



LHBT, the SPAB and Streets of Growth join to create a short film series on maintaining historic buildings

Laura Owen, LHBT Freelance Project Officer, writes about her experience while working on the project.

It's 9:00am on a very rainy February day in east London, and the video team has gathered at Streets of Growth, a young adult intervention organisation, ready for a day of shooting. The crew comprises of Maria Andrews and Sam Liebmann from [manifestfilm](#), James Innerdale from the [Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings](#) (SPAB), Eliza Islam, a local resident with specialist knowledge of the buildings in the Petticoat Lane area, four young people from [Streets of Growth](#) and their Employability Manager, Shuma Begum, and myself. Armed with call sheets and unusually large umbrellas, we head to our first location of this filming project.



I am a freelance Oral Historian & Heritage Engagement Consultant and have been working with LHBT since 2021 on a variety of projects, mostly around the Petticoat Lane High Street Heritage Action Zone in Tower Hamlets. I live locally, so have been involved in projects throughout the area, leading on the day-to-day management of projects and supporting them through community engagement.

LHBT has delivered two projects here: the [Petticoat Lane Heritage Trail](#), a self-led trail co-developed with the community, which celebrates 10 'characters' of historical significance, including people, buildings and landmarks; and a Building Maintenance Training Programme, which aims to educate and inform residents, business owners and tenants about the importance of maintaining historic buildings. Both projects have been funded by Historic England as part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone scheme.



Laura Owen, Oral Historian and Heritage Engagement Consultant

Laura Owen is freelance Oral Historian and Heritage Engagement Consultant living and working in East London. Her practice focuses on giving voices to those who have been traditionally left out of historical narratives, and she facilitates opportunities for communities to share their stories in their own words. Laura works with LHBT on several projects for London's High Street Heritage Action Zones, including the Petticoat Lane Heritage Trail and Historic Building Maintenance Training Programmes, where she manages the day-to-day coordination of activities and leads on community engagement.

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Throughout the scoping phase of the filming project, we learnt about the community and their barriers to accessing information about maintaining historic buildings. To rectify this, we decided to create a series of six short videos, shot in-situ in Petticoat Lane Market, where the SPAB's James Innerdale and local resident Eliza explored the importance of maintaining buildings, highlighting common maintenance issues and explaining where viewers can obtain further help and guidance. For the filming, we partnered with Streets of Growth to upskill a team of four young videographers, who received training in camera skills and video editing and assisted with filming and creative direction.

For both LHBT and the SPAB, this is the first time we have engaged communities with historic building maintenance in this way. We hope to reach a wider audience with these social media-style videos versus hosting in-person training events that residents may not be able to fit into their schedules. With this format, people can access information on the go and at the touch of a button via their smartphone or computer.

However, it's not only the video output that makes this project so special. Our partnership with Streets of Growth meant that the video production process was just as important as the output. Providing paid creative industry training and work experience to four young people and connecting them with local filmmakers has been fantastic, and we're looking forward to building on these relationships in future projects and activities.

The videos will be available online via London Borough of Tower Hamlets' social media later in the year. The High Street Heritage Action Zone scheme is funded by Historic England. This work has taken place in collaboration with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, manifestfilm, Streets of Growth and the Petticoat Lane community, on behalf of London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Find out more about LHBT's work with London's High Street Heritage Action Zones

The High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) initiative is a £95 million government-funded programme, delivered by [Historic England](#), to unlock the potential of historic high streets across England, fuelling economic, social and cultural recovery.

LHBT has been appointed to support the [Petticoat Lane](#) and [South Norwood](#) HSHAZs, bringing together teams of community, historic building and maintenance experts to deliver bespoke activities, designed to have long-lasting benefits for both people and place.



Petticoat Lane Heritage Trail: Phase One is complete as we prepare to announce Phase Two

The [Petticoat Lane Heritage Trail](#) showcases the heritage of the Petticoat Lane Market and its surrounding area through a series of people, buildings, landmarks and stories from the past, which can be accessed by QR stickers that lead to an information webpage when scanned.

Phase One of this project began in January 2022, with four community researchers exploring stories and themes relating to the heritage of the area. Design and engagement activities then took place, and a 10-stop temporary trail was finalised.

This project is live and ongoing. We expect to announce Phase Two soon, which will give permanence to the Heritage Trail, as well as additional entries.

Community Researchers share their findings on the Girls' Charity School

In October 2023, LHBT recruited five individuals from Edmonton to research the history of the Girls' Charity School and its surrounding community. The information they uncovered gives us a greater and more nuanced understanding about the school's sponsors, its mission, its students and its neighbourhood. Furthermore, these findings have enabled the lives of some of the schoolgirls to be pieced together and recorded.



One of the researchers studied the 18th and 19th century charity school movement, highlighting both its philanthropic initiative, and also an element of social control the benefactors were hoping to achieve. The Charity School girls were being prepared for domestic service, and they were taught the skills and etiquette that enabled them to be diligent and dutiful within their station. The schoolmistress taught the girls reading, writing and plain work, which included sewing and embroidery. However, their education, like that of students from other charity schools, contributed to serve the broader ideal of maintaining an orderly and harmonious society.

The origins and later lives of some of the schoolgirls who attended the Charity School were uncovered using birth, baptism, marriage and death certificates, historic photographs and census returns. This research revealed that many of the Charity School girls did, in fact, find work in domestic service. Many ended up getting married and having children; one eventually had her own servant, but another died in destitution.

The Charity School uniform was also researched, and a replica was made with fabrics used at the time, as shown in the photograph above. In addition, we see one of the schoolgirls in her uniform within the Edmonton community in the 19th century photograph below.

A researcher whose family has lived in the area since the 1850s studied the Church Street community over time. The development of the area was traced through demographics and the evolution of maps, revealing that the area expanded from a small village before the railway, to the industrial and commuter centre it is today.

We would like to thank Mateusz, Emma, Amy, Juliet and Ian for their research, their enthusiasm and for being a part of this project. We also thank them for sharing their findings and the stories they helped piece together, which are to be presented on the 4th of April at [Untold Edmonton at the Fore Street Library](#). And lastly, we would like to thank an anonymous poet from Edmonton, a volunteer researcher, for writing such a beautiful and felicitous poem about the girls from the Charity School.



By an anonymous Poet from Edmonton

*Hither to the red-brick school they go
Like goslings, mantled in blue dress
To knitted wools, long as the tress,
Of sylphs, who in canal bound
Sweep silently through Edmonton
sound.*

*Yonder into history they flow
Our hard-worked girls of humble birth
From the dark places of the earth
By charity trained in skill and grace
To learn their craft and find their
place.*

LHBT's 'BUILDING FUTURES' training goes on the road

We're taking our expertise, advice and support on the road as we host the next BUILDING FUTURES training sessions in local London boroughs. While the training sessions will cover the same content, each will be tailored to respective locations, with case studies and speakers specific to locale. This approach will enable shared learning opportunities and networking for attendees.

These workshops will cover:

- What makes a successful, viable heritage regeneration project and how to develop one
- Who could benefit from your project and in what ways
- Project funding opportunities and ensuring a successful application

18th March 2024: Canning Town - for those located in the boroughs of Newham, Barking & Dagenham, Lewisham and Greenwich

Speakers included:

- London Historic Buildings Trust
- Sophia Mirchandani from the Cultural Consulting Network
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Architectural Heritage Fund
- Creative Land Trust will present their new project at Alice Billings House in Newham (see photograph), which has recently secured a development grant of £467,172 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and a potential delivery grant of £2,726,177. This funding will see this Heritage at Risk building repaired and reused as a creative hub.



22nd April 2024: Sydenham - for those located in the boroughs of Southwark, Croydon, Lambeth & Bromley

Speakers will include:

- London Historic Buildings Trust
- Sophia Mirchandani from the Cultural Consulting Network
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Architectural Heritage Fund
- Friends of Crystal Palace Subway, who will recount their work to champion this hidden relic of Victorian construction.
- Kingswood Arts CIC will present their new master planning initiative at the historic Kingswood House (see photograph) on the Kingswood Estate in Dulwich Wood. The feasibility project has secured a grant of £10,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



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