

Oct/Nov 2025

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



Wartime in Bethnal Green

Talk | Local history sources for the impact of WW1 and WW2



Monday 10 November | 11.00am - 12 noon

Venue: Bethnal Green Library

Join our **Archives Manager, Richard Wiltshire** for a talk during Remembrance Week exploring the impact of two world wars on Bethnal Green as well as wider Tower Hamlets. Richard will share some of our incredible sources, including the photo above of Cyprus Street (Ref: L/BGM/F/6/1/30) which document the impact of these devastating wars on the East End's home front. The talk will take place at Bethnal Green Library where the municipal borough's war memorial is located.

Introductory research sessions

Introduction to researching the history of communities | Thu 13 Nov, Sat 15 Nov

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, Reading Room

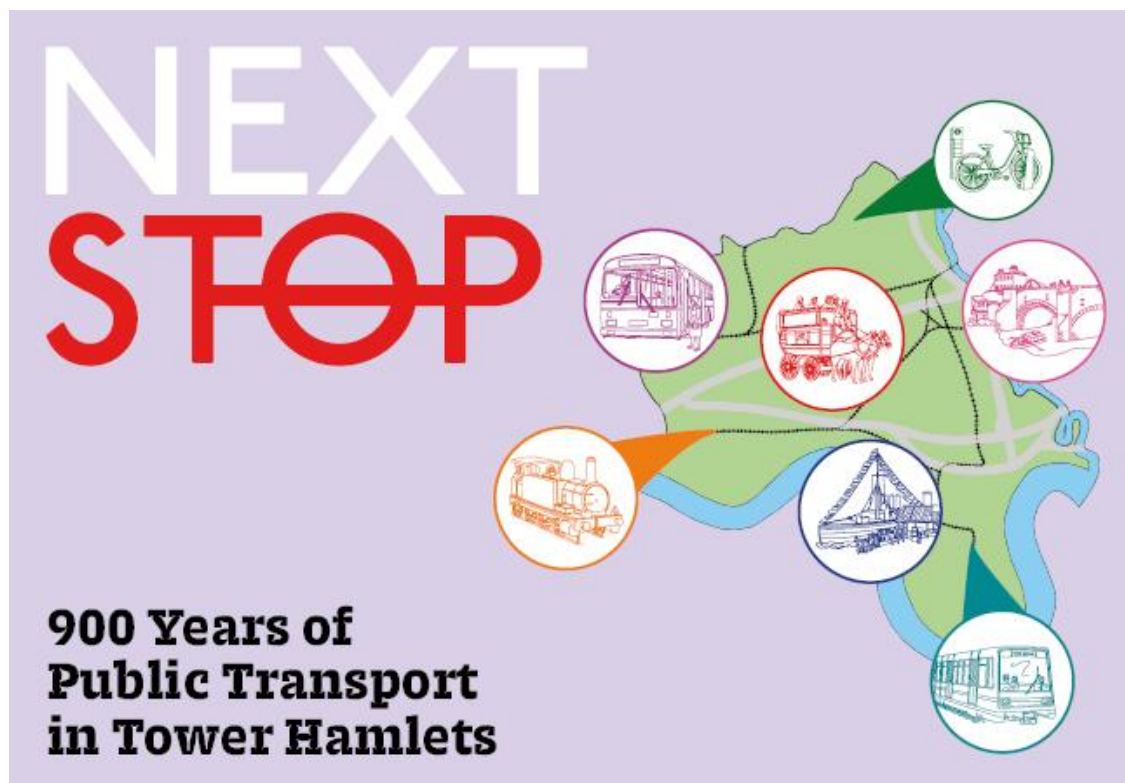
We are pleased to announce two new sessions intended to showcase the incredible breadth of our collections and support you to get the most out of researching here. Each event is free to attend and identical: a 30 minute introduction to a wide range of sources held here which can be used to research the **histories of Tower Hamlets' communities**, followed by a tour of the Reading Room, including some highlights from the collections. Then you'll be encouraged to stay on and continue your own personal research. Whichever of our borough's varied communities interests you, we're sure to have something about their experience in our holdings, and we'll share our tactics for identifying possible sources beyond a free-text search of the catalogue.

Places are strictly limited - please book here:

[Thursday 13 November, 5.30-6.30pm](#) plus 30 mins personal research time

[Saturday 15 November, 2.30-3.30pm](#) plus 90 mins personal research time

Our current exhibition



Exhibition | until 21 February 2026

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Our latest exhibition **Next Stop** explores the fascinating history of public transport in the East End over nine centuries. Learn about the building of Bow Bridge in the 12th century, the opening of the Elizabeth Line in the 21st, and the Victorian innovations in steam and underground travel in between.

Showcasing over 100 unique items from the collections of Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, the exhibition documents many changes and evolutions in public transport - tollgates, trolleybuses and trams included! The exhibition also features first-hand testimonies of people who have used or worked on different forms of public transport, past and present. Through newspaper cuttings, photographs, maps, oral history recordings and creative work, **Next Stop** aims to share both personal and archival knowledge about the history of public transport in the East End.

This is the first exhibition we have curated that is designed for both adults and children. An illustrated timeline, interactive games and artwork by local school pupils are all included in the exhibition, so the whole family can be entertained on their visit.

Information about upcoming Next Stop events below - with more events to follow soon.

'East London's Lost Stations'

Film screening | Saturday 1 November | 2.00-4.00pm

Join us for a special screening of this 1999 documentary film from our collections which surveys the lost stations of the East End. Written and presented by local historian and journalist **Jim Connor**, the film explores what was left of these forgotten stations at the turn of the millennium. How much has changed since then? Is there anything left of these stations in 2025? Alongside the film we will have a variety of collections to view, including newspaper cuttings and photographs that show the former stations in all their glory.

THIS EVENT IS FULLY BOOKED!

~~**East End Speed Histories: Tales from the underground | Saturday 15 November**~~

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Unfortunately this event has been postponed due to council budget pressures. We hope to reschedule it in the New Year.

Friends of Island History Trust Open Day



Thanks to everyone who came to the [Friends of Island History Trust](#) (FoIHT) Open Day last weekend at St John's Community Centre, Glengall Grove. We had a very busy stall showcasing the Island History Trust photograph collections relating to transport, sports, people and streets on the Isle of Dogs. It was lovely to see families finding each other through photographs in the collections and sharing stories.

A big thank you to Pat Wilson, one of our volunteers and ex-Islander, for all her help on the day, and to FoIHT for inviting us. You can explore the Island History Trust image collection online via [our Image Library](#).

Last weeks: Archive of Weird Memories



Exhibition by artist Tan Wang-Ward | Until 31 October

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, first floor landing

Closing soon: the display on the first floor of Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives features artist **Tan Wang-Ward** exploring the layered histories of Limehouse. The project's title is taken from a 1934 tabloid that called Limehouse Causeway the 'Street of Weird Memories'.

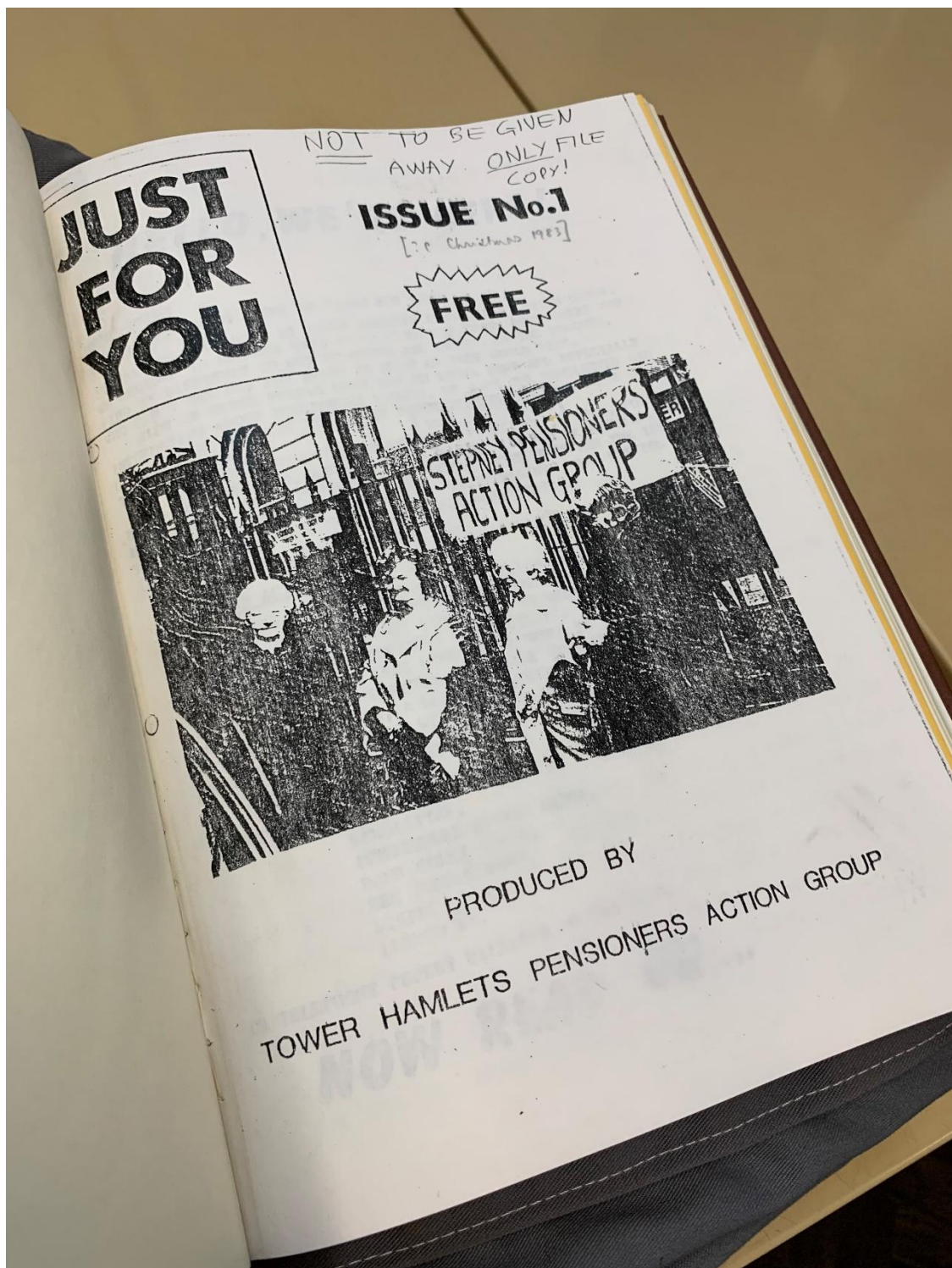
News from the Reading Room



Last week we welcomed Jeff Highfield, Chairman of the **Pensions Archive Trust** who visited us and viewed items from the council's early superannuation schemes as well as images and newsletters of local pensioners action groups.

Before the 20th century, pension provision for workers was limited - families were dependent on funds supplied by businesses or benevolent charities. Many people entered the local workhouses in old age and became dependent on parish poor relief.

[Pensions Archive Trust](#) is a charity formed in 2005 to ensure that important information about occupational pensions is not lost to history, but is retained and accessible to any who may need to learn from the successes and failures of the past. You can explore our pensions-related local history collections under Local History Library class 334.5



Annual report published

Do you want to know how many people visited Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives last year? How many school visits and workshops we delivered? What collections were deposited or catalogued, and how we scored in the nationwide visitor survey? Check out our [2024-25 impact report](#).

Reports from the preceding years are [available here](#) too. Thanks go to Debbie Smith, Local History Officer (Quality Monitoring) for number crunching.

Hire our Education Room



Many of you will have already visited our Education Room when attending local history talks and screenings here, but have you considered using it for your own local community or social group meetings?

Our room is large and flexible, situated on the ground floor and is wheelchair accessible. It has lots of natural light with large windows equipped with blackout blinds to aid visual presentations.

We've recently had a brand new carpet fitted (not the one pictured!) which has really spruced up the room, plus local groups get a 50% discount on our rates.

Please [click here](#) for more pictures and information and email us at localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk to book - we look forward to hearing from you!

Parent & Under 5s Session

Friday 5 December | 10am-11.30am

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, Education Room

Parents or carers of under 5s are invited to join our monthly 'stay and play' sessions - bring your little one, meet other parents over a cuppa and browse some of our local

history collections. November's session has been cancelled due to staff training, so the next session will be on the first Friday of December.

News from here and there

Tower Hamlets Council is installing a plaque to [Ayub Ali 'Master'](#). The unveiling will take place at Drewett House, Christian Street E1 on Sunday 26 October at 2pm. This was the former location of the Indian Seamen's Welfare League which he co-founded.

We have loaned over 20 images for the upcoming exhibition at **Four Corners**, sure to be a smash hit. [A World Apart: Photographing Change in London's East End, 1970-1974](#) opens on 24 October and runs until December.

The **Old Ford ~ Bow** heritage project is holding a History Roadshow at [Idea Store Bow](#) on Saturday 8 November, 11am-4pm.

The annual lecture of the **George Lansbury Memorial Trust** takes place on Thursday 20 November, held at LSE Library. This year's speaker, John Cooper of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, focusses on George Lansbury's faith, its influence on his pacifism and the applicability of his approach today. [Book your free place here.](#)

Writeidea, Idea Store's annual FREE festival of reading is back - taking place between 21- 23 November at Tower Hamlets Town Hall, with many excellent authors reading their work along with a pop-up gazebo full of East End Speed Histories. We will have a stall selling books and maps on both the Saturday and the Sunday. [The full programme and tickets will be released very soon.](#)

Save the date! We are planning to hold a second-hand book sale on Saturday 6 December. More info coming soon.

Get in touch with us!

- Email us: 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 (late opening)

First and third Saturdays of every month:

- Saturday 10.00am-5.00pm

That's the following Saturdays coming up:

- Saturday 1 November
- Saturday 15 November
- Saturday 6 December
- Saturday 20 December

Our last day of opening before Christmas is Tuesday 23 December. We will reopen on Saturday 3 January.

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.



TOWER HAMLETS



Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, 277 Bancroft Road,
London E1 4DQ

You can update your subscription preferences at any time. [Update your details or change your subscription preferences](#)