

May-June 2014



As national commemorations of the centenary of the outbreak of World War One gather pace, our summer programme will be focussing on its local impacts. Thanks to an award of £9300 from the Heritage Lottery Fund we will host a series of free, public events exploring the impact of the Great War on the social and economic environment in Tower Hamlets. Look out for details of our programme at the end of June.

In addition, we will create a touring exhibition about World War One in Tower Hamlets to launch later this summer, and also digitise our most intriguing and valuable WW1-related resource - the Poplar Military Service Tribunal Register, 1916-1918, which records appeals for exemption for military service.

Military service tribunals were held up and down the country to manage the process of appeal, but most of the records were destroyed by order of central government after the war. For unknown reasons, the Metropolitan Borough of Poplar as it then was (extending in the present day from the Isle of Dogs northwards through Canary Wharf, Poplar, Bow and Bromley-by-Bow) did not destroy its register, leaving us with a unique record of interest to a range of audiences. From family historians seeking traces of their Edwardian ancestors, to those researching the history of conscription and conscientious objection, to others interested in the war's effect on local businesses, this register is already fast becoming our most popular item in the Reading Room. As part of our project it will be digitised and made available for free online via the Imperial War Museum's website later this summer. But, as always ...

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives needs you!

We are seeking 10 volunteers to participate in this project with availability between June and September. Tasks include creating a digital name & address index for the military tribunal register enabling its listings to be searched via computer; assisting with the planning and delivery of the public events programme taking place in August, and researching aspects of life on the home front here in the Tower Hamlets to inform the exhibition. Volunteers will be supervised by newly appointed Project Co-ordinator Gary Haines. Please express your interest by emailing localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk or calling 020 7364 1290, by the end of May if possible. Thanks!

Upcoming Events

Huguenots in the East End

Saturday 19 July, 2-4pm

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Heritage and conservation expert Will Palin gives a talk exploring the lives and homes of Huguenot settlers to London's East End, and notably their architectural legacy in Spitalfields.

This talk is part of the 'Huguenot Threads' festival. For more information, please visit www.huguenotsofspitalfields.org or www.eventbrite.co.uk

The East End at War 1914-1918

Friday 27 June, 6.45-8.45pm

Idea Store Whitechapel

A free talk on the wars impact in the East End by academic Mike Berlin, a specialist in the social history of London. This talk is presented as part of Birkbeck's 'Big Ideas' partnership with Idea Store. See the Idea Store website for more details on this series of events bringing university learning into public libraries for the free enjoyment of all.

Out of the Box: arts workshops

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives is pioneering new approaches to provide access to its rare collections for different communities, in partnership with filmpro ltd, a disabled-led digital arts agency.

Thanks to a grant from the Arts Council England, the Out of the Box project will give disabled residents of Tower Hamlets facilitated opportunities to be creatively inspired by the council's extensive archival collections which reflect centuries of East End history.

A series of free workshops, led by digital and video artist Caglar Kimyoncu, will be held over the summer for local residents. Participants will explore selected archival materials using a combination of audio, spatial and visual approaches to the collections. Participants will then develop their own creative responses, culminating in a series of new collaborative artworks.

Disabled residents interested in taking part in the summer workshops are invited to meet the team and find out more at these drop-in sessions:

Friday 23 May (10am-1pm) - Idea Store Canary Wharf

Thursday 29 May (5pm-8pm) - Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Saturday 31 May (11am-4pm) - Idea Store Whitechapel

The Out of the Box collaborative exhibition will be held here for two months from late November to mark Disability History Month. Out of the Box will continue its journey in 2015, touring across the borough's Idea Stores.

The project is supported by The National Archives and is engaging with local disability organisations Tower Project, Local Voices and Real Tower Hamlets.

To find out more contact 020 7613 5856 / 079 4451 3590 (voice/texts) You can also email info@outoftheboxproject.org or visit the project's website - www.filmpro.net/projects/out-of-the-box

Recent Events

Idea Store staff are initiated into the world of Local History & Archives!



Idea Store staff look at items from the archives with Heritage Officer Melanie Strong

Colleagues from within the Tower Hamlets Idea Store service have been visiting us here to take a closer look at the Local History Library & Archive service by means of a series of detailed inductions delivered to the newest Idea Store recruits. Our induction session offers an overview of the beautiful library and its ever-popular collections, which include over 30,000 photographs and 4,000 maps and plans dating from Elizabethan times. The induction also takes in our extensive and varied archival holdings, among the largest of all of the London boroughs, and is rounded off with a talk on our outreach programme, exploring the range of festivals, events, exhibitions and learning activities we produce.

The impetus for this training is to strengthen the ways in which we at Local History and our colleagues in the public-facing library and lifelong learning service work together, so as to embed our Local History offer across the Idea Store network of sites, which together had 2.3m visits last year. We hope to build on our existing successful collaborations with individual Idea Stores and libraries, which include reminiscence sessions, oral history workshops and touring exhibitions all delivered by us and hosted at Idea Stores for their customers.

If you would like to find out more about the training opportunities and workshops we offer, please get in touch via localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk or call us on 0207 364 1290.

Children from Lawdale Primary School delve into Local History...



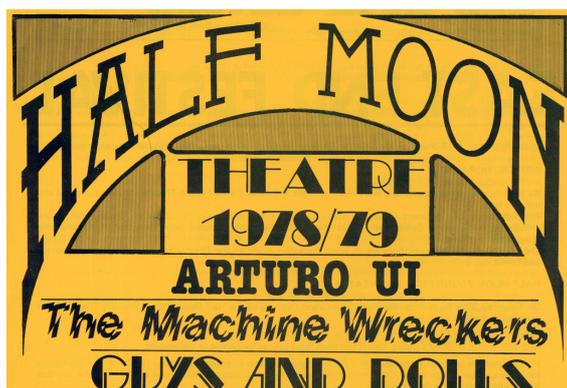
Children from Lawdale School explore historical maps and photographs

In May, Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives hosted two classes of KS2 schoolchildren on an excursion from Lawdale Primary School in Bethnal Green. The children looked at the historical development of the area around the school over time, using maps, photographs, newspaper clippings and other local history sources. They also received an introduction to our current exhibition of the oral histories of Black and Asian women in Tower Hamlets, *Where I Belong* (see below for more details).

THLHLA staff were bowled over by the exuberant enthusiasm of the children and very impressed with their research efforts. We hope to welcome further classes next year, forming part of the 'local history' segment of the new national curriculum.

If you would like to find out more about bringing a school group to visit us, please get in touch via localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk or call us on 0207 364 1290.

Archives Cataloguing Update



P/ROR/1/2/1/4
Half Moon Theatre Programme, September 1978
© Half Moon Theatre Company

Personal papers of Leon Rogers, MBE, JP (P/ROR)

The cataloguing of the personal papers of Mr Leon Rogers (mentioned in our January newsletter) is now complete and the records are fully accessible to visitors in our reading room.

The majority of these fascinating records relate to the Half Moon Theatre, Stepney, during the 1970s-80s, but the collection also includes some material relating to the Bernhard Baron Settlement and the Brady Clubs.

The Half Moon Theatre material includes a wide range of written and visual material including: research papers; publications and publicity (e.g. production programmes; ephemera; newsletters/brochures; press cuttings), in addition to administrative and financial records (for instance, records of the Half Moon Theatre Council of Management).

The sketchbooks of Cornelius McCarthy (P/MCC)

We are pleased to report that the sketchbooks of local artist Cornelius McCarthy which were deposited with us last year (see November newsletter) have now been catalogued and are available for research in our Reading Room. McCarthy was a painter, born and brought up in Stepney. As a boy he attended art classes at Toynbee Hall and at Whitechapel Upper Gallery, exhibited regularly at the East End Academy shows between 1953 and 1960, and later had one-man exhibitions at our own building in Bancroft Road and at Whitechapel Library. McCarthy was one of Britain's leading contemporary painters of the male form. We were pleased to discover recently that he had met his life partner while both were working for the Tower Hamlets library service!

The sketchbooks have been catalogued by Matthew Clifford, a postgraduate Archives student at University College London who joined us in April on a short cataloguing placement.



Matthew Clifford cataloguing the sketchbooks

'Land and Lives' Update

Project archivist Mark Ballard reports on our HLF funded project to re-catalogue our extensive collection of title deeds....

"The Land and Lives project is now well under way, and six volunteers are assisting us by adding to our CALM catalogue database the names of individual parties to the deeds which I have re-catalogued.

In what has been done so far, the benefits of the re-cataloguing process are already detectable. We have found that many of the title deeds were not fully sorted prior to the compilation of the old card catalogue, our guide to this collection until now. The process was then not aided by the obscuring factors of street renaming and house re-numbering, and many connections between individual deeds were missed.

While it now seems we may hold deeds for a slightly lower proportion of the property in Tower Hamlets than perhaps we imagined, we are beginning to see that the titles for those that we do have stretch back further for many precisely identifiable plots of land: back to the early 19th century, when houses were built on them for the first time, or beyond. Several plots in Bethnal Green can now be traced all the way back to the sale of the Eastfield estate by John Walker to Sir Edward and Lady Frances Gould in 1718."

New Additions to the Library Collections

Brick Lane by Phil Maxwell

Phil Maxwell is the photographer of Brick Lane. Over the past thirty years, no-one has taken more pictures than he and his astonishing body of work stands unparalleled in the canon of street photography, both in its range and in the quality of human observation that informs these eloquent images. This book has more than two hundred dramatic black and white photographs of Brick Lane from 1982 to the present day.

Letters to the Midwife: Correspondence with Jennifer Worth

When the Call the Midwife books became bestsellers, Jennifer Worth was inundated with correspondence. People felt moved to share their memories of the world her books described, the East End of London in the late 1940s and early 1950s. 'Letters to the Midwife' is a collection of the correspondence she received, offering a fascinating glimpse into the long lost world.

Teddy Baldock: the Pride of Poplar

The name Teddy Baldock is enshrined in the record books as Britain's youngest ever world champion. A powerful glory and tears story of an East End boxing idol who went from national hero to fallen star. Born in Poplar on May 20th, 1908, at the age of nineteen the Pride of Poplar defeated American Archie Bell at the Royal Albert Hall for the world bantamweight title.

The Gentle Author's London Album

Discover more than 600 of the Gentle Author's favourite pictures of London appearing in print for the first time, setting the wonders of our modern metropolis against the pictorial delights of the ancient city, and celebrating the infinite variety of life in the capital - with a special emphasis upon the East End. Among the multiplicity of visual pleasures to be savoured, enjoy the ostentatious trade cards of Georgian London, the breathtaking lantern slides of Victorian London, the bizarre car crashes of Clerkenwell, the heroic Spitalfields nippers, the soulful dogs of old London, Barn the Spoon, the spoon carver, and Aaron Biber, London's oldest barber. Take a walk through time with the Gentle Author of the Spitalfields Life blog as your guide - be equally amazed at what has been lost of old London and charmed by the unfamiliar marvels of London today.

Current Exhibition at THLHLA: Where I Belong (closes 5 July)

The stories of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women living in Tower Hamlets are not widely known. Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, working in partnership with local group Black Women's Health and Family Support (BWHAFS), sought to address this gap in the historical record through the Where I Belong project, interviewing local women about their lives for the archive. The oral history recordings were conducted by Majeda Begum as part of her heritage skills traineeship supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and The National Archives, with the help of volunteers.

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 Whitechapel Women's Centre, Zacchaeus Project and BWHAFS.

We welcome group visits but ask that you give us some notice so we can arrange a screening of the dvd in the education room where it can be seen more easily by groups.

The Where I Belong exhibition runs until Saturday 5 July.

Please check our opening times before visiting.

Picture of the month

Happy 15th Birthday Genesis!

This month's picture is of the opening of Genesis Cinema by Barbara Windsor in June 1999.

Seen with the famous East End actress is the proprietor Tyrone Walker-Hebborn and his parents.

Genesis Cinema
(www.genescinema.co.uk)
is based in a historic building on Mile End Road which has housed various music halls, theatres and cinemas from the 19th century to present day.

The cinema celebrated its 15th birthday at the beginning of this month with a range of free events.

Please visit us if you are interested in studying the history of local cinemas, theatres and music halls.



Opening of Genesis Cinema, Mile End, June 1999..
[LHLA reference: P25752]

© Tyrone Walker-Hebborn

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

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Library Learning Information