

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives



Celebrate our historic Town Hall



Open Day | Saturday 20 September | 10am – 5pm

Venue: Tower Hamlets Town Hall, 160 Whitechapel Road, E1 1BJ

Tower Hamlets Council is hosting an Open Day to celebrate bringing the historic, Grade II listed former Royal London Hospital building back into public use, including an official plaque unveiling to commemorate the transformation of the building, and hourly tours from 10am.

We at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives have provided images from our collections for a new photography exhibition which will be displayed in the Town Hall celebrating the London Borough of Tower Hamlets' 60th birthday.

The programme of entertainment begins at 12pm, with a wide range of activities and cultural events including:

- An unveiling of a plaque at 2pm.
- Behind the scenes tours of the grade II listed building with the award-winning AHMM architects running every hour from 10am - 1pm, and delivered by Tower Hamlets staff from 2pm – 5pm, all as part of Open House London Weekend.
- Pearly Kings and Queens sharing stories of the East End through the ages.
- Live performances from across our diverse community, including Celtic dancing, steel band and Klezmer music, and Bengali, Somali and Chinese cultural acts.
- Family activities throughout the day, with kids enjoying face painting and balloon modelling, while adults can join fitness sessions with the Council's Be Well leisure team.
- Community marketplace with stalls from local traders and community groups.
- Special discount for the iconic Brick Lane Curry Festival taking place the same weekend in Brick Lane and Banglatown - the UK's 'Curry Capital'.

Just turn up! No booking required.

Cockney Rebels fans please note - we've heard a rumour that the **Mint Juleps** will be performing! Unfortunately we don't know the full line-up or timings for the day so pop in and take your chances!

Black History Month 2025



Talk | Following the trail: African Lives in Tower Hamlets

Thursday 9 October | 6.00-8.00pm

Venue: Online

We are delighted to welcome back historian **Dr Montaz Marché**. She will follow and explore some of the rich stories and histories of African people rediscovered through the [Communities of Liberation](#) research, highlighting African presence in Tower Hamlets and their relationship to their environments throughout the early modern period. There will be time for questions and discussion!

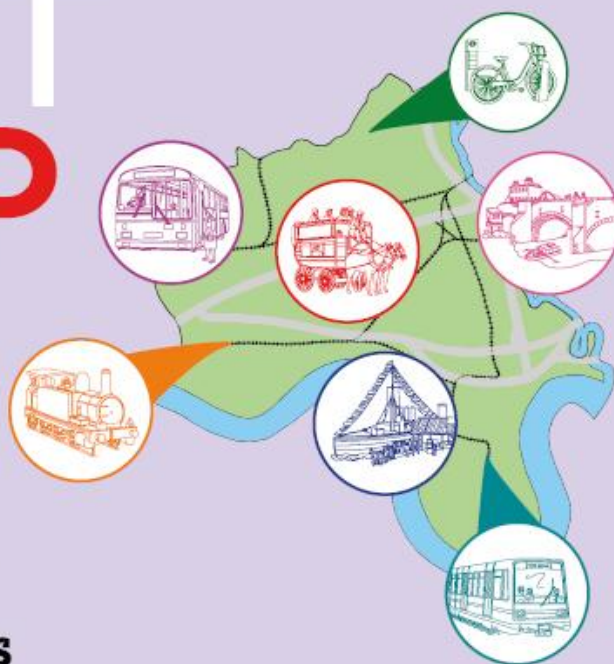
This event is free and open to all and will be held online via Teams. [Please sign up here to be sent the link.](#)

This is one of [a range of events happening in the borough](#) as part of Black History Month.

Our current exhibition

NEXT STOP

900 Years of Public Transport in Tower Hamlets



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.

Events are being programmed for the rest of the exhibition run to tie in with the theme. Due to the popularity of the guided walk which took place recently, a repeat has been arranged for those who missed out. Details below!

Next Stop events programme

Disused stations: Tower Hill to Whitechapel

Guided walk | Saturday 11 October | 11.00am-1.00pm

Join exhibition curator **Genova Messiah** for a repeat outing of her guided walk visiting some of the lost stations of the East End. Starting in Tower Hill and ending at Whitechapel station, follow the construction and abandonment of some of the oldest train stations in the borough. With some fascinating transport facts shared along the route, this walk explores aspects of historical railway infrastructure and its legacy within stations we still use today.

You can get a sneak peek of the histories to be revealed by picking up a free copy of the Disused Stations illustrated map which accompanies the exhibition.

Due to the popularity of our guided walks, the limited capacity (15) and the fact that our free events typically result in a lot of no-shows, we are releasing tickets for this event nearer the time - at 9am on 30 September. Please only book a place if you can definitely attend, and if you can no longer go, please cancel your ticket. We appreciate your consideration :)

[Set a ticket reminder here!](#)



'East London's Lost Stations'

Film screening | Saturday 1 November | 2.00-4.00pm

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

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.

[Book your free ticket here!](#)

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

Venue: Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Eight storytellers. An audience divided into small groups. A bell rings and every five minutes you move to the next table to hear another true story. East End Speed History borrows from speed dating to present multiple miniature talks about Tower Hamlets, often with a theatrical twist.

From The Blitz to trolley buses, a trip on the DLR to the Eighth Wonder of the World - let an eclectic selection of local writers and performers transport you on a magical history tour! Part of the Next Stop exhibition programme. Curated by Alan Gilbey and friends!

Please note – due to the nature of this event, audience numbers are strictly limited. Booking is essential. The event will run twice: choose from one of two showtimes at 4.30pm and 7.00pm. Tickets will be released nearer the time.

Save the date! Booking link will follow in the next newsletter!

'Archive of Weird Memories' artist tours



Exhibition by artist Tan Wang-Ward | Until 31 October

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

The current 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'. This exhibition is part of [ESEA Heritage Month](#).

During her residency at the archives, Tan consulted photographs, clippings, ephemera, maps, and directories documenting the communities that gathered in Limehouse in the early 20th century. Collaborating with locally run AI models (SDXL and Flux) and guided by extensive archival research, she created speculative “forgeries” of lost buildings and sites—interweaving AI interpretation, historical material, and her own creative perspective. She placed them back at their original addresses, where they now converse with and unsettle the Limehouse of today. Tan's methods blur the line between archival research and fiction-ing, bringing multiple practices together in dialogue through experimentation with emerging technologies.

You're invited to meet the artist and see her behind-the-scenes research processes by attending one of these small group artist-led tours. [Pick a date and book your place here](#).

House of a thousand destinies



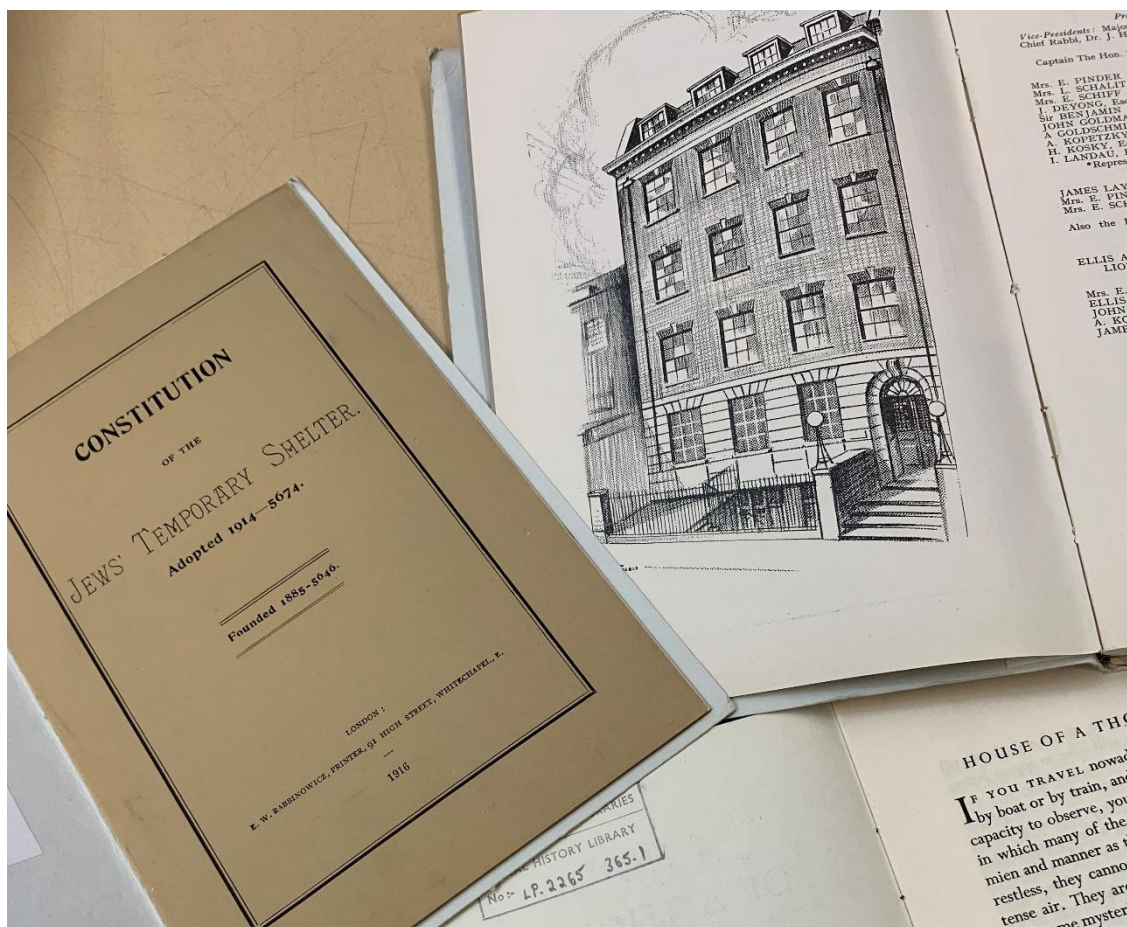
On 4 September Richard Wiltshire, Archives Manager, was pleased to attend 63 Mansell Street for the unveiling of a heritage plaque at the Jews' Temporary Shelter which operated at this site from 1930 to 1973.

The new plaque is the first installed by the Board of Deputies of British Jews to recognise the Jewish people, places and institutions which have shaped British life. It

launches the Board of Deputies' new [heritage plaque scheme, which is now open for nominations](#).

The Jews' Temporary Shelter was established in 1885 to assist Jewish refugees by offering them temporary accommodation, meals and a network of contacts to help them find work. It occupied several addresses in the East End of London. Although the Shelter closed down (the building is now occupied by the Scoliosis SOS charity) the Jews Temporary Shelter charity is still in existence and offers grants for housing related items to applicants in urgent need.

The Shelter had densely packed 30-bed dormitories to accommodate 130 men and women. There were also dining, recreation and reading rooms. On the top floor an isolation department accommodated those arriving with serious illnesses. The Shelter assisted refugees from the Holocaust and later Jewish refugees fleeing persecution. You can find out more by consulting [our collections on the Jewish East End](#).



Brick Lane Curry Festival

[Brick Lane Curry Festival](#) is coming up this weekend, organised by Tower Hamlets Council. Many activities are planned - some of the heritage specific ones below:

The **Swadhinata Trust** are organising a Bengali East End history walk on [Friday 19](#) and [Saturday 20 September](#).

Suresh Singh, the Cockney Sikh, is doing a Brick Lane walk on [Friday 19](#) or [Saturday 20th](#) also.

Discover the history of henna in [a workshop](#) at Kobi Nazrul Centre on Friday 19 September at 6.30pm.

Parent & Under 5s Session

Friday 3 October | 10am-11.30am

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

Come along to our free Parent/Carer & Under 5's stay & play and explore historical records on the famous East End. A chance to meet other parents, enjoy a cuppa and look through our unique collection of maps, photographs, newspapers, pamphlets and much more. Toys will be available for children ages 0-5 with a mini kiddies brunch and refreshments including tea & coffee. [Book here!](#)

News from our friends

Andrew Parnell is running a [guided history walk of Limehouse on Sunday 5 October](#).

The [Petticoat Lane Heritage Trail](#) website is now live!

The **Old Ford ~ Bow** heritage project is holding a History Roadshow at Idea Store Bow on Saturday 8 November. Details to follow in the next newsletter.

Old Ford ~ Bow

History Roadshow

Saturday 8 November • 11.00-4.00

Idea Store Bow, 1 Gladstone Place, E3 5GT



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 20 September
- Saturday 4 October
- Saturday 18 October
- Saturday 1 November
- Saturday 15 November

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

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