



# Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



September 2017

## African and Caribbean Family History Day

**Saturday 7 October, 10.30am-4.00pm**

We're pleased to announce the full programme for our African and Caribbean Family History Day, run in partnership with the [Tony Cheeseman Foundation](#). Visitors will have the opportunity to get help researching African and Caribbean ancestors, find out more about black heritage in London's East End and browse a number of displays and stalls, including a Hansib Publications book stall (50% discount). The following talks will take place throughout the day:



### **11.00: Tracing Black Ancestry: Secrets of the 1817 Slave Registers Uncovered**

Family historian and author Paul Crooks will give an account of how he traced his ancestors from suburban North London to Jamaica and ultimately back to the Gold Coast of Africa, and gained international recognition for his breakthroughs in African-Caribbean genealogical research.

### **12 noon: Introduction to Researching your Caribbean Ancestry**

Join genealogist Sharon Tomlin for this introductory talk on how to begin tracing your Caribbean ancestry. Sharon is an experienced family historian and runs a variety of workshops and classes on tracing Caribbean ancestry.

### **1.00: Mini Talks**

Grab some food and listen to a variety of short, 10 minute talks, including one by Tower Hamlets African & Caribbean Mental Health Organisation (THACMHO), a voluntary group which has played a leading role in researching and publicising the African and Caribbean history of London's East End.

### **2.00: African and Caribbean History at The National Archives**

Sandra Shakespeare from The National Archives gives an introductory talk on the records available at TNA and how they can help you to discover more about African and Caribbean history and ancestry.

### 3.00: 30 years from Black History Month: what are the Key lessons for family history?

Join Patrick Vernon OBE, social commentator and leading expert on African and Caribbean genealogy in the UK, for this fascinating talk. Patrick is the founder of Every Generation Media and 100 Great Black Britons, and is also Editor-in-Chief of Black History Month Magazine and a campaigner for Windrush Day as a public holiday.

This event is free and no booking is required - spend the day with us or just drop in!

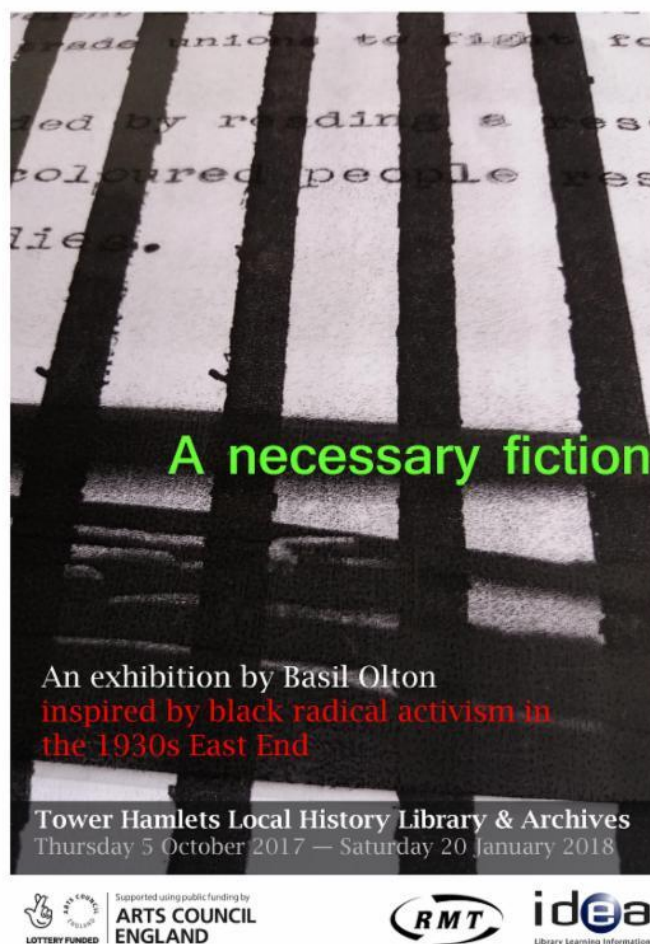
#### New Exhibition!

##### **A necessary fiction**

**5 October 2017 - 20 January 2018**

Launching next week as part of Black History Month, *A necessary fiction* is a new exhibition of artwork by ceramicist **Basil Olton**, which explores the untold history of anti-imperialist black activism in interwar London. The work is inspired by Chris Braithwaite, also known as Chris Jones, a resident of Stepney, trade unionist and founder of the Colonial Seamen's Association who worked and organised in the East End during the 1930s and 1940s.

The histories of people of African and African-Caribbean descent are often overlooked in East End heritage, with other migrant experiences tending to be foregrounded. However, due to the central role our docks and docklands have played in the legacy of British colonialism, much black history resides in Tower Hamlets waiting to be uncovered.



Basil Olton, a ceramics artist and a colleague in [Idea Store Learning](#) - Tower Hamlets Council's adult and community education service - approached us some years ago, keen to use our extensive heritage collections here to inspire the creation of new artwork responding to the borough's hidden black histories.

Basil was immediately drawn to the life and work of Chris Braithwaite, who also used the pseudonym Chris Jones. Originally from Barbados, Braithwaite was a former seaman turned revolutionary activist who lived at Turners Road, Stepney, with his wife and family from 1929 to his untimely death in 1944. He campaigned tirelessly for equal employment rights in the maritime industries for colonial seamen and for the liberation of Africa and the Caribbean from imperial rule.

Surviving archives documenting aspects of Braithwaite's life - including his surveillance by the state, held at [The National Archives](#) - have been manipulated by the artist using a range of print, ceramic and textile forms. Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives is thrilled to host this exhibition of artwork which demonstrates so vitally that history – and the process of

trying to access it in institutional archives - is always political, as well as personal. We are very grateful to the Arts Council and to the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMT) for providing grants for this exhibition, which will enable a youth arts programme for local residents and workshops for schools to be delivered alongside it.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a programme of free public events - more will be added shortly!

## **Events programme**

### **Exhibition Launch**

**Thursday 5 October, 6:00 - 7:30pm**

Artist Basil Olton will launch the new exhibition *A necessary fiction*, as well as an illustrated catalogue featuring two essays on his new work in ceramics and mixed media. Free, no booking required. Refreshments provided. Speeches at 7pm.

### **Talk: The Politics of Exhibiting**

**Thursday 19 October, 6:15 - 7:30pm**

How do memory and history converge in the social production of heritage? What is the role of collections, exhibitions and institutions in the construction of knowledge? A panel discussion with Dorothy Rose du Boulay (grand-daughter of Chris Braithwaite), Michael McMillan and Basil Olton. Free, no booking required.

### **Half-Term Sculpture Workshop**

**Tuesday 24 October, 2:00 - 4:00pm**

Inspired by the exhibition and themes of recorded and un-recorded family history and recollection, this creative workshop for families and children will utilise shape and form and the beauty of the fragment to create a 3D form using Modrock sculpting material. Free, but booking is required.

### **Half-Term Creative Workshop**

**Thursday 26 October, 10:00am - 12:00pm**

Inspired by text, texture and the transient meaning of images, this creative workshop for families will use mixed media and cut-out shapes to create an A3 collage banner. Free, but booking is required.

### **Talk: Pan-Africanism, anti-imperialism and the Left in interwar London**

**Thursday 26 October, 6:30 - 7:30pm**

From the Scottsboro protests to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, this talk by Hakim Adi (Professor of the History of Africa and the African Diaspora, University of Chichester) will consider the activities and campaigns of the International African Service Bureau, of which Chris Braithwaite was Secretary. The IASB was a Pan-Africanist organisation committed to trade unionism and anti-imperialism. Free, no booking required.

### **Talk: Love and loss in mid-century multicultural Stepney**

**Thursday 7 December, 6:30 - 7:30pm**

Join Dr Rob Waters (University of Sussex) for this talk focusing on local educationalist Edith Ramsay, who lived and worked in Stepney during the 1940s and 1950s and became deeply involved with the transnational lives of Stepney's African, Caribbean and South Asian populations. The letters in her archive (held here at THLHLA) reveal lives disrupted by war, illness and poverty, but also give an intimate insight into convivial life and love in Stepney, and its identity as a historic multicultural centre. Free, no booking required.

Please email [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk) or call 020 7364 1290 to reserve your place, if



booking is required.

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## Other Upcoming Events

### Talk: Jewish Participation in the Fire Service during World War Two

**Thursday 12 October, 6:30 - 7:30pm**

Join Martin Sugarman (Archivist, Association for Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women) and Stephanie Maltman (Firemen Remembered) for this fascinating account of the essential role played by Jewish people in the Fire Service during the Second World War. Hear previously untold stories of courage, including that of the only London fireman to be awarded the George Cross for bravery during the war. Free, no booking required.



### Family Fun at the Archives

**Monday 23 October, 11:00am - 12:30pm**

This half-term, explore one of the East End's best kept secrets with your children – Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives! A range of creative activities will be laid on for children, inspiring them with historic materials from the library including old photographs, maps and documents illustrating the landscapes and people of the East End in centuries past. This session is designed for 6-11 year olds, but

younger/older children are welcome. To book your family's place at this **free** event, please call 0207 364 1290 or [email](#) us.

### East End History Club

Are you interested in the history of London's East End? If so, come along to one of our **free** drop-in sessions. You'll have the chance to browse through old photographs, maps, newspapers and archival documents relating to a range of popular subjects, such as housing, health, immigration, work, school, leisure and much more! These sessions are ideal for those who are curious about local history and want to find out more. There's no need to book, just drop in. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided. Suitable for adults and children (11+).

Upcoming dates:

Saturday 21 October 2017, 2:00 - 4:00pm

Saturday 2 December 2017, 2:00 - 4:00pm

Saturday 3 February 2018, 2:00 - 4:00pm

Saturday 17 March 2018, 2:00 - 4:00pm

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## Writeidea Festival 2017



**Friday 17 - Sunday 19 November 2017**  
**Idea Store Whitechapel**

We're looking forward to this year's Writeidea Festival. Now in its ninth year, Tower Hamlets Council's unique and free reading festival will include talks by a wide variety of authors, including a local history programmed by yours truly, featuring Gillian Tindall, Jerry White and Julian Woodford.

For more information, visit the [website](#). Booking goes live next week.

## London Libraries Festival 2017

As part of the first ever London Libraries Festival, Idea Store Whitechapel will be hosting two events with Tower Hamlets born music legend Jah Wobble.

**Jah Wobble in Conversation with Mike Tyrrell**  
**Friday 13 October 3:00 - 4:00pm**  
**Idea Store Whitechapel**

In this intimate 'in conversation' event, Jah Wobble with the help of Mike Tyrrell (lifelong Stepney resident and local historian) will explore a whole host of East End topics in what promises to be an enjoyable afternoon of insightful and entertaining conversation. Jah Wobble's autobiography *Memoirs of a Geezer* is a great read if you're interested in the Stepney of the mid to late twentieth century, or the punk scene he was part of. He did a talk for us in 2010 and it was absolutely fantastic, including stories of working here back when it was the main lending library for the borough. [Book your free ticket!](#)

**Jah Wobble and Invaders of the Heart**  
**Friday 13 October 7:00 - 8:30pm**  
**Idea Store Whitechapel**

Jah Wobble has always managed to surprise, delight and confound his core audience. Never following the dictates of record marketing men, he provides continued creativity and invention. Join him for a fantastic aural journey through dub, world, ambient and avant-rock music, as he paints his entrancingly dark, textural soundscapes.

Both events are free but booking is required - visit the [website](#) for more details.



## New Somali East End project



Numbi Arts are leading a community arts project called [Coming Here: Being Here](#) – archiving British Somali heritage in the East End of London.

Funded by Tower Hamlets Council Somali Task Force and delivered over five months, from 23 September 2017 – 28 February 2018, this project will gather and share the stories of people in the Somali community who have lived and worked in Tower Hamlets for decades.

Numbi Arts will train up to 15 volunteers to help design, develop and deliver the project. Participants will attend an archive workshop here looking at our related collections. For further information and to

apply, please visit the [website](#). Please note people of Somali heritage will be prioritised.

## 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

## Saturday Opening

We are open 9am-5pm on the first and third Saturdays of every month, for research in the reading room and exhibition viewing. That's the following Saturdays coming up:

Saturday 7 October

Saturday 21 October

Saturday 4 November

Saturday 18 November

## Contact Us

Send us your enquiry via email, phone or letter:

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Email: [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

Visit our website

[www.ideastore.co.uk](http://www.ideastore.co.uk)

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[www.THcatalogue.org.uk](http://www.THcatalogue.org.uk)

