



# Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



November 2016

## Brick Lane Born: Exhibition and Events



Gilbert & George contemplate one of Raju's photographs at the launch of *Brick Lane Born*

Our main exhibition, on show until 7 January is [Brick Lane Born](#), a display of over forty photographs taken in the mid-1980s by Raju Vaidyanathan depicting his neighbourhood and friends in and around Brick Lane. After a feature on ITV London News, the exhibition launched with a bang on 20 October with over a hundred visitors including Gilbert and George (pictured), a lively discussion and an amazing joyous atmosphere. Comments in the Visitors Book so far read:

- "Fascinating and absorbing. Raju's words and pictures are brilliant. Thank you."
- "Excellent photos and a story very similar to that of Vivian Maier."
- "What a fascinating and very special exhibition. The sharpness and range of photographs is impressive and I am delighted to be here."
- "What a brilliant historical testimony to a Brick Lane no longer in existence. Beautiful."
- "Just caught this on TV last night and spent over an hour going through it. Excellent B&W photos."

One launch attendee unexpectedly found a portrait of her late father in the exhibition and was overjoyed, not least because her children have never seen a photo of their grandfather during that period. Raju's photos and the wonderful stories told in his captions continue to evoke strong memories for people who remember the Spitalfields of the 1980s, as well as fascination in those who weren't there. An additional event has been added to the programme- see below for details. The opening hours of the exhibition are listed at the end of this email.

#### **Film Screening: A Kind of English**

Thursday 10 November, 6.00pm - 7.30pm

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2016 is the 30th anniversary of Ruhul Amin's ground-breaking feature film about the lives of Bengalis in London's East End. Raju and some of his friends worked on the production. Join him and others who were involved for a Q&A after the screening. This event is hosted in partnership with [Four Corners](#). Free, no booking required.

#### **A History of the Asian East End**

Thursday 17 November, 7.30pm - 9.00pm

Kobi Nazrul Centre, 30 Hanbury St, E1 6QR

Join Taryn Khanam and Raju Vaidyanathan for an introductory talk on the history of Asian settlement in Tower Hamlets. Free, no booking required. Please note this event takes place in Spitalfields at Kobi Nazrul Centre, not here.

#### **Identity and Culture in the Internet Age: the Cockney & Asian experience**

Saturday 19 November, 2.00pm - 4.00pm

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As more and more old photos of the East End are shared online, debates around identity for Cockneys and Asians have been revived. Raju will be joined by Sultana Qureshi, Con Maloney (Isle of Dogs Then & Now) and Taryn Khanam ([www.britbangla.net](http://www.britbangla.net)) for a lively discussion and chance to look at more photos. Free, no booking required.

#### **Exhibition Tour: Brick Lane Born**

Saturday 3 December, 11.30am-12.30pm

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**JUST ADDED!** Join Raju Vaidyanathan as he talks about each of the photographs in his Brick Lane

Born exhibition. Free, but limited capacity - booking required via [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) or 0207 364 1290.

## Other upcoming events

**Exhibition: Bombs, Bullets and Bandages**  
**1 November 2016 - 9 January 2017**  
**Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives**

Bombs, Bullets and Bandages is a free, community curated exhibition, organised by The Fusilier Museum, which explores the experiences of wounded soldiers in WWI and is currently on show on our first floor landing. To coincide with the exhibition's we are hosting a free talk here **TOMORROW**:

**Back in Blighty: Wounded Soldiers in Britain during WW1**  
**Thursday 3 November, 6-7.30pm**  
**Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives**



THE FUSILIER  
MUSEUM LONDON

Jack Davies, Researcher at the University of Kent & Turner Contemporary Gallery, will open The Fusilier Museum's touring exhibition Bombs, Bullets and Bandages with a talk exploring the social and cultural importance of the stately home hospital in wartime Britain through the stories of the individuals who experienced them. Jack will discuss the role of women, of crime and discipline, of nation specific hospitals for Australians, Canadians and Indians, in addition to the general experience of the wounded during WW1. Free talk tickets can be booked online [here](#).

**Remembering World War One**  
**Saturday 5 November**

As Remembrance Day approaches during this centenary year of World War One, we have planned a special afternoon here at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives. Both events listed below are free and no booking is required.



The Battle of the Somme

Talk: The Black Presence During WW1

2:00pm - 3:00pm

Join Selena Carty from [Black Poppy Rose](#) for a talk on the contribution of African / Black British people to the war effort. The talk will be followed by....

Film Screening: The Battle of the Somme

3.15pm - 4.30pm

A pioneering battlefield documentary that was seen

by huge audiences in the UK when it was released in August 1916, barely a month after the events it depicted.

**History Hoppers**

**Wednesday 16 November 2016, 2.30-4.30pm**  
**Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives**

Do you have a passion for old pictures? Fond memories of forgotten streets? Are you curious about archive collections? Our monthly History Hoppers group offers you the chance to explore original historical library and archive sources that help to tell the story of your local area in Tower Hamlets. Free. No booking required, just drop in! Tea, coffee and biscuits provided.

**Explore Your Archive: Map Collection**  
**Thursday 24 November, 6pm-8pm**  
**Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives**

Join us for an evening of

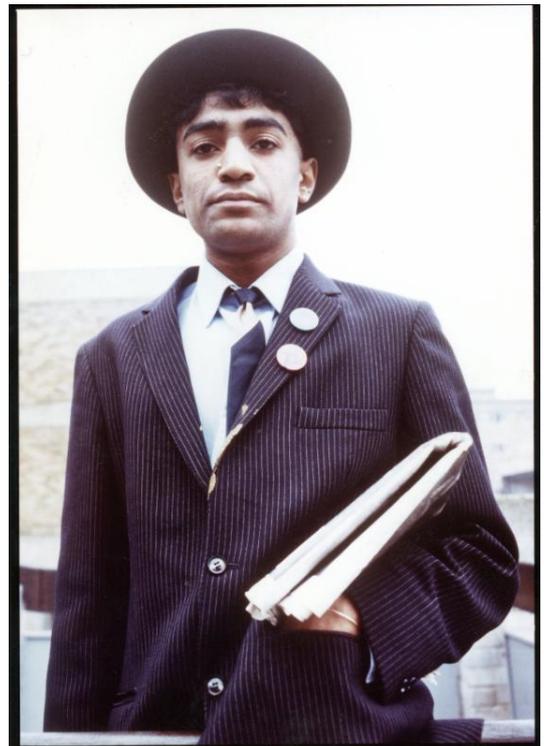
## **ARCHIVE EXPLORED**

exploration into our map collections, with a drop in session from 6pm to view historic maps of the modern London Borough of Tower Hamlets. This will include eighteenth century Gascoyne (1703), Rocque (1746) and Horwood (1792) maps, to both Poverty maps (1899), maps of wartime bomb damage, and nineteenth and twentieth century OS and Godfrey maps. This will be followed by an introductory talk on our map collections with Borough Archivist, Malcolm Barr-Hamilton, at 7pm. Free, no booking required.

**Suresh Singh: Memories of a Cockney Sikh**

**Saturday 3 December 2016, 2-3pm**  
**Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives**

Join Suresh Singh for this illustrated talk which will focus on his memories of growing up on Princelet Street, Spitalfields during the 1970s, at a time when the National Front were active in the area surrounding Brick Lane. Having experienced racist violence and harassment both at school and elsewhere, Suresh went on to become the first Punjabi punk, playing the drums for Spizzenergi on their single 'Where's Captain Kirk?' and joining their tour with Siouxsie and the Banshees in 1979. Later he studied carpentry and joinery, working on the restoration of a number of Georgian houses in Spitalfields, before studying architecture at University College London. This talk is free and no booking is required. It will be preceded by a guided tour of the Brick Lane Born exhibition by the photographer Raju Vaidyanathan at 11.30am (see above).



Suresh Singh

**Writeidea Festival**  
**Friday 11 - Sunday 13 November 2016**  
**Idea Store Whitechapel**

We are hosting a strand of talks with an East End history theme at this year's WriteIdea Festival, an annual weekend of free author events curated by Idea Store for Tower Hamlets, and supported by the Arts Council. Many great writers of fiction and non-fiction as well as children's and young adult authors will be present. Our strand will take place on Saturday 12 November, and the programme is:

- 1.00pm: Roger Mills, on Cable Street
- 2.30pm: Georgie Wemyss, on the lives of Indian seafarers
- 4.00pm: Laurence Ward, on the World War Two bomb damage maps
- 5.30pm: Sarah Wise, on the Old Nichol slum
- 7.00pm: Dan Cruikshank, on Spitalfields [FULLY BOOKED]



All events are free but tickets must be booked in advance [here](#). Do check out the full festival programme, as it is a great line-up. We look forward to seeing you there! Our staff will have a book stall with Christmas gifts available for purchase at the Idea Store on the Saturday only.

## Events from our friends...

**Talk: The Boss of Bethnal Green**  
**Thursday 17 November, 7.30pm**  
**Latimer Congregational Church Hall, Ernest Street, E1**

Join author Julian Woodford for a talk on 'the godfather of Regency London', Joseph Merceron. Hosted by the [East London History Society](#).

**Guided local history walks: Isle of Dogs, Bethnal Green, Poplar**  
**Various weekend dates, November 2016**

Three local history walks around the borough of Tower Hamlets are coming up this month, organised by a group of local guides: Andrew Parnell, Leigh Stanford and William Sharp.

Treasure Island: The Isle of Dogs' Hidden Gems  
Saturday 12 November at 11.00am

The face of the Island was transformed by wholesale regeneration and bombing in the 20th century. This walk looks at some of the buildings that were produced, from housing - social, private and charitable - to glittering offices and ornate buildings with important practical functions. It also reveals some natural features and green spaces which may surprise a first-time visitor. Above all, the walk seeks to convey a sense of the special character of the area, surrounded as it is by water, with its long association with the sea and maritime trades and its track record of adapting to massive economic change. Tickets cost £5. The walk starts at South Quay DLR station (eastern exit, Harbour Exchange side). To buy tickets and obtain more information go to: <http://tinyurl.com/TreasureIsland12Nov16>

Modernism and Model Dwellings: Housing in Bethnal Green  
Saturday 5 November at 11.00 am *and*  
Sunday 20 November at 11.00 am

The history of British social housing can be traced on this walk through Bethnal Green, from fine examples of the work of the Victorian philanthropic housing movement to 20th century council

housing, taking in the grandeur of the pivotal Boundary Street Estate (LCC) and works by two leading modernists -- Lasdun and Lubetkin -- working for a borough council that was radical in both its politics and its choice of architects. To buy tickets and obtain more information on 5 November go to: <http://tinyurl.com/Modernism-ModelDwellings5Nov> and on 20 November go to: <http://tinyurl.com/Modernism-ModelDwellings20Nov>

[Stock Bricks to Brutalism: Housing Design History in Poplar](#)  
Sunday 13 November at 11.00am

The walk focuses on social housing design in the massive slum clearance and redevelopment of the East End of London in the 20th century, taking in typical between-the-wars estates, the influential Lansbury Estate, which formed the Live Architecture Exhibition of the 1951 Festival of Britain, and two modernist developments of the 1960s and 70s around which there has been considerable controversy: Balfron Tower (Goldfinger) and Robin Hood Gardens (Smithsons) - at least until its scheduled demolition! Along the way we will get to know a little of the history of Poplar, from being one of the original Tower Hamlets, becoming home to the East India Company's shipbuilding yard and later its docks to being a base for some of the early leaders of the Labour movement. To buy tickets and obtain more information go to: <http://tinyurl.com/StockBricks13Nov>

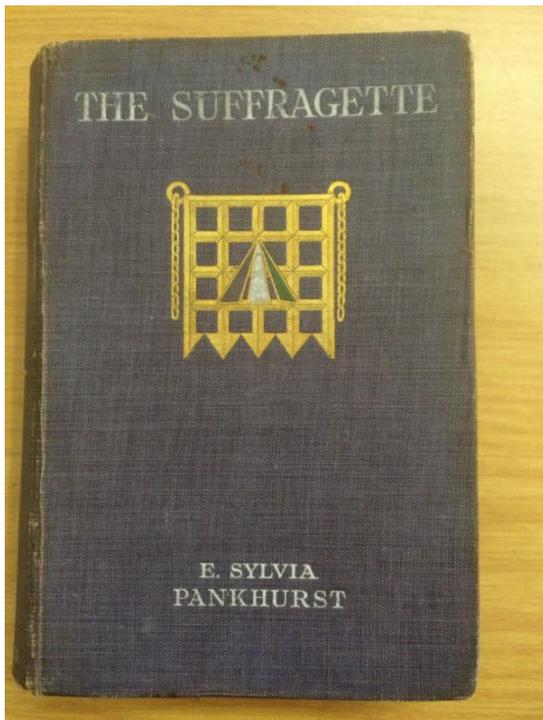
## Book sale & Xmas gifts

Our first second-hand book sale earlier this month was a huge success! We sold about a fifth of our stock of duplicate books and raised over £700 for our Donations fund. We still have plenty of duplicates left and will be hosting another book sale early in the New Year on **Saturday 7 January**, 10am-4pm. This will feature a totally new selection to last time - so even if you came to the last one, make sure to come again for a fresh choice of bargains.

If you are looking for gift ideas for the holiday period don't forget we have a big range of books for sale about the history of East London, including some hard to find titles as well as a large range of historic maps. We also have new tote bags! Priced at £6 with long handles, the bag features an image from our collections - an engraving of our building when it was originally constructed as the Vestry Hall of the Hamlet of Mile End Old Town. The bags will also be on sale at our book stall at the Writeidea festival (see above).



## Collections news

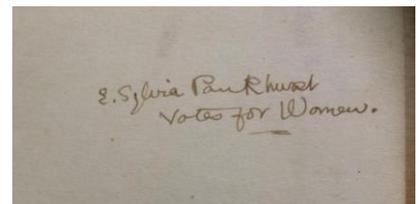


We are very pleased to be able to add a signed first edition copy of **Sylvia Pankhurst's** book *The Suffragette: the History of the Women's Militant Suffrage movement, 1905-1910* to the library's Special Collections. This copy belonged to Elsie Lagsding (1887-1977) who lived at 4 Carters Terrace, Poplar, and was also a suffragette. The book was her personal copy which had been signed for her by Sylvia Pankhurst (see photo below).

The book was donated to the library in 2007 by her nephew, John O'Sullivan. He donated the book along with transcripts of an oral history interview she provided a few years before her death in 1977. The oral history transcript describes her early life and jobs, as well as meeting Sylvia Pankhurst, early meetings, attending demonstrations, being arrested, working at the Cost Price Resturant, selling the Dreadnought, and her other recollections of the Suffragettes from that time. She also describes the air raids in the First World War, including the bombing of North Street School, anti-German riots, and arguing with Minnie Lansbury over the conditions in the resturant. This transcript inspired John to look further

into his family history.

He wrote a book about the family's history in Poplar called *Long Ago and Far Away* and a copy of this is also held in the library collections. The book covers not only details of his ancestry but also his own experiences of growing up in Poplar. Readers are welcome to come in and read both books and the oral history transcript. This important donation to our collections illustrates how such an important aspect of national political and social history is proudly rooted in the lives of local East End families.



In other Poplar collections news, the research papers of **Will Crooks** biographer, Paul Tyler, are now fully catalogued (ref. P/TYC). Crooks, Poplar born and bred, was an early Labour Party pioneer and these papers will be a boon to not only those interested in Crooks' career but also the early history of the Labour Party. Not heard of Crooks? Then visit our online exhibition: <https://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history-online-exhibitions-will-crooks>

## Opening hours

**Monday:** 9am-5pm (exhibition only)

**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

## Christmas closure

Last date of opening: **Thursday 22 December at 8pm**  
New Year reopening: **Tuesday 3 January at 10am**

Closed from Friday 23 Dec - Monday 2 January inclusive.

## Contact us

Send us your enquiry via email, phone or letter at

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