

HUMAN STORIES AND THE EAST INDIA COMPANY



Unique Project by Brick Lane Circle

Are you interested in learning about how East India Company impacted on diverse people's lives and how that changed over time?

Do you want to write historical fictions based on facts about how Britain and Asia got connected?

Do you want to improve your writing skills on heritage fiction writing?

If yes then please apply to join the project as a volunteer heritage interpreter.

Who should apply?

Ordinary members of London's diverse communities, with a special focus on people living in East London and from different walks-of-life, are invited to apply. This project is particularly suitable for individuals who are interested in developing their knowledge on the heritage of East India Company and skills in creative writing. We are not looking for professional or established historians or writers to join the project.

Project details

The project will explore objects, institutions and human stories that linked Britain and Asia through the East India Company for about two and half centuries. It will look at how the East India Company impacted on different people's lives in London, in different ways, and how that changed over time.

A dozen community volunteer heritage interpreters / historical fiction writers will be recruited to undertake research, compile factual information on specific areas of their interest and write short stories set within historical contexts. The volunteers will explore East India Company records and many of the objects that it and people associated with its operation collected, some of which are now stored and displayed at institutions such as the British Library, National Maritime Museum and Victoria & Albert Museum. Many other institutions have relevant records and historical associations with the East India Company.

The main focus of the project will be, but not exclusively, on the life and dramas of people, objects and institutions associated with the operations of the East India Company in London - situated in the East India Dock; inside the tea exchange rooms; during quarterly auctions of goods; activities on the Thames River; dealings inside the East India Company House; etc.

Possible topics could include, depending on the interest of the volunteer recruited, trade, sea voyages, rough storms, Lascars in the East End, planning the opium wars, prosecution of criminals; misfortunes; piracy on the Thames, people becoming famous; receiving news of the Battle of Plassey, impacts of eastern goods; migration to India and immigration into London; romance; British ladies travelling to India to get married to British officers; institutional reforms; hardship; inter-racial relationship, experiences of racism, etc.

Bengal, India and Asia have nearly four centuries of links with Britain. These include the mutually beneficial interactions (early 1600 to the Battle of Plassey in 1757), exploitative colonial phase from the British takeover as rulers of India until independence in 1947 and the post war large-scale immigration of South Asian people into the UK. There are many subjects and objects to explore and stories to tell. More than 200 years of the connection were through the East India Company (early 1600 - 1858 Mutiny).

The method of short story writing to bring out heritage represents a new and exciting way of engaging members of London's diverse communities to discover and enjoy learning about our common and unexplored heritage.

If you are interested in applying please visit www.bricklanecircle.org or email bricklanecircle@yahoo.co.uk for more information and an application form. Closing date: Monday 20 April 2015.

PROJECT LAUNCH

6.30-8.30pm, Thursday, 19 March 2015, Lab 1A, Idea Store Whitechapel, 321 Whitechapel Rd, London E1 1BU

PROGRAMME

1. PROJECT INFORMATION
2. SHORT CLIP FROM THE 1930S FILM 'CLIVE OF INDIA'
3. SHORT PRESENTATIONS FROM GUESTS AND EXPERTS
 - Experiences of writing historical fictions – by *Shahida Rahman (author of Lascar) and Sangeeta Bhargava (author of The World Beyond)*
 - A very brief introduction to the East India Company - by *Margaret Makepeace (Lead Curator for the East India Company Records at the British Library)*
 - India Museum and its collections – by *Avalon Fotheringham (Exhibition Research Assistant for the upcoming V&A exhibition The Fabric of India)*
 - National Maritime Museum East India Company collections and the Traders gallery – by *Sara Wajid, Senior Manager, National Maritime Museum*
 - Looking to the East - by *Maureen Roberts (Senior Development Officer, London Metropolitan Archives)*
 - East India Dock Company Walks – by *Dr Georgie Wemyss (author of The Invisible Empire)*
4. THE NEXT STEP