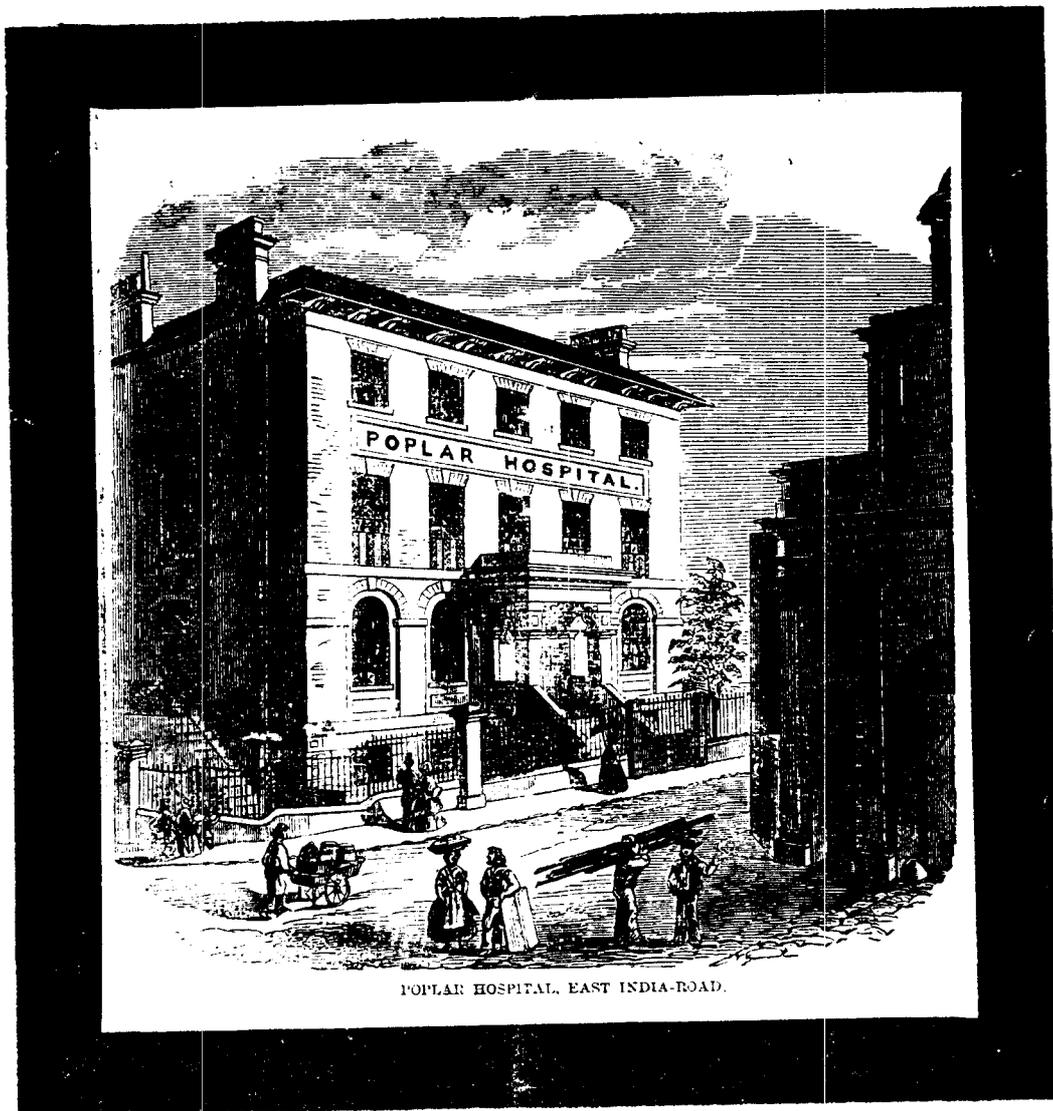

EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY

Autumn Newsletter 1992

Volume 1 No. 2



Poplar Hospital, East India Dock Road, as it appeared when it opened. This sketch is dated 1858.

50 Years Ago - Hop Picking in War Time

We open our new season of lectures with a talk by Gilda O'Neill on Hop-picking. The lectures was originally scheduled for the 29 January, but due to weather conditions, Ms O'Neill was unable to be with us. I know many of our members who turned up for the lecture, and were left disappointed will be delighted to hear that it has been re-scheduled for the 24 September, and I'm sure we are going to have a splendid turnout.

The following is a news item that appeared fifty years ago, and has been selected by JOHN HARRIS to provide a 'taster' to our first lecture:

At the end of August 1942, an army of 50,000 hop pickers most of them from the London area arrived at the Kent farms. This was in response to a government appeal to all experienced hop pickers to get in touch with the farms they had picked for previously.

Hundreds of families who usually go hop picking, but have been scattered by evacuation, war work, and the bombing raids have managed to answer the call.

They arrived carrying gas masks, identity cards, ration books, cooking utensils and some food. At Bodiam, Sussex 4,000 pickers have arrived. In the Tonbridge/Paddock Wood area there will be 19,000 pickers. At Beltring in Kent a special hospital has been set up.

In addition to normal rations, there will be special rations of sweets, cakes, tobacco, paraffin oil, and cooking utensils. Every hop picker over the age of fourteen will receive the agricultural workers ration of 1 lb of cheese; 7,000 meat pies a week are being supplied.

The Ministry of Labour has stated that all persons who are employed on war production work must apply for leave of absence before going hop picking. Failure to do so is a serious offence who could carry a prison sentence. The Ministry of Home Security has also sent out a warning that all the hop fields are in defence zones and are therefore restricted areas, only persons who are in possession of special police permits may visit relatives and friends who are hop picking in Kent. These permits can be applied for at Police Stations.

John Harris

BOOKS AND EPHEMERA SWOP SHOP

Having spent fruitless hours in second-hand bookshops in search of the elusive volume to add to our collection of East London books, we know just how rewarding it can be when we do actually unearth the very book we have been searching for. Doreen Kendall, Philip Mernick and myself are avid 'haunters' of bookshops, and happily buy the books or postcards we know the other has been in search of. For instance, Doreen presented me with a copy of *THE CHRONICLES OF BLACKWALL YARD*, found in a little shop in Wales. I almost wept with joy! Philip has managed to unearth no less than TWO books by Cicely Fox-Smith, books rarer than hen's teeth.

We've also received a letter from Mr EC Basson, with a list of books he would like to dispose of. I thought, therefore that we could start a section in the newsletter dedicated to those members who wish to acquire a particular publication, or perhaps have duplicate copies they would like to dispose of. If you would like to take advantage of this scheme, please write to me, and your request will be published in the next newsletter. I will also look into the possibility of having the list displayed at the Local History Library, Bancroft Road.

All requests /notices will be published with the enquirers full names and address/telephone number unless specifically requested that they are omitted. However, we will then have to ask for SAE or stamps to cover the cost of sending on requests /information.

Please write to Rosemary Taylor, 5 Pusey House, Saracen St, Poplar, London E14 6HG.

Letters from Our Members

Mrs Margaret Wiltshire from Ingatestone, Essex, wrote to us in response to the article on the finding of Clara Grant's grave:

I remember Clara Grant, 'The Farthing Bundle Lady'. But she was a lot more than that.

She was a survivor of the Titanic disaster in 1912, and she went on to be Headmistress of Devons Road Girls School in Bow.

Her interest in the poor people of the area was legendary. Miss Grant was I believe, the founder of the Fern Street Settlement which she ran for many years. Farthing bundles were only one of the activities there. To qualify for a Saturday morning bundle, children had to be able to pass under a wooden arch without their heads touching the bar and then they would receive a bundle of small toys and a bundle of used greeting cards, all for their farthing.

Once a month there were sales of used clothing to enable mothers to dress their (sometimes large) families. The word was that the clothes came from her well to do friends, because they were generally of good quality and condition. Then periodically she would hold a 'New Mothers Sale' consisting of baby clothes and blankets to help mums to be. During the wartime bombing anyone whose house was damaged could go to her for help with household items.

There were two rooms in the Settlement used as a library and any child could go and borrow books.

Clara Grant was a real lady whose only concern seemed to be to help people and educate children.

Without being picky I must point out that 1949 is only 43 years ago.

ED: Thank you for your comments and interesting snippets on Clara Grant. Incidentally, the Fern Street Settlement is still in existence, and the wooden arch is on display there.

Joyce Garwood from Leigh-on-Sea has asked us for information on the Galloway Arms, situated in Burgess Street Limehouse. Her husband's Grandfather was John David Footer, publican, and the photograph she has in her possession dates to 1910-1912.

Dr Melvyn Brooks has written to us from Israel:

Re: Charles Wakefield & Daddy "Birt" (Vol 1 No. 1 Newsletter).

"Daddy Burff's for Dinner" by Rose Lowe, published by Centreprise 1976.

If all else fails I could photocopy my one. (35 pages - about 18 photocopies)

Mrs Ann Barrett from the Isle of Wight writes:

I have just acquired a copy of the East London Record No. 14. I found it fascinating reading, particularly the article by Ellen Rae called 'On the Isle of Dogs'. It brought back vivid memories of stories told to me by my mother and grandmother. In fact I could picture them saying exactly the same things.

They lived at number 12 Galbraith Street moving on to Plevna Street and my great grandmother lived in Strattondale Street. Both streets mentioned in the article, also my mother went to the school that was talked about. St Johns Church was also the family church for weddings and christenings. This was all taking place about the same years. But for a change in the names, this could have been about my family.

Ellen Rae is a very fortunate person, in as much as she can picture the area for herself because she has been there. I have only the memory of words spoken to me when I was a child and alas my Gran and Mum are no longer alive to tell any more.

I would be extremely grateful if you could pass on my congratulations on the superb writing to Ellen Rae, the detail explaining the simple things of life in and around the area are very pleasing. Just to read it from time to time will bring back times and conversations from my own childhood.

Mr E C Basson, 35 Abbots Road, Edgware, Middlesex, HA8 0QT has written in to say he has a collection of books on East London history he wishes to dispose of. Besides a full set of East London Records (1-14) he has various publications, both paper and hard back. Enquiries to the address above.

One of our faithful members, Elsie Sanders from Hampshire, recently attended a course at Exeter University on the subject of West Country churches. One of the lectures was on Stained Glass, and she was intrigued when the tutor made much of the fact that a lot of the mediaval stained glass was actually made in the East End. She was wondering if any of our members could throw some light on this? It would certainly make an interesting little piece for the newsletter, and we look forward to your comments.

We are happy to pass on any responses to queries. If however you would like a direct reply please let us know so that we can publish your full address.

Letters from our Members

Mrs Lily O'Brien, Leigh-on -Sea is researching the life of her grandfather Richard Henry Paul, East End Boxer. she writes:

Richard Henry Paul earned his living as a fishmonger. He had his own ponies and carts and worked from Billingsgate Fish Market. He used to live in Aston Street Stepney where he had a yard to keep his ponies and carts, until a land-mine fell onto the house and he was buried for (I believe) about 24 hours. During that time most of his boxing trophies were also lost, believed stolen. He then moved to Yorkshire Road Stepney, where he and his family lived under the railway arches, or rather, in one of three houses at the back of the arches. He lived in No. 27 whilst we lived in No. 31.

As far as I know at the moment, he had a brother named Dick. Harry Paul married my nan - Polly Igly or Iglie and they had seven children, most of whom are now dead. He did a lot of charity work and fund raising, and got an honorary mention at the London Hospital.

(Doreen adds: The East London Record No. 5 had an article on Boxing Memories by Louis Behr. Also deposited in Bancroft Archives are 8 typed pages of descriptions of Richard Henry Paul's fights as recorded in newspapers of the time.)

We received this interesting letter from Sandra Cooper from West Sussex, who read the article on Elizabeth Fry in the East London Record No. 14:

Whilst at Prestbury in 1986 I bought the booklet about the history of the Parish Church as the Rev Peter Mayer on my pedigree was Vicar there for thirteen years. His grand-daughter Frances married Edward Wakefield at the embassy in Paris and was stepmother to Edward Gibbon Wakefield who abducted Ellen Turner of Shrigley Hall in 1826. He spent three years in Newgate and wrote many books on penal reform and gave ideas for Dickens' Oliver Twist. From the Dictionary of National Biography I learnt of the Quaker connection with the Gurney, Barclay, Bell, Fry families and so investigated further.

Edward Gibbon Wakefield was named after Edward Gibbon the historian, buried at Fletching church near Sheffield Park Sussex. I am in contact with Michael D'Arcy, a descendant of the Wakefields, and Helen Shaw, descendant of Edward Gibbon Wakefield's sister Catherine Gurney Wakefield, who married Lee Torlese. Catherine helped look after Nina and Edward Jermingham Wakefield whilst Edward was in Newgate.

I have read extracts from several journals the sisters of Elizabeth Fry have written and there was even one concerning Mr Fry when he came to court Elizabeth Gurney, and Edward G Wakefield managed to trick him out of half a crown. There is no end of material and records and this story has taken precedence over all other lines - an ideal soap opera. Barclays Bank have even helped by giving information and references from their archives.

The East London History Society plans to publish, in 1993, a book on Victoria Park, largely based on post cards from several private collections.

Although we have a large selection to choose from there are several prominent features of the Park (both past and present) that we have no views of. If any of our members have postcards or photographs of the following areas of Victoria Park and are willing to loan them for copying we would of course fully acknowledge the fact:

We are looking for:

Deer Park

Running Track or athletics

Lido

Moorish Shelter

Meetings (political, social etc)

Anything else of interest

Please contact

Philip Mernick

42 Campbell Road

London E3 4DT

STOP PRESS:

Just published by Peter Marcan Publications: AN EAST LONDON ALBUM. Price £6.95 + 85p P&P. Continuing the series of picture reprints from sources such as the Penny Illustrated Paper, Pictorial World and Builder. All enquiries to Peter Marcan Pub. 31 Rowloff Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 3LD.

REFLECTIONS OF CHANGING TIMES

Part I Food for Thought

In 1922 in the East End of London the lifestyle of Bethnal Green was much different than today. These were the days of the trams, costermongers, horse and carts, the days of the Music Halls and fairgrounds, the days when our entertainment was street games and walks in the parks, the days of the lamplighter who came around every evening and lit the street lamps. There were the newsboys calling out their late night final and the dog winner man, not forgetting the man with the barrel organ and the Walls ice cream man on his three wheel box tricycle with its Stop Me and Buy One sign.

In the street markets, meat, vegetables and fish etc were sold exposed to the elements. There was no Hygiene Act in those days, although I never heard of anyone dying of food poisoning.

I was born in 1922 in Baxendale Street near the Sunday Flower market. My mother and father were bred and born cockneys and because families were very large in those days we had lots of Aunts and Uncles who lived in the surrounding streets. My sister and I would call on our relations to play with our numerous cousins and consume rock cakes, and bread and jam which was always in abundance. The food we ate in those days always seemed to fill you up. There was bacon dumplings, meat pies and puddings, plenty of baked rice with nutmeg and butter on it, rhubarb and custard and boiled currant pudding, sometimes with dates or plums. These foods would be called stodgy today, but were part of the main diet of a large majority of people in the East End.

My dad had been wounded three times during the 1914-18 war, he had also been gassed as well and throughout the 1920-30 depression times were very hard, nevertheless when work was available he would turn his hand to anything and everything. My mum would go out in the early hours to do office cleaning and then do more cleaning at Wasems Bakery in the Hackney Road. She would bring home day old cakes and stale bread that would be made into a bread pudding. She was a terrific cook and everything was tasty. She always brought the cheapest cuts of meat; the tops of the top rib that had a lot of bone and a fatty centre that swelled up after it was cooked leaving behind a bowl of succulent dripping which we ate on toast with much relish. Markets in those days would stay open until 10 o'clock at night. The shops did not have any refrigeration and when it was getting late on Saturday they would sell off any goods that

would not keep. Meat was auctioned off as it tended to dry up. You could get a leg of lamb for a shilling and an aitch bone of beef for twopence, a pound of sausages cost fourpence and the finest Saveloys you ever tasted could be bought with a helping of pease pudding for a penny. There were faggots and pigs trotters and half a pig's head could be bought for threepence. My mum would buy pigs chitlings, cow heel and tripe and often we would have a lump of salt flank of beef. Meat always had plenty of fat on it, for meat without fat has very little taste. When we went and bought half a pound of ham it was always cut off the bone and we were always told to ask the butcher for a bit of free fat.

Most people had pets. We always had a cat and there was a cat's meat shop on the corner of Winbolt Street named Gilletts. They would always have a supply of fresh horse meat, not this tinned rubbish one gets today, and it would be delivered to your door. In fact I had a friend whose house I was in one day after school and the catsmeat woman had put the meat under the door knocker. His mother went out and got the meat which was on a skewer and put it on a plate. When his father came in she put some vegetables on the plate with it and that was his dinner.

On the corner of Squirries Street was the fish shop. Here my mother would buy her fish. Mrs Hughes the proprietor would smoke the haddocks, kippers and bloaters which had a taste unknown today. Mrs Hughes knew everyone and they her. She was a big woman and a true diamond.

There was a family that lived in Elwin Street whose name I think was Manzi. He was known as Old Jack. He would deliver ice to the butchers and other shops, which they used as a form of refrigeration. He had an ice cream stall and sold ice cream in the summer and lemon ice wafers. In the winter he sold hot baked potatoes and chestnuts. You would season them with salt and vinegar and on cold nights they warmed the cockles of your heart.

The sweet shop we used was Curtisses on the corner of Elwin Street and Quilter Street. They had sherbet dabs with Spanish sticking out of them. You bit the end of the Spanish which was hollow and sucked up the sherbet through it. They sold liquorish sticks, locust beans, nut rock, stick jaw and gob stoppers, plus jars and jars of wonderful sweets. A halfpenny would buy you a quarter of a pound, enough to hand round to all your friends. The coffee stalls would stay open all day and night with hot snacks and Doubledays meat pies. A cup of tea was a penny. There were Saveloys and cheese cakes and numerous sandwiches and rolls.

Along the Bethnal Green Road there was a very

Food for Thought (contd)

good market. The sweet stall that made all its own sweets had candy twist, cough candy, bulls eyes and toffee apples. There were no supermarkets but we had The Home and Colonial Stores, The Maypole and The Co-Op. There were cheeses on the counters weighing 56 lbs which were cut up to your wish with a cheese wire. The butter was also sold from a large piece of about 2 ft square. In David Greggs you could have what you liked from 2 oz upwards and at the Pudding Shop there was always a crowd buying Baked Jam Plum Pudding, Apple Pudding etc.

There were the butchers shops that sold their meat straight from the slaughter house, if they did not slaughter on their own premises, no frozen meat that has had fifty percent of its flavour destroyed. The best butchers was Meadway's. My mother always said they sold the best meat. There was Bells who sold home made sausages and Hailers and Reids, Edwards and Bachells, not forgetting good old Dinah Wade who had a meat stall. There was Websters fried fish shop from which one could smell the tasty aroma many streets away. Fish and chips don't taste the same today.

At the top end of Bethnal Green Road near Cambridge Heath there was Austin Balls the Wine and Port house. My dad would give my mum a treat if he won a couple of bob and take her to have a glass of the excellent port called Gold Cap that they sold. It was considered to be the best around at the time, and I believe it still is and I can vouch for this in latter years. It was a shame that this establishment had to change to a public house. Anyone who did not know it when it was a wine house has missed out.

Our Christmas dinner was a spring hand of pork that had the thick end of the belly on it, and after my mother had dressed it and seasoned it and gently cooked it you would enjoy it as much as any turkey or game. It was followed by the Christmas Pudding which was prepared some weeks earlier having been stirred and seasoned with fruits and spices.

After dinner we played snakes and ladders, draughts and ludo, then it was time for tea. My mother always made delicious Christmas cakes before which we would have red salmon and many other niceties we did not have during the year. In the evening my Uncle Tom and Aunt Mimi would arrive and they would take the jugs down to the pub for some beer. We would play the gramophone, which would start a sing song, chestnuts were also baked on a shovel over the open fire. When we had gone to bed the adults would get more beer and sit around talking about old times until it was time to leave.

On Sundays we had the Flower Market in Columbia Road. Most of the stall holders came from Bethnal Green. There was Stones, Gales and Swifts and many others I have long since forgotten. There was a cart that sold drinks, hot in the winter and cold in the summer. The drink was called sarsaparilla and tasted like today's coca cola. Many other fruit flavours were also available. On the corner of Baxendale Street was a pub which was called the Baxendale Arms which was unfortunately destroyed by a land mine during the war. Families would take their Sunday dinners to the local bakers to be cooked while they had a lunchtime drink in the pub, collecting their dinners on the way home.

The barrel organ would come around and play in the streets and all the young girls would dance around it. You could buy sheet music with the words and everybody would stand there singing. Sunday afternoon would also bring out the buskers. They were well known people and one group I call to mind were the Luna Boys. They would sing and dance on a wooden mat to the music from an accordion and people would give them a penny. There was the strong man who would let you try to strangle him with a length of rope and of course the escapologist who never failed to free himself.

On Sunday afternoon we all went to Sunday School. Among other things this gave our parents a break and they could spend some time alone together. At five o'clock the Muffin man would appear ringing his hand bell and shouting Muffins, Muffins. Sunday tea was always in the front room. We would have shrimps, winkles and celery. In the winter Dad would have a red herring which he bought at a shop we just called the Jews, opposite the Royal Oak in Columbia Road. It never seemed to close and sold all kinds of Jewish food. Dad would put the herring on a toasting fork and grill it in front of the fire. The fish was very salty and I never knew how anybody could eat it. Our treat on Sunday evening was an ice cream from either Roods or Asinines. Joe Asinine would come around the streets shouting 'Asinine the old firm, penny a lump the more you jump.' Then there was the peanut man. He would roast his nuts in Voss Court behind the Earl Grey Pub and sell them from his barrow. Percy Dalton the peanut millionaire started this way.

I was about twelve years old when I got myself a job as a butchers boy at Osborne's on the corner of Columbia Road. I had a bicycle with a small wheel in the front on top of which was a big deep basket. Osborne's had another shop in Hackney Wick where they made the sausages and cooked meats.

On my way back from there with a basketful of sausages I was turning into Mare Street when the bicycle

Food for thought (contd)

wheel got caught in the tram lines. It had been raining and over I went. The sausages were thrown all over the road getting covered in mud and dirt. A man came over to help me and we collected all the sausages and took them across the road where there was a horse trough. They were then given a good wash and put back in the basket.

It was still raining when I got back to Columbia Road and I told nobody what had happened. There were no complaints from the customers but I shall never forget the incident. As they say what the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve over.

George Renshaw

The Museum of London is looking for help from Londoners in an exciting new project to be called "The Peopling of London."

The project will record and tell the fascinating stories of the people who have settled in the London area. There will be a major exhibition and publication in 1993 and a series of related educational activities and events.

The project aims to show that from long before the Romans, people from many different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds have contributed towards making London the culturally rich and exciting place it is today.

Very few Londoners can go back far into their family's history without discovering an ancestor from Poland, Africa, Russia, the Caribbean, India or Ireland. Yet this kind of history has hardly ever been written down.

The "Peopling of London" project team would like to hear from readers about their own or their family's experiences since moving to London from other countries. You may have photographs, objects and stories you would like to share. The team is particularly keen to record everyday life as well as special occasions.

Contact Nick Merriman, Rozina Visram or Nichola Johnson at the Museum of London, London Wall, London EC2Y

The Evil Smells of Old Ford

The weather forecasters now give us air quality measurements and make us appreciate how important fresh air is to better health. Government controls have only come about through public criticism, an example of which is the letter of 15th September 1884, from William B. Bryan of Old Ford, reproduced below, from the Hackney and Kingsland Gazette of 19th September 1884:

For years past, especially during the last six months, the inhabitants of Old Ford and Bow have been subjected to the most intolerable nuisances. People of all classes in the neighbourhood have been to ask me to co-operate with them in calling attention to the fearful stench which fill our houses day and night and especially when the wind is in the east.

The nuisances arise from chemical and soap works, bone manure works, huge piggeries and places where condemned meat and offal are boiled in open vats, and other manufactories too numerous to detail. Complaints have been made to the Poplar Board of Works and to the West Ham Local Board and also to the perpetuations of the nuisances but the volume of noxious fumes is ever on the increase and the manufactories are constantly being enlarged or multiplied in number. These noxious fumes are turned out in large quantities not only in the daytime but after 10 o'clock pm and on Sunday evening at 10.30 the whole of the houses in Old Ford were filled with a most disgusting stench. This occurs so frequently that it is impossible to get a breath of pure air even in the night time.

There has been an alarming amount of sickness in the neighbourhood and to those who are compelled to live and labour near, the consequences are very serious. My house is in the midst of several acres of open space but the nuisance is so great that I am compelled to send away my family for eight or nine weeks in the warm weather. My poor neighbours cannot do this and must live and die in it. What are we to do? The local authorities do nothing to help us. Can the Local Government Board compel the parish authorities to move in this matter.

Out and About with our Members

A lovely summer day for our coach outing on May 16th! First, we stopped at the Priest House in West Hoathly. The guided tour revealed that this 15th century timber framed house was probably built after the appointment of a new Prior in 1414 for the estate of the Cluniac Priory of St. Pancras. After the dissolution of the monasteries, first Thomas Cromwell and then Anne of Cleves received the rents. John Browne husbandman leased the land in 1524 and his son Thomas bought the freehold with profits from the iron industry in 1560. By the end of the century they were forced to sell the land and it was divided into two cottages. After many years of neglect in 1905 it was bought by John Godwin King who restored it and opened it to the public. It was presented to the Sussex Archaeological Society in 1935. The contents of the house include many local iron household items, copy of the famous painting by Helen Allingham of the house, which sells today as birthday cards. Upstairs on the wall is a silk handkerchief which was embroidered with the names of 51 suffragettes who were in prison in March 1912. This wonderful piece of history was saved from the vicarage bonfire after a Jumble Sale. How it came to be in the area no one knows.

Unfortunately, our coach broke down on the way to Standen House, which resulted in a long trek for the members. However, this did not spoil our enjoyment of this lovely house, which was built by Philip Webb, a friend of William Morris, in 1894. It still has all its own original wallpaper, tiles and textiles by William Morris in perfect condition. We were walking on the carpet designed for the front hall without a mark or tear in this beautiful carpet after all the thousands of visitors who have visited the house. All the light fittings and furniture designed by Philip Webb are still in their original positions. Everyone enjoyed the gardens with hill side views of the Medway valley and we all came away wishing we could live in this perfect house.

There will not be a coach outing this autumn for the Society, as we had a deficit of £62.00 on the hiring of the coach for the summer outing. This was in spite of all Ann Sansom's hard work in organising the event, publicising it at every meeting, advertising it in the newsletter, and even phoning members etc. Ann will be organising a Spring Coach Tour in 1993 and we ask all members to support it, to make it a success. It is a great day out and a wonderful opportunity to meet other members and exchange views and make friendships.

The East End Festival

Thirty people met at the Brunswick Arms on June 22nd, for a delicious fish supper, then a guided walk led by Rosemary Taylor, finishing up in The Gun for a talk on Toshers and a well earned drink in this riverside pub. Our thanks must also be extended to the publicans for a great night out.

Thursday June 24th proved a hectic day for Rosemary who gave two lectures at Oxford House on the East End Women's role in the suffragette movement. Well over a hundred sixth formers and local people attended these two workshops.

The same evening saw Rosemary leading a walk through Victoria Park showing over twenty people some delightful corners in the back waters of Bow where Sylvia Pankhurst and her friends worked and lived, and spoke on street corners and in the Park during the Votes for Women campaign.

(Note from Rosemary: Thanks to Doreen, our attentive group were given a full brief on Victoria Park, tracing its history right down to the present day, with the reconstruction of the park by Bow Neighbourhood. For more information please see the Programme for 1993, we have an evening devoted to Victoria Park, as well as a guided tour)

Saturday June 27th saw Ann Sansom leading a walk around Tower Hill on what must have been the hottest day of the year. We have received no report on the walk, but we're sure it must have been an enjoyable afternoon.

On Sunday 28th all the committee were in Millwall Park for the final day of the Festival. It really lived up to its title Lark in the Park. It was a terrific fun day attended by thousands. The music was wonderful with Gerry and the Pacemakers and Suzi Quatro. Lots of interest was shown in our East London History stall and we also had an exhibition of 18 enlarged postcards tracing the history of Victoria Park, with a commentary researched by Doreen. The committee thoroughly enjoyed all the hard work organising the stall, which gave us the opportunity of meeting so many of our own members, and friends from other societies plus the added bonus of meeting people who genuinely love local history.

Doreen Kendall

The Chingfliers

The R N Air Station Chingford was a grass airfield lying about 10 miles north of London and was inspired by Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty. It opened on April 15th 1915. It was originally projected as a refuelling base for seaplanes defending the East Anglian coast against German planes and airships, for it was sited in close proximity to the large King George V reservoir which opened in 1913. However in practice it was used for the training of pilots. A power boat was moored on the edge of the reservoir to enable the rescue of pilots crashing in the water. Chingford had the distinction of being formed one year before Cranwell. About 1,000 pilots passed through this 'drome during its 4 year existence.

Listed as a second class ground of 150 acres (1500 x 400 yards) it was of clay soil and in addition was on the River Lea marshes. Being sited on enclosed surroundings it was difficult to approach except from the south. It was bordered by the River Lea and its tributary aptly named Flanders Weir. The large reservoir was a good landmark for the pilots.

The writer is of the opinion that it was also available to defend the nearby Enfield Small Arms Factory and Gunpowder Works at Waltham Abbey. Chingford came under No. 40 wing and was used by No. 44 Squadron on Home Defence. No. 56 Wing Headquarters (RAF) was at 'Whitehall' Chingford and was also a photographic section.

With the primitive aircraft being flown, accidents and fatalities were high. The Spring of 1917 was known as 'Bloody April' - seven chingfliers lost their lives between

April and September flying Sopwith Triplanes and a further eight whilst flying the latest Sopwith Camels.

One of the most notable personalities who passed through Chingford was Flight Lieutenant Ivor Novello who crashed badly injuring his back and spent a year at Sewardstone Lodge - then a hospital. Ivor entertained his comrades and the locals at the 'Kings Head', playing the piano and singing his composition 'Keep the Home Fires Burning'. He also wrote for the camp magazine 'The Chingflier'.

The Canadian Roy Brown who was credited with the 'scalp' of the Red Baron Von Richthofen, Ben Travers the playwright and novelist, and Sir Egbert Cadbury of the chocolate family were all based at Chingford, as was Sidney Cotton inventor of the 'Sidcot' Flying Suit, who after a few hours in a Fairman Longhorn was ready for his first solo flight, and Norman Blackburn a member of the Blackburn Aircraft family, who crashed but was relatively unharmed.

No. 138 Squadron was formed on September 30th 1918 with Bristol F2B's and was disbanded without firing a shot on February 1st 1919 when the Station was closed.

After World War I the 'drome was used by 'Flying Circuses' giving hops to the public for 5/- per head. One of the most famous being that of Sir Alan Cobham. The site then reverted to that of a dairy farm named Low Hall better known locally by the name of the occupant 'Soper's'. Then in 1951 the area was flooded and became another large reservoir - the William Girling and all that history now lies beneath 3493 million gallons of water.

George Rider

Co-operation and Help

Norman Jacobs, Chairman, Clacton & District Local History Society, has sent us a special plea:

Most Local History Societies work mainly in isolation from one another. Perhaps they will come together at special events e.g. History Fairs, or they may be in "second hand" contact through reading the same magazine e.g. Local History Magazine, or by affiliating to the same umbrella organisation, such as the British Association for Local History. But it is very rare for societies to come into direct contact with each other.

Which is a shame really, because there is probably a lot of common ground and societies could help each other in a number of ways. For example, as well as being a member of the East London History Society, I am also Chairman of the Clacton and District Local History Society. Many of the Clacton members originally came from East London. In fact, one of our best attended meetings recently was when the speaker was Robert Barltrop speaking on the East End.

I am also quite sure that many members of the East London History Society have spent holidays in clacton, maybe at Butlin's and have a wealth of memories, perhaps even photographs or other ephemera such as programmes, postcards, bus/coach tickets. Well, if anyone reading this thinks they may have anything that might be of interest to the Clacton and District Local History Society I would be very pleased to hear from them.

As a reciprocal arrangement I would be very happy to print any requests for help or information from the East London History Society or any of its individual members in the pages of Clacton Chronicle, the C & DLHS magazine.

Welsh Connection - Richard Jones

David Sullivan, currently doing research into the history of Millwall Football has sent us this intriguing account of one of Millwall's heroes:

A recently published book on Welsh football in which Richard Jones has an entry, says of him 'Welsh by birth and Cockney by upbringing.'

I have been collecting career details on Millwall footballers since 1976, of which Jones is one of many. To confirm his beginnings, I thought, should be fairly straightforward considering he was an international and with a name like Richard Jones no one would argue with his land of birth. But for a number of years I'd had no success in tracing his or his two footballing brothers' actual birthplace. (His brothers Eddie (Taff) and Willie Jones both assisted Millwall from the late 1880's until the mid 1890's)

About a year ago I decided to try and correct the situation. I contacted friends and acquaintances who do similar research on their own clubs and/or players in general. After some months and many phone calls all I had to show were two pieces of conflicting information. One was a birth in London on 5 February 1879 (which would have ruled him out of selection for Wales) and a snippet from an old 'Athletic News' annual which stated our Dick hailed from Montgomeryshire, a Welsh county. This now had to be checked for authenticity.

Hopefully, confirmation would arrive in the shape of the 1891 census, which was due to be released in January this year for public inspection. When I did consult the census which covered the Isle of Dogs area of Poplar, where the Jones family now lived, I discovered that Dick and his kin were in residence at 106 Glengall Road. His father, Daniel a tailor by trade, was from a place called Llanbrynmair in Montgomery, his mother a North Walian from Festiniog. The family included another three sons, Eddie, Willie and Danny junior, plus three sisters, a normal household for the times I would think. Dick's age was given as ten at the time, which I assumed would give him entry into this world around 1880. One other point that stood out for me was that all seven children were down as being born in the father's home town.

The next step in my quest for hard facts was to try and locate any living relatives. The task seemed very daunting, I mean Jones, not the rarest of names is it? Asking around I made contact with a chap who informed me that he knew a son of Dick Jones who had been living within a half mile of The Den for the last fifty years. My approach to Dick Jones junior over the telephone was well received by him.

Although he had no mementoes of his father's footballing days, his father's Welsh cap being in the possession of another son who lived locally, I did manage to obtain from him his father's actual date of passing.

I now felt that I was very close to acquiring all the personal details that I required for my project. All that was needed was a positive date of birth, and this duly arrived in May when I finally met up with a surviving daughter who lives in Oxford, and she gracefully loaned to me the relevant certificates relating to her parents.

I eagerly scanned Dick's birth certificate, date of birth gave 5 February 1880 (exactly one year from what I had been given). Then the place of birth - a small village near BURTON-ON-TRENT England. I was dumbstruck. It then dawned on me why no information on Dick's origin had ever been published. Probably because he did not want it to be made public as he would never have been selected to play for Wales. The parental rule was not around in 1906 and Dick I am sure realised that he was not going to be chosen for England whilst playing for Millwall, although he had played in various Welsh trial games. He kept his head down and in all possibility the Football Association of Wales did not ask too many questions either, so everyone seemed perfectly happy, and as far as I know there were no disputes recorded about his participation in the two Internationals he played.

If we can forgive this oversight, and how many of us wouldn't have done the same, when offered the chance to play international football, and concentrate on Dick's career his record shows he was a splendid club man, giving Millwall well over thirty years loyal service. He joined the club from Millwall St Johns, later the club's reserve side, in 1899, along with the likes of Johnny Riley, David Maher, Sammy Frost and Fred Bevan. The latter pair made the trek to Manchester City with Dick in 1901, this sorry state arising from the threatened demise of Millwall due to ground problems. When he retired from playing he joined the training staff along with his great friend 'Tiny' Joyce, and remained there until July 1935.

Richard Jones was capped twice by Wales in 1906 against Scotland and Ireland but missed the England fixture through injury. He played in no less than 328 games, and scored 85 goals in all matches. He gained winners medals in the Southern Professional Charity Cup, Western and London Leagues.

After leaving football Dick, who resided in Edrich Street, New Cross, found employment at the Woolwich Arsenal and remained there until his death on 8 November 1943, from cancer in Lambeth Hospital.

(If anyone has information on former Millwall players or their relatives please contact David Sullivan on 071 638 9044 (day) or 081 981 0567 (eve)

Books Etc.

Annie Besant. A Biography by Anne Taylor. Price £25.00. Published by Oxford Press.

Reviewed in Record No. 15 by Rosemary Taylor.

Members may like to note the funeral arrangements to BOW (Tower Hamlets) Cemetery made by Annie Besant for Alfred Linnell (page 119), who died on 18th December 1887 of injuries received when a police horse ran him down in Northumberland Avenue after a demonstration in Trafalgar Square on 20th November, the week after what was to become known as Bloody Sunday, 17th November 1887.

The funeral procession's music, The Dead March from Saul, was played, with fifty wand bearers, veterans of the Chartist agitation preceding the coffin. Annie paced slowly on its left side with WT Stead, Herbert Burrows and the MP Robert Cunninghame Graham. On the right walked William Morris, Robert Darling of the Irish Land League, Frank Scott of the Salvation Army and James Seddon, Secretary of the LLL. Following in a coach were Linnell's family with Dr Richard Pankhurst and his wife Emmeline, and John Burns.

According to Annie the steps of St Paul's were black with spectators. "The chimney pot hats stayed on, but all others came off" as the coffin with the words "Killed in Trafalgar Square" went by. She thought close on ten thousand people followed to the service at Bow Cemetery, where the service was read by Stewart Headlam and the address was read in gentle tone by William Morris, who said, "Our friend who lies there has had a hard life, and met with a hard death, and if society had been differently constituted his life may have been a delightful, a beautiful and a happy one. It is our business to begin to organise for the purpose of seeing that such things shall not happen, to try and make this earth a beautiful and a happy place. We are engaged in a most holy war, trying to prevent our rulers making this great town of London nothing more than a prison. I cannot help thinking that the immense procession in which we have walked this day will have the effect of teaching a great lesson."

This event brought together so many names that are famous and associated with our East End history, I thought our members' attention would like to be drawn to it.

Doreen Kendall

"Matched and Despatched"

Marriage and Obituary Notices - 1848 (Lynn Advertiser, Norfolk). Volume 5. Published June 1992. Janice Simons.

Price (including p&p) £5.00. Enq. 17 Kingcup, Pandora Meadows, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 3HF

Congratulations to Janice for having produced yet another volume in her highly successful series. She has surely hit upon a winning formula, for her previous efforts have all but sold out, only a few copies of 1881 and 1900 are still available.

This volume is a collection of all marriage and death notices from the Lynn Advertiser and West Norfolk Herald and contains events in many locations outside the county. The book is indexed by surnames as well as by place names, making it doubly valuable.

Having followed her success story from the very beginnings, I thought I would glance through this volume before writing a few words bringing it to the notice of members who are currently researching family history or those engaged in One Name research. Two hours later I was still engrossed in its contents. This was compulsive reading with a vengeance. But what has this got to do with East London, I hear you cry? In defence, I can only quote two extracts from amongst many East End entries I picked out (lack of space forces me to discard several other fascinating snippets, including the one on the 24 stone lady who required 19 stout men to carry her to the grave!).

Marriage: Saturday April 15, 1848. Mr Charles Fenton, printer, High Street, Colchester to Mary, eldest daughter of Mr Thomas Sharpe of High-street, White-chapel.

Obituary: Same day, Mary, wife of Mr Thomas Sharpe of 136 High-street, Whitechapel. The deceased had long suffered from a disease of the heart and died amidst the happy excitement consequent upon her daughter's marriage with Mr C Fenton of Colchester which had been celebrated on the morning of that day.

And how's this for coincidence? Having just typed in the letter from Sandra Cooper (see page 2) detailing her research into the Fry, Gurney, Barclay families, I came upon this:

Marriage: Saturday April 22, 1848. At Plaistow, Essex, Henry Ford, son of Ford Barclay Esq of Walthamstow, Essex, to Richenda Louisa, youngest daughter of Samuel Gurney Esq., of Ham House, Upton, in the same County.

Rosemary Taylor

PROGRAMME NEWS

1992

Thursday 24 September

Pull No More Bines: Memories of Hop picking
Gilda O'Neill

Thursday 22 October

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Start Time - 7.15 pm

Followed by:

London's Early Docks 1800 - 1855
Bob Aspinall

Thursday 19 November

Healthcare of Jewish Mothers and their Infants in East
London 1870 - 1939
Lara Marks

Thursday 3 December

The River Lea
Margaret Ashby

1993

Thursday 21 January

Poplar and the Councillors who went to Jail in 1921
Gillian Rose

February - Visit to the Coopers Company

Date to be advised

Thursday 11 March

Paper and Printing in East London
Alfred French

Thursday 22 April

Rebuilding of Docklands and the Remaking of its 'History'
Darrel Crilley

Thursday 6 May

Life and Times of Victoria Park in Pictures

Saturday 15 May

Victoria Park - The Walk
Doreen Kendall and Rosemary Taylor
Meet at 2.30 pm near the Cafe at the Grove Road/Old Ford
Road entrance.

June - Visit to The Heritage Centre Spitalfields
Details to be confirmed.

Note:

**ALL LECTURES WILL NOW BE HELD IN THE
HALL OF THE LATIMER CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH, ERNEST STREET, STEPNEY.**

**All lectures begin at 7.30 pm with the exception of
Thursday 22 October which is at 7.45 pm.**

Due to changes in administration procedures at the Queen Mary and Westfield College it is no longer possible for the East London History Society to make use of the college premises for meetings and lectures. Mr Alfred French recalls that in Professor Bindoff's day the college was very anxious to have some connection with the local population and the ELHS provided that opportunity. So many universities are accused of isolating themselves from the "man in the street". But it seems now that the climate has changed.

Despite the sterling efforts of our Programme Secretary David Behr, the college are no longer willing to provide their facilities free of charge or even at a nominal fee. A new system of charges for room rental effectively prohibits the ELHS from using the lecture hall. We are deeply grateful to David for all his efforts on behalf of the society and for having found an ideal alternative in Ernest Street, which is less than five minutes walk from the college.

The facilities at the Latimer Church are excellent. The hall is on the ground floor and access is through the car park. It has disabled access and toilet facilities.

We also have the use of the canteen, so all our members can now be assured of a welcome cup of tea on arrival. Now for the good news. It's not going to cost us an arm and a leg! However, there will be a collection at the door to cover the cost of the hall and use of facilities.

HOW TO GET THERE: From Mile End Underground Station walk towards QM & W college and take a left turn into Harford Street, then right into Ernest Street.

From Stepney Green Underground Station come out of the station, cross over Mile End Road, turn into White Horse Lane then left into Ernest Street.

The church is approximately half way down Ernest Street and is prominently sign-posted.

We have had some excellent audiences at our recent lectures and I do hope all our members will continue to support us by coming along to our 1992/93 series.

Reminiscences of a Poplar Childhood and the Poplar Hospital

I was born in Great Eastern Buildings, Winchester Street (now renamed Dunbar Street) Bethnal Green. My mother, Mrs Arnold Hall, nee Murphy, died six weeks after I was born. I was taken by my father to Poplar where I was handed into the care of a couple in their 40's with a grown up son and daughter. I have not yet discovered if this was arranged through an adoption society, the local church or through friends and relatives.

My father returned to France to rejoin his regiment. He was later killed during the Battle of the Somme.

My childhood was fairly happy, lots of toys and things that other children were denied. I was "shown off" as our new little daughter. At times the neighbours' children would call out "She's not your real Mum." We lived at 74 Northumberland Street, Poplar, once the home of Will Crooks. Because my foster brother and sister were so much older than me I spent most of my time with my best friend who lived over a Barber's shop in Upper North Street, Poplar. She was one of a family of ten, a poor but very happy family. I remember sitting at the table in their house and in came this huge bread pudding all hot and glistening with sugar. On other days we went to the Far Famed Cake company, where we could buy bags of broken biscuits at a cheap price. On sunny days we would play in the street with a great skipping rope which stretched across the street, one end tied to the lamp post.

On May Day each year we went to the Pavilion Cinema in the East India Dock Road where we were entertained with a free film show. We were given an apple and orange, and a marzipan fish. What a day that was, as the Cowboys and Indians galloped across the screen you could not hear yourself speak with the cheers and boos as the film grew ever more exciting.

When voting day came, we marched up and down the streets with all the children chanting, "Vote, vote for Major Atlee." I sat behind him many times on the tram.

Blackwall Pier, what happy times we had there! It could be reached by walking, so we had no bus fares to pay. We sat there with our bottles of home made lemonade and bread and jam and pretended we were at the seaside. Then came winter, and at Christmas time Chrisp Street Market would be all lit up with bright lights and holly.

When I was thirteen my foster mother told me we were going to see some gentlemen at Aldgate. This I learned later was the Toynbee Hall Juvenile Court. This was a very unsettling experience for me. I stood before the committee who asked many questions such as, was I happy

at school, did I love my parents etc. Not once was it explained to me what was going on, and why I was being asked these questions. All this left me with a feeling of resentment which I still feel today.

At this time I was attending the Farrance Street School, where I stayed until I was sixteen, which was most unusual for those days. From there to a job in the bookbinding department of a printers in Clerkenwell. I was assured of a job in this firm as my foster brother was a partner in the firm.

I was twenty then my foster mother died. I was with her at the end. She told me nothing about my adoption or the circumstances behind it.

It was now 1939 and I was still in Poplar. I had always wanted to take up nursing, so I made the move and joined the 68th Essex Red Cross and went on courses and training. Every spare hour I had saw me at our local hospital whose official title was the Poplar Hospital for Accidents. I loved every minute of it, cleaned every cupboard and every piece of brass in sight, polishing the couches, entering the patients names in the admission book, those who could or could not afford to pay. All then took their turn to be treated.

One evening I was called to the Matron's office and asked if I would work in the accident department and I accepted. As a probationary nurse, my Tutor was a Sister Smith whose teaching and discipline have always remained with me.

Saturday night was always the busiest night of the week with much blood in evidence: a quarrel between two Chinese families from Chinatown, fights between local gangs, the occasional knife wounds. We had two very tough male dressers, dressed in white coats, who were called on to keep order in the accident department. Saturday night was also rum night, and the special room kept for the recovery appliances would smell strongly of rum. A docker or a crew member would fall into the docks and the stomach pump would be in use again. Later on, I was transferred to the wards.

In 1940 I was married at St Matthias Church in Poplar Recreation Ground. About this time we started to take in many casualties from the bomb damaged streets of Poplar and Millwall. It was during this period that the hospital itself was bombed. It was a direct hit and cut the wards in two. It was the worst possible time for it to happen as all the beds in the wards were occupied. The corridors were lined with casualties on stretchers await-

Reminiscences of Poplar contd..

ing treatment. Among those killed was a nursing sister who was a Quaker, all the firewatchers on the roof, and three other staff. I was phoned at 2 am and told to report for duty. I managed to get as far as Aldgate. From there I got a lift on a fire engine to the hospital along a road lined with burning buildings and falling debris.

I met many interesting people who worked at the hospital. Sir Stafford Cripps' sister, Lady Mary Cambridge the Queen's cousin, not forgetting the Quakers who were against all forms of war yet worked at the hospital all through the worst of the air raids.

One day an American ship came into the East India Dock. One of the officers collected tobacco and cigarettes for the male patients, and bananas for the children's ward, most of the children had never seen a banana before. The Canadians also gave us much aid through the Canadian Red Cross.

A Canadian Sister at Poplar Hospital arranged for a parcel to be given to me when I left in 1944 to have my baby. Among the baby clothes was a cot coverlet and pillow case cover. This was made up into squares each embroidered with an animal and the child's name who had done the work. I kept this until about six months ago, still in good condition. I wrote to the Red Cross in London, who sent my letter to Ontario. I asked if they would like to have it for their museum. They were delighted to receive it and said that although they had photos of this work they did not have this article.

When I returned to nursing I was nominated by the Matron of Poplar Hospital for a nursing post at Saint George's Hospital Hyde Park Corner, where I worked for two years. I was very rare for a State Enrolled Nurse from a voluntary hospital in the East End of London to be accepted by this highly acclaimed training school, but my knowledge and experience gained at Poplar Hospital was a great help.

Mrs Phyllis Upchurch

Hot off the Press!

The Membership Programmes with all the lectures for 1992/93 which our members have all hopefully received by now has been printed by an old family printing firm ARBER & CO LTD, situated at 459 Roman Road. Mr W Arber is the grandson of the founder of the firm, set up in the last century. The programme was printed on a 1939 Heidleberg Platen and creased on a Golding Treadle Platen circa 1900 and the type 1940-43 founded at Risca Monmouth.

The three storey house in which the shop is situated was built by the builders Pickard, who owned most of the houses and land around Bow, in 1900. It was built as a pair with the adjacent house on ground which was originally the garden of a wooden house that laid back from the road and survived when the other two storey houses were built earlier.

It is a very solid well built house with beams running across the building. The staircase is red mahogany and it shares its chimney breast with the second three storey house next door. In 1901 it was the first house to have the piping laid for electricity in Roman Road, and all the neighbours gathered around to see the lights being switched on. It was D.C. and was still working fifteen years ago.

The shopfittings are original with the glass cases that toys were displayed in, all still intact. Mr Arber has many old type headings of local businesses on show, and is looking forward to the lecture by Mr French on PAPER AND PRINTING IN EAST LONDON, on March 11th, 1993.

The above information was given to Doreen Kendall in conversation with Mr Arber, who we hope will also enjoy the article on Bow by Miss Sharp which will appear in the Record Number 15, due to be

The ELHS Newsletter is edited, typeset and produced by Rosemary Taylor, Chair, ELHS.

Editorial team: Doreen Kendall, Rosemary Taylor, John Harris and David Behr.

We welcome short articles, news snippets and details of research for inclusion in the Newsletter, which is published twice yearly.

Information and enquiries should be sent to Doreen at the address below. We try to reply to all correspondence and do our best to assist members in their research.

Information on subscriptions and membership may be had from John Harris, 15 Three Crowns Road, Colchester, Essex.

All other correspondence to: Doreen Kendall, Secretary, East London History Society, 20 Puteaux House, Cranbrook Estate, London, E2 0RF.
