

# ELHG

# EAST LONDON HISTORY GROUP

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THE EAST LONDON HISTORY GROUP

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BULLETIN No. 9EDITORIAL

Since our September Bulletin, the last ship has sailed from London Docks. Its world-famous wine-vaults are being emptied after 160 years of service and some 65,000 barrels of rum have to be moved by March of next year. The United Rum Merchants consider this a problem of some magnitude. They might learn something from the seafaring community of this area two centuries ago who had excellent arrangements for the rapid disposal of any quantity of spirits which happened to come their way!

Millwall Dry Dock closed on October 30th also for economical reasons. After the closure of Fletcher's Dry Dock where in the 'twenties the bowsprits of sailing vessels with their carved figure-heads overlapped the West Ferry Road, this has been for 40 years Millwall's only Drydock and is only a stone's throw from the small Millwall Dock and Mast House shown on the Commissioners of Sewers map of 1740.

Also closed last month after 100 years of service is the Globe Iron Foundry of Stratford. This small foundry exported casts all over the world but has now given way to the modern steel giants under a Newham compulsory purchase order. One man who has not succumbed to modernisation is Mr. Brian Foulger who still operates his blacksmith's forge in Plashet Road, Upton Park. He claims that there has been a forge there since the 16th century and his family have operated it since the Victorian era. He now makes ornamental gates instead of horse-shoes.

I am glad to say that the Forest Group (which includes a number of Societies as well as the East London History Group) have succeeded in their endeavours to prevent the despoilation of Waltham Abbey's ancient centre. The Ministry rejected a plan to modernise the mainstreet after hearing the petitioners. It is gratifying too to know that the Hackney Society's fears over the De Beauvoir Estate (one of Hackney's Conservation areas) have been somewhat allayed. They (and we) are concerned over the Lee Valley Developments in the Victoria Park area, but it now seems that much of the Park area re-development may be underground. We are watching the position closely.

Do you know of any interesting tomb-stones in the East London area? Mr.K.R.Royden (27 Chestnut Close, Buckhurst Hill, Essex) will be pleased to hear from you, as many of these stones are now disappearing.

Limehouse, like the rest of East London, is fast losing its ancient character. Make a note in your new diary to come on our Limehouse walk led by Mr. French, meeting outside Trinity Church, East India Dock Road (opposite Wade Street) at 2.30 p.m. on Saturday, 15th March 1969.

The Chairman and Committee of the Group wish you all a Happy Christmas and every success in your local history studies in 1969!

A.H.F.

NOTES ON HACKNEY CHURCH (2)

Previous to 1613, the affairs of the parish were in the hands of a public Vestry Meeting. A petition to the Bishop of London stated "that there falleth out great disquietness by the dissent of some evil disposed, and others of the inferior and meaner sort of inhabitant, being greater in number and thereby more ready to cross the good proceedings". So the Bishop appointed a Select Vestry, comprising two knights, five esquires, eight gentlemen, one yeoman, eight Misters and eight without a prefix. An interesting sidelight on the social structure!

In 1743 a faculty was granted for recasting the six old bells into a new peal of eight, at a cost of £12.4.4d. This sum, which included thirty separate items, was only the expenses of obtaining the faculty!

The old church saw several events connected with famous persons. In 1537 Henry, Earl of Northumberland, "died at his manor of Hackney", and was buried in the church. This Earl was said to have paid suit to Anne Boleyn, but withdrew on learning of the King's attachment to her. He was later one of those entrusted with the arrest of Cardinal Wolsey. In 1604, Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford was buried, a poet and one of the contenders for the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. The marriage of General Fairfax to Ann, daughter of Lord Vere, took place in 1637, and that of Sir Christopher Hatton in 1630. Daniel Defoe's daughter Sophia was baptized on Christmas Eve 1701, and his infant son Daniel buried in 1724.

One of the greatest funerals London had seen was that of Francis Tyssen, Lord of the Manor, who died in 1717. He was buried on November 11th within the communion rails. His body lay in state at Goldsmith's Hall two days, and the procession left there about ten o'clock at night, comprising of 60 horsemen, including four of the King's trumpets, persons carrying trophies, six pages in mourning, thirty coaches, etc. The deputy Earl Marshall stated in "The Gazette" that much of it "far exceeded the quality of the deceased".

By 1788 the church had become both neglected and too small for the growing parish, and the Vestry petitioned Parliament for a new one. This Act was passed in 1790, and 153 trustees were appointed to raise £12,500. Building of the new church commenced the following year. James Spiller was the Surveyor for the work, and of his three plans that of the Greek cross - practically a square - was chosen.

It was finished and dedicated in 1797, but its total cost rose to £25,000, not finally cleared until about 80 years later. The tower and porches were added 1812-13. Some modifications were made in 1883, and in 1929 the central roof area had to be strengthened.

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The church survived the war, but in 1955 it was very severely damaged by fire, which necessitated a great amount of rebuilding. The timber roof supports were replaced by steel, from which the new curved ceiling hangs, and the tower was strengthened. The memorial chapel under the south gallery was skilfully restored, and the reredos in this panelled with material used in Westminster Abbey at the Coronation in 1953. On the High Altar are 17th century Italian carved and gilded candlesticks and cross. The church was re-consecrated on St. John's Day in 1958.

One of the greatest blows of the fire was the destruction of the organ. It was built by George Pike England in 1797, using many of the parts of the organ from the old church, built by Snetzler early in the 18th century. The new organ is from All Saints, Ennismore Gardens.

Among some memorials from the old church is the handsome tomb of Christopher Urswick, which stands on the east side of the entrance porch. This was redecorated after the fire and the area converted into a small chapel.

(By courtesy Hackney Library).

#### "RATTLE HIS BONES OVER THE STONES"

In the Great Age of Victoria, 40% of all working-class deaths occurred under 10 years of age and 25% above 60 years. Living between these age groups was a precarious chance. Death was so close to life that it became as acceptable as birth, the only difference being that birth had an obvious first cause, Death just happened. Stealing up on someone from foetid cesspools, damp over-crowded hovels, or abominable working conditions. Malnutrition, drink, or just the loss of the will to live, took its toll of the lower orders of that great advancing society as naturally as the sun rose each day on their sordid surroundings.

But Death, of whom it is said is no respecter of persons, often gave to some miserable nonentity something which they could never achieve in life, viz. status. For a corpse was an object of awe, of attention, and if lucky enough to have a family and friends, even some reverence. To be whispered and wept over. To be shown sufficient respect to justify a walking Funeral at 30/- was something worth dying for.

However, if by a worthy thrift the Burial Club subscriptions had been regularly paid, there was to be had a Carriage Funeral with superior coffin, Hearse and Pair, Mourning Coach and Pair, Velvets, Mutes, Pages and all requisites for the sum of £6.

Mr. Moses John Hickman, Undertaker, 1 Princes Place, Poplar, advertised in Simmonds Guide to Poplar, 1866, a "Tariff of Equipage of the best description, and the obsequies performed with respectability and decorum". His services ranged from

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Children's Carriage Funerals at 24/- to a grand departure at £20 which included a Leaden Coffin, Stout Elm Shell and Case covered with fine cloth. Hearse and Four. Two mourning Coaches (Pairs), Ostrich Plumes and Velvets, Lid of Feathers, Mutes, Pages, etc.

For a corpse who lived within ten miles of the G.P.O. and whose friends at his local could raise a whip-round of £2. 2. Od. there was a Carriage Funeral complete with Coffin and all requirements. There were Double-Lid Coffins and Ostrich Plumes to the Hearse for £9. For this any self-respecting relict in her black Bambazine dress would expect the Undertaker to have dignity, and a pot-hat well turbanned with black weepers.

But there were those without family or friends, and to them fell the greatest shame, the Pauper Funeral. As old folk were led to the Workhouse it was not the failure in their lives or the dreary wait for Death in bleak, unfriendly surroundings that so tortured them, but the soul-tearing vision of being carted, there being no other description, in a rough unpolished coffin; planed only on the outside; square-ended without handles, to a deep unmarked grave.

The naked corpse (for Workhouse night-shirts were not for disposal) was laid on a mattress of wood chips, and covered with a strip of coarse canvas. Bereft of shroud, mourners, flowers, a few words of remembrance, dignity, and with benefit of Clergy a mere mumbled formality, a human being would be trundled into oblivion, "buried by the Parish" in the Vestry Register being the only record that they ever lived at all.

'HE'S ONLY A PAUPER WHOM NOBODY OWNS'.

S.A.A.

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#### CHRISP STREET ON CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE 1920'S.

Naptha lights flaring away, crowds jostling each other against the rickety stalls.

"Don't forget yer horse-radish, Ma"! and for a penny, a bag, freshly-grated, is passed to someone lucky enough to have a piece of back-ribs for Christmas Dinner. A few turkeys swing in the bright lights of the butchers shops - these are for the loan-club 'opulents' who still have enough left after the liquid celebrations. There is a large crowd for chickens and geese - if you wait long enough you'll get a good bird for two shillings but the auctioneers are perspiring and the going is hard. The wild rabbits went earlier but a

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few tame ones still tempt the deeper pocket. The pig's trotters - a rare delicacy for Boxing Day - have all gone. A bunch of sage for a penny, a string of figs for twopence and twopennyworth of dates from the block, and off to the next stall. "New season's mixed nuts, dear, at threepence a bag". After opening them at home we wonder how long the new season lasts.

The paper chains are already up and its getting late to buy holly, but for twopence there <sup>are</sup> a few sprigs with a bunch of bay-leaves. So long as there's a sprig to put in the pudding! What's this? Cold Christmas Pudding at twopence a slice. Just the thing warmed up with a drop of hot rum or custard for those who live alone, or can't afford a pudding, or have forgotten to make one. There's still time to get the mincemeat for the pies. Bring your own jar and the grocer fills it for fourpence from his vast earthenware jar. Old women grope furtively under the stalls for the odd celery stalk or bit of berry-less mistletoe.

Here's the man with the song-sheets. We need one of these to make the party go with a swing. Nothing like "Lily of Laguna" or "Little Annie Rooney" whilst the tiger-nuts and wine-gums are passed around. "'Ere, Ma, wot about the kids?" A coster presents an array of dubiously filled Christmas stockings at sixpence each. The corn-plaster stall next door is not doing much despite the shouted guarantee of a permanent cure to include warts, bunions etc. Perhaps corns don't hurt much over Christmas. But the stall across the way is doing well - hore-hound candy, bullseyes, clove cushions, menthol jelly and Brompton lozenges - all guaranteed at twopence a bag to ensure a happy Christmas even if you have the worst cold!

We hear the strains of "The Laughing Policeman" as we stop at the gramophone stall. Perhaps we ought to get a fresh record in case the party flags - yes, that's it "Ukelele Lady". The murk is closing in, the Waits are playing "Good King Wenceslas" in Cordelia Street. What's left on the shopping list? Some black-pudding for Christmas breakfast, a box of crackers ('Just paper-hats please, sixpence a dozen, the shilling ones with the novelties are too expensive"), and some shrimps and winkles to go with the boiled bacon for Christmas tea. A few bottles of stout to take home, and off we go in the gloom.

A.H.F.

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"THE TIGER TAVERN"

When the "Tiger" public-house on our Tower Hamlets /City border was pulled down in 1893, a mummified cat was found. The story goes that the cat belonged to Anne Boleyn, second wife of Henry VIII, and kept her company during her imprisonment in the Tower. The cat may still be seen on view in the new "Tiger". Incidentally, there are excellent murals showing Tower Hill in 1746, and the original "Ye Olde Tiger Taverne" (of Queen Elizabeth I fame), in the Beefeater Bar on the ground floor.

"BIRTH OF A HOSPITAL"

May I take this opportunity of thanking the Chairman and Committee of the Group for the interest shown in publishing my paper on the Poplar Hospital. As in all these projects further information comes to hand after publication and the following points will correct certain statements, and enlarge our knowledge regarding the first Surgeon, Matthew Brownfield.

One of the Founders of the Hospital I have given as Charles Mayer. This should have been Charles Mare Owner of the Millwall Iron and Shipbuilding Works. The name Mayer appears on a Hospital publication but nothing in any early minute suggests that he served on any Committee.

Another Founder mentioned briefly was Joseph D'Aguilas Samuda, 1813-1885, Engineer & Shipbuilder. He was the first Treasurer of the Institute of Naval Architects from 1843-1880. Became M.P. 1862-;880. Samuda Street was named in 1864, and a modern block of flats in Poplar has been named Samuda House.

Matthew Brownfield, the first Surgeon, became a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1854, obtained the Licentiatehip of the Society of Apothecaries in 1855, and the Licentiatehip of the Royal College of Physicians in 1858. He was a Fellow of the Hunterian Society, Police Surgeon to K Division of the Metropolitan Police, and Public Vaccinator for Bromley by Bow. He died some time between December 1907 and November 1908. There are no details as to the precise date of death or of his age. He had business investments in the area of Poplar, owning tugs on the Thames. Brownfield Street is named after him.

I am indebted to Mr. F. Sainsbury, Deputy Borough Librarian (Newham) for drawing my attention to the correct spelling of Mare, and to the Royal College of Surgeons for supplying me with further details of Matthew Brownfield.

S.A.A. 27/10

'AN ELEPHANT'S REVENGE'

A few days since, John Glascott, groom to a gentleman named Turner, was conveyed to the London Hospital with a severe fracture of the leg near the ankle. The injury was caused by an elephant; and this is an additional proof that that animal remembers wrongs and seldom fails to resent them.

In the morning, Glascott had been witnessing the performance of the elephant then exhibited in a booth in the Commercial Road East; and he took it into his head to amuse himself by teasing the animal. Nothing more happened then, but in the afternoon Glascott returned to the booth with his children and, whilst they were entertained by the feats of the

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animal, it suddenly wound its trunk round the man's leg and did not uncoil it until the limb was fractured. The surgical treatment Glascott received in the Hospital at first succeeded, but in a day or two erysipelas attacked the system and today terminated fatally.

"The Sunday Monitor", 29/4/1842.

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Lectures to which you are welcome, arranged by Local Societies.

"History through the Camera" - E.R.Chandler.

The Public Library, The Drive, Loughton, 8 p.m. 28/1/69.

"The work of the Passmore-Edwards Museum" - I.G.Robertson P.A.

The Public Library, The Drive, Loughton, 8 p.m. 25/3/69

"The Barking Fishing Industry" - Major T. Hewett.

United Free Church, Woodford Green - 8.15 p.m. 20/1/69.

"Place & Street Names in the City of London" - R. Shiers.

United Free Church, Woodford Green - 8.15 p.m. 17/2/69.

"Ilford's yesterdays" - C. Caunt. - 8 p.m. 20/2/69.

Community Centre, Wanstead House, The Green, Wanstead E.11.

"Our Building Heritage" - Mrs. M.Dance, Sec. Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. 8 p.m. 20/3/69.

Community Centre, Wanstead House, The Green, Wanstead E.11.

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## HOW TO FIND OUT II.

### Using Directories

Although the most obvious use of directories is for finding the address of a person or, conversely, the name of a person whose address is known, it is not generally realised that a great many directories (and gazetteers) are invaluable as a reference source for other local information. As is to be expected, the production of this type of publication is uneven in quality and coverage and where there is no index of personal names, the enquirer has much careful reading to do, but by the late 1860's the format is reasonably settled in most publications and the indexes are adequate although, as ever, one must be alert for mis-spellings and errors in alphabetisation - as a simple example, Philips/Phillips, Townsend/Townshend, serves to illustrate.

In looking for street names also, terraces - that bane of so many researchers - appear frequently only under the main thoroughfare and if one has no idea where (e.g.) York Terrace is, other than somewhere in Hackney, a certain amount of time is going to be wasted in delving through. Whilst on this aspect of searching, mention might be made of the invaluable "List of the streets and places within the Administrative County of London" published by the L.C.C. The first edition was published in 1901, the second in 1912, and the third, and most useful, in 1929. The supplement for 1929/34

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adds to the value and may be found often bound in with the principal edition. Periodical supplements keep the work up to date.

The List is arranged alphabetically by streets against which, in twelve columns, is given locality and postal district, former parish, Metropolitan Borough and Parliamentary Division. Then, after map references, follow the most valuable items - the date when the street name was approved (where known from existing records), the date(s) of alterations in designation and re-numbering, and the former and subsidiary names and the plan number on which this is shown. These plans are to be found at County Hall, in the Street Naming Section, Room 170, North Block. They are bound in series and the over-riding value of them lies in the fact that both old and new numbers are shown. The 572 pages which this data occupies is followed by three most useful appendices :

- (1) Abolished street-names, followed by the present name and former parish (a useful check when one considers how many King/Queen/Crown/Coronet Streets or South Streets etc. existed throughout the Metropolis).
- (2) Abolished subsidiary names. These are terraces, villas, places, etc. whose names disappeared when a street name was designated and the thoroughfare numbered overall. There is, unfortunately, no alternative but to wade through these hopefully unless an index has been compiled locally (The Hackney index alone totals about three hundred entries but they are used successfully time and time again.
- (3) Origin of names. As is to be expected, this is a comparatively short list, the origin of so many names being lost, but such names as Adler Street, White-chapel; Amazon Street, Stepney; Bonister Street, Hackney, are explained, to name but three of several thousand.

Returning to directories, two Hackney examples serve to illustrate certain points. The Hackney Almanack & Directory for 1843, published by Caleb Turner, was one of the many such publications which sprouted after the abolition of the Stamp Duty. The prosy introduction is followed by a short history of the Parish, a calendar for the year, showing the Feasts, and then the alphabetical list of residents with address (and occupation if tradesmen). In turn, this section is followed by a list of the Trustees and Guardians of the Poor, Magistrates, Churchwardens, Surveyors, Doctors, Constables, Headboroughs, Ale-Conners, Beadles, Collectors, etc. A particular value of this type of list is in dating a document. Where other internal evidence is lacking, the name of the official in whose name a statutory announcement is issued undated may be checked in such directory lists and a tentative date given.

(To be continued).

S.C.T.