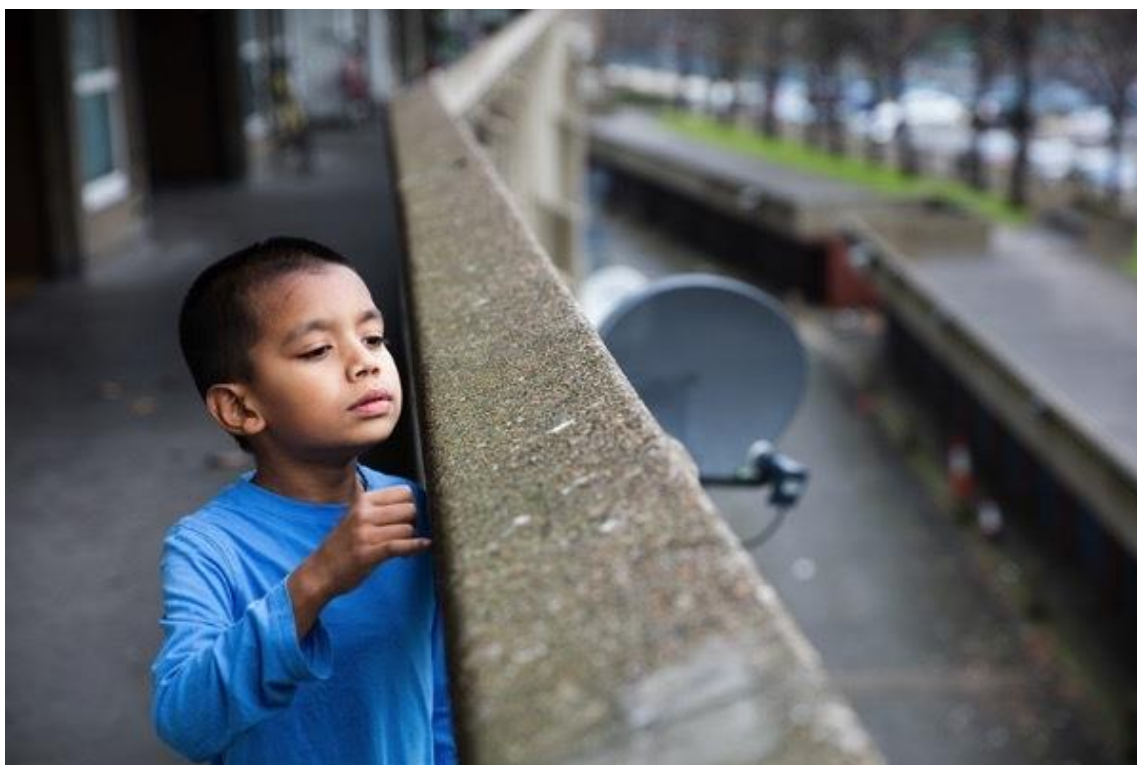


# Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



## Bangladesh 50 continues



*Boy on balcony, Robin Hood Gardens © Kois Miah*

Our programme of events commemorating 50 years since Bangladeshi independence continues online with great feedback received from the hundreds who have attended talks and workshops hosted so far.

The events have been programmed by staff at THLHLA and Citizen Researchers from the Bangladesh 50 project, exploring the connections between the War of Independence in 1971 and the local community here in the East End. [Bangladesh 50](#) is a partnership project with the National Portrait Gallery and includes the launch of a new public artwork coming soon!

- **Whose image is it anyway?**  
Wednesday 19 May 5.00-6.00pm

Join photographers Kois Miah and Phil Maxwell alongside Magda Keaney, Senior Curator of Photographs at the National Portrait Gallery, to discuss the ethics of ownership, focussing specifically on photographs of the East End's Bangladeshi community from the

1970s to the present day. The event will be convened by Nishat Alam from Khidr Collective Zine.

Please follow [this Eventbrite link](#) to book your place. The event will be hosted on Zoom and you will receive joining instructions one or two days before the event.

- **What next for Bengali archives?**  
Thursday 20 May 6.00-7.30pm

The last twenty years have seen a surge of interest in British Bengali history and the establishment of Bengali community archives. Join Julie Begum and Ansar Ahmed Ullah of the Swadhinata Trust in conversation with Howard Doble from London Metropolitan Archives. They will explore the challenges in researching as well as capturing these histories, the importance of collecting them, and reflections for the future.

Please follow [this Eventbrite link](#) to book your place. The event will be hosted on Zoom and you will receive joining instructions one or two days before the event.

- **My Great Uncle, Ayub Ali Master**  
Saturday 29 May 2.00-4.00pm

A pioneer of the Bengali East End, Ayub Ali Master opened the Shah Jalal Restaurant and Coffee House in Spitalfields in 1920. The café became a vital community hub for migrants from the Indian subcontinent, where activists made plans and new arrivals could access information and shelter as well as a taste of home. We are delighted to welcome his grand-nephew Tam Hussein who will recount the story of two Sylheti brothers who arrived in London in 1919 and changed the face of the East End forever.

Please follow [this Eventbrite link](#) to book. The event will be hosted on Zoom and you will receive joining instructions one or two days before the event.

- **Home, Sweet (Squat) Home: Housing struggles in 1970s Tower Hamlets**  
Saturday 5 June 2:00 – 3:30pm

Denied adequate housing by local councils and facing the rise of racist violence from the National Front, in the 1970s hundreds of Bengali families squatted properties in Tower Hamlets. In Spitalfields and beyond, squatting provided a solution to the housing crisis and helped to establish a safer community. Featuring Shabna Begum (QMUL) and conversations with Husnara Matin and Helal Abbas who were squatters from the time, the session will establish and explore the significance of this form of activism to Bengali homemaking in the East End.

Please follow [this Eventbrite link](#) to book your place. The event will be hosted on Zoom and you will receive joining instructions one or two days before the event.

## New archive collection released



We have recently catalogued the records of **Coverdale and Ebenezer Congregational Church, Stepney** and this collection is now available for research!

Archives of several smaller chapels located in Mile End, Shadwell and Whitechapel are included in the collection - these chapels preceded the church and ultimately were amalgamated into it.

Records of baptism, marriage and burials, membership lists, minutes of meetings, accounts, church histories and printed material are all included. The registers and lists are of particular value for tracing individuals - you can find the names of members, their age, residence, date of admission to the congregation and other remarks.

### **A family tree of chapels**

The Coverdale and Ebenezer Congregational Church is now closed, but for many years it was a member of the London Congregational Union - a place of worship for Protestant Christians who had the right to practice reformed worship independently without interference from a wider authority.

Preserved within the collection are fascinating records of predecessor chapels which merged to form the Coverdale and Ebenezer Congregational Church.

- The Ebenezer Chapel, Ratcliff Highway, Shadwell was established in 1785. It moved to Watney Street, Commercial Road, St George-in-the-East in the late 1870s. By 1910 it joined with the Brunswick Congregational Church to form Brunswick and Ebenezer Congregational Church. Also referred to as Watney Street Congregational Church this joined Coverdale in the 20th century.
- The Coverdale Chapel, Commercial Road, Limehouse was formed in 1838 in Dalgleish Place School Room. The first members were mainly from the church at Rose Lane, Ratcliff. Enhanced by members of Limehouse Independent Church, the Coverdale Chapel building opened in 1841.
- The Brunswick Congregational Church, 193 Whitechapel Road, was formed in 1894. It was an amalgamation or 'union' of the Sion Congregational Church (formerly the Sion Chapel) and Mile End Road Congregational Church (previously the Iron Chapel).

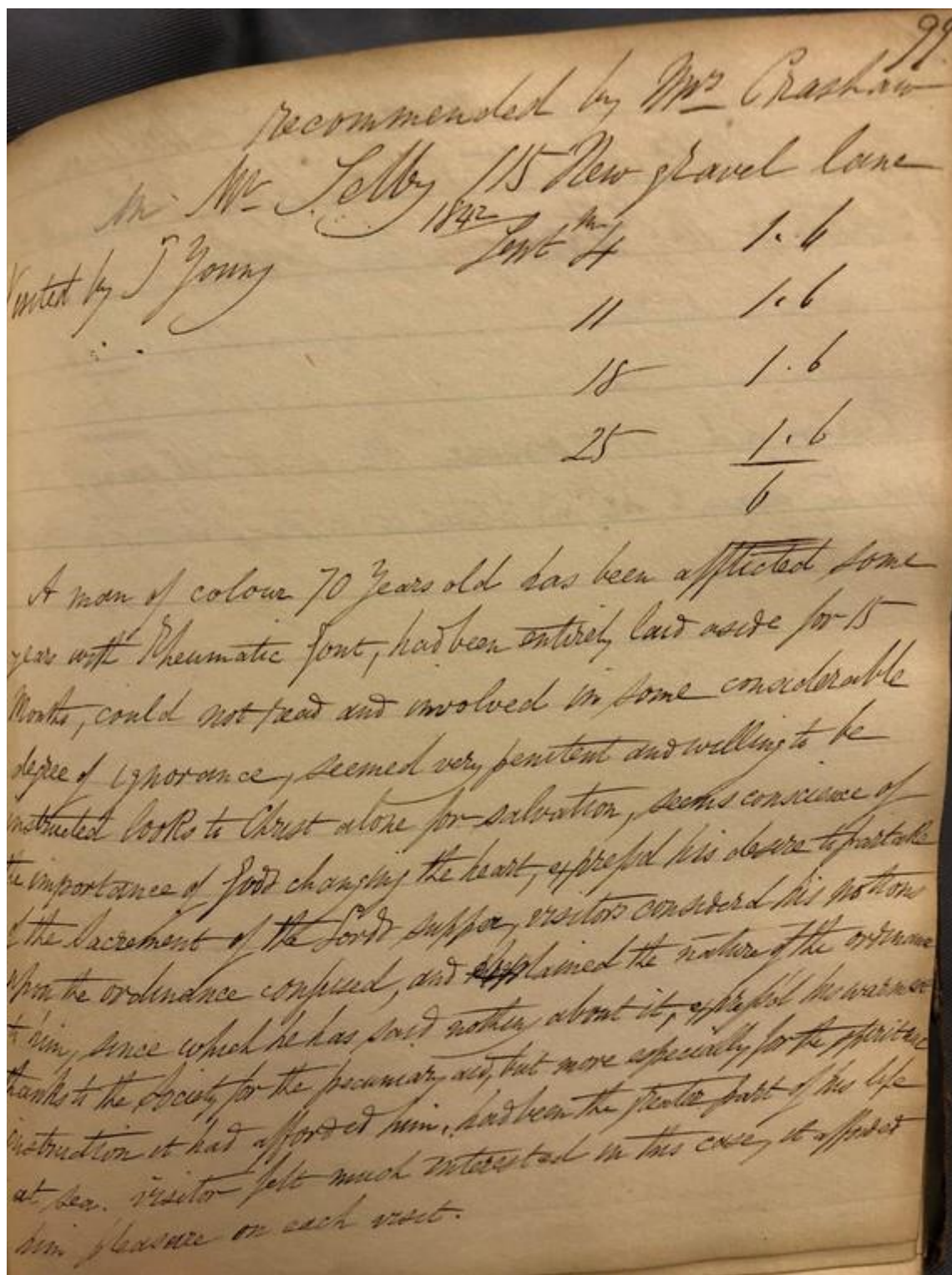
In addition to their value to genealogists and church historians, the records in this collection help to deepen our understanding of daily life in the Victorian East End. Here are some examples...

### **Emigration, race and welfare**

The Iron Chapel on Mile End Road was founded by Rev. Samuel Eastman in 1855, and soon accommodated two hundred hundred children in its Sunday school. Building debts were mitigated through a fundraising appeal but the church experienced difficulties in leadership. In 1870 a number of church officials resigned, some leaving the country for North America (ref. W/CAE/E/1).

Records of the Association for Visiting and Relieving the Sick Poor, established by the Ebenezer Chapel in Shadwell, provide details of care provided to individual residents during the period 1841-44. One such beneficiary, seventy year old Mr Selby of 115 New Gravel Lane, is described as a 'man of colour' (ref. W/CAE/B/3/1).





Record of visit to Mr Selby, a 'man of colour' living in Shadwell in the mid C19th. Ref: W/CAE/B/3/1

### How to research the collection

Researchers are welcome to order the original volumes to consult in the Reading Room. Some volumes are subject to restrictions due to their poor physical condition or data protection requirements. There are no digital copies.

Check out our Places of Worship guide for other related non-conformist churches and other places of worship in the East End. Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives would like to thank the Congregational History Society for depositing these records.

### Other sources

The National Archives holds the earliest baptism register and burial register for Ebenezer Chapel, Shadwell, covering 1824-1837 with some entries from 1820. These registers have been digitised and are searchable on [Ancestry](#) in the category 'England & Wales, Non-Conformist and Non-Parochial Registers, 1567-1936'.

At THLHLA we hold a microfilm copy of the burial register, 1822-1837, which is available for consultation in the Reading Room (ref: Film Number 1223).

## News from our friends at Half Moon



### Snapped 1990 | 2020 Exhibition

2020 marked the 30th birthday of Half Moon Young People's Theatre. As part of a series of activities to celebrate this milestone, some of Half Moon's young people took part in a photography project to explore the changes in the landscape of Tower Hamlets over 30 years. The result is *Snapped 1990 | 2020*, an exhibition of photographs taken in 1990 alongside images taken at the same locations, 30 years later, in 2020.

The exhibition began in February 2020, with a series of research sessions which took place with young people from Half Moon Theatre at Tower Hamlets Local History Library prior to the pandemic. The young people identified photographs taken in 1990 by local residents and professional photographers that would reveal the area's transformation. What had changed in the local area since the young people's company was established in 1990 and what had stayed the same?

In March 2020, the first COVID-19 lockdown was looming and the on-location photo shoots around the borough had to happen quickly. What had been intended as a celebration of the evolution of a cosmopolitan, thriving borough was now a poignant reminder of how precious life is, capturing a very particular moment in the history of the world. *Snapped 1990 | 2020* will be displayed in the Half Moon Gallery until 13 September 2021, before becoming a permanent exhibition in the Half Moon garden. The exhibition will begin online as a [virtual exhibition](#) with the hope of opening for in-person visits in due course.

## Opening hours and contact details

We have reopened and continue to operate on an appointments-only basis.

Our Reading Room is currently open for two days a week. There are procedures in place to ensure everyone's safety:

- You'll need to pre-book an appointment to visit us. Slots will be available on **Tuesdays** and **Fridays** at the following times:

Morning: 11am - 1.30pm

Afternoon: 2pm - 4.30pm

- You will need to **pre-order** items from the collection that you'd like to look at. The full range of our resources, including periodicals on microfilm, will be available. Not sure what we've got? [Search our collections catalogue](#).
- Free access to Ancestry.com will also be available onsite, using a PC or on your own device.
- Please **book via email** at least a week in advance of your preferred date. For full details on how to book, please head over to our [visitor information](#) webpage.
- Our events programme will remain online - no public gatherings will be taking place in the building for the time being.
- We're very excited to see you all, but please **don't drop in** - you must have a confirmed appointment to enter the building, and we hate to turn people away!

Feel free to contact us with any enquiries:

- [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk)
- <http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history>