

THE
NATIONAL
ARCHIVES

Archives Live: Whitechapel

Live broadcast resource pack



Introduction

This resource pack is designed to prepare and support students to take part in the Archives Live: Whitechapel live event. The resources and activities in this pack have been broken up into **three different sections: before, during and after the live event.**

The event itself has been designed for GCSE students with a focus on the Migration to Britain modules across all exam boards as well as the Crime and Punishment modules – particularly the Edexcel Whitechapel c1870-1900 site study.

The broadcast will take place on 13 October 2025 at 2pm and last 50 minutes. It will then be available online on The National Archives Education Service website and YouTube channel for use as a teaching resource.

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Preparations for the event

In preparation for the live event, you may find it helpful to go through the **context sections** for each individual story which can be found further on in the resource pack. However, this is not essential.

During the event there will be **two interactive census activities** that students can participate in. Both of the census pages will be shown live on the screen however we recommend **printing** these **in advance** of the event for students to view. Before the event begins, please ensure the two census activities are face down on the desk. The two census documents can be found on pages 8-13 of the resource pack. These are labelled census activity 1 and 2. There are also transcripts for both census pages and a help box with some key words. Please encourage students to look at the original side first, before turning over to the transcript.

Important note: Please explain to the students in advance of the census activity that the column on the right-hand side referring to people as “deaf and dumb”, imbecile or lunatic is today considered offensive and is no longer used on census records. However, it highlights how people with poor mental health or learning disabilities were treated by society at this time.

Preparation for the live Q&A with historians Sarah Elizabeth Cox and Breda Corish

Prior to the event, schools will be able to **submit questions** about each story in the broadcast. You may want to decide as a class/school on one question together to submit. If time does not permit, you can still submit questions during the live broadcast.

Below is a list of potential questions:

- What advice would you give to a young person who would like to become a historian?
- What do you find interesting about researching the boxers of Whitechapel?
- Why do you think Whitechapel was so difficult to police?
- What would life have been like for someone living in a lodging house?
- What were some other common jobs that Irish people undertook in Whitechapel?
- What percentage of the population in Whitechapel came from Irish backgrounds?
- Could you tell us a bit more about the relationship between the police and the Irish immigrant community?
- What happened to Mary and Margaret Driscoll after the strike?
- How many people were affected by ‘phossy jaw’?
- What type of sources do you find most useful when researching these histories?
- What are some of the challenges of researching stories of migration to nineteenth century Whitechapel?

Preparations for the event

Optional activity before the broadcast

During the **live event**, a variety of documents will be displayed on the screen for each of the three stories. One of the documents we will refer to for the Irish migration story is the below document from **The Illustrated London News**. It shows women and girls undertaking different stages of the match making process at the Bryant and May factory. If time permits, you may find it useful to print out copies of this image and discuss the following questions with your students:

- Describe the types of work you can see in the image.
- Can you spot any potential dangers?

Illustrated London News, 1888. Catalogue ref: ZPER 34/93



Historical background for teachers

Caribbean migration

During the event, students will learn a little about Caribbean migration to Britain in the 1800s. Migration from this area is often considered to have started with the major wave of the Windrush Generation in the 1940s, but many Caribbean communities established themselves in Britain during the 1800s with notable figures such as Mary Seacole and William Davidson featuring prominently elsewhere in History studies. As this is less of a major 'wave' of migration to Whitechapel than the Irish and Jewish stories it should be seen as an example of the connections and opportunities fostered by the docklands.

Crime, Punishment and Poverty in Whitechapel

Alec Munroe's story should be seen as a case study of both crime and community in the area, working to reinforce some of the learnings students are likely to cover with the 'Jack the Ripper' murders while also challenging some preconceptions such as crime requiring isolation from community or helpless victims.

Alec lived in a common lodging house on Little Pearl Street run by Frederick Gehringer, whose family ran several lodging houses and pubs in the area. Gehringer is noted by George Duckworth and Sergeant French in their description of the area for Charles Booth's poverty map, showing the police were aware of his businesses, which were known for overcrowding and drunken fights. An extract of the notebook has been provided for context on the area, however the investigators writing these notes had clear prejudices against the subjects they were observing, especially concerning race, migration, and poverty. Many comments are dehumanising in nature and should be examined critically.

Charles Booth's poverty map of London, 1898-9, sheet 5

LSE Library

MAP DESCRIPTIVE OF LONDON POVERTY, 1898-9
(IN 12 SHEETS)

SHEET 5.
EAST CENTRAL DISTRICT



THE STREETS ARE COLOURED ACCORDING TO THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE INHABITANTS, AS UNDER:—

- Lowest class. Vicious, semi-criminal.
- Very poor, casual. Chronic want.
- Poor. 18s. to 21s. a week for a moderate family.
- Mixed. Some comfortable, others poor.
- Fairly comfortable. Good ordinary earnings.
- Middle class. Well-to-do.
- NIL Upper-middle and Upper classes. Wealthy.

A combination of colours—as dark blue and black, or pink and red—indicates that the street contains a fair proportion of each of the classes represented by the respective colours.

Charles Booth's poverty map of London, 1898-9, sheet 5

LSE Library

Transcript

Map Descriptive of London Poverty, 1898-9
(In 12 sheets)

Sheet 5
East Central District

The streets are coloured according to the general condition of the inhabitants, as under:

Black = Lowest class. Vicious, semi-criminal.
Dark blue = Very poor, casual. Chronic want.
Light blue = Poor. 18 to 21 shillings a week for a moderate family.
Dark pink = Mixed. Some comfortable, others poor.
Light pink = Fairly comfortable. Good ordinary earnings.
Red = Middle-class. Well-to-do.
No colour = Upper-middle and Upper classes. Wealthy.

A combination of colours - as dark blue or black, or pink and red - indicates that the street contains a fair proportion of each of the classes represented by the respective colours.

Visual description

A map of the East End of London showing the general block shapes of buildings along the roads. The buildings have been coloured in based on a scale of "the general condition of the inhabitants" as observed by Charles Booth's investigators. The scale ranges from black for the "Lowest class, vicious semi-criminal" to red for "Middle class. Well-to-do". The area of interest for us is between St Stephens and Christ Church in the Spitalfields area and shows Little Pearl Street and the surrounding area Coloured in black and blue while an area of Red is shown on the other side of Commercial Street.

Page from notebook from Charles Booth's Inquiry into Life and Labour in London (1886-1903). LSE Library, BOOTH/B/351 p131

Little Pearl St. Late Vine Court, 3 st. black as map
 old houses with long, smaller peaked weavers' windows
 to top stories. Some boarded up in the middle
 & few Jews - On the West side lives F. Scraggs
 'Barrows to let' the name of all these houses.
 On the West side is Vine Court. broad, cement
 Court, well done up. WCs at West end away
 from houses - perhaps a little better than most
 1 lb. rather than black on the East side
 of the St. is Crown Court. 2 st. men packing up
 sacks of peas. Lives in one house, blue
 in map but it shd. be as black as you can
 make it. At into Commercial St. Brothers
 on SE side of Little Pearl St. black as
 map.

a thoroughly vicious quarter. The presence of the
 Cambridge Music Hall in Commercial St.
 makes it a focusing point for prostitutes.
 South down Commercial St. past Puma Court.
 Late Red Lion Ct. a passage: shops & public
 South side: purple on it side East of them
 houses. 1. to Furnace St late Church St.
 3 st.

Nine Court - lb

Lewis says that respectable
 Jews are in the West
 corner of Little Pearl St
 but that is black.

Brown Court - black

Journies Street - pk 6

Cambridge Music Hall.

Page from notebook from Charles Booth's Inquiry into Life and Labour in London (1886-1903). LSE Library, BOOTH/B/351 p131

Transcript

Little Pearl Street, late Vine Court, 3 stories, black as map old houses with long, smaller paned weavers windows to top stories. Some boarded up in the middle. A few Jews. On the west side lives F. Gehringer 'Barrows to let' the owner of all these houses. On the west side is Vine Court. Broad cement court. Well done up. WCs at west end away from houses. Perhaps a little better than the rest and dark blue rather than black on the east side of the street is crown court. 2 stories. Men packing up sacks of parsley. Owner lives in one house, dark blue in map 'but it should be as black as you can make it' Out into commercial street. Brothels on south east side of little Pearl Street. Black as map. A thoroughly vicious quarter. The presence of the Cambridge Music Hall in Commercial Street makes it a focussing point for prostitutes.

Irish migration

During the live event, students will learn about the reasons for Irish migration, with a focus on the Driscoll family. At least three members of the family were match makers at the Bryant and May factory in Bow, East London. They were also leaders of the match women's strike at this factory in 1888.

The 1888 match womens' strike was a pivotal labour movement event where approximately 1,400 female workers at the Bryant & May match factory in Bow, London, walked out to protest appalling working conditions, low wages, and unfair dismissal.

Context of Irish migration to Britain

Irish people migrated to Britain long before the 19th century, but the Great Famine led to an increased influx. Much of the population were reliant on the potato crop as the main source of food. When the crop failed due to a virus in 1845, mass starvation occurred. . This led to over 1 million deaths and an estimated further two million emigrated to Britain and the USA. Counties Cork and Kerry in the south of Ireland were among the worst hit places.

Irish migrants chose to settle in places like Whitechapel for several reasons. There were many factories located in East London, and it was closer to the Thames, offering dock labourers a chance of employment.

Jewish migration

During the event students will be introduced to the Smiths, a Jewish family who emigrated from Poland to East London in the second half of the nineteenth century. They will learn about the reasons why so many Jewish people left Eastern Europe during this time, and why for many, the East End of London became their home. Through an exploration of original documents, students will learn about how this part of London became a cultural hub for the Yiddish speaking Jewish communities that settled there. This section of the broadcast will highlight the importance that culture, language and community played in the lives of migrant communities living in Whitechapel in the late 1800s.

Context of Jewish migration to Britain in the nineteenth century

The second half of the 19th century saw a period of largescale Jewish migration to the UK. This culminated in what became known as 'The Great Migration', a period around 1890-1914 when lots of Eastern European Jewish people emigrated to the UK, and especially to East London. By the end of this period, 150,000 Jewish immigrants had settled in the UK. At this time, Jewish people in Eastern Europe were facing a high level of antisemitic persecution and violence that meant it was no longer safe to stay in their mother countries. Alongside this was the general economic hardship for all Eastern Europeans. It was this, along with the promise of job opportunities available in the UK that led to so many Eastern European Jewish people settling in the East End of London in the nineteenth century. Concentrated in areas like Spitalfields and Whitechapel, they established a vibrant cultural and commercial centre with Yiddish theatres, synagogues, newspapers and institutions catering to their community.

About our speakers and host

Sarah Elizabeth Cox

Sarah Elizabeth Cox works in marketing for the British Science Association by day, and as a boxing and wrestling historian by night. She holds Masters Degrees in History from Goldsmiths, University of London, and International Relations from the University of East Anglia. Sarah researches biographies of late-Victorian and Edwardian boxers and wrestlers, piecing together the previously-hidden lives of those on the margins in the melting pot of London, with a focus on men recently arrived from the US and Caribbean to 1880s London. Across 2022-23 Sarah worked as a historical consultant on Steven Knight's Disney+ bareknuckle boxing and crime TV drama *A Thousand Blows*, which is part-inspired by her research into the boxers Alec Munroe and Hezekiah Moscow. Sarah has written for magazines and newspapers and appeared on podcasts, including BBC History. Her first book, a group biography of 1880s boxers, will be published by Duckworth in Autumn 2026. www.grapplingwithhistory.com

Breda Corish

Breda Corish is an Irish public historian who explores the multifaceted presence of Ireland and Irish people in London over the centuries. After a long career in the scientific information industry, Breda returned to university in 2020. She was awarded the Francis Clark Prize by Queen Mary University of London, graduating top of the BA History cohort with a dissertation on the intersection of sanitary reform, cholera and Irish migrants in mid-nineteenth century Whitechapel. At University College London, she was commended in the Dean's List for exceptional performance and received the MA Public History dissertation prize for her research project www.irishlondonhistory.com. Breda is now an independent researcher who welcomes every opportunity to share the many, sometimes surprising, historical connections between London and Ireland.

Theo Daniels

Theo Daniels is the Producer: Communities and Informal Learning at the Jewish Museum London where he has worked for two years; researching, developing, and delivering engaging sessions that further the Museum's aims to tell the story of the history and heritage of Jewish people in Britain through universal themes of migration, family, faith and culture. The Jewish Museum is currently functioning as a groundbreaking 'Museum Beyond Walls', having moved out of their Camden home in 2023, and preparing for the 'Museum of the Future' long-term plan. During this time, the Learning and Engagement Team work with schools (virtual classrooms, outreach sessions at London schools, loan boxes, and free virtual broadcasts); family audiences; people affected by dementia; and adult engagement with the Museum's collection.

Jenny Draper

Jenny Draper has worked in the museums and heritage sector and now leads walking tours across London as a blue-badge certified private tour guide. She is passionate about teaching the public entertaining and fascinating titbits about history through her social media channels and her book 'Mavericks' published earlier this year. She has previously presented Archives Live: Tudors for The National Archives which is available to watch on our website now.

During the event

Census activities

For both activities, students will be given instructions from our live presenter Jenny Draper. They will be given around 30 seconds to examine a census from 1881 and point out anything they may find. If you have printed copies in advance, please encourage your students to look at the **original side first before the transcript**.

You may also find it helpful to print out the below census help box below for your students.

Census help box

Term	Meaning
Head of family	This was normally the man in the family at this time, often the father/husband.
"Do"	This means the same as the person above. For example, they could have the same surname or the same job.
Occupation	Job
Carman	A person who drove horse drawn carriage to transport goods.
Brass moulder	A person who makes moulds from patterns.
Dock labourer	A manual labourer who loads and unloads cargo from ships at a port.
Scholar	A school pupil
General Dealer	A shop keeper who deals in many kinds of goods.

Census activity 1 (Irish migration story) - photo and transcript

Catalogue Ref: RG 11/467

The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the
 Civil Parish [of Township] of Whitechapel Ecclesiastical Parish of St. Andrew

No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES (U) or (B)	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON-DITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday of	Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	Parliamentary Borough of <u>Whitechapel</u>		Town or Village or Hamlet of	Rural Sanitary District of	Ecclesiastical Parish of
									Males	Females			
70	Whitechapel		Sarah Ann Porter	Head	Widow	22	Match maker	Whitechapel					
71			Mary A. D.	Wife	Widow	30	do	do					
			Henry Taylor	Head	Married	34	General Dealer	do					
			Lily	Wife	Married	8	Scholar	do					
			William	Son	Married	4	do	do					
			James	Son	Married	2	do	do					
			Henry	Son	Married	3mo	do	do					
			Emily	Daughter	Married	17	Book Binder	Whitechapel					
72		1	Edmond Nicholson	Head	Married	13	Book Binder	Whitechapel					
			James	Wife	Married	11	Scholar	do					
			Thomas	Son	Unmarried	10	Book Binder	do					
			Edelaide	Daughter	Married	10	do	do					
73			Edward Hills	Head	Married	18	do	do					
			Mary Hills	Wife	Married	16	do	do					
			James	Son	Unmarried	8	do	do					
			Emily	Daughter	Unmarried	13	do	do					
			Martha	Daughter	Unmarried	7mo	do	do					
74		1	James	Head	Married	50	do	do					
			Elizabeth	Wife	Married	49	do	do					
			Katherine	Daughter	Unmarried	17	Match maker	do					
			Margaret	Daughter	Unmarried	9	Scholar	do					
			Marion	Daughter	Unmarried	7	do	do					
			Elizabeth	Daughter	Unmarried	6mo	do	do					
5	Total of Houses...	7	Total of Males and Females...				8	17					

Note.—Draw the pen through such of the headings as are inappropriate.

No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET and No, or NAME of HOUSE	Houses		NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CONDITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday of		Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN
		Inhabited	Un-inhabited				Male			
70	1 Gloucestershire Court			Sarah Ann Cook	Head	Unm (Unmarried)		22	Match Maker	Middlesex/Limehouse
				Mary A ditto	Sister	Unm		20	ditto	ditto
71				Henry Taylor	Head	Married	30		General Dealer	ditto London
				Sophia ditto	Wife	Mar		29		ditto
				William ditto	Son		8		Scholar	ditto
				Jane ditto	Daughter			4	ditto	ditto
				Henry ditto	Son		2			ditto
				Emily ditto	Daughter			3 mo		ditto Limehouse
72	2	1		Edward Nicholson	Head	Mar	59		Dock Labourer	ditto Poplar
				Jane ditto	Wife	Mar		53		S.Wales. Pembrokeshire
				Thomas ditto	Son	Unm	21			London
				Adelaide ditto	Daughter			12	Scholar	ditto
73				Edward Giles	Head	Mar	42		Brass moulder	ditto St Pancras
				Mary Giles	Wife			40	NK	ditto Clerkenwell
				James ditto	Son	Unm	18		Carman	ditto
				Emily ditto	Daughter			10	Scholar	ditto
				Martha ditto	Daughter			8	ditto	ditto
				Mary ditto	Daughter			13	ditto	ditto
				Agnes ditto	Daughter			7 wks		ditto Limehouse
74	3	11		Patrick Driscoll	Head	Mar	50		Dock Labourer	Ireland Co. Kerry
				Elizabeth ditto	Wife	Mar		49	Lead worker	ditto Cork
				Catherine ditto	Daughter	Unm		17	Match worker	Middlesex Limehouse
				Margaret ditto	Daughter			9	Scholar	ditto
				Mary ditto	Daughter			7	ditto	
				Elizabeth ditto	Daughter			10 mo		ditto Ratcliff
5	Total of Houses...	2		Total of Males and Females			8	17		

Archives Live: Whitechapel - Resource pack

No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET and No, or NAME of HOUSE	Houses		NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CONDITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday of		Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN
		Inhabited	Un-inhabited				Male			
	4 Crispin Street	1		David Smith	Head	Mar (married)	50		Butcher (master) 3 men 1 boy employed	Poland
				Jessie ditto	Wife	Mar		49		ditto
				Abraham ditto	Son	Unm (unmarried)	20		ditto	ditto
				Blumah Symonds	Mother in law	W (widow)		74	Retired	ditto
				Rachel Smith	Neice	Unm		19	Tailoress	ditto
				Jane Morris	Servant	Unm			General Servant	ditto
				Isaac Rotenberg	Serv (servant)	Unm	23		Butcher's man	ditto
	5 Crispin Street	1		John Brooks	Serv	Unm	31	3 mo	Housekeeper (crossed out) Barman	Whitechapel
7	The Horn of Plenty			Asher Hart	Head	Mar	54		Tailor	Canterbury
				Esther ditto	Wife	Mar		52	Tailoress	London
8				Frances Jero	Head	Mar	30		Market Porter	Northampton
				Mary ditto	Wife	Mar		50		Wiltshire
9				Harriet Smith	Head	W		39	Charwoman	London, Shoreditch
				Edward ditto	Son		14		Printers boy	ditto
				Alice ditto	Dau (daughter)			11	Scholar	ditto
				Elizabeth Ellis	Serv	W		56	General servant	ditto
				Thomas Lee	Border		7		Scholar	ditto
				Frederick ditto	Border		1			ditto
10				William Fells	Head	Mar	31		Market Porter	Whitechapel
				Martha ditto	Wife	Mar		26		ditto
				Elizabeth ditto	Dau			6		ditto
				William ditto	Son		4			ditto
				George ditto			3			ditto
				Martha ditto	Dau			1		ditto
	Total of Houses...			Total of Males and Females						

After the event

If you'd like to know more about the stories explored in this Archives Live, we have a few free resources on our website that might be useful.

[The Boxers of Whitechapel](#)¹ - What do the documents reveal about the inhabitants? (Another look at Alec Munroe as well as more information about Hezekiah Moscow and his family)

[What was the significance of the Match girls strike in 1888?](#)² Political and social reform in 19th century Britain

[Whitechapel - How can we find out about what Whitechapel was like in 1888?](#)³ Bookable workshop available onsite or online

[Crime and Punishment: Robert Peel](#)⁴ - How was law enforcement changed by Sir Robert Peel's new Metropolitan Police Force?

[Criminal Petitions](#)⁵ - What do they reveal about the justice system?

[19th Century Prison Ships](#)⁶ - What do these documents reveal about attitudes to crime and punishment?

[Victorian Industrial Towns](#)⁷ - What made them unhealthy?

[Victorian Health Reform](#)⁸ - How did the Victorians view compulsory vaccination?

[Health and the Poor Law](#)⁹ - To what degree did the Poor Law make an important contribution to Public Health?

¹ <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/the-boxers-of-whitechapel/>

² <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/what-was-the-significance-of-the-match-girls-strike-in-1888/>

³ <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/sessions/whitechapel/>

⁴ <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/crime-and-punishment-robert-peel/>

⁵ <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/criminal-petitions/>

⁶ <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/19th-century-prison-ships/>

⁷ <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/victorian-industrial-towns/>

⁸ <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/victorian-health-reform/>

⁹ <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/voices-of-the-victorian-poor/health-and-the-poor-law/>