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# East London History Society Newsletter

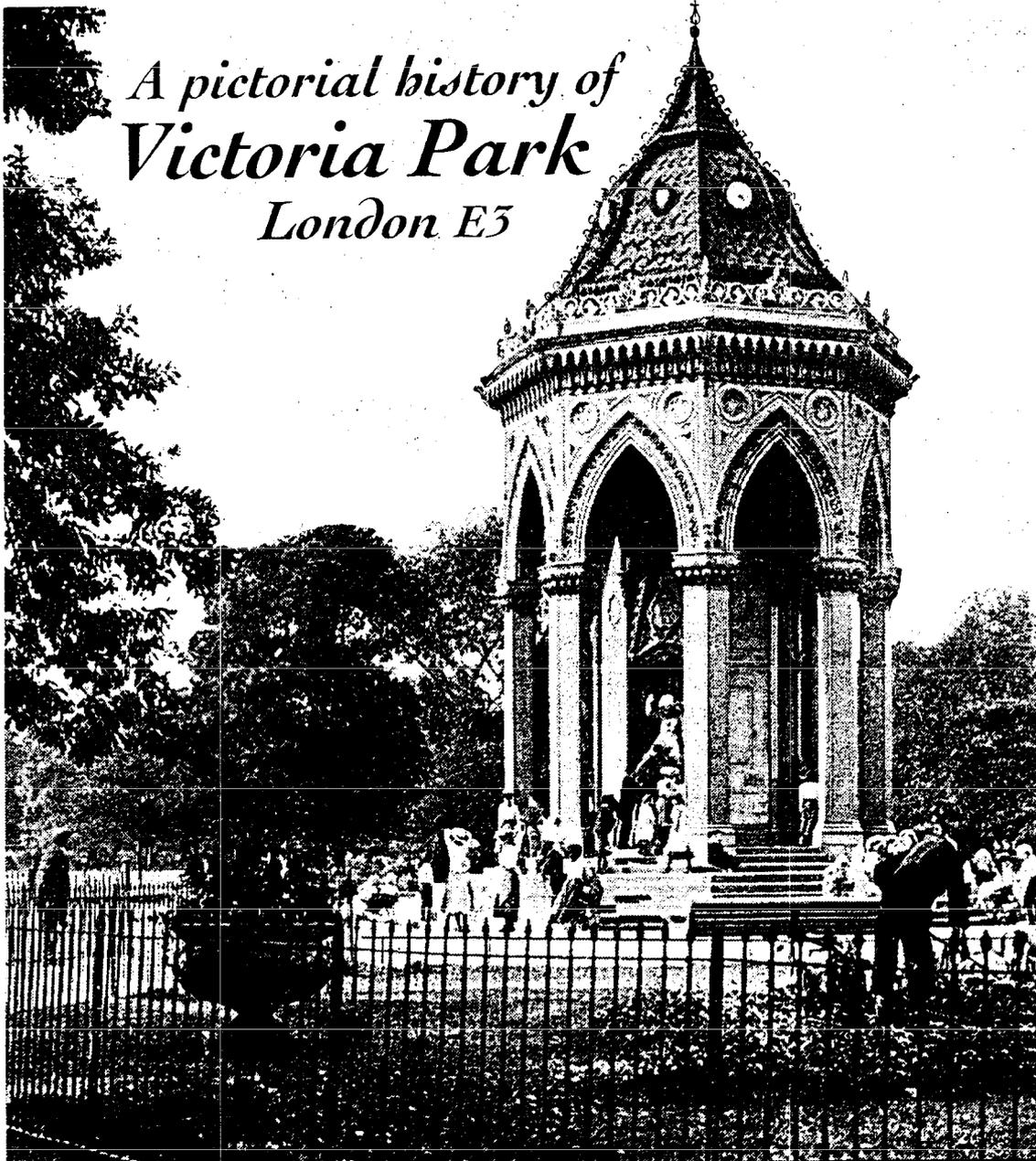
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Volume 1 Issue 12

Spring 1997

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*A pictorial history of  
Victoria Park  
London E5*



*Illustrated with postcards and  
contemporary photographs*

Text and pictures  
collated by  
Philip Mernick  
and researched by  
Doreen Kendall



## THE EAST END 50 YEARS AGO

The winter of 1946/47 started early with the worst weather for fifty years. Blizzards swept across the country and this was followed by large scale power cuts as power stations and gasworks ran out of coal which could not be replaced because the railways were also being affected by the severe weather conditions.

Eastenders sat frozen in houses that had been built for the great-grand parents, all heating came from open fires burning coal, coke, wood, paper and even potato peelings, in fact, anything that would burn. It was thousands of domestic chimney pots discharging smoke, soot and sulphur into the atmosphere which brought on the London fogs, called 'peasoupers' because of the yellow-green colour. The fog turned white net curtains black, stopped trains running, slowed buses and made everyone cough. The streets became empty in the evenings, with visibility nil. If you were out in the streets you could hear people, but you could not see them, and yet there was very little street crime, you were safe provided you did not wander into the road or trip over a kerbstone.

January 1947 brought snowdrifts, 14 feet high outside London. Ice floes drifted along the south coast, the Thames froze in places and in London 14 degrees of frost recorded. Many factories closed down because of power cuts as a result of which 4 millions workers were idle throughout the country. In the East End, most of the well known firms closed, among them were Bassetts clothing factory in Bow Road, where 240 women were put out of work. The Far Famed Cake Company in Poplar shut down, Clarnicos confectionery works at Wick Lane put all their workers off. All these workers were given their National Insurance Cards and told to report to their nearest Labour Exchange (now known as Benefit Centre). However, Bryant and Mays match factory at Bow kept up production because it had its own power plant.

With many men returning from the armed forces having been told by London Transport that their old jobs would be kept open for them, LT decided that all women employees who were doing 'men's' work such as bus conductors and garage hands would have to go. These women who had carried on with their jobs all through the air raid were now told that, as the war was over and the men were back, they could now return to their cooking and housework.

The Labour Government announced an amnesty for all deserters from the armed forces, if they gave themselves up. There were an estimated 20,000 in the country, most of them in the London area. They could not get identity cards, ration books or National Insurance cards and lived mostly by petty crime and casual work. They all knew that they could be stopped in the street at any time by the police, and asked for their identity cards. It was a problem that the government needed to clear up now that the war was over.

March 1947, and the big thaw started, followed by large scale flooding. Hackney Marsh was under water, the water works at Lea Valley which supplied most of the east end of London with fresh water was also flooded. Police cars came round all the streets warning everyone to boil all drinking and cooking water, and 400 fresh water wagons were called out to provide drinking water for eastenders.

In Stepney a man in the street was struck by a large piece of ice which slid off the roof of a house. He died later in London Hospital.

By April 1947 the bad weather eased off, even the sun came out for a while and people began to relax. The queues were now outside the cinemas and the most popular films at the time were 'The Jolson Story' and 'Great Expectations'.

**John Harris**

## A Pictorial History of Victoria Park

The East London History Society is delighted to present its illustrated book on Victoria Park. The illustrations, mainly from Philip Mernick's collection of picture postcards, with additional material from archival sources, many of which have never been seen before, make this book a collector's item. The history of Victoria Park was extensively researched by Doreen Kendall, and the text has been meticulously edited by Philip, Doreen and the Committee of the ELHS. The book has been superbly put together by Expression Printers, to create a book that is sure to become a standard reference book for local history enthusiasts. It is now available, and well worth the wait!

Copies are on sale at all local bookshops, or write directly to Doreen Kendall, 20 Puteaux House, Mace Street, London E2 0RF.

Price is £6.99 plus £ 1.50 p & p.

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Note:

*The East London History Newsletter is published twice yearly, and is free to members of the Society.*

*The Newsletter is typeset and produced by Rosemary Taylor. The editorial team comprises John Harris, Doreen Kendall, David Behr, Philip Mernick and Rosemary Taylor.*

*Letters and articles on East End history and reminiscences are welcomed and we make every effort to publish suitable material.*

*Letters and enquiries may be sent to Doreen Kendall, 20 Puteaux House, Bethnal Green, London E2 0RF, or to Rosemary Taylor, 5 Pusey House, Saracen Street, Poplar, London E14 6HG.*

All enquiries concerning membership should be addressed to the Membership Secretary, John Harris, 15 Three Crowns Road, Colchester, CO4 5AD.

### Stop Press Stop Press Stop Press

Diane Atkinson will be giving her lecture on **Homeworking Women in Spitalfields** on **Thursday 3rd April.**

Many members who came along hoping to hear her lecture in December, which was postponed as Diane was unable to come, will be delighted with this news. Please spread the word!

Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery will be holding their **Annual Open Day** on Bank Holiday Monday 26 May 1997.

There will be plenty of entertainment for all the family, with walks and trails throughout the day. Birds, butterflies, wildflowers and wildlife can all be explored and for researchers of family history, a guided tour of the cemetery graves and an opportunity to seek the advice of our Cemetery Team - Doreen and Diane Kendall, Rosemary Taylor, and Bradley Snooks.

## Letters Page

*In response to Stephen Sadler's article on the Red Church and the Revd Coke, Doreen Kendall sent in the following which she came across:*

**From the Observer, 28th September 1878:**

'The Revd Mr Coke stated at the Bethnal Green Board of Guardians that he only spent 8 shillings a week on himself and "he could assure them he lived well on that."

Mr Coke is renowned for marrying people at the unremunerative fee of 7 1/2d per pair.'

**Mrs B A Pugh, 6 Raith Avenue, Southgate, London N14 7DU:**

With regard to the Summer Edition article on St James the Great and Francis Coke, please find enclosed the Baptism certificate of my mother's sister, Constance Annie Miller, at St James the Great, September 27th, 1891, Edward Francis Coke being the presiding Vicar. Unfortunately, Constance Annie died a little under two years later of scarlet fever. We have no idea where she was buried.

The large Miller family lived all around Bethnal Green in Temple Street, Canrobert Street, Mape Street, Granby Street, Fashion Street, etc. etc., but particularly 283 Bethnal Green Road.

Your newsletter is fascinating reading to genealogists such as myself. I have just applied to John Harris for membership of the Society.

### Editor's Note:

*And may I offer a very warm welcome to you, Mrs Pugh.*

*I was visiting Tottenham Park Cemetery in September, in connection with a proposed guided walk, and while being shown around the cemetery, I happened to notice a gravestone with the name of the Revd Coke and reference to Bethnal Green. By sheer coincidence, I had stumbled across the grave of someone we had*

*only just featured. Having only recently typed it up for the newsletter I was able to give the group I was with a brief history of the life and times of the Revd Coke, and to say they were impressed would be an understatement!*

**Heather Dawson, 12 Timaru Road, Terrey Hills, NSW 2084, Australia:**

My brother-in-law was recently visiting London and made some enquiries for me about my ancestors who lived at 3 Prospect Place in the division of St John's, St George in the East. He sent me your leaflet requesting information about Tower Hamlets Cemetery.

I don't know exactly where the cemetery is, however I imagine that you exchange information with groups researching other cemeteries in the area and I may be able to contribute.

My Gt. gt. grandfather was Samuel Henry Franks, who married Jane Love c 1800. Children included Mary Anne Franks, Eleanor Love Franks, Samuel Henry Franks and George Scott Franks. They were all baptised at Sion Chapel.

Although a printer by trade Samuel Henry I was closely associated with the Eastern Champion Friendly Society and letters written by him during the period 1835-40 refer to funerals that he arranged. Unfortunately, I do not have access to all the correspondence at this stage, however I do have copies of a few of his letters. His son, also, was secretary to the society in the 1860's.

Samuel's grandson - Samuel Franks III - died July 27th "aged 4 years 3 months and 11 days," was to be buried on Sunday August 11th 1839 "I expect it will be Whitechapel Church."

Mr Williams of Bethnal Green died 3rd June 1839 aged 92 buried at Spitalfields Church, "He had three coffins, one was lead. It was a very respectable funeral, a hearse and 2 coaches, feathers, velvet, porters etc."

If this type of information is useful to you I will go through the remaining correspondence for other references. It is rather difficult to read. Naturally, if you already have any information on

Franks, Stanton or the Friendly Society, I would be delighted to hear from you.

**Norman Bishop, 22 Grove Road, Deepcar, Sheffield, S Yorks, S30 5QA:**

My Bishop ancestors moved across the water from Bermondsey to Stepney some time between 1863 and 1871. Robert Bishop was a Master Mariner on the East Coast run, bringing coals from Newcastle until he was nearly 70. In the 1871 Census he was living with his wife at 54 Trinity Almshouse Mile End. There were six other members of the family living there as well, including his son, a Trinity House pilot/master mariner (no mention of them being visitors, though I think they must have been.) These almshouses must have been very good as I noticed several other families had servants. In 1879 he and his wife were living in Portland Street, Stepney, with their daughter.

Could you let me know of any books that would give me an insight into life in Stepney in the latter half of the 19th century as well as information on Trinity House.

Ed. Note:

*Doreen has suggested Record No. 13 which has an article on Trinity House. Jane Cox's book, London's East End, Life and Traditions, is another useful book. Millicent Rose's The East End of London is a book I find invaluable.*

**Joyce Garwood, 42, Aberdeen Gardens, Leigh on Sea, Essex, SS9 3RH:**

I was very interested in the Summer Newsletter with regard to the Central Line.

I noticed that it was mentioned that the tube was sealed until after the war. but did you know that the Plessey Company of Ilford used the 'tunnel' as it was called, to keep production going during the time of the Blitz and flying bombs.

I was a coil winder and our department was on Gants Hill platform, and machines were put through the tunnel, and I think it went as far as Leytonstone. This was to save time going to the

shelters, when we were in the main building in Ley Street.

Can you tell me what happened to the Red Coat School in Stepney Green, it was my first school and going through old photos came across our class with teacher Mrs Black.

*(Ed. Note: The school is opposite St Dunstan's Church and is called the Sir John Cass Foundation and Red Coat School).*

**John Gorman, Galley Wood House, Aimes Green, Waltham Abbey:**

The day following the lecture, I had a heart attack. As a result, I was unable to come to the opening of the Hannah Billig exhibition. I will also miss Rosemary Taylor's lecture on William Morris.

Please convey my regrets to Rosemary, and tell her how much I enjoyed In Letters of Gold.

David Webb sent me a programme of events for the City of London Historical Society, but it looks as though I will not be really fit until the end of the year.

I hope that I will be able to attend some of your events in 1997.

Ed Note:

*It is with great sadness that we learnt of the death of John Gorman, our speaker in September. As he mentions in his letter, he had a heart attack the day after giving his lecture to our Society, and although he appeared to recover, he suffered another fatal heart attack about a month later. Besides being a distinguished printer John was a labour historian and author of "Banner Bright". On 26 September he spoke on the post-war East London Communist Party (he was a member from 1949 to 1956), and his disillusionment with communism. We all enjoyed his entertaining talk, and his untimely death has come as a shock to all those who knew and admired his work. I am sure all our members would like to join me in offering our condolences to John's wife and family.*

**Mr J F Crouch, Park View, 131 Hillcrest Road, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 1EE, wrote in response to Doreen's request for information about St Augustine's Church:**

I have childhood memories of the "Old Church" which was located at the end of the Park. I remember it as being derelict which we presumed as children was the result of bomb damage. I also seem to remember that there was a POW camp located to the end of the church.

I have spoken to one of my friends who also played in the 'shell' of the church and we can remember a large statue of the Madonna at the rear of the church.

Somehow we used to manage to climb into the belfry via an old iron ladder. Not much information but perhaps it will assist you in your research. Incidentally I used to live on the island or Monier Road estate as it was then, after moving from Libra Road (by the 'Roman').

**Mrs Yates, 128 Clare House, Montheith Estate E3 5PZ, also has memories of St Augustine's:**

The church was like a little country church, seating fifty people. It has rough, not regular brickwork. The tower looked like a castle with pointed arrow like pointers on each corner. People referred to the church as "Thumbs Up Church" because of this. The church had no bells. The church fell into disrepair and the left hand wall was left standing, although the rafters seemed to have been burnt.

*Ed. Note: Mrs Yates also recalls walking with her parents across the park to church. Her home was in Park Terrace and the deeds went back to the 1700s.*

*Today in Victoria Park by St Augustines Gate a large black stone stands where the altar used to be. At one time this had a plaque on it recalling the history of the church.*

## BOOKSHELF

**The Tower Hamlets Connection By Harold Finch, Price £7.99. Published by Tower Hamlets Library and Stepney Books.**

A biographical dictionary of anyone famous or infamous who has had connections with Tower Hamlets, this book has been a labour of love for Harold Finch. The author is in his eighties, and has spent over thirteen years researching his work. The illustrations add an extra touch to a book which is sure to be taken on board as a standard reference book for local historians and schools alike.

Copies are available at Bancroft Road Library and Eastside Bookshop.

**More Light, More Power, and illustrated history of Shoreditch by David Mander. Published by Sutton Publishing Limited. Price £9.99. (128 pages)**

The title is the motto adopted in 1897 by Shoreditch and refers to the establishment in that year of the Shoreditch Electricity Station and Refuse Destructor, the furnace of the latter being used to raise steam to generate electricity. Shoreditch was also the first in London to build municipal housing and to patent its own water closet.

Shoreditch had a strong theatrical tradition, beginning with Shakespeare's Curtain Theatre, where some of the Bard's finest plays were first performed, but it was also the centre of London's furniture trade and a thriving boot and shoe industry.

**Hackney, Homerton & Dalston by David Mander, published by Sutton Publishing. Price £9.99. (160 pages)**

Continuing the series of Britain in old Photographs, this compilation of archive photographs from Hackney Library is an excellent and informative addition to the bookshelves of local history enthusiasts.

## Notes and News

### Coach Outing to Otley Hall

The outing to Otley Hall in April 1996 was a great success. We had stopped first at Needham Market which had a well described walk around the back of the town. Many of the shops in this area were experiencing difficulties as a result of the new supermarket on the outskirts of the town. Some of the old established shops have been forced to close.

As we pulled into Otley Hall a blackboard welcomed Ann Sansom and the Society, and we felt quite privileged that the Hall had been opened specially for us.

The Hall is a 15th century house and is one of the few Grade I listed houses privately owned by J G Mossesson. It stands in grounds of ten acres. Our guide was one of the five daughters of the owner who had grown up in the Hall and seen all the restorations carried out under the guidance of English Heritage. The gardens were beautiful and the sun shone, making it a perfect day.

Otley Hall was once owned by Bartholomew Gosnold, who captained the Godspeed on its historic voyage from Blackwall to Virginia, where the group of 105 men were to become the first permanent settlers in America. Gosnold pioneered the route to New England in 1602, first charting and naming Cape Cod (first Gosnolds Hope), and Martha's Vineyard, after his daughter. In the following years a major return trip was planned, and in 1607 the Jamestown Colony was founded. Gosnold would have become Governor of the colony but died of malaria three months after his arrival in Virginia. His brother Anthony Gosnold also made the journey, and survived him by three years before being lost at sea. Gosnold's exploits were used by Shakespeare as the basis of his play *The Tempest*.

### Christmas Party at the Ragged School Museum

Once again in December 1996, members of the East London History Society and the Ragged School Museum Trust celebrated Christmas together, with a Quiz followed by refreshments. It was a highly successful evening which everyone seemed to enjoy. The Quiz was both entertaining and proved very popular. The winners who included Doreen Osborne and Philip Mernick, ELHS committee members were rewarded with books from the bookshop.

The mulled wine went down very well, and volunteers had excelled themselves with the food, of which there was far too much, despite the fact that there were over forty guests and volunteers present. The fact that the musician was unwell and unable to come, so we had to rely on a tape recorder, did not lessen our enjoyment.

Our thanks must go to Claudia Bigg, the Museum Curator, who worked hard to ensure the success of the occasion.

#### TO ALL RESEARCHERS:

For those of our members engaged in family research, a reminder that the General Register Office of Births, Deaths, and Marriages at St Catherine's House will transfer to Myddleton Place Finsbury. This large modern building will also house the National Census Records for the UK. The census rooms will be open to the public from 9.30 am Monday 10th March. The Births, Deaths and Marriages will be open to the public after the Easter weekend. From April this building will stay open until 7 pm Tuesday and Thursday and also Saturday 9.30 to 5 pm. The building also has a bookshop and a cafeteria. Your nearest tube station will be the Angel (Northern Line).

**It is with great sadness that we announce the death of the Revd. Reg Sagoe, Minister at the Latimer Congregational Church. Many of our member who have attended lectures in the church hall will remember his unfailing kindness and generosity towards the ELHS. Reg will be sadly missed by all who knew him.**

## Hannah Billig at the Ragged School Museum

The opening of the exhibition on the 6th October, on the life and times of Dr Hannah Billig, the Angel of Cable Street, was a truly memorable occasion..

The exhibition was opened by the Mayor of Tower Hamlets, and we were privileged to have with us, Mrs Rossi Billig, widow of David Billig, Hannah's younger brother, together with her children and grandchildren.

The Ragged School Museum was packed with guests and well-wishers, with several of Dr Hannah's patients eager to share their memories of this great lady.

Councillor Denise Jones was able to announce the great news that the Council have agreed to erect a plaque on the house at 198 Cable Street, where Dr Hannah lived and worked. This is to take place in July 1997, to mark the tenth anniversary of her death. Further news of the exact date and time will be published in the local papers.

The exhibition was on at the Ragged School Museum up to the first week of January, and has now moved to the Whitechapel Library. For those of you who were unable to visit the Ragged School, this is another opportunity to see the exhibition.

We have now had an enquiry from Galway in Ireland, requesting the loan of the exhibition. Dr Brooks has been making enquiries about having the exhibition in the Museum at Caesarae, the little town in Israel, where Dr Hannah spent the last years of her life.

A booklet on the life of Dr Hannah has been published by Rosemary Taylor. Written in a straightforward style with illustrations by Luke Power, it is hoped that it will form an introduction to local history which can be easily read by children, and encourage them to explore the lives of our local heroes and heroines.

## Hannah Billig,

**The Angel of Cable Street** price £2.50 + 50p post and packing is available from Rosemary Taylor, 5 Pusey House, Saracen Street, Poplar, London E14 6HG.

**Every Stone Tells a Story, A short History and History Trail of Tower Hamlets Cemetery**, by Rosemary Taylor, with illustrations by Bernard Canavan. Price £3.50 + 50p p&p. Address as above.

This book continues to sell well, and several London Cemeteries (and one in Bromley, Kent) have taken copies to sell at their Information Centres.

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*Future issues of the Newsletter will carry a feature entitled "What They Were Like to Work In", through which members can share their memories of the workplace, factory or office in time past. What were the conditions like, the wages and the hours of work. We would like to hear from any of our members who worked in Wickhams, Boardmans at Stratford and Clarnicos at Stratford. Were you a cinema usherette, a barmaid, a factory worker. If you have information to share with our members, please send your letters to Rosemary Taylor, 5 Pusey House, Saracen Street, Poplar, London E14 6HG.*

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**The East End Festival Programme for 1997 has kicked off with the launch of their new website on the Internet via:**  
[http://leevalley.co.uk/EastEnd Festival/](http://leevalley.co.uk/EastEndFestival/)

**The East London History Society's contribution can be found on History, with background history on Tower Hamlets and items on Chinese Limehouse, and Working Women 1888 by Rosemary Taylor.**

## FIREWORKS BY THE REGENT'S CANAL

**The following article was amongst some old cuttings and items sent to me by our President Mr. Alfred French.**

On the east bank of the Regent's Canal a short way along the Mile End Road from Queen Mary and Westfield 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 a difference with his step-brother. There he established himself as a farmer and hay and straw merchant. He was also the 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 elder son farmed the land on the west side of the canal but he soon began to take an interest in the new form of transportation. 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 were 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 at about this time and his license 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 and chalets in which visitors took tea. 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 QMC, though the green fields have long since vanished).

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

By the end of the 1850s 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.

## LIMEHOUSE CAUSEWAY

**This article was sent in by Neil Pepper. An extract from the diary of his father, who was born in 1907.**

Arrived with parents back from Germany in 1921. Father was discharged from the army, we had no home to move into so we had to live with my grandmother in No. 71 Park Street, Poplar.

Dad went back to work as horse keeper for G J Anderson in Lower North Street, Poplar, night work. I used to go to the stables and help to shift manure and see the horses to drink. At week-ends several of the horses used to do canal work pulling the barges through Limehouse Cut and Regents Canal. Late at night my father used to take me to an all night coffee stall, called Hole in the Wall. You could get hot cakes and a large tea for 2d. This stall was in East India Dock Road and there was always lots of horses and carts loaded with hay for the hay market at Gardiner's Corner. Opposite was a coffee shop called Bob Hills, open 7 days a week. The carmen could get a cooked breakfast from 4 am until midday. During the night sometimes a local policeman would call in for a cup of tea at the stables.

During that year I became ill with a diseased bone in my leg and my Mother used to push me in a wheel chair to Poplar Hospital. I was taken into hospital and spent 9 months in Donald Currie Ward, named after Union Castle I think. I used to lay out on the balcony and watch the ships loading and discharging in the East India Docks.

During my time in hospital my parents moved into No. 49 Limehouse Causeway. The foundations had collapsed and the house was at a slope, all the furniture had to be levelled up with blocks of wood and if you dropped anything it rolled to the end of the room! The street was very narrow, only one cart or van could get through one way at a time. We lived with Chinese families next door and several

other families lived in the same road. There were Chinese restaurants and gambling dens and puka-poo shops where results were every hour from 10 am to 10 pm. For sixpence or a shilling for each try you would get your money back if you got 5 out of 10, for 6 you got £4 6s., or £9. If you got 10 right you got £180. My Mother got 10 right and got £180 all in her apron. We were well off for a while, then.

There were Chinese shops and fish shops and smoked fish; a coal shed where you could buy 7 lb of coal for 2 1/2d or 14 lb coke for 4 1/2d. There were many dice houses in the Causeway and Pennyfields. In West India Dock Road, there was Charlie Brown's Pub. Its bars were lined with curios from all over the world. The seamen from the West India Dock used it a lot. November 5th was a great night in Chinatown. The Chinese made some great fireworks and Charlie Brown used to do a fireworks display for all the children in the area.

As children we would take a coster barrow or hand cart and wait for the seamen to come, paid off from the ships from the West and we would take their baggage to the different homes in the West India Dock Road - Jacks Palace, Lascars Home and German Seamen's Home. During my time there was once a fight between the Chinese which lasted several days, with mounted police patrolling the streets. Many of the Cantonese lived in Limehouse Causeway and the Shanghai men lived in Pennyfields. In my young days nearly all the Chinamen had their pigtails and several women had their feet bound and always wore their country's dress.

In Limehouse Causeway when any Chinaman died he was taken in a closed in hearse and only men followed with music. But a little time before they would leave, a man I knew used to push a costermongers barrow laid out with fruit, flowers and a whole roast pig, to East London Cemetery, and it was buried with the person who had died, for his journey to the gods.

Bobby Ince who lived opposite us, who was to become my brother-in-law later was a sailing

barge mate. I met him one morning coming out of the West India Dock and he had a monkey on a lead which he bought off a seaman off a ship, for 10s. It was wild and vicious and he wanted to take it home to show our brother-in-law, Jimmy Collins. We got it on a No. 77 tram at West India Dock. We had to take it upstairs. Suddenly it got loose and jumped on the passengers' shoulders and started to bite them, and grab their hats. We got thrown off the tram and walked to Bow with it. When we got there we let it loose and it caused a riot in the house. It flew at the cat, tore the curtains down and smashed everything it got hold of. Everybody was shouting and trying to catch it. We caught it, and it bit my sister-in-law's finger so Bob took it back home to Limehouse, put it in a cage and sold it at Club Row for £1 on the Sunday. When Bob got married he and his wife Jane lived with his wife's granny at Bow Common. He brought another monkey home. It was nice and tame and we used to give it food and peanuts, it was a nice pet.

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### MEMORIES OF HAWRAH HOUSE

**In our Summer 1996 Newsletter, Mr Hellicar asked about Hawrah House Convent. The name has often been spelt 'Howrah', a trap I have also fallen into. Below is an abridged version of an address written by Miss E Youles, on her retirement from Cardinal Griffin School (now Blessed John Roche) in Upper North Street, Poplar.**

I was born in Tottenham on the 9th June 1905, because my father (William Youles) worked for Pickford's in the High Road, and occupied a house over the stables, but he was returned to Poplar depot soon after this.

In 1908 I was taken to Wade Street School, screaming my head off, to meet my first Headmistress, Mother Anna Waring FCJ and my first class teacher Miss Nellie Lynn. I remember this day with crystal clarity, as it were yesterday. My mother went off and left me and I was lifted forcibly onto the back of a large wooden rocking horse, a fearsome steed, with snorting nostrils distended, and painted a

bright scarlet. He had a fiery eye, a hairy mane and a long flowing tail to which I clung, and even now, I am able to feel the texture of the horse hair that I must have dragged out in my frantic efforts to dismount. My memory of Miss Lynn is of a tallish, dignified, slender lady, with a soft musical voice. She wore beautiful lacy blouses surmounted by lace collarettes held up to a place under the ears by pieces of fine whalebone surmounted by tiny pearls. I used to sit and wonder if the pin at the end of the pearl went straight through her neck and fastened on the other side. Mother Anna to me was a lady, who never removed her hat.

In due course I was promoted to the Girls School under the headship of Mother Winefride Rebbitt FCJ and proceeded through the classes to the top one i.e. Standards 5, 6, and 7 in one huge room which must have been able to hold about sixty pupils. Here my teacher was Mother Gertrude Fagan FCJ a great disciplinarian, and a lady of marked dramatic talent. This was the age of learning by heart and under her tutelage, we declaimed with great fervour the speeches from Shakespeare plays and were introduced to the works of Charles Dickens in abridged form.

On August 4th 1914, I remember seeing on the placard in huge black print "BRITAIN DECLARES WAR" and I recall the looting of baker and butcher shops owned by people who were suspected of the slightest affinity with the enemy. When the air raids started I saw families with bundles of bedding going for shelter to Blackwall Tunnel where they would stay for the night. The air raid warning was a knocking on the street door by a warden and I can still hear the knocks along Sussex Street, getting louder and louder as he approached No. 36 where we lived. My mother, sister and grandmother used to go downstairs at the signal and we would be told to get on with our homework. I do not remember being afraid.

In 1916 came the Exam for the Junior County Scholarship and I duly went one Saturday morning, to Ricardo St. School armed with a numbered ticket only. The papers were set in English and Arithmetic. The Composition that

year was: How can you help your country in war-time. My efforts met with the award of a coveted scholarship and I became the proud possessor of a Post Office Savings Bank Book, into which a sum of money would be paid towards my maintenance at a Grammar School.

I proceeded to Hawrah House Convent and I settled in there very well. Mother Alice Barton was the Revd. Mother and we were told to "bow from the waist" when we met her. Our uniform was a navy serge dress and a sailor collar made from white pique. These collars would be stiffened with starch and mine had to remain clean for a whole week. It was sent to the laundry - the Non Pareil in North Street and was done for 2 1/2d. We wore a "cup and saucer hat" or mortar board on our head. The tassel had to be arranged at the correct angle. These hats were the target of groups of boys who would flick them off very expertly and we often had to rescue them from the kerb along East India Road.

Each day as we went home, we were required to wear our gloves, because such were the sign of a young lady and one of the nuns would shake hands in the doorway as we left the building and we would say "Good morning Mother" or "Good afternoon Mother" as the case might be. I do not remember having much leisure time. We had lots of homework to do but as a treat on Saturday afternoon, we might be allowed to go to the Gaiety Cinema on the corner of Pekin Street, where for 2d we were shown one complete film and the instalment of a serial e.g. The Exploits of Elaine. The heroine would be left hanging by the hair from a steep cliff or tied to a railway track in the path of an oncoming train. Then it stopped and you had to return the next week to find out if she was rescued. There were no books in my house, so I haunted the Poplar Library in the High Street with my sister, both of us being avid readers. The open access system was not in use in those days. One had to get a catalogue, trace a number of the chosen book down rows and rows of red and blue numbers behind a glass case. Of course, red indicated that the book was out and quite often we had

to start all over again until we succeeded in finding a number in blue meaning that the book was 'in' and therefore available.

Each year we took a public examination, Junior and then Senior Oxford, and in 1921 came the General School Exam upon the results of which exemption from Matriculation could be obtained. I passed these exams and on the last one obtained a distinction in English which pleased me very much. As there was no 6th Form in Hawrah House, two of us who wished to go in for a teaching career were transferred to St Aloysius Convent, Clarendon Square. This involved a journey to King's Cross, which cost 10d a day. In 1925 I emerged a fully qualified teacher and obtained my first post at Wade Street School. My sister joined me in 1927, and we have remained together ever since.

In 1939 when World War II broke out the school was evacuated to Oxford. However, many boys and girls returned to Poplar, so I was recalled and reported for service in the Holy Child School, Grundy Street, where Sister Mary ran morning and evening sessions for various groups of returned evacuees. Several more evacuations took place, to Devon and later to Sheffield.

After the war I returned to Poplar and Wade Street School. Then in 1951, I was offered the post of Deputy Head at Cardinal Griffin's. The Cardinal Griffin's Secondary Modern School was a show piece for the building section of the Festival of Britain. I remember the architect Mr Stokes, being present on the first morning and he presented a half-crown to the first pupil to walk into the new school.

I would like to thank the parents for their loyalty and support and the pupils for their love and appreciation for all we have tried to do for them. A few years ago, a boy who was leaving school at the end of his 5th year, came to say goodbye. I commented that I did not have the pleasure of teaching him in my classes and he answered, "No, but you were always there," a remark I shall always treasure.

*Spring Coach Trip*  
*on*  
*Saturday 26th April 1997*  
*To Brighton*

Our Spring Coach Trip will take place on Saturday 26th April to Brighton.

We will be visiting the Royal Pavilion, George IV's fantastic pleasure dome. The entrance fee is £3.35, but is subject to change.

In the afternoon there will be a guided walk through The Lanes, Brighton's old town. This will be about £1.50, depending on numbers.

Lunch will not be arranged. There are many places to eat, including the Royal Pavilion cafe, or you can bring a picnic. I hope to arrange tea for the party.

**The coach fare will be £6.50 a head. The pick up will be at Mile End opposite the station at 9.30 am.**

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Please send bookings to Ann Sansom, using the form below.

To: Ann Sansom, 18 Hawkdene, London, E4 7PF. Tele: 0181 524 4506.  
Spring coach Trip to Brighton.

I/we would like .....seats for the coach trip @ £6.50 per head.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

TELE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

I/we enclose a cheque/PO for £..... payable to the East London History Society.



**LECTURE PROGRAMME  
1997**

**Thursday 30 January**

Police in Stepney and Whitechapel -  
Terry Brown

**Thursday 20 February**

Bad Smells in Stepney - the chemical  
industry in East London - Mary Mills

**Thursday 13 March**

Rise and Destruction of Mosley's  
British Fascist Party 1932 - 1948 -  
Morris Beckman

**Thursday 3 April**

Homeworking Women of Spitalfields  
1880-1909 - Diane Atkinson

**Thursday 10 April**

Three Mills - Their story and area  
(illustrated) - Brian Strong and Michael  
Burkham

**Thursday 8 May**

Transport in East London - memories  
and research, Members' Open Evening.

All meetings are held in Latimer  
Congregational Church, Ernest Street, Stepney  
E1 at 7.30 pm. Ernest Street is between  
Harford Street and White Horse Lane, off Mile  
End Road, just opposite Queen Mary and  
Westfield College. The nearest stations are  
Stepney Green and Mile End.

**David Behr** welcomes suggestions for future  
topics and speakers. Discuss your ideas with  
him before or after the lectures.

**Annual General Meeting  
of the East London History Society**

The AGM of the East London History  
Society was held on Thursday 17  
October at 7.15 pm.

The Accounts of the Society were read  
out and approved, following which the  
committee was re-elected en-masse.

The Society members were informed of  
the resignation of Colm Kerrigan as  
editor of the East London Record. As  
an interim measure, the work of  
producing the Record has been taken  
over by Philip Mernick and Rosemary  
Taylor. It is hoped that the 1997 issue  
will be published shortly.

The Committee members are as  
follows:

**Rosemary Taylor - Chair**  
**Doreen Kendall - Secretary**  
**Philip Mernick - Treasurer**  
**David Behr - Programme Secretary**  
**Ann Sansom - Coach Outings**  
**John Harris - Membership Secretary**  
**Doreen Osborne**  
**Bradley Snooks**

The committee would welcome any  
members who are considering taking  
an active part in the affairs of the  
Society to attend committee meetings,  
as observers.

