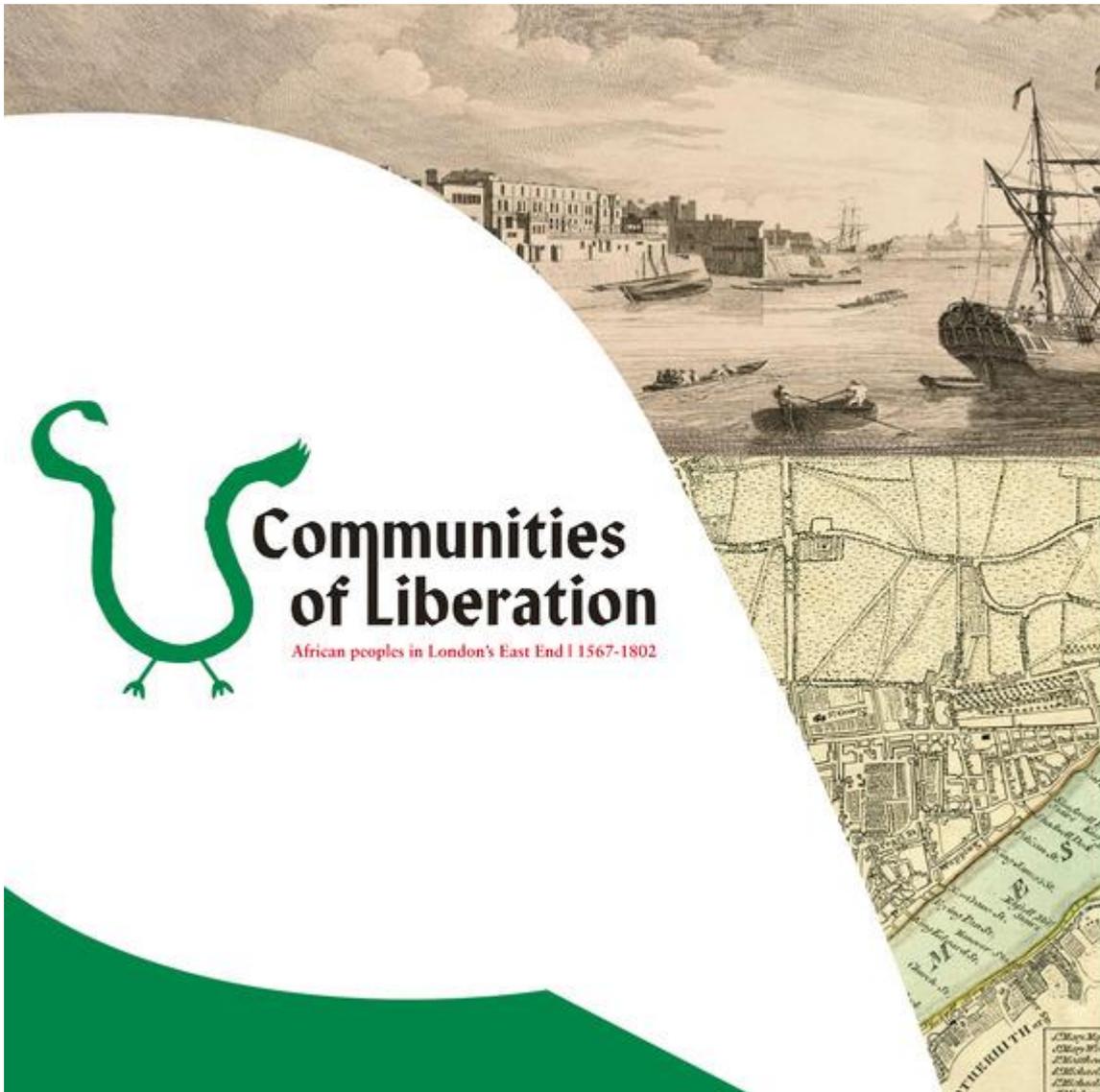


# Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



## Communities of Liberation

African peoples in London's East End 1567-1802

### Communities of Liberation

#### Your chance to become a Co-Producer

There is no public recognition of African people who lived in the East End 300 years ago.

Now, thanks to funding from Historic England, Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives is seeking **6** local people of African heritage to research in the archives and

produce new creative work – visual, text and sound – which imagines and gives life to these neglected stories.

**Please get in touch if you:**

- Have African or African Caribbean heritage - age 16 to elder
- Live in Tower Hamlets or have a strong connection and familiarity with the borough
- Are keen to do historical research and creative work inspired by your findings
- Do not have formal training in history or visual arts – people with no specific qualifications or experience are particularly welcome
- Are available to attend fortnightly 2.5 hour workshops in East London during Friday daytimes

**What do you get out of it?**

- Your work featuring in a groundbreaking public exhibition, on digital platforms and in audio portraits
- Training in archival research from heritage experts
- Support to creatively imagine the lives of African people found in the archives using visual arts, writing, sound recording and editing
- Payment for your time at London Living Wage - £13.15 per hour (total fee available £1,270)

**You'll be expected to:**

- Commit 4 x half-days per month during May to November 2024 (12 days in total)
- Collaborate and share your experiences with the group throughout the project
- Take responsibility for completing the tasks assigned to you

**Sound good?**

- Send us an email telling us a bit about yourself, why you fit the bill and want to be involved
- If it's easier, you can email a video or voice note instead
- Elders supported by younger family members are welcome

**Deadline for applications: 5pm on Tuesday 2 April 2024**

**Email for more info and to submit applications – [Tony.T@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:Tony.T@towerhamlets.gov.uk)**

**Final weeks: Brick Lane 1978 exhibition**

# BRICK LANE 1978 THE TURNING POINT



02/DECEMBER/2023  
TO 16/MARCH/2024

*Photograph (c) Paul Trevor of an anti-racist protest in Brick Lane, 1978.*

## Exhibition and events | until 16 March

We are entering the last few weeks of the current exhibition at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, which reveals the dramatic events in 1978 sparked by the racist murder of Altab Ali, a 24-year-old Bengali leather garments worker, and pays tribute to the activists who mobilised around the rallying cry of justice that followed.

Local photographer **Paul Trevor** documented how members of the local Bengali community endured racial abuse as a constant factor of everyday life, and the moment at which they mobilised against racist violence and institutional police racism. The exhibition – **Brick Lane 1978: The Turning Point** - brings together seventy of Trevor's photographs as well as original archival materials and first person testimony.

The display was originally created in 2022 as part of a major heritage project led by Four Corners and [Swadhinata Trust](#), in partnership with [Paul Trevor](#) and supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. With the help of volunteers and original activists, the project created a record of this watershed moment as told by local people.

The final event in the programme is below, also coinciding with Women's History Month.

## East End History Club: Women's Revolt!

**Workshop | Saturday 16 March, 11am-1pm**

**Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives**

In partnership with The Women's Library at LSE, we will be exploring how women in the East End resisted and fought for their liberation. Whether it was for voting rights, better living and working conditions, equal pay or better health and family care, you will have the

opportunity to look through material from the collections of both archives. There will also be a badge-making activity for those who feel inspired to mark their own mini protest!

[Book your free place here!](#)

## More local newspapers digitised



*Cutting edge microfilm technology in use at Bancroft Library in 1973. Image ref no: P28621*

All issues of the *East London Advertiser* published between January 1960 and December 1979 have now been digitised and are available to search in our Reading Room. Thanks to our new digital microfilm reader, these peerless repositories of East End local history are now fully searchable PDFs, and what once would have taken hours to find by trawling through bound volumes or reels of microfilm can now be discovered through a simple keyword search.

Our digitised newspaper collections for this period are especially useful if you are researching:

- **Family history**, through announcements of births, marriages, and deaths, and obituaries
- **Local businesses**, via advertisements and job postings
- **East End politics and events**, covering elections, crime, and social movements
- **Cultural life**, including theatrical performances, concerts, and festivals
- **Sports**, such as football and boxing matches
- **the Bangladeshi community** as it grew more and more established in Tower Hamlets

Due to copyright restrictions these newspapers are only available to search in our reading room and cannot be shared online. This is an ongoing project with the aim of digitising all our issues of the *East London Advertiser* up to 1996.

# Women's History Month 2024

## Child Migrant Voices in Modern Britain

**Saturday 6 March | 2.00pm**

**Venue: Idea Store Bow**, Gladstone Place, E3 (off Roman Road Market opposite Tesco)

'Child Migrant Voices in Modern Britain; Oral Histories 1930s to the Modern Day' is a new book by author Eithne Nightingale. At this event for International Women's Day, come to Idea Store Bow to watch a powerful short film about a young girl, Linh Vu escaping Vietnam by boat. The film, which uses Linh's artwork, will serve as the stimulus for a discussion with chair, **Rayah Feldman**, **Eithne Nightingale** and **Linh Vu** about how the lived experiences of migration of girls from different cultural backgrounds may differ from those of boys in education, choosing a marriage partner, work and feelings about having left the country of their birth.

Suitable for all including with children. Just turn up, no need to book.

## Our next exhibition: What we have become

### Archival breaks, gaps and silences

**Exhibition | 26 March – 1 June 2024**

A new exhibition at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives will showcase the work of five visual artists who are exploring the impact of local and colonial archives on personal and collective identity.

Curated by ceramicist Basil Olton, the group exhibition **What We Have Become** will display new artwork including painting and drawing, photography, collage and sculpture, responding to Stuart Hall's idea of cultural identity being formed from "points of deep significant difference".

The artists' work explores the impacts of silence and erasure in archival records created and kept by the British state about people of colour – for example, the destruction of Home Office immigration records which caused the Windrush Scandal – and how the violence implicit in the destruction of archival records may be reproduced as a rupture in the sense of self, identity and belonging.

Casting the exhibition as a space of healing and reconciliation, the artists evoke new narratives emphasising the contributions, resilience and rich cultural heritage of communities of colour, with the histories of Black and Asian Britons retold on their own terms.

Participating artists include Rudy Loewe, Holly Graham, Diensen Pamben, Kelly Wu and Basil Olton.

Alongside the display, **What We Have Become** will include an events programme of artist's talks, clay ceramics workshops for adults and children, a creative workshop at THLHLA using archival inspiration, and sessions for pupils at St Paul's Way Trust school. Nurull Islam of Mile End Community Project will also produce a collaborative community response to the work.

All are invited to a launch event with the curator, 6.00-7.30pm on Thursday 28 March. [Click here to book your FREE place.](#) Details of the rest of the events in the programme will follow in a few weeks - [watch this space!](#)



## Trustees wanted!



St Matthias Conservation Trust is a registered charity which looks after the Grade II\* listed [St Matthias Old Church](#) in Poplar, first founded in 1652 as the East India Company chapel.

It's the only building in Tower Hamlets serving the local community which has a direct link to the East India Company, and many important local figures, including George Green and Mary East/James Howe, are buried in its churchyard.

Deconsecrated in the 1970s, this former Anglican church has been known as St Matthias Community Centre since 1993, recently celebrating its 30th anniversary of service to the community of Poplar, Blackwall and the Isle of Dogs. The centre is home to [Neighbours In Poplar](#), [SPLASH](#) and [Little St Matthias Pre-School](#). Much important work takes place here. Since the onset of the pandemic over 45,000 meals on wheels have been provided to E14 residents by Neighbours in Poplar using the resources of the building and goodwill of its volunteers. It also runs a food bank and occasional homeless shelter.

St Matthias Conservation Trust does not benefit from any core funding and has to fundraise in order to cover the building's running costs. A small group of Trustees meet regularly with the aim of ensuring the building continues to serve effectively as both a historic landmark to be preserved, and a community space which provides essential services to the local community.

Trustees are volunteers who meet quarterly, receiving reports on the activities of the Community Centre, its financial position and coming up with ideas and opportunities for new projects and funding streams. However, the group is small and is keen to welcome new members.

If you are interested in becoming Trustee - particularly if you have experience in fundraising, finance and buildings/the construction industry - please contact Sister Christine Frost for further information. You can email Sister at [nip65@msn.com](mailto:nip65@msn.com)

## Honouring a leader of the Matchgirls Strike

Last week we were delighted to be invited to the opening of Sarah Chapman House in Bow, a new block of 9 social housing apartments.

Sarah Chapman was born in Mile End in 1862 and worked at the Bryant & May match factory in Bow. She was a member of the Strike Committee that negotiated with the directors of the factory over poor conditions, low pay and the use of white phosphorus, which caused serious health complications.

The building on the corner of Arbery Road and Strahan Road was opened by Sarah Chapman's great granddaughters and the Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets Lutfur Rahman.



Here at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives we have long supported the campaign for greater recognition of Sarah Chapman's role in the Match Girls' strike, including hosting an exhibition about her here in 2019.

The Matchgirls Strike was a landmark moment for working rights. Following the strike's success, Sarah Chapman was elected President of the new Union of Women Matchmakers and represented them at TUC Congress meetings in London and Liverpool.

Sam and Graham Johnson, Founding Trustees of The Matchgirls Memorial, said: "Our aim is to ensure that the success of the 1888 Matchgirls Strike is memorialised in the East End, so we are delighted that Sarah Chapman is remembered in this social housing initiative."

Sarah Chapman House has nine homes, which are a mix of 1, 2 and 3-bedroom properties, all with an external balcony. It has been built on the site of an old council housing office.



*Attendees at the launch sang the Matchgirls' Song in unison*

## Four Corners Archive Internship

Our friends at Four Corners are offering a paid 12-month internship as part of its new National Lottery Heritage Fund project, **The People's Gallery**. This is an exciting opportunity to work on Four Corners' Archive collection whilst gaining skills in archiving and collections management, and experience in delivering community and exhibition projects. The internship will run from May 2024.

[Find out more on the Four Corners website.](#)

Deadline for applications is 10am on Monday 25 March 2024. Interviews will take place during the week of 1 April 2024.

## Bernard Kops (1926-2024)



*Bernard Kops reading from his poetry at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, March 2011, at the launch of an exhibition by the Jewish East End Celebration Society*

We were very sorry to learn of the passing of Bernard Kops on 25th February aged 97. Born into poverty in Stepney in 1926, Bernard Kops was a playwright, poet and writer who led an extraordinary life, finding huge success as a writer in the 1950s and later.

His poem 'Whitechapel Library, Aldgate East' is an enduring testament to the value of public libraries and is inscribed in the window of the former Whitechapel Library, now part of Whitechapel Gallery. Kops was Honorary Life President of the Jewish East End Celebration Society (JEECS) which has [published this obituary](#). On behalf of Tower Hamlets library staff past and present we pay our respects and send condolences to his loved ones. May his memory be a blessing.

# Bernard Kops returns to <sup>Hackney Gazette 6/10/70</sup> East End

## Talk about his writing job

ONE of the poets who has drawn his inspiration partially from his childhood in East London, as well as from "chaos, holocaust and gas chambers" is Stepney-born Bernard Kops. His first jobs included ones as a wine waiter, bookseller from a barrow in Cambridge Circus, chef and docker.

He entranced and inspired a goodly sized audience at the Mayfield House Music Library, Cambridge Heath-road, Bethnal Green, last week with a stimulating talk. His theme was "The Writer and the Community." This was part of the Tower Hamlets Arts Forum.

He spoke of the difficulties facing a working class boy who knew he wanted to be a writer. He did not come from a literary background—far from it. He was told by his immigrant Jewish father, "You cannot be a writer—you are a poor boy."

Mr. Kops pointed out, "In the thirties the intellectuals came from Universities. People like myself could not think of undertaking writing as a career. My father, a leather worker, who was going blind, offered me the tools of his trade and I took them. He imposed on me the same framework as had destroyed his life."

His family had thought Mr. Kops a "lousy, good-for-nothing low-life," and in fact he did go through a period of drifting, and drug addiction. But from the age of five he knew he wanted to write. Yet he felt this sense of alienation. It was only by writing that he was able to overcome it.

and "The World is a Wedding," among other books. At present he is working on two new books, a novel, to be called "The Passionate Past of Gloria Gaye," and a book of poetry, "For the Record." He is also writing a new comedy series for A.T.V.—"Alexander the Greatest," to be screened in 1971.

All the Forums are organised by Hester Mallin, Chairman and Arts Organiser for P.A.T.H. (Promotion of the Arts in Tower Hamlets). She lives and works in Tower Hamlets.

The second Forum will be about "Magic and Superstition in Britain," and will be held at the same place on October 30, at 7.30. The speaker will be Cottie Burland, an authority on ethnology and tribal magic and practices. He is on the board of "Man, Myth and Magic," and is the author of "The Exotic White Man" and many other works.



### EAST LONDON TALENT

SEEN here are Mr. Bernard Kops, local born playwright, together with Miss Hester Mallin, Chairman and Organiser for P.A.T.H. (Promotion of the Arts in Tower Hamlets).

Press cutting about a talk given by Bernard Kops to the Tower Hamlets Arts Forum in Bethnal Green; published in the Hackney Gazette, 6th October 1970. To read the full article please visit our reading room! Ref no: Class 100 KOPS

## Contact us

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

### Reading Room opening hours

- Tuesday 10.00am-4.30pm
- Wednesday 10.00am-4.30pm
- Thursday 10.00am-7.00pm

First and third Saturdays of every month:

- Saturday 10.00am-5.00pm

That's the following Saturdays coming up:

- Saturday 16 March
- Saturday 6 April
- Saturday 20 April
- Saturday 4 May

Exhibition opening times are: 10am-5pm Monday-Friday, plus the Saturdays and Thursday evenings noted above. On Monday and Friday lunchtimes, the exhibition will be closed for lunch between 1 and 2pm.

Stay Connected with Idea Store on social media:

