

# EAST END HOWLER



FOR A GROUP OF  
FOR COMMUNITY

East London's **FREE** Working Class Newsheet

ISSUE 1 September 2008

## Campaign to save Bancroft library



*Open letter from East End local historian Tom Ridge:*

YOU may have heard or read in the *East London Advertiser* about the forthcoming sale of the Bancroft Library building to Queen Mary, University of London. The college is keen for the Wiener Library (the Holocaust archive) to occupy the ground floor, which contains Tower Hamlets' purpose-built archive store.

We are concerned about what is going to happen to the Archives and Local History Library, should Tower Hamlets council's cabinet finally decide to sell the building.

The contract for the sale has already been drawn up and there are even rumours about Queen Mary College having the pick of the archives.

There is a slight possibility that the local history collection of books, maps, photos, microfilms, etc, may go to the Museum in Docklands on the Isle of Dogs, when or sometime after the building is vacated in December. But there are, as yet, no arrangements for the unique documents in the environmentally-controlled secure archive store at Bancroft.

It is bad enough that the Local History Library will be separated from the archives, even worse that there is only vague talk from the council about the collections being 'reunited' in about three years time in some place yet to be built.

We all know that, should this happen, there will be very little left to 'reunite'.

The Library & Archives are a precious educational resource for present and future generations and the Town Hall has a duty of care for all that has been handed on by previous generations.

It is beyond belief that the council can even contemplate putting this precious resource at risk, simply to obtain a paltry £1.2 million for one of the East End's most historic public buildings (Mile End's former municipal Vestry Hall).

It is even more scandalous that Tower Hamlets, as an education authority, has failed to consult the teachers in its schools.

Had they done so, teachers would have pointed out that national curriculum at primary and secondary stages require pupils to study their local history and geography.

Also, that there is an increasing emphasis in secondary-level history for pupils to study and interpret historical documents and artefacts.

These may be facsimiles or online images, but the originals must be safely stored for all the same reasons that the Wiener archive must be safely stored.

Teachers from many schools across East London already use Bancroft for local research projects and, in some cases, the archivist has even visited schools.

With outreach workers, a gallery and a schools' room at the Bancroft, much more could be done for the education of East London pupils now, rather than at some dim and distant point in the future when half the unique documents, books, maps and photos have either been lost or rotted away.

Now is the last and only opportunity to make your views known to the Town hall before its cabinet decision.

I urge people to write as soon as possible to Cllr **Rofique Uddin Ahmed**, to Children's Services Director **Kevan Collins** and to Children's Services Lead council member **Clair Hawkins**. The address is:

**Tower Hamlets Town Hall,  
Mulberry Place,  
5 Clove Crescent, Blackwall,  
London, E14 2BG, UK.**

And email the Campaign to Save Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives at Bancroft:

[stepney.history@live.co.uk](mailto:stepney.history@live.co.uk)

Our petition welcomes the Wiener Library to Tower Hamlets, but proposes another building, one that's vacant, in good condition and near Poplar DLR station and the

A13, is sold instead to Queen Mary college for the Wiener Library, and for the money to be used for repairs to the Bancroft building and improving existing services, especially for teachers and students.

**Tom Ridge**, local historian

(former secondary school teacher in Poplar and Stepney)

on behalf of the

Campaign to Save Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives at Bancroft  
Welwyn-street, Bethnal Green

## **PUBLIC MEETING**

### **SAVE TOWER HAMLETS LOCAL HISTORY LIBRARY & ARCHIVES AT BANCROFT ROAD**

Invite you to our public meeting on Saturday, 27th September, 2008 at 2pm at the ARBOUR YOUTH CENTRE, Shandy Street, Stepney, London E1 (no disabled access to first-floor hall)

The meeting aims to persuade Tower Hamlets Council not to sell Bancroft Library; and instead raise funds for the repair and adaptation of the whole building as the TOWER HAMLETS LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE for schoolchildren, local residents and visitors from around the world.

**RSVP as soon as possible or by the 25th September at latest:**

Melissa Parker, 43 Aberavon Road, London E3 5AR

Email: aberavonroad@gmail.com

Tel: 020 3336 6634

### **A REMINDER ON HOW YOU CAN HELP THE CAMPAIGN**

#### **DOWNLOAD THE PETITION AND ENCOURAGE AS MANY TO SIGN IT AS POSSIBLE**

We now have 2,772 signatures. We need more! We also need more messages of support from organisations and more letters to the Council. The deadline for the return of completed petition forms is TUESDAY 30th SEPTEMBER 2008

#### **SEND A BRIEF MESSAGE OF SUPPORT**

WOULD ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS PLEASE SEND A BRIEF MESSAGE IN SUPPORT OF THE CAMPAIGN to the campaign email address; so that Tom Ridge can include on list of supporting organisations and individuals when he presents the petition to the Cabinet.

**WRITE TO THE COUNCIL** WOULD INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS PLEASE SEND DETAILED COMMENTS about the proposed sale of the Bancroft Road Library building and the dispersal of the various collections in the local history library AND archives (and in support of the campaign's proposal for a Tower Hamlets Local History Centre) to;

Martin Smith, Chief Executive,  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Town Hall, Mulberry Place,  
5 Clove Crescent, London E14 2BG,  
Email: martin.smith@towerhamlets.gov.uk. If you email the Chief Executive you must send a copy to his Personal Assistant carol.marchant@towerhamlets.gov.uk and please send copies to Cllr. Rofique Uddin Ahmed, Lead Member for Culture on rofique.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk. If you include educational issues in your letter to the Chief Executive (see below) please also send copies to Kevan Collins, Corporate Director (Children's Services) on kevan.collins@towerhamlets.gov.uk. PLEASE SEND COPIES OF ALL LETTERS by post to Tom Ridge or the campaign email address (stepney.history@live.co.uk). Would individuals and find the time to send all amended letters to the Chief Executive (with copies as necessary) as this is the best way to influence the decision making process.



We at **Action East End** want to see an alternative, one based on a genuine sense of community and solidarity.

Action East End is a local group based in East London that wants to contribute to the resistance, both defending ourselves in our communities and workplaces, but ultimately helping co-ordinate activities to improve our quality of life. This we believe can only be done through our own initiatives, outside the agenda of the local authorities or political groups, and by taking collective action for ourselves.

This is no flight of fancy but the basis from which radical change springs, and we would urge others to join us or get in touch at:

Send an email to: [actioneastend@googlemail.com](mailto:actioneastend@googlemail.com)

Or call: 07795183479