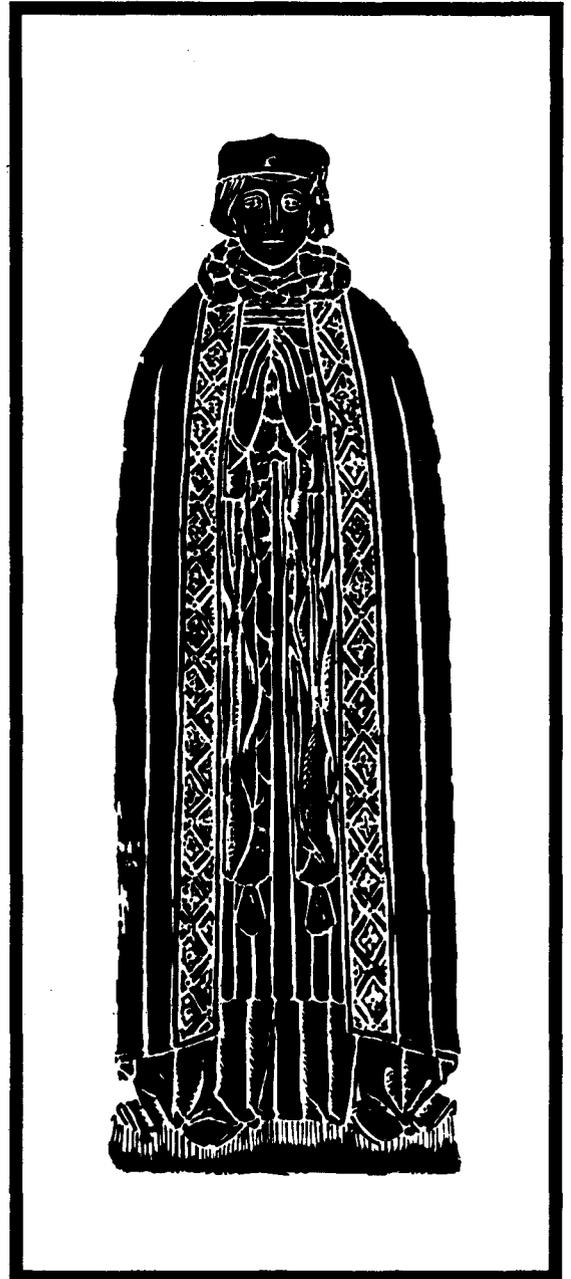


# EAST LONDON HISTORY GROUP

Bulletin No.8. September 1968.



THE EAST LONDON HISTORY GROUP

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BULLETIN No. 8.EDITORIAL

The Isle of Dogs Redevelopment Scheme is now well under way. Many of the new flats have now been occupied and George Kirkham, who owned one of the seven windmills of Mill-wall in 1740, would surely be delighted with the riverside garden, hitherto an oil wharf, which now occupy his site.

Since our last issue, the fight to preserve Upton House (Lord Lister's Forest Gate birthplace) is over and the bulldozers have moved in. The Church of England owned Upton House since 1885 and the Diocese of Chelmsford have been attacked for allowing it to rot. The 225 year old building would now cost far too much to restore.

More than a century and a half of East London's history came to an end recently with the last ship to sail from the East India Dock - the m.v. "Mount Stewart". The Dock was opened in 1806 in the middle of the Napoleonic Wars. The Import Section was filled in some years ago, the site now occupied by a large Power Station. Close to this site, also now demolished, was the old Brunswick Wharf. It has been suggested that the Dock area should be turned into a marina for pleasure boating, but it is more likely to meet Poplar's need for housing space.

Those who came on Mr. Moss's interesting tour of Leman Street will remember seeing the widening improvements to the Highway. During the next two years some £1 $\frac{3}{4}$  m. is to be spent on these improvements between Dock Street and Butcher Row. A subway will be built at the junction with Glamis Road. The opening up of this area may remind us of the monks of St. Mary of Graces Tower Hill, who played a great part in draining this area and establishing the original Wapping Wall.

We are sorry to lose Michael Power - a valuable member of our Committee, who is taking up an academic appointment in Liverpool and we wish him every success. His recent Population Report, circulated among members, will probably be reproduced in "East London Papers" next year, and the Cambridge Group for the history of population wish to include it in their news-letter which is sent to local historians over a wide area of the country.

Part of the skeleton of a man found by workmen in Abbey Road, Stratford, will shortly be seen in the Archaeology display at the Passmore Edwards Museum. Mr. Ian Robertson, the Curator, believes they could be the bones of a monk, having been found on the site of the old Stratford Langthorne Abbey.

Mr. Alfred W. Ballard, one of our oldest members, points out that Forest Gate must be unique! It has a railway station which is nameless outside. It also has a road named (Verona Road) but no houses in it; so why name it? This is probably to pinpoint its location (as with Moiety Road and Hutchings Street, Mill-wall), but we cannot say why the station has no name!

A.H.F.

NOTES ON HACKNEY CHURCH.

During the recent visit of the Group to the Church of St. John at Hackney, it was not possible to give more than a sketchy outline of the Church's history. The following notes may therefore be of interest.-

The Knights Templars, who established themselves in the 12th Century to protect pilgrims to the Holy Land, were given land by Stephen, notably in Essex, and a piece of land was granted to them in Hackney, somewhere between 1150 and 1300. They built the first church here (or perhaps replaced a small Saxon church). They established a settlement in the village in a similarly stone-built mansion, and proceeded to develop also the mills on the Lea, commemorated today by the name Temple Mills.

The first recorded church was dedicated to St. Augustine and was eventually taken over by the Order of St. John probably on the dissolution of the Templars. It came to the Bishop of London in 1372 and so remained until Nicholas Ridley (the Bishop who was burnt at the stake with Latimer) granted the Manor to Edward VI in 1551.

The first recorded Rector was Robert de Wodeham, appointed by Edward II in 1317, and he was succeeded by Gause - linus, who was Rector from 1328 to 1334, and who became a Cardinal. Christopher Urswick (remembered today by Urswick Road) became Rector in 1502. He appears briefly in Shakespeare's Richard III, Act IV, Scene 5. He had great ability as a statesman and was Chaplain to Henry VII, being instrumental in ending the War of the Roses by arranging Henry's marriage to Elizabeth of York. He had been Dean of Windsor and Archdeacon of Richmond (Yorks) but on coming to Hackney, resigned these and other preferments. He refused a bishopric and died in 1521, being buried in the church.

As to the old building, the chronology may be as follows:

Original Building by the Knights Templars	1150 - 1300
The tower rebuilt (probably by the Knights of St. John)	1350- 1400
Chancel and nave rebuilt (Heron & Urswick)	c. 1519
The Rowe Chapel added	1614
Galleries added and much interior change	1614 -1720/1
Demolished (except the tower and Rowe Chapel)	1799

The Rowe Chapel, which stood in the south east corner, was built by Sir Henry Rowe as a family vault. The family residence was at Shacklewell, and Sir Henry's father, also Sir Henry, was a Lord Mayor of London, and his grandfather, Sir Thomas, who died in 1570, was buried in the church. Sir Thomas directed in his will "that twenty priestes, ministers or clerks sing all the way that my corps is had to the burial, and I give to either of them 2s., and I will that there be given to forty poor men, forty black gowns,

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ready made, every gown with the making to be worth 20s., which poor men to accompany my corpse to the ground;... and also that there be a dynner provided at my house at Shacklewell the day of my burial, for the Lord Mayor, aldermen, company, friends, morners, clerks, priests, ministers, poore men, parishioners and such other persons as shall accompany the corpse to the ground; and for the same dynner, and the provision thereof, I bequeth £66. 13.4d."

The Chapel stood until 1896. Three members of the family were Lord Mayors and another, Col. Owen Rowe, was one of the regicides who signed the death warrant of Charles I.

(To be continued) -

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SWEDENBORG SQUARE (STEPNEY).  
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East Londoners have noted with regret the virtual disappearance of this once picturesque backwater under the Highway development Scheme, although we are assured that some little reminder will be left to mark the site. The following notes kindly lent by Cllr. Moss, one of our members, were compiled before the bulldozers moved in.

"This Square was once called Princes Square, and upon approaching it from St. George's Street, the quadrangle that comes in view at the south east corner is rather surprising. The open space is paved with flag stones for the purpose of affording a children's playground.

The present state of the quad-rangle dates from 1921 when the Swedish Church, which stood there was razed to the ground and the upright railings that surrounded the green plot were taken away. There were at the time some public protests against the destruction of the neat little edifice which had been built as far back as 1728, when, for many years afterwards it had been the meeting place of the Swedish community in its vicinity. The services that were held there were those of the Swedish National Church (Lutheran), and until 1908 were attended by members of the Swedish Embassy. Among the congregation could be seen Swedish sailors when their ships were lying in the Thames and other persons of the same nationality who were resident in the various parts of London.

In the vault under the Communion table was buried the body of Emanuel Swedenborg, the mystic who died on 20th March 1772. In April 1908 the remains were removed and carried in a Swedish battleship to his native land.

The surrounding houses which are now let out in tenements will recall to the onlooker the time when each was inhabited by one household. "

Speech by the Countess of Dartmouth  
Chairman of the Historic Buildings Sub-Committee  
to the Greater London Council, County Hall,  
25 June 1968

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Council,

An Historic Building makes one think of a crumbling Cathedral or a vast stately home. Today it can mean a barn, a cottage or a tea shop. In Greater London we have no less than 18,000 Historic Buildings - some on the list since 1946.

This report\* explains extremely well what we are doing to prop them up, repair and preserve them. But many people wonder why this is really necessary.

I have a friend who loves beautiful houses and knows a lot about them, and when friends from abroad with similar interests spent a few days here, he used to say:- "I will show you a really splendid London house. It has a carved staircase, wall paintings, beautiful ceilings and almost perfect architecture." It was used as offices but very well kept. He took many visitors to see it. Then three months elapsed before yet another friend came from abroad. Off they set after lunch one day to see this little gem. When they arrived it was curiously different. The steps were gone, the front door was gone and once inside they found themselves in the frozen food department of a chain store.

Mr. Chairman, this, alas, is not an isolated case. When people want to redevelop the site, Historic Buildings have been mysteriously burnt by fire. Tiles have mysteriously come or the roof and rain pours in. Dry rot, wet rot, neglect and vandalism have defeated any amount of Building Preservation Orders all over the Country.

But today I find that the public are suddenly aware that many of their familiar and beloved landmarks are disappearing one by one. The old pub on the corner, the cottage on the green, the tea shop in the side street, make way almost overnight for faceless buildings of glass, concrete or steel. I urge people to join their local Amenity or Preservation Society and through them alert us before it is too late.

Of course we must have changes. Of course we must have new roads, houses and schools. But I believe that intelligent planning and preservation can go hand-in-hand.

I congratulate Parliament on the very imaginative Civic Amenities Act which enables us and the Borough Councils to make conservation areas of whole streets, whole districts, whole villages. I also welcome the new 1968 Town and Country Planning Bill. This will discourage people from deliberately allowing Historic Buildings

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to fall to pieces. It will also prevent them spoiling buildings by thoughtless alterations.

Since becoming chairman of this committee a very short time ago, I have been fascinated by the wide variety of applications we receive. 'Can I extend my dining room. Can I put in a garage. Can I demolish this theatre. Will you give me a grant to restore my porch. Can I knock down this whole block of eight houses?'

We give money and advice, we try to protect, preserve and improve. Together with the Borough Councils we try to be guardians of the future, yet practical in a twentieth century present.

Can I thank my vice-chairman, officers and clerk, my charming committee, and especially Miss Scott and Mrs. Chaplin, two former chairmen, for their wonderful help and advice.

In fifty years time our children and grand-children may travel only by helicopter and aeroplane. I hope that after they take off from the top of a skyscraper, they will hover for a moment to admire the Tudor cottages, the Georgian squares, the Victorian villas, or the dramatic beauty of other more famous Historic Buildings, which we have helped to keep - for them to enjoy.

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#### OPEN CONFESSION

On Sunday last the churchyard, and the streets leading to Bethnal Green Church, were crowded by thousands of spectators, to witness the ceremony of a young woman doing penance, by order of the surrogate of the ecclesiastical court, by standing in a white sheet in the chancel of the Church, for calling her sister-in-law a bad name. However, the ceremony of the standing in the sheet was dispensed with, to the disappointment of the multitude; but the female, who was a very fine young woman attired in a white dress, repeated the following recantation in the vestry, in the presence of the rector, churchwardens, the person calumniated, and five or six of her relations:

"I, S..... G....., wife of J..... G....., have uttered and spoken several scandalous and opprobrious words against A..... J....., of St. Matthew, Bethnal Green, to the great offence of Almighty God, the scandal of my Christian religion, and the injury and reproach of my neighbour's credit, by calling her ----- I do therefore, before God and you, humbly confess and acknowledge such offence, and am heartily sorry for the same, and do ask her forgiveness, and promise hereafter never to offend her in like manner, God assisting me."

("The Sunday Monitor" May 19 1822)

PAST AND PRESENT IN POPLAR.

"Sadly it is admitted by East Enders that the day of Poplar's prosperity is past. The closed shops, empty warehouses, and deserted dwellings are a mournful sight. At one time, some 20 years ago, there was no more flourishing locality in the whole of the eastern district than High Street, Poplar, whereas now it is one of the worst paying thoroughfares in London. Only here and there is a shop to be seen open, where a tradesman bravely struggles against the fates which sooner or later must be too much for him. The iron works, the ship yards, and the docks all provided work, wages, and life, and now there is but one iron yard, while nearly all the ship yards have succumbed, and the docks - well, their position needs no explanation. The shipping industry has gone elsewhere, thanks to strikes and labour troubles and the rating of property is higher in Poplar than anywhere else in London, so that all speculation from outside is absolutely prohibited. Government contracts come not to the yards, although its Parliamentary representative is a member of the present Government. The parish is blessed with a Socialistic board of Guardians which encourages pauperism and makes life in the workhouse better for the working classes than the life which their own honest exertions can bring them. Were it not for the fact that for parochial purposes the parish of All Saints, Poplar, is associated with Bow and Bromley, the consequences to the local ratepayer might be quite fatal. As it is, on the side of the partners there are serious thoughts of separation or dissolution. Whitechapel is associated with Poplar in regard to its poor-law schools at Forest Gate, with the result that for months past the unequal burden is being felt by the contracting parish. The same is said of Stepney, which associates with Poplar for the care of the infirm and sick poor at the Poplar and Stepney Sick Asylum. The division of these institutions is only a matter of time, because the Poor Law methods of the Poplar Guardians are quite opposite to those of Whitechapel. The new Boards of both these parishes are considering the practicability of dissolving partnership with Poplar, a partnership which has proved so inequitable; and when Poplar is entirely cast upon its own resources, what the result will be is a matter of certainty."

(From the "City Press", January 16th 1895).

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EAST LONDON'S ASSOCIATION WITH AMERICA - BEFORE THE "MAYFLOWER"

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I had long cherished the idea of following up the illuminating article by Thomas Downs on "The United States and East London" (see p.181, "East London Antiquities" 1902) in which the author expresses the following wish:

"My object in this paper is to stimulate enquiry into this subject, to bring together if possible all the evidence tending to show the part played by the East London Riverside Hamlets in American colonisation; to recover from obscurity the names and birthplaces of the chief actors, the names and location of the first colonists, and to bring into one focus the number and the quality of the mariners, the number and the quality of the passengers who first left East London for the making of America."

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As an example of the field of research open to the student in this matter, Mr. Downs introduces John Vassall, a Vestryman of Stepney Parish (from 1589-1602), a citizen and alderman of London, who lived on Ratcliff Wall, a man of great enterprise and considerable wealth, connected by friendship and marriage with another renowned Stepney family, the Boroughs. Vassall was a founder of the Colony of Virginia, and his son, William, was among the original emigrants who went out to America with John Winthrop in 1630, and engaged in a long, intensive struggle to gain wider freedom of worship in the new Colony of Massachusetts.

Mr. Downs further introduces us to "A relation of a discovery towards the northward of Virginia by Captain George Waymouth, 1605, employed thither by the Right Honourable Thomas Arundell, Baron of Warder, in the raigne of our most royall King James, Upon Tuesday, the fifth of March, we set sayle from Ratcliff." and then, continues Mr. Downs, and I quote :

"In the planting of Virginia, 1606-7. Capt. Christopher Newport commands three ships, one of 100 tons, one of 40, and a pinnace of 20 tons, 19th December 1606, and he set sail from Blackwall. The transportation of the first company of successful settlers in Virginia was committed to Stepney's old Vestryman, a mariner well-practised for the Western parts of America".

With this brief statement, Mr. Downs opens up the amazing drama of the first settlement or plantation of an English-speaking colony, in America. Like most others of my generation, I was brought up to think of the America story as beginning with the "Mayflower", but when I saw the statue to Captain John Smith "Citizen and Cordwainer (1580-1631), First among the Leaders of the Settlement at James Town, Virginia, from which began the overseas expansion of the English-speaking peoples" I began to think otherwise. This statue, in the courtyard of Bow Church, Cheapside, was presented to the City of London by the Jamestown Foundation of the Commonwealth of Virginia (in commemoration of the 350th Anniversary) and was unveiled by H.M. Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, 31/10/60. It acknowledges the fact emphasised in the article by our Mr. Downs in our local newspaper, as quoted above.

The story of the struggles undergone by the pioneers, narrated graphically, and with poignant detail, particularly in the works of Samuel Purchas, Vols. 18 & 19, I would recommend, together with other writers' "The life story of Captain John Smith", by A.G. Bradley, the brilliant novel "Pocohantas" by David Garnett, "The Elizabethans and America" by A.L. Rowse, and for the latest research "The Elizabethans' America" by Louis B. Wright (Arnold).

The Americans, by the way, are showing intensive up-to-the minute interest and are engaged in compiling and publishing "List of Emigrants to America" from 1600 onwards. This is a fascinating book, fairly expensive, and available for consultation only through the good offices of the Archivist, Hackney Public Library, to whom I here acknowledge my deep thanks.

C.S.T.

WINTER PROFIT

Why not take up some form of profitable activity this winter? Your local librarian will assist you in a choice of books on local history and local personalities. If you are interested in old parish registers, Mr. S. C. Tongue, of the Central Library, Pitfield Street, N.1. will welcome your assistance with the Shoreditch Church Registers. If you wish to specialise in a particular aspect of local history e.g. photography, buildings, street names, ethnic minorities, industries, markets, etc. drop a line to Mr. A. French, 36 Parkland Road, Woodford Green, Essex, who will be pleased to assist you.

For those who can free themselves for the period, Miss Millicent Rose (well-known to East Londoners for her "East End of London") will be giving a series of talks on the History of London at Morley College, Lambeth, on Thursdays 10-12 noon, beginning on the 26th September.

The following lectures should appeal to some of our members, all at the City Literary Institute :-

"London's History"	Gwyn Laurie. Thurs. 2-3.30 p.m.
"Look at London"	Mrs. Doris Mason. Thurs. 1.30/3.30.
"London Art & Architecture"	Alison Kelly, Thus. 6-7.30 p.m.
"The London of Christopher Wren"	Rupert Jarvis, 7.30/9 Tues.
"Georgian London"	Rupert Jarvis, Mon. 6-7.30 p.m.
"Digging up London's past"	Peter Marsden. Fri. 5.45/7.45 p.m.
"London for Everyman"	Freddie Brampton Mon. 7.45/9.15.

These lectures all commence during the week beginning 23rd September 1968.

A combined East London History Group/Forest Group lecture will be given at the Bishopsgate Institute (opposite Liverpool Street Station) by Mr. Merrifield of the Guildhall Museum. His lecture will be on recent discoveries in the City most of which are on the East London border. Many of us have been wondering what has been going on at Aldgate and Thames Street and this will be an excellent opportunity to find out. This will be on Tuesday, 8th October, at 7.30 p.m.

Another Group "highlight" is the Annual Lecture at Bancroft Road Library. This will be a lecture on Captain Cook, who lived for some time in East London, and will be given by Mr. Christopher Lloyd, ex-Professor of History at the Royal Naval College, and an authority on Captain Cook. There will also be a small Exhibition at the Library to commemorate the Bicentenary of Captain Cook's historical voyage. The lecture will be on Thursday, 14th November, at 7.30 p.m. Don't forget the Annual General Meeting at Queen Mary College, on Wednesday, 23rd October, at 7 p.m.