

Connecting the Past to the Present



A Photographic Journey Draughtboard Alley

NEWHAM
HERITAGE MONTH

Connecting the Past to the Present - A Photographic Journey

A visual journey and learning resource that provides a snapshot of a mixed-race community who lived in Canning Town, London, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Celebrating the solidarity, optimism, resilience and strong sense of community, this photographic journey highlights the lives of Black and Asian sailors and soldiers. This collection is suitable for anyone over 12 years old and who is interested in photography, archival images and local history.

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Images

All images have been attributed where possible, but we can make amendments or corrections if we have unintentionally made errors. Please contact **hello@trishadionne.co.uk** if you have any information to help us identify the owners of any of these images.

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Canning Town - A brief history

Locations, Churches & Community Centres



Kamal Chunchie - Community Activist



Claude McKay - Jamaican Poet & Writer

Laskars - Bengali Sailors

Jack Leslie - Footballer

Children - Canning Town Kids



Josie Wood - Entertainer & Dancer

Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order (1925)

Marriages

Black Seafarers & Soldiers - A legacy



Canning Town – A brief history

Canning town had been largely underdeveloped marshland and for centuries it was only accessible by boat or toll bridge. Barking Road was built in 1894, and this opened up the landscape of Canning Town during the early 20th century. A booming industry expanded with it becoming a heavily industrialised and densely populated area. Growth in manufacturing, pharmaceutical and shipping attracted workers from around the world.

During World War I, the numbers of soldiers and sailors from Africa, the Caribbean and India increased. They settled in Canning Town, married local women and raised families. Owing to the large community of sailors, it was often called 'sailor's town', and by the 1930s Canning Town had the largest black population in London. Located mainly in Crown Street, this growing and diverse community was often referred to as 'Draughtboard Alley' because of the many black and white people living there.

As a whole, there were good relations between different ethnic groups, but owing to the pressures of World War I, competition for work increased and tensions erupted into violence. Indian workers were paid less than their white counterparts, therefore they were more favourable employees, and the lack of adequate housing created hostility towards black members of the community resulting in disturbances. Despite these differences, the community worked together to buy houses, set up businesses and social clubs to support homeless people. They also united to organise local events, held social gatherings and donated to help local children.

The mixed-race community developed strong links with local churches, even setting up their own societies.

Members of churches would donate food and clothing for local children as well as organise excursions and tea parties for the community to enjoy.

Some of these churches and buildings still exist today and include St Luke's Church; St Anne's Church; Custom House; Flying Angel, the site of the British and Foreign Sailors Society, and St Marks Church, Silvertown, where Brick Lane Music Hall took over the building in 2003.

Locations, Churches & Community Centres



Photograph: St Luke's Church, Canning Town 2021, Maggie Falshaw



Photograph: Flying Angel, Victoria Dock Road, Maggie Falshaw 2021

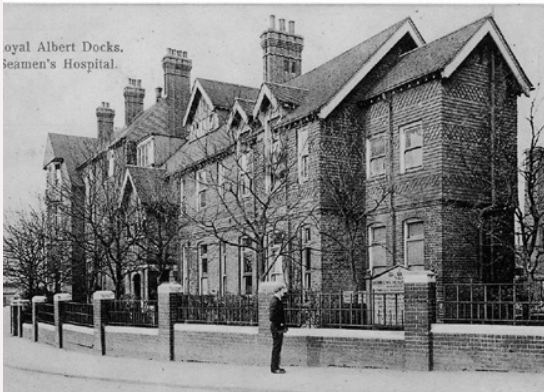


Photograph: Tidal Basin Road, 2021
Maggie Falshaw

Tidal Basin Road,
former location of the
Coloured Men's Institute.



Photograph: St Anne's Church, Custom
House, Maggie Falshaw 2021



Royal Albert Docks,
Seamen's Hospital.

Royal Albert Docks Seamen's Hospital
National Maritime Museum Attribution-ShareAlike
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Locations, Churches & Community Centres



St. Matthews Custom House.

© Royal Docks Chapel, St Matthias Custom House 1909

Attribution: SludgeG, License

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/sludgeulper/3471836413>

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>



Photograph: Brick Lane Music Hall 2021
Maggie Falshaw.

Who was Kamal Chunchie?

Born in 1886 in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Kamal joined the British Army and served in France, Greece and Malta.

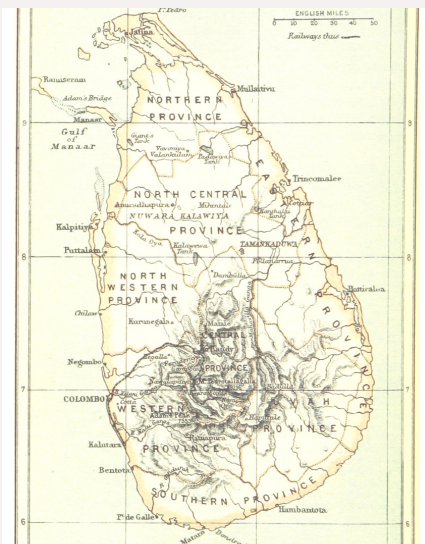
After marrying Mable William Tappen in 1920, he became a minister for the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

Kamal went on to found 'The Coloured Men's Institute' located at Tidal Basin Road, Victoria Docks. Kamal served the local community providing food and shelter to stranded sailors, dockworkers and their families.

Kamal Chunchie



Methodist Pastor Kamal Chunchie, (hands on gramophone) with his assistants in London's dockland where he is starting a 'clinic' to try and cure and stamp out the opium menace, 1930s (Photo by Henry Guttman Collection) . Copyright Getty Images 2021



 Map of Ceylon, modern Sri Lanka 1914

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Ceylon_\(1888\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Ceylon_(1888).jpg)

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Coloured Men's Institute C.1926
Location: 13-15 Tidal Basin Road, Canning Town
Copyright Newham Archives

Claude McKay

Who was Claude McKay?

Political writer and poet, Claude McKay, was born in Sunnyhill, Jamaica in 1889. After migrating to London in 1919, he worked for the socialist publication 'Dreadnought', and it is believed he was England's first black reporter.

McKay documented the lives of soldiers and seafarers from across the globe who were now living and working in the East London docks. He interviewed London dockworkers, and their stories inspired his later novels, 'Home to Harlem' and 'Banjo'.



© Claude McKay, 1930's
Attribution: James L. Allen

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mackey.jpg>

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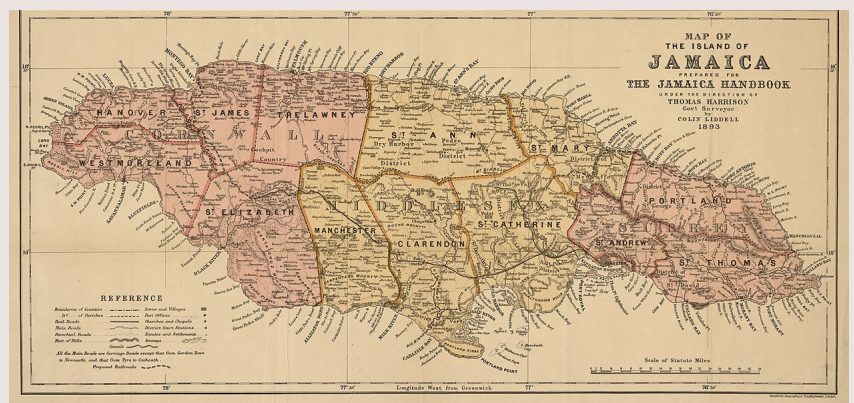


© Image: Portrait Photograph of Claude McKay, 1920

Attribution:

<https://archive.org/details/springinnewhamp00mckarich>

License: Public Domain Mark 1.0



© Map of the Island of Jamaica published by George F. Cram, 1901.
Unknown Artist

Attribution: <https://archive.org/details/springinnewhamp00mckarich>

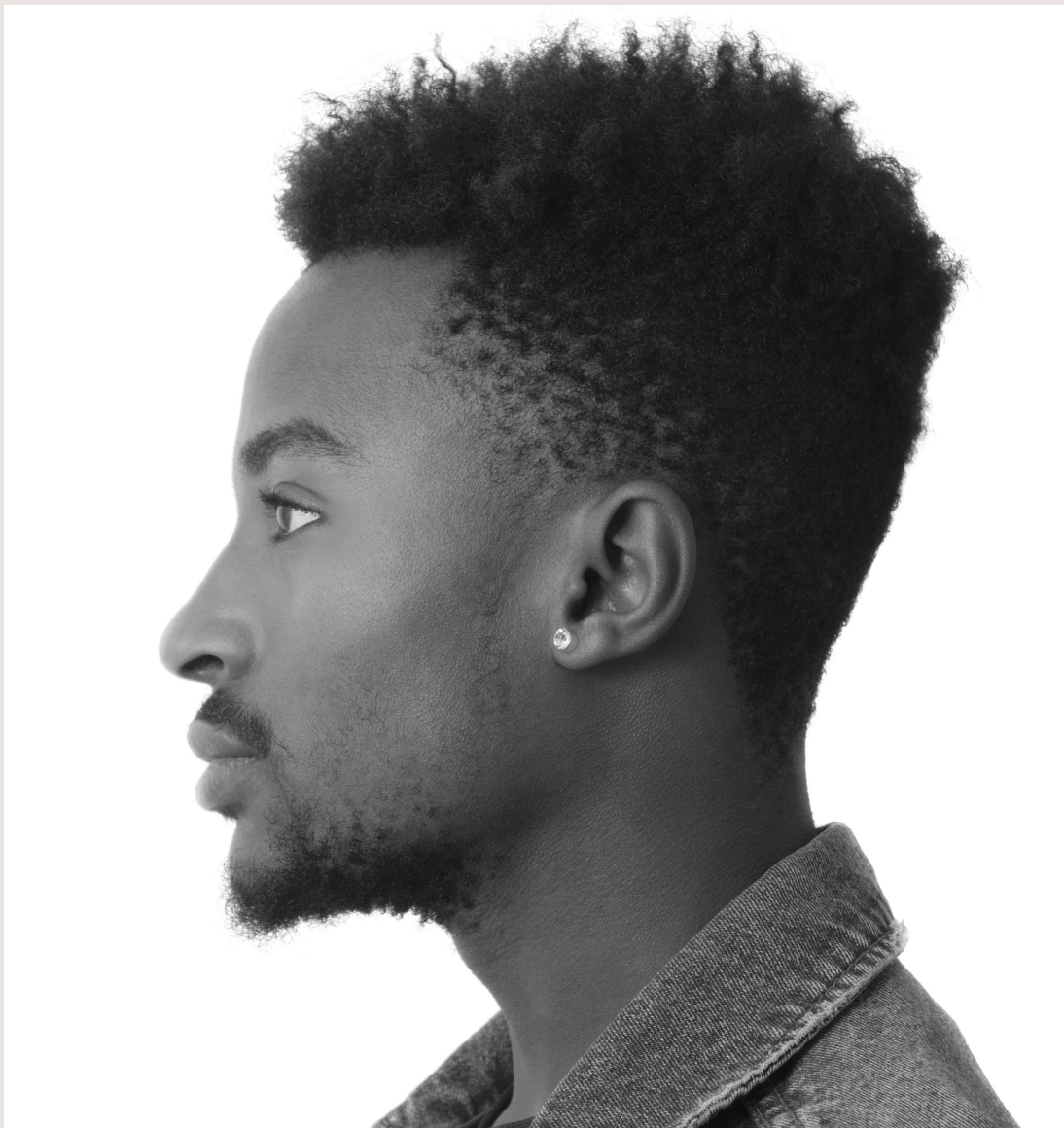
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Photography Activity

Portraiture

Portraiture is a type of photography aimed toward capturing the personality of a person or group of people by using natural lighting, studio lighting, backdrops, and various poses.

Create six portraits, three in black and white and three in colour of an individual inspired by the images of Claude McKay.




Lascars

Who were the Lascars?

As seafarers from the Indian Subcontinent, the Lascars were employed on British ships to replace British sailors who abandoned their posts because of the appalling working conditions.

The Lascars were cooks, machine cleaners, coal carriers and in the engine room they stoked coal in up to 40 degrees heat.



 Photograph: Lascars at the Royal Albert Dock
Port of London Authority, 1936

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lascars_at_the_Royal_Albert_Dock.jpg.

License: ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0)



 Map of India 1882
Author: University of Texas
Libraries

https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/india_1882.jpg

License: CC0 1.0 Universal (CC0 1.0) Public Domain Dedication.

Lascars Club

The Lascars' Club was founded in 1909 by K Chowdry. It was located near Victoria Docks, making it an ideal stopping point for Lascars in London. Between January to June 1910, 4180 Lascars made use of the club.

Location:

313 Victoria Dock Road
London, E16 3AA

During 1890 to 1920 according to the annual statement and shipping of the United Kingdom Lascars formed 20% of the British workforce.

Sadly, the Lascars were badly treated like the British men, many jumped ship, while others were abandoned by their employers without pay and found themselves unable to return home.

Some Lascars settled in Canning Town and married local women who were referred to as 'Lascar Sally' or 'Calcutta Louise'.



© Three Lascars of the 'Viceroy of India', standing behind the wheel of one of the ship's tenders, 1930s.

Author: National Maritime Museum from Greenwich,
License: CC0 1.0 Universal (CC0 1.0) Public Domain Dedication

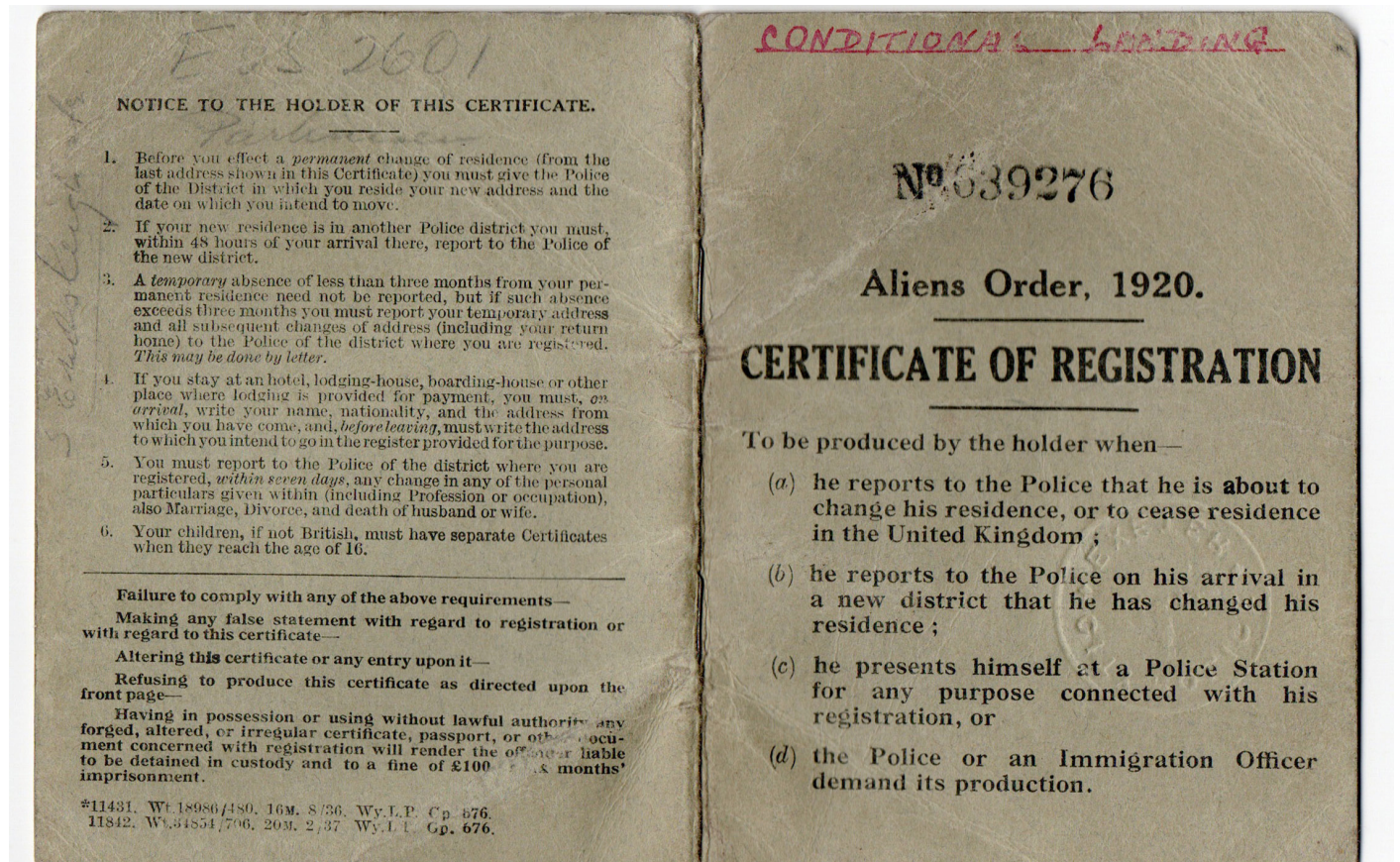
Introductory Questions

What does this photograph tell you about the Lascars?

If you could interview the men in this photograph, what questions would you ask them?

Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order (1925)

This order stated that "coloured seamen who did not possess documentary proof of their status as British must register as 'aliens' in Britain whether or not they have been in the United Kingdom for more than two months". Unable to prove their status they could not find work and were threatened with deportation. This resulted in extreme poverty for mixed-race families.



Aliens Order, 1920, Certificate of Registration
Image by Trisha McCauley 2021.

“

British women who had married these men were also classed as 'aliens', as per the 1914 Nationality Act.

”



Image: Servicemen at the Coloured Men's Club Social Club, London 1919.

Attribution: Australian War Memorial
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C228591>

License: Public Domain Mark 1.0

Introductory Questions

How do you feel when you look at this photograph?

Why did the soldiers attend these social clubs?

How do you think the British public responded to this image at the time?

Jack Leslie



Image: Jack Leslie & Vic Watson
Copyright Newham Archives



Photograph: Gerald Road, 2021 Maggie Falshaw

In 2020 'The Jack Leslie Campaign' was set up to raise £100,000 to fund a statue to be built outside Home Park, Plymouth and, in August, the target was achieved after just six weeks.



Who was Jack Leslie?

Footballer, Jack Leslie was born on the 17th of August 1901 to a Jamaican father, a gas fitter and labourer, and an English mother, Annie, a seamstress. They lived at 12 Gerard Road and Jack Leslie was baptised on the 29th of September 1901 at St Gabriel's Church, Wellington Street, Canning Town. Jack played for Barking Town and scored 250 goals for them. In 1921, he joined Plymouth Argyle and later became captain. Jack played for fourteen seasons, scoring 133 league goals in 384 games, making him their fourth highest goal scorer.

In 1925 Leslie was called to represent England, however, he was dropped from the team after objections from the selection committee when they found out he was black. After an accident, Jack retired from football.

In 1965 he was offered a job as boot boy at West Ham United, where he cleaned the boots of the likes of Trevor Brookes and Harry Redknapp. At the age of 80, his retirement was featured on ITV's 'The Big Match' programme.

Jack Leslie died on the 25th of November 1988 aged 88 years.



Image: Jack Leslie 1935, Copyright Newham Archive

“

Quote

"I did hear that The FA had come to have another look at me. Not at me football, but at me face. They asked, and found they'd made a ricket. Found out about me daddy, and that was it. No one ever told me officially, but that had to be the reason".

”

Photographic Activity

Photostory

A photo essay is intended to tell a story to the viewers through a series of photographs. They allow you to be creative and fully explore an idea.

Re-read the stories in this booklet, think of a story in Newham that you could illustrate. For example you could photograph a day in the life of a local celebrity, a sportsperson, a community group, a member of your family or even a local barber shop! Once you have selected your images create a story board or upload online to share with the world.

Remember always seek permission first if you are photographing people and let them know why you are taking photos and what they will be used for.



“ Quote

So black men married white women and quite a lot of mixed marriages turned out alright because they were good to each other. Where we lived there was no feeling that mixed marriages were wrong.

The white people we lived with accepted it. I feel there is more racism here now than we ever had before the war. We never had any racism when I was young.

Anita, daughter of a Guyanese father and white English mother. — Source: Bourne, 2001.

”

Marriages

“ Quote

I think as the white wife of a British coloured man I have a right to speak. ‘Hal o’ the Wynd’ thinks it repulsive to see a white woman in the company of a coloured man. It is a shame to say that.

They are as God made them; they cannot help the colour of their skin. We, the white wives, know better than anyone what they are.

We have been married for years and find the British coloured man – I don’t say all, but I say most – make us very good husbands — *Evening Times*, 21 June 1919 in Jenkinson (2008: 24).

”



c. 1925. Image courtesy of Butetown History & Arts Centre.

The Children

“

Quote

There were lots of black kids. We used to play together, no animosity between any of us. There were white women married black, you know, West Indians, they were working on the boats. Got on ever so well together.

Played in the street, great big skipping rope right across the road. And we had a factory down the street so we used to have quite a bit of traffic, just drop the rope and let the lorry go over it.

Everybody in the street used to speak to each other, and all the children used to play together. Sometimes when me and my sister's talking, we say, "I wonder what happened to so and so," you know. During the war a lot of them went.

Doris, a white Eastender, who was born in 1922 in Canning Town, East London and lived there until 1948. - SOURCE: PADFIELD 1999

”



Children playing together on Crown Street in Canning Town.
Image: Copyright Mary Evans Picture Library 2021

Introductory Questions

How does this image make you feel?

How do you think the kids felt having their photographs taken?

What sort of experience do you think the children had growing up in Canning Town?

Please see links to guidance on photographing children and photographers rights at the end of this resource.

Josie Wood

Who was Josie Wood?

Living in Ivy Road, E16 with her parents, pioneering dancer and choreographer, Josie Woods, was born on the 16th of May 1912. Her father was a merchant sailor from Dominica, and her mother, Emily, was a local woman of gipsy ancestry.

During the late 1920s, at just 14 years old, Josie joined a dance troupe called the 'Magnolia Blossoms' and they left the UK to dance in Paris.

On her return to London, Josie joined the 'Eight Black Streaks' one of the first black British dance troupes. She toured the music halls around the UK and was a pioneer of the Jitterbug dance in Britain.



Image: Josie Wood

Source: <https://eastendwomensmuseum.org/blog/josie-woods>.



Photograph: Ivy Road 2021
Maggie Falshaw



Photograph: Street Sign 2021
Maggie Falshaw

Josie also appeared in the films, 'Kentucky Minstrels' (1934), and 'The Nitwits on Parade' (1949).

In 1997 she was featured in a BBC2 documentary 'Black Britain'.

In 2001 she moved to the USA to be near her son, saxophonist Ralph Moore.

Josie passed away on the 28th of June 2008 at the age of 96.

“

Quote

When my mother took me to see Josie there was lots of laughter. She was a very happy-go-lucky lady. Never down. Always very positive. Sometimes Josie would jump up and do a little dance for me.

Source: Actress Cleo Sylvestre,
Independent Newspaper 23/10/2011

”



Photograph: Ivy Road 2021, Maggie Falshaw

Photographic Activity

Ancestors & Heritage

Family Album - Sketch Book Style

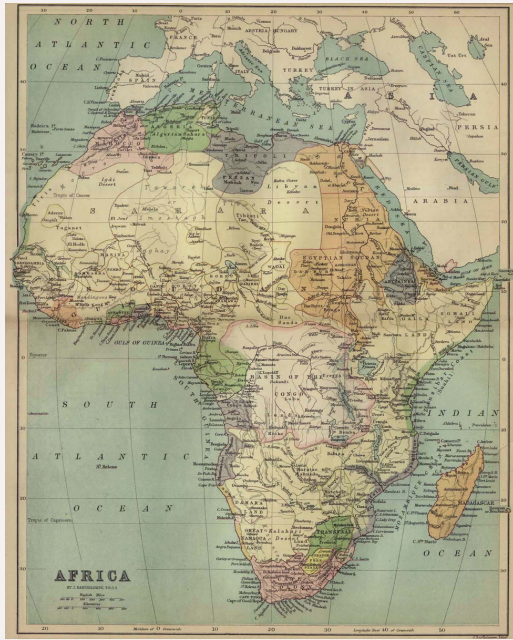
Look through your family album, select images of your relatives including yourself. Print digital images in various sizes. If the photographs are originals re-photograph them using a mobile phone or a camera and print them out too.


Next, find a sketchbook and start arranging them on the pages until you are happy with the layout then stick them in. Add handwritten notes, comments from family members, sketches, drawings and any other suitable material, you can be as creative as you like!

Share your album with your family and friends and have fun reminiscing.



Seafarers & Soldiers A Legacy




 Historical map of Africa
by J. Bartholomew

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:African_map_1885.jpg

License: Public Domain Mark 1.0



 Servicemen relaxing around a fire, at the Coloured Mens Social Club, 1919.

Attribution: Australian War Memorial

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C228594>

License: Public Domain Mark 1.0



A group of Lascars posing on the promenade deck of the 'Viceroy of India' .

Contributor: Atomic / Alamy Stock Photo, 2021

Beginning as a society of sailors and soldiers, the community grew to include entrepreneurial individuals who helped strengthen social and charitable organisations in Canning Town. They bought houses and rented them out to black men and their families because finding accommodation was often difficult.



Crew of a British merchant navy vessel, including sailors from Africa or the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent, 1900s / 1910s. Copyright Alamy 2021

This local community spirit continued supporting dock and factory workers and their families with many organizations formed across London.

This historical picture resource has charted just some of the lives of individuals in Canning Town and remembers their contributions both locally and beyond.

RESEARCH/RESOURCES/LINKS

Photographers Rights

<https://www.blpawards.org/competition/photo-rights>

Photographing Children

<https://www.anncrafttrust.org/is-it-illegal-to-take-a-picture-of-a-child-or-young-person-under-18/>

Licenses

<https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/public-domain/>

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

Research

<https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/events-global-african-history/britain-s-1919-race-riots/>

[https://www.museumoflondonprints.com/products/pod449807?
_pos=1&_sid=cd362bdde&_ss=r](https://www.museumoflondonprints.com/products/pod449807?_pos=1&_sid=cd362bdde&_ss=r)

<https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/short-reads/article/3044306/who-were-lascars-where-did-they-come-and-where>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z8bbtyc/revision/1>

<https://soundcloud.com/hiddenheroesuk/kamal-churchies-grandson-the-coloured-mens-institute-of-canning-town>

<https://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/oms/the-lascars-britains-colonial-era-sailors>

<https://www.hidden-histories.org/>

<https://twitter.com/eastsidech/status/1047086523898900480>

http://www.hi.lk/top_story/Gallant-Soldier-Minister-and-Founder-of-the-Coloured-Mens-Institute-in-East-London-Kamal-Churchie/53-5818

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9swNml40cwl>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p032rms9>

<https://eastendwomensmuseum.org/blog/josie-woods>

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2008/aug/02/dance>

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8478287/Campaigners-launch-bid-Jack-Leslie-statue-man-Englands-black-player.html>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-53184615>