

# Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



## Soup kitchens and Spitalfields



*The soup kitchen at the Stranger's Home in Limehouse, 1868, pictured in the Illustrated London News.*

### A talk by Phil Carstairs

Thursday 29 September | 6pm-7.30pm | FREE | [Book your place on Eventbrite](#)

Spitalfields and Poplar have always been a place for London's new arrivals to set up home - Huguenot refugees in the early eighteenth century followed by Irish, Jewish and Asian immigrants in the nineteenth. During hard times, many of these new arrivals relied on soup kitchens that became famous, run by the local community or even celebrity chefs, reported on by national newspapers and even discussed in Parliament.

We are delighted to welcome Philip Carstairs from the University of Leicester who will be giving this talk on feeding the migrant poor in the 18th-19th century East End, with a focus

on Jewish soup kitchens. There will be a selection of relevant materials on display from Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives collections.

This event is part of the Feeding the Hamlets exhibition programme.

## Recalling October 1936



*Met police officers escorting the BUF march through the East End. Ref no. P34344*

### The archives and activism of the Cable Street Group

Thursday 6 October | 6:00-7.30pm | FREE | [Book your place on Eventbrite!](#)

The Battle of Cable Street is one of the most important events in the history of 20th century London, but decades before smartphones and all of the other devices that can now capture 'instant history' how was this seminal day recorded for posterity? There are a number of contemporary photographs and newsreels, some of which have become iconic, but there are other sources to be found in our collection here at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives which can throw light on what happened on 4 October 1936.

Join our Heritage Officer **Andrew Lewis** as he discusses the recently catalogued records of the Cable Street Group, a community-based organisation dedicated to keeping alive the memory and example of those who came together in October 1936 to stop the British Union of Fascists marching through what was then a predominantly Jewish neighbourhood.

Andrew will explain the challenging nature of the records from an archival perspective, outline the way they have been catalogued and suggest how they might be used by those interested not only in the Battle but also life in Cable Street and the East End in the 1930s. With very few individuals of that generation now left, he will also offer some personal reflections on the nature of collective memory and public history.

## Foraging in the Cemetery Park

A plant medicine walk with Rasheeqa Ahmad

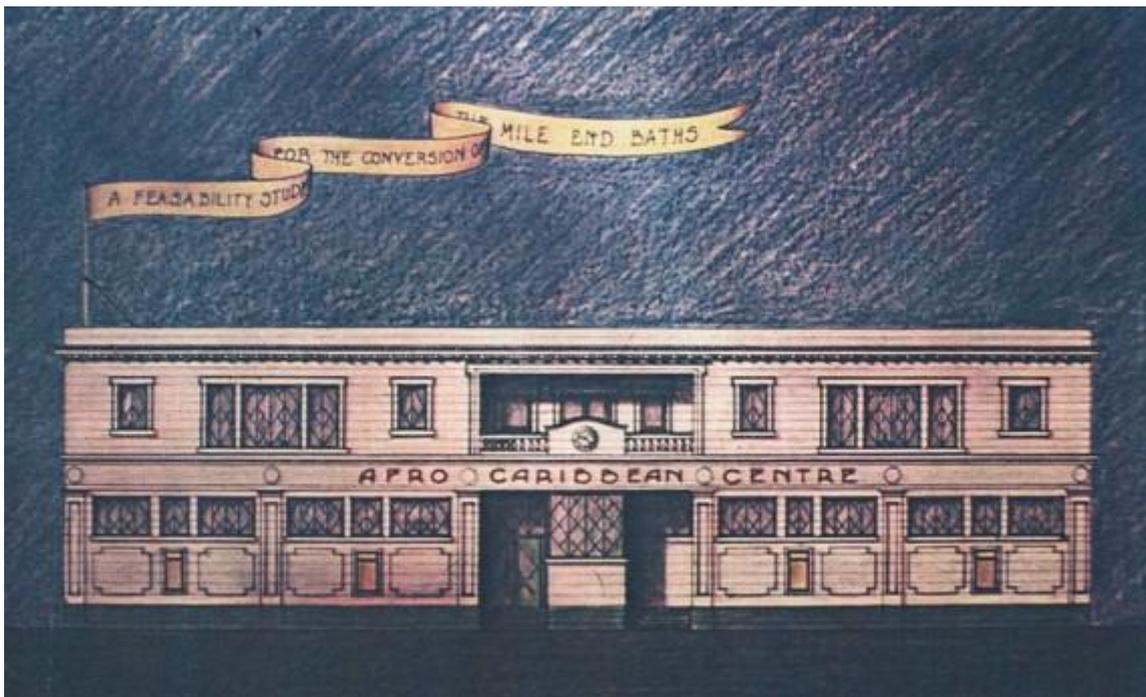
Saturday 8 October | 11am-1pm | FREE | [Fully booked - returns only](#)

Do you know white-dead nettle from regular nettle? Or the magic of mugwort? What nourishing offerings do our green spaces have that we normally just walk by? Join herbalist **Rasheeqa Ahmad** for a foraging walk at **Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park**, where we will explore the histories and politics of plant medicine.

Rasheeqa Ahmad (@HedgeHerbs) is a herbalist whose aim is connecting communities with the potential of plant knowledge and craft as a way to develop healthier living systems and relationships. She is an instigator of the Community Apothecary in her locality, a project that brings community members together around a patchwork of medicinal herb gardens where they can learn about growing, wildcrafting and making medicines together.

This event is part of the Feeding the Hamlets exhibition programme.

## Black History Month 2022



*Campaign to convert the former Mile End Baths into a community centre, 1984. Image courtesy Archibald McAllister and Harry Cumberbatch*

## Black History and Mental Health

### A workshop in partnership with THACMHO

**Saturday 15 October | 10.30am - 4pm | FREE | [Book your place on Eventbrite](#)**

All are welcome to join Tower Hamlets African and Caribbean Mental Health Organisation (THACMHO) for an all-day workshop at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives exploring the connections between Black history and mental health.

The event will take place in our ground floor Education Room and will include pop-up exhibitions and highlights from Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives.

We are pleased to announce that **Malcolm Philips** will chair the day. The morning session focusses on the pioneering community development work that took place in Tower Hamlets during the 1980s, with guest speaker **Archibald McAllister** sharing his experience as a Development Worker for the Tower Hamlets African and Caribbean Association (THACA).

Following a Caribbean buffet lunch, the afternoon will focus on mental health, with a presentation on the THACMHO story and a panel discussion with **Valarie Grahame** and **Charles Brown**.

THACMHO are celebrating 25-years service since the community consultation conference was held in November 1996.

Please note this event will be filmed. There is free on-street parking nearby. Book your free place by [clicking here](#). If you have any access needs, please contact us.

## Bethnal Green Library's Centenary



*Bethnal Green's grateful readers of 1922 pose outside their new library, which opened 100 years ago this October!*

After three years off, the **Write Idea Festival** - the borough of Tower Hamlets' FREE festival of literature and reading - is BACK! It takes place over the first weekend of November, and this year, to mark its centenary, the venue for the festival is our beloved Bethnal Green Library instead of the regular Idea Store Whitechapel.

Tickets will be released on 3 October, but you can [check out the programme now](#) - which includes some great writers of interest to a local history audience - including Ben Aaronovitch, Vivi Lachs, David Hoffman, Shahida Rahman and many more.

Fans of Bethnal Green Library are invited to assemble to recreate the iconic photo at its opening 100 years ago. If you'd like to be one of the massed faces, come to the front of the building at **4pm on Thursday 13 October** as we attempt to re-enact it!

Just turn up - no booking required. Free tea and biscuits! This photoshoot will precede [the 6pm launch of author Kate Thompson's novel \*The Little Wartime Library\*](#).

## Exploring the histories of food production in the East End

[More information about our current exhibition \*Feeding the Hamlets\*](#)

In production since 2019 but delayed by the pandemic, *Feeding the Hamlets* is the brand-new exhibition at Tower Hamlets Local History & Archives, using the unique collections held here as a lens through which to explore the borough's history of producing food.

For centuries, the East End's landscape and social and economic history have been influenced by the growing, trading or manufacturing of food. Before 1800 farmland and market gardens characterised the area, but rapid industrialisation saw this pastoral tradition give way to the factories and warehouses producing food for mass consumption nationwide and globally. Close proximity to the docks ensured that food businesses based in the East End had ready access to a fresh supply of raw ingredients, within many supplies imported from countries colonised by Britain.

Photographs, deeds, plans, minutes, illustrations and maps are among the many unique items selected by staff. These sources illustrate fascinating and lesser-known tales from the history of food production in the East End – from flour milling and sugar refining to cow-keeping and vegetable growing. The exhibition looks at the methods and sites where food production took place, as well as the people who were involved.

Huge thanks to all archive staff whose hard work made this exhibition possible - particularly Medha Chotai, Sanjida Alam and Genova Messiah who really went the extra mile in getting the very complex exhibition researched, designed and installed and organising the brilliant launch event last night.

A programme of free events is taking place to explore the exhibition's themes in more detail. More will be added later in the year. The exhibition is on display in the entrance hall during our opening times.

*Feeding the Hamlets* will be on show until February 2023. If you would like to bring a group or class for a tour or workshop inspired by the display, please get in touch at [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk)!



*Morton's jam and sweet factory at Millwall. Ref IHT/190\_05*

#### **Save the date!**

Morton's and McDougall's will be under discussion at a special event on **Saturday 3 December** hosted by Friends of Island History Trust. Check our website for more details.

## **Recent Feeding the Hamlets events**



We were delighted to welcome Esther and Ray Rinkoff to the library on 3 September, where a packed-out audience to enjoy hearing about the history of her legendary family bakery in Stepney, established in 1911, and taste some sample bakes!

Later that week local historian and author of 'The East End Canal Tales' joined us for a fascinating talk on 200 years of the industries along the Regent's Canals, which include food manufacturers.

Thank you, Carolyn, Esther and Ray!

We hope to see you at an event soon.



## Contact us

**We are waiting to hear from you!**

- Email us: [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk)
- Visit our website: <http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history>
- Phone (during opening hours only): 020 7364 1290

### Reading Room - Regular opening hours

- Tuesday 10.30am-4pm
- Wednesday 10.30am-4pm
- Thursday 10.30am-7pm

First and third Saturdays of every month:

- Saturday 10am-5pm

That's the following Saturdays coming up:

- Saturday 6 August
- Saturday 20 August
- Saturday 3 September
- Saturday 17 September

Additionally our **Exhibition Hall** is open 10am-5pm Monday-Friday, plus the Saturdays and Thursday evenings as above.

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