

EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY

WINTER NEWSLETTER - March 1987

Apologies must be made for the lateness of this newsletter and the sparseness of the contents. This apology is made necessary by lack of contributions and the domestic misfortunes of your membership secretary, leading to several postponements of production.

EAST LONDON SILK INDUSTRY IN BRAINTREE from Bob Vickers, Braintree.

Dr Samuel Dale (1659-1738) was a botanist, son of a silk-throwster of Whitechapel, born in Braintree.

At the time of the 1851 census, there were small communities of silk workers grouped around the silk factories of Braintree. One such group, in Martin's Yard, where there was a group of 14 cramped cottages, had 19 workers who would weave silk at home while others would finish the product within the factory. The head of one family was Thomas Owen, a 61 year old hand-loom weaver from Whitechapel.

Around 1820, several silk firms moved to Braintree because a fixed wage-rate among weavers was cutting into profits, and agriculture was at a low ebb with local labour willing to work for smaller wages. In a strange way, East London was doing good for a town in despair.

Henry Summers (1643-1698), born in Braintree, went to London to learn hat-making, married a widow who owned a silk-dye works, and took to a merchant's life, including an interest in the Hudson Bay Company. He died at Hackney, leaving no issue.

FROM FRIENDS OF HACKNEY ARCHIVES DEPT.

Thursday 9th April : A.G.M. of Friends of Hackney Archives Dep't. Our guest speaker will be Miss Christine Johnstone, the newly-appointed Museum Curator for Hackney. 7.30pm at the Rose Lipman Community Centre, DeBeauvoir Road.

Date in June/July to be arranged: visit to St. Mary's Churches (old and new) in Stoke Newington.

Saturday 4th July : Boat trip along all Hackney's waterways. Contact the Hackney Archives Department for details.

A VICTORIAN 'COMMERCIAL'

Most people today are hardened to the slushy, oversentimental tone of many television commercials. Modern advertising may have become more slick but the fundamentals still exist and the basic approach hasn't changed from the day of the Elizabethan mountebank.

How the following advert from Simpsons Directory of Poplar (1866) must have

brought tears of relief to many a Victorian parent.

CUBITS ELIXER OF STRENGTH

Many a pale faced girl has had the bloom of health bright back to her.

This medicine comes to the mother as she weeps over her pale, sickly child. It bids her sigh no more, for the little one, now delicate, shall soon be as strong as ever.

If sorrow has brought you low, then here is the antidote. Are you a total abstainer, who from principle, will not take strong drink? Then if weakness comes upon you, here is the remedy that will strengthen without making you break your pledge.

It comes to the consumptive, the asthmatic, the scrofulous and the cancerous and whispers hope even to them.

11/- - 4/6d - 2/9d - 1/1½d.

S.A.A. 23/2/68

SOME RECENT PUBLICATIONS from Colm Kerrigan

Readers of the EAST LONDON RECORD who are also followers of West Ham United F.C. will recall that issue 8 (1985) contained a review of John Moynihan's book, THE WEST HAM STORY. Two more books about the club have appeared during the last few months and Peter Aylmer, now the elected member of Bethnal Green and Stepney on ILEA, will be reviewing both at some length in our 1987 issue, due out in October.

Not daring to steal his thunder, I feel Society members will wish to know of the existence of the two books, especially as both are reasonably priced clothbacks and may even be sold out before Peter's review comes out in October.

Charles Korr's WEST HAM UNITED (Duckwork £7.95) is a history of the club by an American social historian with an interest in how and to what purpose the club is run, as well as in performances on the pitch.

WHO'S WHO OF WEST HAM (Helliard and Sons Ltd 235 Barking Road, E13 8EQ) was written by Tony Hogg and Jack Helliard and is priced at £6.50 plus 75p post and packing. Jack Helliard is the club's programme editor and has watched the team for 60 years. The book contains brief biographies of everyone who ever made the first eleven. If any member of the East London History Society have recollections of matches at Upton Park that go back as far as Jack's I would be glad to let them have a look at my copy of the book to see if they can discover any omissions or errors. I can't, but then I first visited the ground a mere twenty years ago..... just the other day, as it were!

Three recent publications from Tower Hamlets Directorate of Community Services will be of interest to members. The first, a booklet with views of Bow in the past. These are on opposite pages to photographs of the same scenes taken recently. This book will be reviewed in the next 'RECORD', as will THE GREEN. The latter is a reprint of A J Robinson and D H B Chesshyre's excellent work on Bethnal Green and the Blind Beggar legend, which first came out in 1978. Then priced at £1, it is now £1.95.

TOWER HAMLETS CALENDER (1987) consists of 13 photographs of the Borough in the past and is priced at £1.50. At less than 12p a photograph this is excellent

value even if you never need to know what date it is. Besides old reliables like Gardiner's Corner (1909), Whitechapel High Street (1905), Bow Bridge (1912), and Churchill at Sidney Street, there is a delightful photograph of an old English Fair at Poplar Recreation Ground in 1919 and a full frontal of the number 8 bus in 1923. What a beauty! Run to your nearest library and buy this calender...if they still have any.

We have received two new books from Peter Marcan Publications (31 Rowcliff Road, High Wycombe, Bucks), both of which will be reviewed in the October RECORD. DOWN IN THE EAST END is an anthology of writings about the area, with more than 80 illustrations. Priced at £7.95, it is available from Mrs Kendall or myself; or direct from the publisher, when 60p for post and packing should be added.

A LONDON DOCKLANDS GUIDE is just what it says. Written by Tony Phillips, a member of the Basement Writers Groups, his text, as well as the illustrations and maps, will form a useful guide for anyone intent on getting to know this rapidly changing area while there is still time.

EAST LONDON RECORD No.9 (1986) This is now available, price £1.30, from any branch of Tower Hamlets Libraries, T.H.A.P. Bookshop, or by post (adding 25p for post and packing) from Mrs D Kendall, 20 Puteaux House, Cranbrook Estate, London E2 ORF.

The contents include a detailed study of Copperfield Road Ragged School by Tom Ridge of the Ragged School Museum; a study of the parish of St. Saviour's, Hoxton; and some memories of Stepney, contributed by Mrs Carrington, who used to live in Stepney Way. There is also an article on Ile End Old Town and the East India Company in the eighteenth century by Derek Morris, whose ancestors were actually living in Mile End at that time. There is a short article by Cyril Demarne on the Imperial, Canning Town. He also reviews a book on the Silvertown fire in 1917, an event he actually remembers seeing. Other reviews cover a wide range of local studies and there is the usual list of publications relating to the area.

POINTS FROM MEMBERS

Mrs Dot Swarc (32 Loveday Road, London W13 9JS) is presently engaged on a BA project on Jewish prostitution in the East End of London from about 1880-1920. She would be more than grateful for suggestion on information/sources/contacts.

Victor W Croxford pays us a compliment. He adds our newsletters to his extremely valuable collection of historical documents, etc., which date through centuries. Mr Croxford sounds like a very useful source of reference for historians.

Mr Laurence Moss of 16 Park Grove, London E15, regretfully told us of the death of his father, Harry Moss. Harry Moss was a member and no doubt was know to many of our older members. He was an active historian and his 'particular patch was from Wapping to the City'. He has left his son his extensive notes, wishing him to continue some of his walks for the London Appreciation Society, which Laurence will do. Harry Moss also left notes which Laurence hopes to present in some kind of publication at some time. He would be glad of any guidance and help we can give. Anyone willing to help should contact him.

Mr E Basson of 35 Abbotts Road, Edgware, Middlesex, was born and bred in Whitechapel. He attended Old Castle Street School and is anxious to obtain a history of that school if such exists. An interesting buy he has had is a post-card of Petticoat Lane, entitled 'Polly Nathan's Fish Shop'.

From Mrs L E Roberts, 14 Alan Avenue, Henderson, Auckland, New Zealand, comes a request.... and an offer... "Many years ago I saw a Blue Peter film on TV. I can remember the Pearly King being interviewed and saying how hard it was to get the real pearl buttons to put on their costume. I then promised myself I would, when I had finished with my button box, sort out the pearl button and send them off." Unfortunately, Mrs Roberts doesn't have an address to send them to.... so anyone who can help out here, either pass the address to Mrs Roberts, or pass Mrs Robert's address to a lucky recipient of pearl buttons. Mrs Roberts requests that any information be sent Airmail.. and she will kindly refund postage.

Major C R Elderton, HQ BAOR (630PS) BFP0140, is attempting to trace his paternal grandfather's 'roots' in the East End of London. He is particularly interested in the family name of ELDERTON and the 17th London Regiment (Poplar and Stepney Rifles). His grandfather was born in Splidts Street in 1896 and his parents lived in Back Church Street, both in the parish of St George in the East, North Parish. Grandfather died 26 years ago.

During the first World War he served with the 17th Londons, having joined in 1912. Major Elderton is now trying to write a history of the 17th and would be extremely grateful to hear from veterans or anyone else who could help with information or with similar interests. He does know that a Colonel J Godding OBE TD proposed to compile a history during the 1914-1918 war and appealed to past or present members of the battalion for information, trench maps, photographs, etc. He asked for these to be handed in to Headquarters at 66 Tredegar Road, Bow. Col. Godding never published his work... but did he leave his notes and material anywhere.. and can they be found? Any help would be most gratefully received.

EXPLORE LONDON'S CANALS

British Waterways publish literature on this and I quote fairly freely from one of their leaflets here :-

Half hidden in Britain's capital is the more secret, peaceful world of canals. The Grand Union, Regent's and Hertford Union Canals swing in a wide arc through the heart of London, linking with the River Lee Navigation to the east thd the River Thames to the south. Its a fascinating world to explore, weaving between factories and warehouses or opening out into parks, gardens and nature reserves, and providing unusual views of some of London's best-known landmarks.

When these canals were built (the Regent's Canal was completed in 1820) they ran through open country, avoiding built-up areas, Wharves, warehouse and docks sprang up, turning the canalside into a lively commercial centre and inland port, allowing London to expand its trade.

However, the canal soon faced fierce new competition from the expansion of railways. Only twentyfive years after the Regent's Canal was opened, its owners tried unsuccessfully to turn it into a railway line! For a short period the two transport systems worked together, with canal barges unloading goods on to trains. Remnants of this era can still be seen today where short canal extensions were built to reach right into railway depots.

Today they are valued for their architecture and industrial archaeology and as an important refuge for wildlife. Many access points make the canals ideal for short strolls or long-distance rambles. Whichever you choose you will be rewarded by a rich variety of rural and urban scenery and glimpses of the canal's history..and views of colourful narrowboats, locks and lock cottages.

In central London, access gates to the towing path are locked overnight. A booklet giving details information about canal walks in London is available from the Regent's Canal Information Centre, 289 Camden High Street, NW1 7BX, Tel:482 0523.
