

Connecting Histories

Newsletter

Issue 4 - Spring 2006

New Staff at Connecting Histories

Over the past few months three new members have joined *Connecting Histories*. Sarah Dar and Andy Green started in December as Research and Learning Officers, and in April Adisa Folarin joined the team as Outreach Support Officer. Adisa will be working alongside Izzy Mohammed with groups and community organisations undertaking their own community history projects. Andy and Sarah are working on the learning materials that will be available on our website, which will be launched in the autumn.

Adisa: "I've been busy working on the project since April this year. In that short time I have already worked with a diverse range of individuals and groups from the local community. I am currently preparing an event to launch the Vanley Burke archive and a Black History Research learning package. Watch this space."



From the papers of Dr Mary Barrow

Sarah: "I'm currently working on a number of learning packages for the *Connecting Histories* website, the first of which is about social justice in Birmingham. My search has taken me through the papers of the Indian Workers' Association and those of Dr Mary Barrow and the Sparkbrook Association - two organisations with very different approaches towards campaigning for social justice during the 1960s and 70s. Both were united in their commitment to furthering equality for people of all backgrounds in Birmingham and beyond."



From left to right: Adisa Folarin, Andy Green and Sarah Dar

One of my favourite photographs (left) dates from the 1960s and shows two children at either side of an easel at one of the Sparkbrook Association's play centres."

Andy: "I am currently engaged in finding materials on Birmingham antislavery history for a forthcoming learning package entitled 'Campaigning for Social Justice'. The project has allowed me to find new archive sources which contribute to an awareness of locations in Birmingham involved in antislavery."

The photo (below) of Heneage Street Chapel (no longer standing) is an important reminder of this history. This site originally contained 'The Negro Emancipation School Rooms', with a foundation stone laid in 1838 by local abolitionist Joseph Sturge to mark the end of the apprenticeship system in the West Indies. A few years later, money was raised for a complete chapel and the Heneage Street Baptist church opened on 9 June 1841"



Heneage Street Chapel, late 19th century [Central Library, Local Studies]



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Exhibitions and Events

Review: *One City - Many Stories*



From a collection of 'Socialism' photographs [Central Library, Local Studies]

On the 18th of March about 100 people attended the *One City - Many Stories* event which was organised by *Connecting Histories* in Birmingham Library Theatre. The day was intended to share ideas and information on the experiences and practices of a variety of community groups who are involved in community history projects in the city. Interesting and inspiring presentations were given by the *British Bengali Heritage Project*, *Canon Street Memorial Baptist Church Project*, *Birmingham St Patrick's Festival Oral History Project*, *Small Heath Community Forum Rainbow Project*, and the *New Style Radio Oral History Project*.

In the afternoon the *West Midlands Heritage Lottery Fund Team* gave a presentation on what funding sources are available to community groups and how to go about making an application. The rest of the afternoon was given over to audience debate and discussion on a variety of issues including the representation and exclusion of the histories of various groups and communities, the relationship of heritage to regeneration, employment opportunities and the use of volunteers in the heritage sectors and many other issues. Feedback from the day indicated that people valued an opportunity to hear about the projects that are happening in the city, meet others involved in similar activities and that similar events or a forum for networking and exchanging information would be useful.

***Connecting Histories* will be organising other events over the coming year so please contact us if you would like to join our mailing list or would like any more information about the projects listed here or tell us about your own community history project.**

Exhibition: *Black British Style*

Black British Style

**Waterhall Gallery of Modern Art
Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery**

10 June – 17 September 2006 (free)

Black British Style looks at fashion and styling across all aspects of black life and culture over the past 50 years. From celebrity to Rasta, streetwear to Sunday dressing the exhibition explores clothes and the people who wear them, looking at not only what is worn but how. It includes a significant number of works by Birmingham-based photographers or collections including Vanley Burke, George Hallet and Ernest Dyche. Their images represent some of the styles that have been worn by people living in the city, and some original garments featured will also be on display.

An exclusive addition to this exhibition will be the first showing of work by Birmingham fashion designer Gavin Douglas. An array of free dance, craft and music workshops have been arranged with outstanding local artists including DJ Roc 1, graffiti artist Dave P, percussionist Andy Mason, dancer Shaun Cope and designers Sharon Morgan and Nique Forde, and photographer Vanley Burke. There will also be a late viewing of the exhibition on Thursday 29th June (7-10pm) with fashion and music icon Normski and music provided by Galaxy 102.2's Sacha Brooks.

For further information contact 0121 303 2834 or go to www.bmag.org.uk



Image: Hainsley Brown, stylist Cynthia Lawrence-John

Connecting Histories

Featured Collection



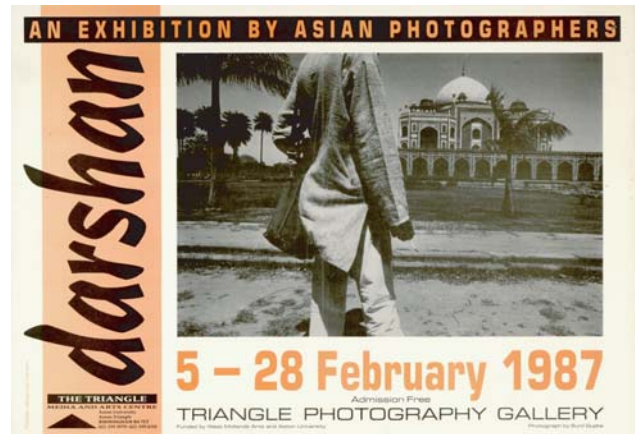
Handsworth Self Portrait, 1979

Derek Bishton and Ten.8

Derek Bishton is a journalist and photographer who lived and worked in Handsworth. He and other photographers, journalists and designers, including John Reardon and Brian Homer, worked together on photography and community projects in Birmingham. They were also founder members of the Ten.8 collective, which produced an influential photography magazine from 1979 to 1994. The collection contains material that relates not only to Bishton's work for Ten.8, but also to his work for other organisations that he established or was involved with during the 1970s and 1980s.

The collection contains some photographic work from the *Handsworth Self Portrait* project, which was set up by Bishton, Homer and Reardon in 1979. They wanted to take photographs that would confront racist stereotyping, and used self portraiture as it offered the largest measure of control to those taking part. The photographs documented the lives of people living in the area, largely from the black and Asian communities.

Bishton, Homer and Reardon also established *Sidelines* design and publishing agency that specialised in working



Poster advertising a photography exhibition at The Triangle, 1987

for community groups, and the collection includes various publications for community organisations and education and arts projects in Birmingham.

The Ten.8 collective was established in 1979 by Bishton, Homer and Reardon together with a number of other Birmingham and West Midlands based photographers. One of its aims was to promote local work and the archive includes photographs by several documentary photographers working in Birmingham and the West Midlands during the 1980s who had work featured in Ten.8 magazine, or included in West Midlands Arts and Ten.8 Touring exhibitions, including Nick Hedges, Roy Peters, Anna Arnone, Armet Francis, Vanley Burke, Orde Eliason, Janine Wiedel and Rhonda Wilson.



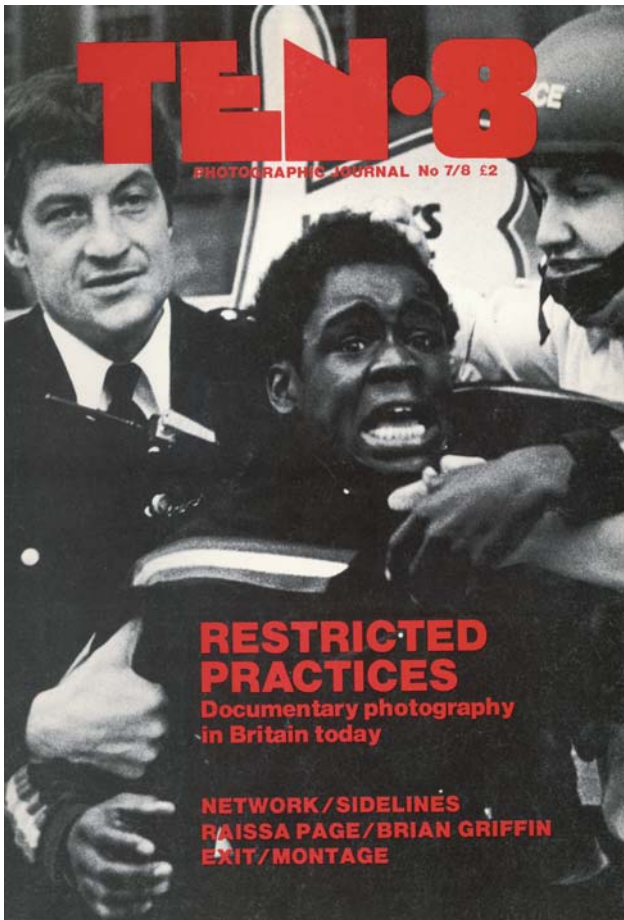
'Removing Offering from Shrine; Guru Ravidas Temple, Wolverhampton'. Photograph by Nick Hedges, 1976

Derek Bishton and Ten.8 continued



Photograph from 'Home Front' by Derek Bishton, c.1984.

There are also some photographs by Derek Bishton, including laminated exhibitions of photographs from the *Sunsplash* reggae festival in Jamaica, and photographs from the *Home Front* project by John Reardon and Derek Bishton. In addition, the collection includes photographs taken by members of community arts groups in Birmingham and the surrounding area.



Front cover of Ten.8 photographic journal, 1982

Derek Bishton and Merrise Crooks set up *Handprint* project in 1983, to produce publications for use in basic skills teaching for young black people. Some of these publications are included in the collection, as well as the extensive *Handprint* press cuttings library, which contains cuttings relating to issues affecting black people in Britain and abroad during the 1980s and early 1990s.



'Waving the Flag, Prince Charles Visit' by Derek Bishton, 1981

The collection also includes a large number of posters for exhibitions at the *Triangle Photography Gallery* and for various touring exhibitions, some of which were held in other galleries in Birmingham.

The archive of Derek Bishton and the Ten.8 collective is a valuable source for the study of documentary and community photography in Birmingham during the late 1970s and 1980s, and the work of community arts, education, welfare and activist groups in the city. The *Handprint* press cuttings library provides a resource to view these activities in the wider context of political developments and race relations during this period.

The collection [MS 2478] is available at Birmingham City Archives on Floor 7 of Central Library [0121 303 4217]

Connecting Histories

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