyed a talk on family history resources at Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, a reminiscence session using copies of historical images from the library's collections and a hands-on training session using this popular website, which visitors to both the community centre and the borough's libraries and Idea Stores can access for free!



LGBT history in Tower Hamlets: What's in the archives

In honour of February being LGBT History Month, Heritage Officer Melanie Strong presented a look at the material held in Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives of relevance to LGBT experience in the borough. The event took the form of a show and tell, with visitors able to handle the material and look through the items that were of most interest to them. Items included historical biographies of LGBT residents, newspaper clippings including homophobic attacks, celebrities "coming out" and the local campaign against Section 28. A highlight was a collection of sketch books by the late Stepney artist Cornelius McCarthy who actually met his lifelong partner in the Bancroft Library building many years ago. The event was well attended with many people signing up to register their interest in our planned project to acquire new LGBT materials for the archives.

Picture of the month



Magnet and Dewdrop Outing, 1920s

Since its transfer to Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives last year, the Island History Trust's fantastic photograph collection is proving increasingly popular with our users. This example shows an outing from the 'Magnet and Dewdrop' in Westferry Road on the Isle of Dogs in the early 1920s. The woman standing on the extreme left has been identified as Bridget Hester, one of the Island's money lenders. The 'Magnet and Dewdrop' was renamed 'The Telegraph' in the 1980s before closing in 1995. It has since been demolished.

Call for volunteers: *Land and Lives* project

Further to the piece in the last Newsletter we are looking for some volunteers with a day or half-a-day a week to spare to assist with transferring data relating to title deeds from catalogue cards onto our computerised cataloguing system. This will kick off after Easter. If you are interested please contact us at localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk

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Library Learning Information