ROYAL DOCKS

Sail Back in Time



Sail Back in Time

Sail Back in Time was delivered as part of the Places of Change heritage project, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Royal Docks Team, and delivered by Thames Festival Trust. The wider mission of the Trust is to increase appreciation of rivers and their importance to us all. To create and promote river and river-related art, education, and heritage events as well as sporting, cultural, community, and environmental activities. Thames Festival Trust has a particular interest in the River Thames and its tributaries.

This learning resource provides an introduction to the diverse communities and locations that existed around the Royal Docks in the early 20th century. This visual resource is suitable for anyone over 12 years old with an interest in photography, archival images, and local history.

All images have been attributed where possible, but we can make amendments or corrections if we have unintentionally made errors.

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With special thanks to Asif Shakoor and Solmaz Kennedy.

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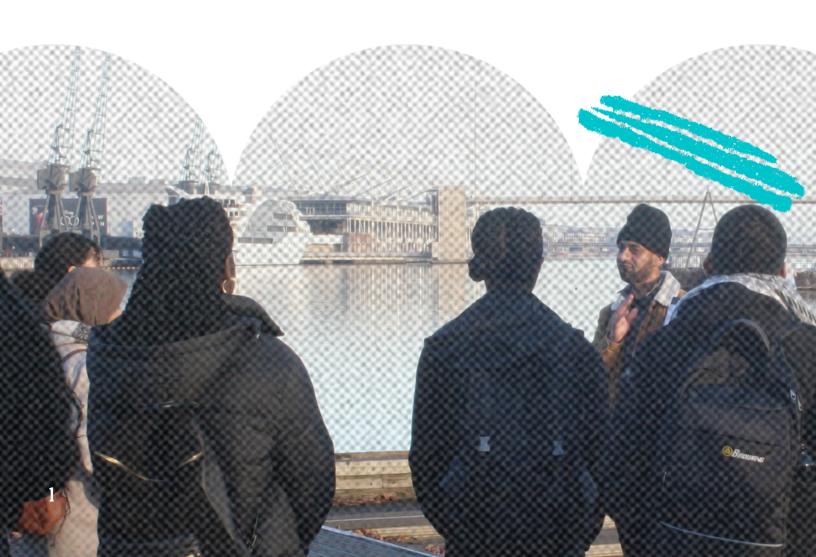
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THE ROYAL DOCKS

Sail Back in Time

The Royal Docks is situated in the London Borough of Newham in East London. It consists of three docks; Royal Albert, Royal Victoria, and King George V. They were constructed between 1855 and 1921 and collectively formed the largest enclosed dock system in the world, spanning 19.3 km.

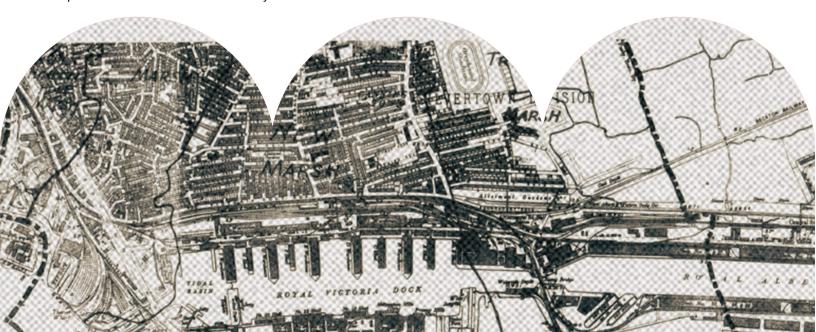
The exponential and violent growth of the British Empire in the nineteenth century along with increasing trade from the colonial countries led to the development of the Royal Docks. The docks were built to accommodate large shipping vessels importing foodstuffs and raw materials such as sugar, spices, cotton, and tea exported from the British colonies in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean as well as other parts of the world. As a result, many factories and warehouses were built along the quayside serving the hundreds of cargo ships.



Image:Spillers Millennium Mills, Royal Victoria Dock, London, 1934. Originally published in the "Spillers: 1934 Review" chapter of British Commerce and Industry 1934.



Image: Menestheus in King George V Dock, 1940. National Maritime Museum from Greenwich.



South Asian Seafarers

The Forgotten Sailors

South Asian Seafarers, renowned for their ship-handling skills, had served on European ships since the 15th century. The sailors played a valuable role in British maritime trade and were recruited by the Royal Navy during the First and Second World Wars. The word 'Lascar' is derived from the Persian word 'Lashkar,' meaning an army, a camp, or a band of followers. However, this term was eventually used as a generic term to describe all Asian and Middle Eastern sailors from across the globe.

A growing number of seafarers from East Bengal, present-day Bangladesh, were employed on British ships to replace British sailors who abandoned their posts due to the appalling working conditions. The sailors were employed as cooks, machine cleaners, coal carriers, and in the engine room, they stoked coal in temperatures up to 40 degrees celsius.

Sadly, the sailors were badly treated, poorly paid, and like the British men, many jumped ship. In contrast, others were abandoned by their employers without pay and found themselves unable to return home, left to fend for themselves. Inappropriately dressed for the British winters and unable to find adequate shelter or food, some men perished in the streets.



Image: Asian seamen – painting a Union flag on the deck of the P&O liner 'Chitral' © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.



Japanese Seaman's Club

As Japan's industrial economy grew, shipping became one of its major industries. During the First World War, Britain ordered almost 200 trawling vessels from Japan's major shipping company Nippon Yusen Kaisha. The order increased employment opportunities for young Japanese men willing to join the merchant navy and travel the world.

In 1898, The Japanese Seamen's Club, located at 31 Elizabeth Street, North Woolwich, was established by Mrs Bickersteth. The club organised social activities, outings, and spiritual guidance for the sailors.

During the Second World War, there was a growing sense of animosity and mistrust towards the Japanese sailors. In 1941, after the bombing of Pearl Harbour, Britain declared war on Japan. As a result, Japanese sailors and businessmen were rounded up and sent to the Isle of Man. Most of the businessmen were repatriated to Japan, but sailors were considered a potential threat due to their seafaring skills and were sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in Knapdale, Scotland.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhLP3BJZEF8

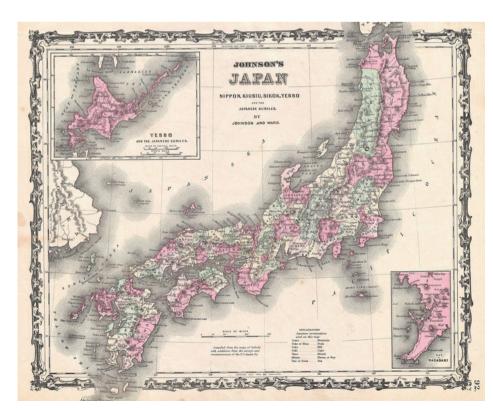




Image:1862 Johnson Map of Japan, Public Domain.

Kamal Chunchie

The Coloured Men's Institute

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, a former Chinese lodging located at Tidal Basin Road, Victoria Docks. Kamal transformed the space into a community centre that served the local community, providing food and shelter to stranded sailors, dockworkers, and their families.

Unfortunately, the building was demolished in 1930 to accommodate a road-widening scheme. The organisation continued to function at a local church until Chunchie's death in 1953. In 2021, the public voted to rename the road leading to the Mayor's Office from Siemens Brothers Way to Kamal Chunchie Way.



CMI: a daily canteen and safe social space for East London's Black and Asian communities. $\[\]$ Newham Archives.



Image: Portrait of Kamal Chunchie, © Eastside Community Heritage.

Claude McKay

Political Writer



Political writer and poet Claude McKay was born on the 15th of September, 1890, in Sunny Ville, Jamaica. He migrated to London in 1919 and worked for the socialist publication 'Dreadnought'. It is believed that he was England's first black reporter.

McKay documented the lives of soldiers and seafarers from around the world 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'.



Photo of the poet, novelist and short story writer Claude McKay, Author James L Allen.



Claude McKay photographed while in Russia, 1923.

Communities of Crown Street

For many centuries, Canning Town was mostly undeveloped marshland that could only be accessed by boat or toll bridge. In 1809, an Act of Parliament was passed to construct Barking Road, which transformed the landscape of Canning Town and led to a thriving industry. Consequently, it became a densely populated and heavily industrialised area, with significant growth in manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and shipping, attracting workers from all over the world.



Image: Children playing together on Crown Street in Canning Town. $\ \$ Mary Evans Picture Library 2024.

During the First World War, soldiers and sailors from Africa, the Caribbean, South Asia and Southeast Asia increased. Many settled in Canning Town and the surrounding areas close to the Royal Docks, some married local women and raised families.

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.

Catastrophe in Canning Town

Generally, there were good relations between different ethnic groups, but owing to the pressures of the First World War, 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.

'In July 1917, several black sailors were attacked in their lodging houses and on the streets in Canning Town. The Daily Express firmly blamed interracial relationships as lying at the heart of the problem. Hostility to interracial relationships between black men and white women would also play a key role in the wider series of race riots that took place throughout the UK in 1919'.

https://exhibition.mixedmuseum.org.uk/ museum/timeline/disturbances-in-canning-town

Claude McKay was so upset about the stories and propaganda reported in the newspapers that he wrote a response to the Local Herald. Unfortunately, the newspaper refused to print it!

"The result of your propaganda will be further strife and blood-spilling between whites and the many members of my race who have been dumped down on the English docks since the ending of the European war". Claude McKay

Flying Angel



Image: Flying Angel, Custom House, © Malc McDonald 2011.

A number of other organisations were set up to support destitute sailors and soldiers these included:

 The Destitute Sailors' Asylum, founded in 1827 in Dock Street.

 The Sailors' Home, established in 1835 in Well Street.

 The Strangers' Home in West India Dock Road opened in 1857.

https://newhamndp.org.uk/ heritage-e16/arrival-2/

The Anglican Missions to Seaman Institute was built between 1934 and 1936 by Fetch & Fermand. It was established to accommodate sailors, many of whom were from different parts of Africa, the Caribbean, east, south and southeast Asia.

https://edithsstreets.blogspot.com/search?q=flying+angel



Image: Flying Angel, © M Falshaw, 2021.

South Hallsville School



Winston Churchill visits east London the day after South Hallsville school tragedy at Canning Town. Picture: London Metropolitan Archive.

South Hallsville School, located on Agate Street in Canning Town, was hit by a parachute bomb on the night of September 10th, 1940, devastating the building and killing many of the people sheltering there. However, there were conflicting reports of the number of casualties. The government reported that 77 people had died, but local people argued it was closer to 600. After the Second World War, a new school, Hallsville Primary, was built on the site in 1948.

THESE ROSES WERE PLANTED BY THE
CHILDREN OF HALLSVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL
IN THE PRESENCE OF HER MAJESTY
QUEEN ELIZABETH THE QUEEN MOTHER
ON IST AUGUST 1990.
(During the period of her 90th Birthday celebrations)
THEY COMMEMORATE THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES
ON THIS SCHOOL SITE 50 YEARS AGO
ON THE 10th SEPTEMBER 1940
FOLLOWING HEAVY BOMBING WHICH
RESULTED IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE
SOUTH HALLSVILLE SCHOOL, AGATE STREET.

In 2020, to mark the 80th anniversary of the tragedy, an oak tree was planted in the school grounds to honour those who lost their lives.

Image: © Michael Bradley (WMR-12412)

Seaman's Hospital

Living conditions aboard ship were difficult for all sailors. However, Asian seafarers had a higher death rate in comparison to Europeans. This was hardly surprising as they were forced to live in harsher conditions; overcrowding, a poor diet, and inadequate healthcare led to diseases that spread quickly amongst the crew. Some of the fortunate sailors managed to receive care at the Seamen's Hospital located on Alnwick Road in Custom House.

			TABLE						the Lascars, o	n board of the Ships mention	ned in the foregoing Reports.		
Ships News.	Sailed from	Acricol a	Said from	Arrived at	of Cross.	Shipped in England	Honorwood.	Dipaje. Osossark.	Prevailing Dijneje.	Feed.	Chilling.	State of the Joy and Labor's Errob.	
			England, December 15, 1800		8 Europeans, 82 Natives.	10 Europeans, 16 Natires.	3 Nations.	55 Natires.	Droplical Swellings.			wathed, and tiriskled with vinegar.	Cape I cutward, hazy and maid, but
Arran, Appendix No. L	March 15, 1800.	1	December 7, 1800	May 25, 1801.	40 Nation.	49 Natires.	3 Nations.	41 Natires.	Diese.	and beer; eneward, nice, herrings	Clash jockets and trawfers; obliged to change them when wet. But duty in cold weather.	named being the bounds.	The greatest mortality in calm, clear weather, in Lat. 40 South.
Appendix No. L		September 6, (1)	Oraceford, December 7, 1500		53 Nation.		8 Natives.	14 Natires.	Dirto.	In Englant, beef and heer came on board fieldy: outward, diet as in the other two flips.	Very indolent. Warm clothing furnished before leaving Eagland.		
Appendix No. II.	April 9, 1501.			Madra, July 18, 1802.	68 Mes. 85 Nations	45 Nations	4 In England.	15 Notices.	Sourry.	Rice, dll, butter, tale-bearings, sotators, tamaclock, curry fluff.		Berth ventions by a wind fall. Not washed, but often fundated. Con- fixed six.	Variable y feems not seach up have affected the state of diffcafe.
Appendix No. III.	Bragal, March 21, 1801.		1		(Af Annual Register 1800, Nume Paper mag. 81)		(Af. Annual Regifter 1800. State Popers pag. 80)		Fever.	Fice, d3l, give, tamerinds, chillies in harbone, feeth meat and vege- tables; off the Cape, conjue, with run and metalles, faired fith.		Well restlated and rousey. Offers famigated and femped.	Homeward, had weather out the Cope,
Appendix No. IV.										Rier, dll, ghee, cod and herrings, potatocs, fault beer, speace beer.		Rather control, and imperiority ventilated, White-walked often, and	
Appendix No. V.	Brogal, April 1801.	English, February 15ts.	August 7, 1802.	Jamusy 29, 1805.	105 Men.			42 Nations	Outward, fever	ther. In England, musson or beef with regetables. Outward, rice, but live and falls.			Honewards very honey.
Poscher, Appendix No. VL			April 1, 1801.	Fally Roy, August 1, 1801.	110 Natives,	1	Died in England, 7 Natives.		In England, feve and preumonia. Off the Cape, feur sys with droptica twellings.	Non, dil, glor, a few falt her rings.	Proper clothing wasting a mea dirty and hadolest.	Dicks offen wet.	Of the Cope, cold, with rain at times.
Appendix No. VII.			April 6, 1803.	Argult 9. 1503.	ng to 50 haropeans. 120 to 130 Natives.			27 Natives.	Scarny.	Rice and glave, with two drawn daily, fome falc fift, rather old.	Warm plaining and float floor. Dirty and never changed their clothes.	Clean, day, and well ventilated.	Flexibit and day, except in the Bay of Rifery, near the line, and off the
Appendix No. VIII.	Bengsi, Murch 18, 1801.	Mocha, May 25, 18cc.	Mecha, May 30, 1803.	July 11, 1803.	68 Nativos		From Mocha to Coller and at Coller 13 Natives.	After leaving Codice 11 Natives.	fever.	Before ageing at Mecha, rice, this, gher, fals fift. From Micha to Coffee the famous revolution, with falled France.		By h very cochord, and budly ven-	Cape,
Athes, Appendix No. XVI.	Bengal, April 13, 1802.	Sc. Helena, July 24- Depetion, Ochober 16, 180,	Rogland, January 2, 1803.	Calcum, May 8, 1803.	14 Europeans, 85 Natives.	7 Notices.	2 Native, 4 Do. in Eng- land.		the Cape, fourty, In highed, ca-	Honewarl, rice, dit, give, when, neloffer, filedit, preferred tame risols, explicates, esteens, garle. In England, firth murno, with ve- getables and final beer. Outword, the fame as homewarl,	is yold weather haven, denor- und facts of P-ray blackering, clock runties and clockliptices liked with Sudering; cop and those. In warm- seather their sum common deefs, Lafeus kept clem and nonland with oil, to which you was functions added,		Houseand; at first gloony, squally also rais: through the trades fine: in June 2 pills of wind for 48 boers. This of high almost conducting give and possel; after rounding the Cope, fine. Outwish, other and moderate.

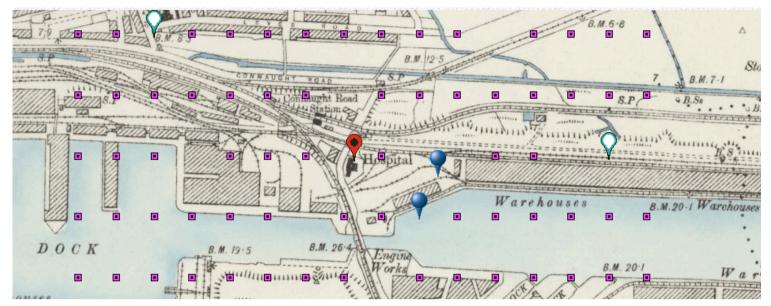
Image: Table exhibiting the circumstances which appear to have affected the Health of the Lascars on board the ships mentions in the foregoing reports.

The Seaman's Hospital was opened in 1890 on Connaught Road as a branch of the Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital, Greenwich. The Hospital was relocated to a new site on nearby Alnwick Road (east of Felsted Road) in 1937-1938.

https://www.theundergroundmap.com/article.html?id=6195&zoom=16&annum=1900



Image: Royal Abert Docks, Seaman's Hospital Location: Alnwick Road, Custom House, E16 3EZ.



https://www.theundergroundmap.com/article.html?id=6195&zoom=16&annum=1900



Seamen's Hospital booklet. Wellcome Collection. Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0). Source: Wellcome Collection.



Despite the challenges of racial disturbances, war, and poverty, there was still a strong sense of community. People worked together to set up businesses, charities, social clubs, and organised social gatherings to support each other through difficult times.

Activities



Portrait Photography



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

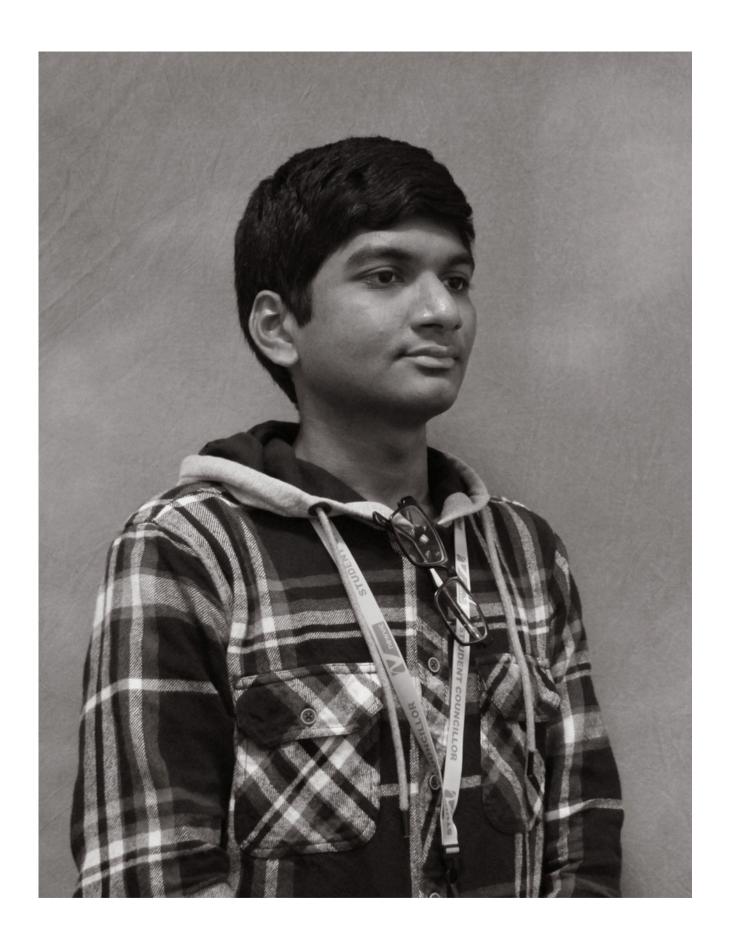
Create four photographs, two in black and white and two in colour, of an individual or a group inspired by the archival images of Kamal Chunchie or Claude McKay.



Kamal Chunchie, © Eastside Community Heritage.



Portrait of Claude McKay, 1920

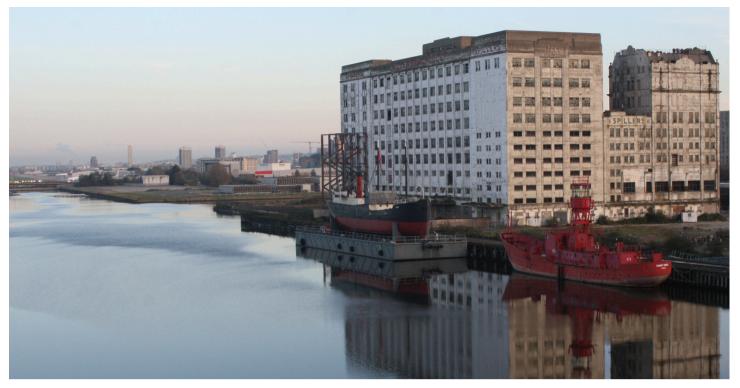


Exploring the Royal Docks

Local History walk with Asif Shakoor







View of Spillers Millennium Mills, Royal Victoria, 2023.







Dockers Statue, Royal Victoria Dock, Sophie Fung, 2023.



View from The Royal Victoria Dock Bridge, 2023.









Views from Royal Victoria Docks at Dusk, Polaroid Film 2023.



Document Your Community

Photograph the areas within your community that you find interesting or start with the locations in this resource. Visit your local library and search through archival records or Google images of your community from the past.

Compare your photographs to the ones you have found:

- Any notable changes?
- What differences can you spot?
- Or, have certain aspects remained unchanged?



Spillers Millennium Mills Royal Victoria Dock, London, 1934. Originally published in the "Spillers: 1934 Review" chapter of British Commerce and Industry 1934.



View of Spillers Millennium Mills, Royal Victoria, 2023.



HISTORY TALK

Discussions with Curator Solmaz Kennedy

"The Asian Seafarer sometimes formed temporary or lasting relationships with British women. One Victorian woman named Sarah Graham, for example, was given the nickname 'Lascar Sally' because she kept a London lodging-house that catered for lascars."

"In the early 19th century, Chinese seamen who were employed in the tea trade on East India Company ships began temporarily lodging in London. At the turn of the 20th century, most Chinese settlers congregated in East London. Sadly, they became victims of prejudice from fearful locals who resented them setting up their own businesses."

"Bengali sailors have been settling in the East End of London and in other ports since the 1700s. Some had simply ended their contracts with a shipping company. Others 'jumped ship', impatient with shipboard conditions or the lack of payment of their wages."

Now Do Your Own Research

What evidence and images can you find to support the above statements?

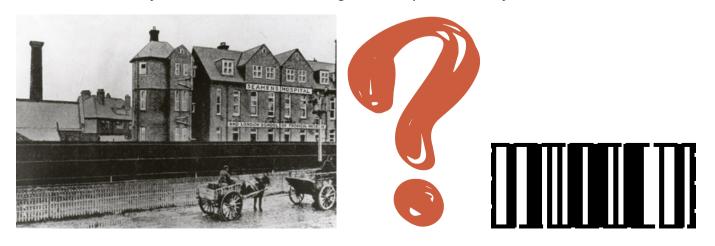


How to Analyse a Photograph THINK WONDER ?

A photograph is a great source of historical information. When we 'read' a photograph carefully we can extract information often overlooked by just a glance.

Look at the image below or select another in this resource:

- Observe: What do you see? Identify the elements describe what is in the image?
- Think: What do you think of this image?
- · Wonder: What do you wonder about this image what questions do you have?



Create a Zine

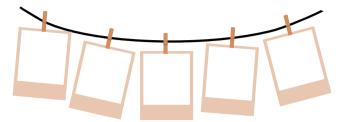


What is a Zine?

A Zine is a handmade or online magazine with a short circulation of self-published content incorporating text, images, and art, and usually reproduced using a photocopier. It is a fun and creative way to share a story.

Materials Needed

A3 Card Scissors Glue Stick Colouring Pens



Instructions

- Prepare the Paper: Begin by folding your A3 card in half. Continue this process two additional times until the card is folded into eights, as illustrated in the accompanying diagram.
- Create the Booklet: Unfold the card so it's only folded in half. Then, make a cut along the centre fold, stopping halfway. This will form the spine of your booklet.
- 3. Form the Pages: Fold the card lengthwise at the cut to create a slit. Grasping the card at both ends, gently push them towards each other. This action will cause the card to collapse into itself, forming an eight-page booklet.
- 4. **Personalise Your Zine:** Now, use the blank pages of your booklet to express your heritage and identity. Utilise text, images, and art to fill in each page with content that resonates with your personal story.











