**British Empire Walks Project - information**

A new project by Brick Lane Circle

In the UK, there is a growing interest in learning about heritage and understanding the historical connections of peoples and places. Heritage walks as tools for learning about the past through visiting important historical sites and locations, in addition to becoming popular, generate positive mental and physical well-being outcomes for people.

Brick Lane Circle has been organising heritage walks focusing on the East India Company's London presence since 2007 with Dr Georgie Wemyss and Nick Robins. Over the years, we have gained relevant expertise and knowledge and collected materials and developed lists of sources of information on the East India Company, the British Empire and places and locations across the globe from where the company operated its trading, administrative, educational and military activities. This pilot initiative seeks to help develop local skills and experience in heritage learning. It will focus on locations in East London with links to the British Empire and help create an avenue for income generation by local people through heritage walks.

In this regard, the project will recruit ten individuals from East London's diverse communities and provide them with training and visits to heritage institutions. The outcome will be the production of walking tour packs with details of their subject focus, a map, stops and narratives. In addition, we will organise practical walking tours training to enable them to develop experience and confidence in running their tours independently. They will also be introduced to virtual heritage walking tours using 360-degree cameras to generate immersive experiences.

The main focus of the training will be on East India Company Walks, based on our extensive experience running them and the materials we possess. However, the participants will also be encouraged to consider other British Empire themes, for example, West India Docks and Trans-Atlantic slavery, Limehouse China Town and the late 19th Century and early 20th Century Asian and Bengali lascar seamen experiences in the East End. British Newspaper Archives and British History Online have fascinating stories linked to the British Empire, including lascar funerals, lascar deaths in police custody, and many other incredible stories that could be incorporated into the walks.

In addition, the participants will be taken on visits to Tower Hamlets Local History and Archives, Old Matthias Community Centre, British Library, National Maritime Museum (Royal Museums Greenwich), Victoria & Albert Museum and Imperial War History Museum. They will also collect stories from the community to develop their narratives for the walks.

A ten-half-day training programme will be organised, including with invited guests who run history walks to share their experiences, insights and advice for our participants. The training will consist of theoretical perspectives and purpose of heritage walks; how to make narratives and delivery interesting; preparation of heritage packs and marketing; practical experience of delivery under supervision. This will be followed by producing final packs and the participants' public delivery of several heritage walks. In the end, a major project completion celebration will be organised to share the outcomes with the wider public and promote the walks.

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**@HeritageFundUK, #HeritageFund, #NationalLottery. The project ‘made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund, with thanks to National Lottery players.’**