

ELHG

EAST LONDON HISTORY GROUP

BULLETIN No. 12.

SEPTEMBER 1969



BULLETIN No. 12.EDITORIAL

The disastrous explosion a few weeks ago at Dudgeons Wharf, Millwall, in which five firemen and a civilian lost their lives, recalls that the Wharf got its name from John and William Dudgeon who established a shipbuilding yard there in 1862. The two brothers pioneered the idea of screw propulsion, but others moved ahead and the firm closed down after only 13 years. The name was retained by subsequent owners, and the tradition is still carried on in the firm of Dudgeon & Gray, Marine Consultants, now in Aldgate High Street.

With the closing of the St. Katherine and London Docks, Dock Street, Stepney, will be losing its ancient dock connections and atmosphere. Among the hostelries that will survive for some time yet is the "Sir Sidney Smith" named after an admiral who was with Nelson at the Battle of the Nile. Apart from being a naval officer, Smith was a great public figure in his day, and was described as a great benefactor to the people of the East End, especially dockers and their families. The pub sign is a good likeness according to those who knew him. The "Sir Sidney Smith" is still known to local dockers as 'Old Pepper House' because there was for generations a pepper mill next door.

The Stratford Unitarian Church in West Ham Lane celebrated its centenary last month, and Lord Sorensen, former M.P. traced the social changes since the church was founded in 1869. Perhaps it will one day have a history as full as that of its Anglican sister at the end of the Lane, or even of its Cistercian predecessor a few hundred yards to the west.

I cannot let this editorial pass without paying a tribute to Mrs. Henrietta Girling, O.B.E., J.P., whose death since our last Bulletin has been reported. With her late husband, William H. Girling, O.B.E., she took an active part in Shoreditch in the struggles of the Socialist Movement from the early part of the century. She was elected Mayor of Shoreditch in 1930 and represented the Borough on the L.C.C. from 1931 to 1949. She was awarded the Freedom of the Borough of Shoreditch in 1948. So passes another of East London's keen and uncompromising fighters.

We congratulate the Dalston firm of Margetts Preserves Ltd. in Dalston Lane, who also celebrate their centenary this year. James Margetts, a Hackney grocer, bought fruit from the London Fruit markets, preserved it and sold it through his shop. Since then the Company, which uses the "Hartwell Farm" brand name, has expanded to include fruit canning. In 1948 it became the first Company in the U.K. to manufacture and distribute fruit pie fillings.

The Group's Annual General Meeting will be held at the Queen Mary College, Mile End, on Wednesday, 15th October 1969. If you do not normally attend Meetings, please make a point of coming to this annual reappraisal of our activities.

"DAHN THE MILE END ROAD".

On the east bank of the Regent's Canal a short way along the Mild End Road from Queen Mary College, there stands the "New Globe" public house. It was built in 1820 when the district surrounding it was still rural and in the middle of the nineteenth century it was well known for the pleasure gardens behind it which were similar in kind if not in magnificence to the renowned Vauxhall Gardens.

The New Globe Gardens were the creation of the Gardner family who arrived in the Mile End Road towards the end of the eighteenth century. William Gardner was born in Coggeshall, Essex, in 1759. He moved into the Mile End Road probably as a result of differences with his step-brother. There he established himself as a farmer and hay and straw merchant. He was also licensee of the "Cherry Tree" public house which stood on the site now occupied by the Church of the Guardian Angels. William Gardner died in 1816 and by then the Regent's Canal had cut his land into two unequal parts.

Gardner's eldest son farmed the land on the west side of the Canal but he soon began to take an interest in the new form of transport. He established himself as a boat-repairer and later he opened a coal wharf. His business survived until 1902 when he joined his rivals and Charrington, Gardner, Lockett and Company was formed. This Company used to operate Globe Wharf, the entrance of which is on the opposite side of the Canal from the new Globe.

The small piece of land on the east side of the Canal was used for building. In 1820, Martha Gardner, William's widow, had an inn and a large house built on it. The inn was the New Globe which, with alterations to the front of the lower storey, still stands in the Mile End Road. The large house remains, too, though it has been divided into several shops. The "Cherry Tree" seems to have disappeared about this time and the licence may well have been passed on to the New Globe.

The licensee of the New Globe was Gardner's youngest son, Thomas, who in 1838 bought the land behind the inn from the West Ham Water Works. The site, bounded by the Regent's Canal, Grove Road, and the then new Eastern Counties Railway, had contained a reservoir which had been made by hollowing out a large mound. The reservoir was filled in and laid out as a bowling-green while the rest of the land was made into a pleasure garden with ornamental fountains, trees, statues, chalets in which visitors took tea, etc. From the bowling-green there was a pleasant view of the surrounding fields and the hills to the north (you can see this view from the roof of the Q.M.C., though the green fields have long since vanished).

In the hey-day of the New Globe Gardens there were often as many as 4,000 visitors in a day. The cost of admission was sixpence, and for this visitors could enjoy the beauty of the gardens and also be provided with entertainment. (Cont.)-

The balloonist Coxwell made many ascents from the Gardens and William and John Brock gave firework displays. It was as a result of experience gained there that William's son was awarded the contract to provide firework displays at the Great Exhibition of 1851.

By the end of the 1850's, the popularity of the gardens had declined. The area around them was being built up, making the views less pleasant, and the railways were providing an enjoyable alternative to visiting the gardens in cheap excursions. The house next to the New Globe was sold in 1859 and in 1860 the gardens too were sold as a building site. Today there is no trace of the once famous gardens. Only the New Globe itself and the house by its side remain. The gardens, like the Vauxhall Gardens, are no more than a memory.

Celia Davies.

NEWBARN, THE STORY OF A PLAISTOW FARM.

The story of this Farm from 1628 to 1914 can be reconstructed from its deeds, which are now at Surrey Record Office at Kingston. How did they come to be there - what has Plaistow to do with Surrey?

They are there because Henry Strode, a wealthy London citizen and member of the Coopers' Company, left £6000 by his will in 1703 to found almshouses and a school in his native Egham, Surrey. In order to endow this charity, his trustees bought a farm called New Barnes in Plaistow, and acquired the deeds back to 1628.

The farm had originally been part of Stratford Langthorne Abbey lands, and after the Dissolution of the Monasteries, it had become Crown property. During the reign of James I, it was leased to Sir Francis Bacon (of Bacon's Essays) and others for the use of Henry, Prince of Wales, the King's eldest son. When he died young it reverted to the Crown.

In 1629 it was granted to two trustees for Sir Thomas Fanshawe, and it remained in the Fanshawe family till 1701. In the late seventeenth century it was separated into two main portions - the farmhouse and 48 acres was leased to Joshua Turner of West Ham, yeoman, in 1678, whilst 58 acres were let to Samuel Newton of London. In 1701 Bernard Ben Denton and Captain Crowder occupied these two holdings, whilst one field was leased to Thomas Wright, a butcher. In 1706 Henry Herring and the Coopers' Company acquired the land, about 108 acres, on behalf of the Strode charity. It cost £3125. In 1712 they leased the farmhouse and 48 acres to Charles Williams of Plaistow, yeoman, and in 1721 this part was leased to Samuel Emes of London, merchant.

There is a gap in the records till 1801. By then, apparently, it had become one farm again, called Prospect House Farm. There were two houses on it, the farm house and a private dwelling house called New Barn. In 1818 the two houses are described as "A brick dwelling house, two parlours, kitchen, drawing room, two main, three other bedrooms", and "A farm house, kitchen, wash-house, parlour and three bedrooms".

(Cont.)-

In 1801 the whole farm was leased to Richard Hudson, or rather the lease was assigned to him by the former tenant, James Galloway. A previous occupier is given as John Shadwell. Someone of this name was active in parish affairs in the 1740's and 50's. He became the Overseer for Plaistow Ward, and was flung into gaol for owing the parish £20. However, he paid it afterwards and the vestry petitioned for his release. In spite of this, he was elected to other parish offices later!

To get back to 1801, Richard Hudson was a butcher whose London address was Bond Street. According to local recollections he supplied meat to the nobility and even to royalty. The local marshland was excellent for fattening cattle, and leases specify that the marshland portion of the farm must never be ploughed up. In 1845 the farm was taken over by Elizabeth Ireland and her sons, market gardeners. They sublet part of it to Robert Freeman of Rainham, a farmer.

In 1861 there came the first signs of urban development, 18 acres being leased for gravel digging. In 1869 another 15 acres or so were leased to the Gas Light & Coke Company for the construction of Beckton Road to their gasworks.

In 1870 Richard Ireland assigned his lease to Richard Brandon of Clapton. In 1872 the farmhouse, by now called Cumberland House, was assigned to Hector Benjamin Clark. By 1903 or so, a certain amount of building had taken place. There is a plan dated May 1903 which shows the estate as laid out for building. Some notes about that date state that the roads had been laid out but little building had as yet taken place. In 1902 some land had been sold to the School Board for a school site (at Holborn Road), and these notes describe 12 old and 28 new houses as being on the estate. The last document in the collection at Surrey Record Office is a conveyance from the Governors of the Charity to Sir John Bethell of the sites of Turnbull Road and Shuter Road in 1914.

Newbarns has left its mark on the present-day street map in the names of New Barn Street and Cumberland Road, and there is a local story, retold by J.S. Curwen in 'Old Plaistow' that the Duke of Cumberland had his racing stud there. This was Henry Frederick, younger brother of George III, not his more famous uncle 'Butcher' Cumberland of Culloden. He lived from 1745 to 1790, so this would have been in the later eighteenth century. However, there is no confirmation in the deeds of this story - it may be true for there is a gap in the eighteenth century records of occupiers. The name of Cumberland House is first used in the deeds of 1872.

The house was still standing, though 'in a deplorable condition' in 1902. There are some photographs of both interior and exterior in Stratford Library's local collection, taken in 1895, and these show a quite imposing front, with brick gables, perhaps late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. There was also a fine staircase and panelling. The barn, which gave its name to the farm, also survived to about the same date. Like most things called new, it was in fact very old, and very large, about 130 feet long and 50 feet high. Photographs of 1895 show it with the roof fallen in, but apparently it was repaired later. It may have dated from the time of West Ham Abbey.

DANIEL DEFOE.

"In the centre of Whitechapel market is a little dirty alley called Harrow Alley, opposite to which is a hairdresser's shop occupied by Mr. Lawson. In this house above 150 years ago dwelt that Prince of wit and excellent man, Daniel Defoe. Here he wrote that first-rate and excellent moral work "Robinson Crusoe" and here he wrote a memorable melancholy journal of the Plague in London of which he was an eye-witness."

("Bell's Weekly Despatch 17/10/1824).

"Daniel Defoe says that he remembers Spitalfields as all fields when he was a boy and it became all town within his lifetime, (1661(?) - 1731). In his childhood the lanes were deep, dirty and unfrequented, the part now called Spittlefields market was a field of grass with cows feeding on it.... Brick Lane, which is now a long, well-paved street, was a deep dirty road, frequented chiefly by carts fetching bricks that way into Whitechapel from brick-kilns in those fields."

(Millicent Rose "The East End of London")

RAINE'S FOUNDATION SCHOOL.

This School, in Arbour Square, Stepney, celebrates this year the 250th anniversary of its foundation by Henry Raine, a Wapping brewer. Born in 1679 Henry Raine was brought up in Wapping and it was there that he set up his brewery. Despite his trade, he was a pious Christian, and to help the less fortunate he established a school in Charles Street, Old Gravel Lane. Over 100 children, equally divided, were admitted to the school to be taught "the true spelling of words" and given religious instruction. Raine superintended the school activities, selected staff, and occasionally took classes himself. Life in the school was strict and, when children left school, the religious habits of would-be employers were carefully examined, and at one time they had to give an undertaking not to let the boys go "to where the Methodists assemble".

Two years before his death in 1738, Henry Raine set up a second school - the Raines Asylum. Here 40 of the most deserving girls from the 'Lower School' were boarded, clothed, educated, and trained for a life in domestic service, learning the "arts of mid-wifery, needlework, cooking, housework, etc". Discipline was strict, and during the winter the girls worked ten hours a day and in summer eight. In 1775 every girl had to have on admittance sufficient security for her clothes "in case she should abscond". However, there was always the chance of winning a £100 'dowry' when the time came for a girl to marry an approved suitor ("noted for his piety and industry"). Henry Raine instituted this ceremony whereby each year lots were drawn in respect of twelve selected pupils, six in May and six on Boxing Day. The May winner was wed on the fifth of November and the Christmas winner on the following first of May, in St. George's in the East where a special preacher was usually invited for the occasion. Beside the dowry, the foundation also provided a wedding breakfast for the bridal party at the school. On Henry Raine's death, the custom ceased temporarily but was resumed by the Trustees in 1740. Lack of funds ./-

finally compelled its abandonment in 1892, the very last recipient being Anne Engstrom, the 164th girl to receive the 'dowry'.

In 1821 the boys school moved into a new building behind the boarding school, the new premises being opened by the Duke of Clarence, later King William the Fourth. By this time, the school was taking fee-paying pupils. The boarding school itself closed down in 1833. In 1870, the Education Act made the State responsible for elementary education and the Trustees had to decide how the school could maintain its traditions. In 1874 the Trustees applied to the Charity Commission for permission to provide wider education. In the following January, the boys school was reorganised and moved into new premises in Cannon Street Road, Stepney. Then in 1880 the girls school, also reorganised, moved to a building near the boys school.

In the early 1900's under the Balfour Education Act they became Secondary Schools, and in 1913 growth compelled them to move to the now combined school in its present premises in Arbour Square. At the Thanksgiving Service in St. Paul's Cathedral on the 1st May 1969, tribute was paid by many old Raineans to Henry Raine, whose tomb can still be seen in the churchyard of St. George's in the East.

A.H.F.

HOXTON MUSIC HALL.

To many people the Music Hall is the dead symbol of a past era, a centre of family entertainment now replaced by T.V. It may therefore come as a surprise to some to know that in the middle of Hoxton Market there is a tiny music hall, complete with double cast-iron gallery, that is over 100 years old and is still very much in use.

Hoxton Hall is now run by the Bedford Institute - a Quaker body involved with many kinds of social work. Its warden is a Miss May Scott, a neat grey-haired woman with a highly individualistic approach to her work. She believes in people doing things for themselves, with the least amount of direction from above. The old people who have a midday lunch provided by the welfare kitchens at Hackney Town Hall, are encouraged to serve the meal themselves and then wash up. Similarly, children are encouraged in their painting, dancing or playing groups, to organise as much as possible for themselves.

Groups of drama students and professional actors use the hall for rehearsals and productions, and the children like to watch the actors and absorb ideas from them. Recent productions have mainly featured Shakespeare - Miss Scott is anxious for people to know of the bard's connections with Shoreditch - "The Theatre in Curtain Road was built in 1590 before the Globe" she tells you. Such familiar names as James Fox, Hywel Bennett and Vernon Dobtscheff figured in recent Shakespearean productions. A production of three Chekov plays presented Sarah Miles. May Scott says that the actors enjoy performing in Hoxton because they feel the audience is there "because it wants to be". A.H.F.

"THE PEARLIES"

The death was reported last month of Mr. Harry Springfield, Pearly King of Stoke Newington for 23 years, a member of the Marriott family which claims to have more than 20 pearly kings and queens.

There is apparently no recorded evidence or specific information on the origin of the Pearly Kings. "There is no evidence to show that this garb is of any notable antiquity, or that it was ever universal with costers" ("The Cockney" - Julian Franklyn 1953). It seems that pearly kings and queens are members of a Guild ("The Original Pearly Kings and Queens Guild" 51 Pepler Road S.E.15) whose principal purpose is to collect for charity. The date of their origin is somewhat obscure - it would seem to be about 1885-1890 (The first mention of 'pearlies' in print is given by the Oxford Dictionary as 1885). The use of pearly buttons originated in the popularity of smoked pearl buttons in the nineties, and the elaborate costumes are handed down from father to son. The office of "Pearly King" seems to be hereditary while there is a member of the family to carry on the tradition, but it is apparently elective otherwise. There are pearly kings for various districts of London (Lambeth, Southwark, Hackney, Bethnal Green, etc) and it would appear that the Pearly King of London is selected from these.

In a letter in 1953 to the South London Press, a Mr. Fred Tinsley stated that he founded the Guild 40 years before, but he goes on to refer to the costumes as being "improved" about 70 years ago, from which it would appear that the Guild was founded to regularise and carry on an organisation which had already been in existence some time, from in fact, about 1885.

The pearly kings of some of the East London Boroughs (Stepney, Limehouse, etc) seem to have disappeared, but certainly half a century ago they were viewed almost with awe in East London circles. If the pearly king and queen attended your wedding or social function it was a tremendous honour, and they were treated royally. For many reasons, the "pearlies" have declined, but it will be a sad day when the black velvet suits and caps covered with pearl buttons, and the sweeping ostrich feather hats of the queens will be seen no more.

If any reader has more information on this subject, we shall be glad to hear from them.

A.F.

Would you like to make a study of some aspect of London History this winter? There is an excellent programme of lectures and studies drawn up by the University of London Extra-Mural Department, also by Local Authorities. The Editor (or your local library) will be pleased to give further particulars.

Make a note in your diary - The Tower Hamlets Libraries and E.L.H.G. joint Annual Lecture will be given by J. Kennedy Melling "300 years of East London Theatres and Music Halls". Thursday, November 13th. Bancroft Rd Library

EAST LONDON RAILWAYS.

The North Greenwich Branch of the Great Eastern Railway which during its existence from 1871 to 1926 enjoyed the publicity of using even more decrepit rolling stock than that which had hitherto existed on the main line to Millwall Junction, the change-over point for passengers. The North Greenwich Line extended from Millwall Junction to Ferry Street (alongside the Island Gardens). The terminus, known simply as North Greenwich, comprised a single wooden structure from which a ferry, purchased by the railway in 1874 ran across the River to what the Great Eastern termed South Greenwich. Through tickets were obtainable until 1902 when the ferry was replaced by the L.C.C.'s free subway (ever since affectionately dubbed by the Island residents as "The Pipe") and the railway received £8000 compensation.

The trains ran every 15 minutes throughout the day, their busiest time being the Saturday afternoons when Millwall F.C. were playing at home. Millwall Football Club was formed in 1885 and used various grounds on the 'Island' until they removed to New Cross in 1910. Passenger services to North Greenwich came to an end with the General Strike in 1926. Surprisingly, the modest wooden station at the terminus in Ferry Street survived, firstly as a storage depot, and subsequently over recent years it became the H.Q. for the Blackwall and Poplar District Rowing Club. Now it is no more. During May 1969 I watched the remaining structure being demolished to make way for a new H.Q. for the Rowing Club and the provision of improved local amenities.

Are any of our readers interested in railways? When one realises the amount of land in East London used for railway purposes over the past 100 years, there appears to be a wealth of local history in relation to communications to be recorded and brought together in useful form. Please pester me, or the Chairman, for more information relating to sources for research.

K.R.R.

THE WRATH OF THE WEAVERS.

Several thousand journeymen weavers assembled in Spitalfields and in a riotous and violent manner broke open the house of one of the masters, destroyed his looms, and cut a great quantity of rich silk to pieces, after which they placed his effigy in a cart with a halter about his neck, an executioner on one side and a coffin on the other; they then drove it through several streets, hanged it on a gibbet, and burnt it to ashes; which having proved a sufficient vent for their fury, they dispersed of themselves without further mischief.

("Annual Register" October 3 1763).