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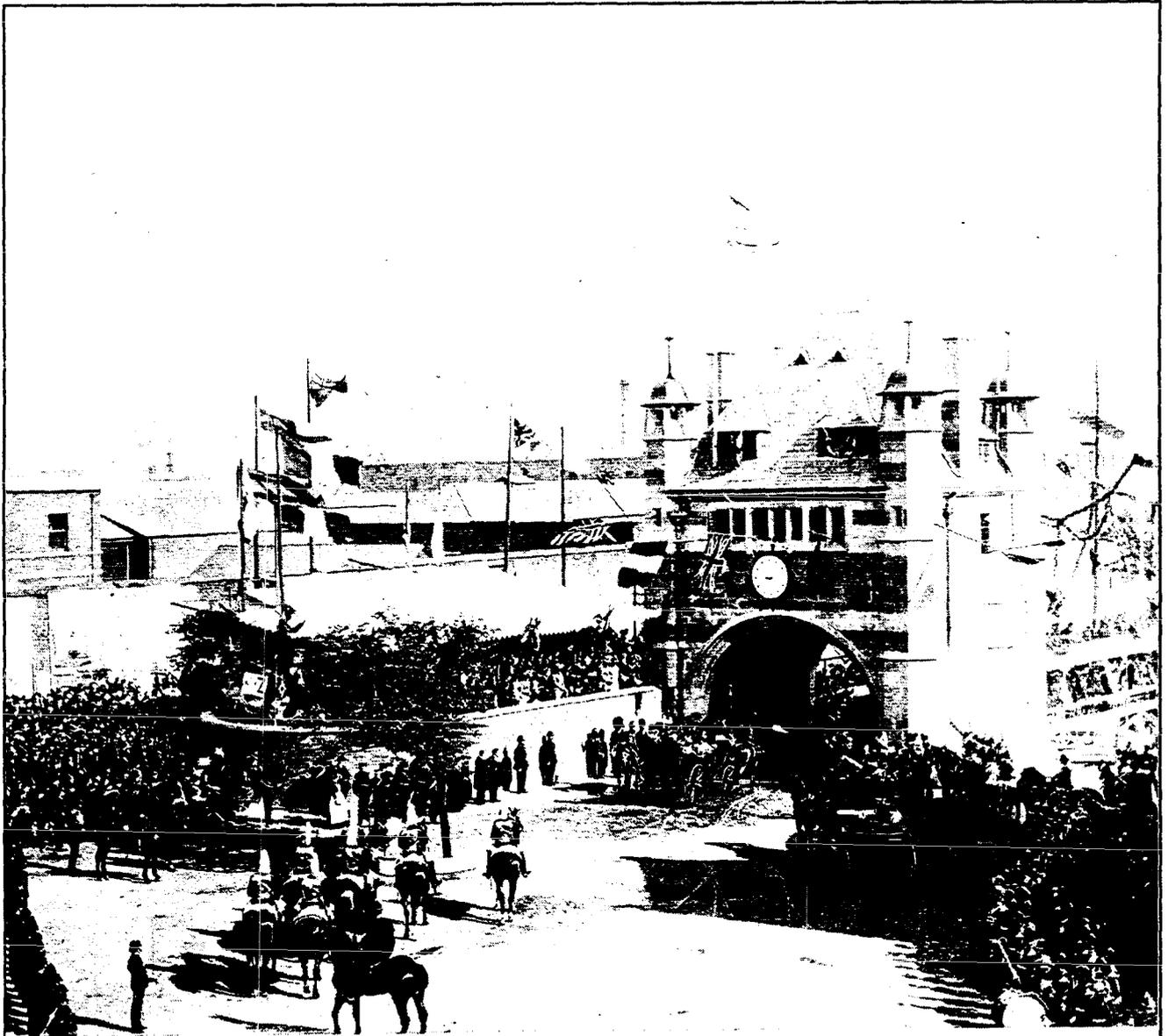
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# East London History Society Newsletter

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Volume 1 Issue 13

Summer 1997



*Opening of Blackwall Tunnel by the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) on May 22nd, 1897.*

## Blackwall Tunnel - 1897 - 1997

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## SUMMER OF '47'

This had to be the best summer since 1940, for most people the first real holiday since the war. Many could not afford to go away, and had to make do with what the government called 'stay at home holidays.'

The only way people could travel on holiday was by railway or motor coach. The railways of Britain were in a rundown condition after six years of war and the coach companies were subject to very strict petrol rationing.

Car owners were not allowed by law to use their cars for pleasure trips. If they had to use a car for business, they were given extra petrol ration coupons, and if they were caught using this petrol to take the family for a day out, they would be liable for a prison sentence, the government were very strict about this.

For the people of the East End the local parks were the focal point. The LCC and the local councils laid on all sorts of entertainment, concerts, open air dancing, roller skating in Victoria Park, Punch and Judy shows for the children.

With temperatures in the eighties, the Lido in Victoria Park was crowded with long queues outside waiting their turn. The children's beach at the Tower of London was also very popular but could only be used at certain times, depending on the tide.

For those who went away, Butlins holiday camps were very popular but for most people a day trip to Brighton or Southend was enough.

If you had £30 to spare, the new television sets were now in the shops. The new models were set in a walnut cabinet 56 ins high with a sloping screen 7 ins x 6 ins and the adverts stated that at least 3 people could 'view' at the same time.

Against this background of people enjoying themselves, there was a dark side. A number of polio cases had been reported in the East End and medical officers had plans to close the swimming pools if necessary. The meat ration had just been cut to one shilling (5p) per person, and the bacon ration was so small at 1 oz that it could only be taken fortnightly.

Looking at the national and local newspapers, which had just been reduced in size because of a shortage of paper, we find plenty of jobs available for ladies of all

age groups, but very few vacancies for men aged between 17 and 20. This was the age group who would be liable for two years military service, and no employer was interested in them.

### John Harris

#### Arabella Susan Lawrence (1871-1947)

In September 1947, Miss Arabella Susan Lawrence, (known to everyone as Susan Lawrence) died at the age of 76. A solicitor's daughter, Susan Lawrence studied mathematics at Newnham College Cambridge, before entering politics.

In 1900 she was elected to the London School Board as a Conservative candidate, and in 1910, represented West Marylebone on the London County Council. In 1911 Susan Lawrence joined the Fabian Society, and in 1912 the Independent Labour Party. The following year she became an organiser for the National Federation for Women Workers, and was elected to the LCC as Labour candidate for South Poplar, a post she held upto 1928.

Although she did not join the East London Federation of the Suffragettes, which led Sylvia Pankhurst to state that Susan Lawrence was not a suffragette, she did in fact support women's suffrage, and attended meetings in Stepney, upholding the right of women to vote.

Susan Lawrence was elected to the Poplar Council as an Alderman, when George Lansbury and the Labour Councillors swept to victory after the First World War. She served Poplar from 1919-1924, and was one of the five women on Poplar Council who went to prison for six weeks in September 1921 during the Poplar Rates Dispute.

In 1923-24, Susan Lawrence served as Member of Parliament for East Ham North, and was re-elected 1926-1931. She held junior posts in the first and second Labour Governments. She had the distinction of being the first woman chairman of the Labour Party in 1930.

'Our Susan' was a familiar and much-loved figure in Poplar, fondly remembered by many old-timers, but the Borough failed to honour her during her lifetime and other than having a school named after her, have not acknowledged her contribution to improve the lives of the people of East London.

## Letters and Correspondence

**A Pictorial History of Victoria Park** has been selling extremely well and Doreen Kendall and David Behr have been doing the rounds of bookshops and outlets replenishing their shelves. Doreen has been able to get the book on sale in several unusual places, such as the Bagel Shop on the north side of the Park and the Pottery Workshop in Lauriston Road, both of whom are making brisk sales. The book has been received with great enthusiasm by Society Members. Here are a few of the letters received:

**Beryl Chandler, Romsey, Hants:**

What a beautiful book - well worth waiting for and I shall treasure it. Thank you very much for sending it to me. How hard you worked on the research, and the pictures are really splendid, you must feel so proud - I hope you do! And now I am looking forward to your next book.

**Mrs Elsie Shirley, Springfield, Chelmsford:**

Thank you for the book on Victoria Park and the return of the photographs. It certainly was a lovely surprise to know you were able to use one of them. I look forward to reading the book and I know the photographs and postcards will bring back many fond memories.

**Chris Dixon, Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne:**

Thank you very much for sending me the book about Victoria Park. It is great. I have enjoyed reading it very much, in fact, I keep going back and looking through it again. I'm not surprised that it took you so long to put together, there is so much information in it, but I bet it was really interesting doing it. Anyway, all your hard work paid off. It is an excellent book, definitely well worth it.

I recently sent for Rosemary Taylor's book of old photographs and enjoyed that very much as well. One thing that did upset me when reading both books was discovering how many familiar buildings had disappeared since I left Bethnal Green (1973), such as Bethnal Green Hospital (where I was born) and the Victoria Park Lido (where I used to

spend virtually every day during the summer holidays). You tend to think that places you know well will never change, don't you? I couldn't help thinking how much my Dad would have enjoyed reading both of the books if he was still alive. He was Bethnal Green born and bred and was very interested in the history of the area.

**Mrs M Ward, of Highcliffe, Christchurch who lived in Bethnal Green reminisces on her childhood as she looks through "Stepney, Bethnal Green and Poplar, in old photographs":**

I was one of few girls who were picked to represent Mowlem Street School at the opening of York Hall (page 21). The highlight was receiving a small box of 6 chocolates, with a picture of their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of York, the latter, the Queen Mum, still going strong 68 years on!

I didn't know that the Bethnal Green Hospital had closed. (Pg. 72) My parents had spells in there, and I used to complain about the long walk from the front to the wards at the back.

The Wesleyan Church (Pg. 72) had a school attached, which my brother and I attended, from 1921 - 1927, when it closed as being sub-standard. Only 6 classes for ages 5-14; when I left at 11 I was in Class 1, the top, with those waiting to leave at 14.

The Chest Hospital as it was called (Pg. 73) was always a place of mystery, my mother forbidding me to go anywhere near it for fear of "catching TB". The Fire Station (Pg. 73) was at the corner of Globe Road, and often the fire engine would clatter across the cobbled road on its way to the fire, real or a hoax. We youngsters, if on holiday, would run after it for miles. There were timber yards along the canal-side, down Old Ford Road, which if they went up in flames, was a bonus!

The Museum, (Pg. 74) was my second home in the school holidays, if a wet day. I got to know every exhibit there, when not playing 'tag' around the show-cases on the first floor out of sight of the warder, as he was called.

Bethnal Green Road conjures up the times I walked its length, from Salmon and Ball to Shoreditch High Street when I first started work as a clerk in a furniture manufacturers in Tabernacle Street, just off City Road, the money saved, 1 penny Was probably spent on sweets, then 4 ozs for 2d.

When Approach Road Wesleyan School closed I went to Mowlem Street School and it was from there that we went to Meath Gardens for netball practice, thirty of us in a crocodile. For laundry lessons, we went to Bonner Street School, cookery at St James-the-Less School in Sewardstone Road, and when the latter also closed, we had to go to Lauriston Road School across the Park.

At 14 I went to the East London Continuation School, Bow Road, which had a branch in Turin Street School, Bethnal Green Road for a year, mornings only, to acquire typing and shorthand skills, as well as book-keeping, English and on Friday mornings, and hour's PT in the Men's Institute Gymnasium, where I learnt to do the 'monkey' on the ropes, my mother would have been horrified if she had known. The same applied in the swings in Victoria Park. I was never off the maypole, flying over the other girls. Still have the scars when I occasionally 'came a cropper'.

Bethnal Green had a number of minor celebrities in my young days. Sir Wyndham Deedes who had a nephew William Deedes, a reporter for the Morning Post 1931-1939. Said nephew lodged with his aunt and uncle at Oxford House or was it University House? On corner of Sugar Loaf Walk (Pg. 142) Victoria Park Square, and it is he who became an MP, Editor of the Daily Telegraph, and now Lord Deedes.

A Miss Monckton, sister of Walter Monckton, who also lived in Victoria Park Square and kept a goat. It was she who supplied goat's milk to Gandhi when he stayed at Kingsley Hall, a settlement in Bow, when he came to Britain in the '30s, on a mission (Pg. 134) My mother was always amused when Miss Monckton could be seen kicking a bundle along Sugar Loaf Walk, opposite where we lived. She was on her way to the laundry with her 'bagwash', items for washing stuffed into a hessian bag and securely tied, all of

which went into a machine, and when washed was collected and kicked home to be dried!

I think that will 'do' for this time round.... If your Society would like a member, albeit one at a distance, then I'd like details/forms etc. to complete, please.

In the meantime, thank you very much for sending on the S BG & P book which is very absorbing. I have a relative who introduced me to your Society coming for the week-end, I wonder what we will be talking about in the main?!

*Ed Note: Thank you, Muriel, for your excellent notes, which have given me some very valuable information. Welcome to the Society, I hope you will enjoy the newsletter as well, and find items of interest to you.*



**Celia Lacey, Street, Somerset recalls a recent visit to Tower Hamlets Cemetery:**

This week I paid one of my all too rare visits to East London to visit a cousin in hospital. Normally, I love visiting London but this trip was a disaster (an incident at the hospital, followed by the car breaking down on the way home) but the worst thing was the shock of seeing Tower Hamlets cemetery. I moved to Somerset 20 years ago but before that I used to visit the cemetery regularly with my mother. The first grave we would tend was that of my grandmother who dies in 1964. The cemetery was overgrown then but we could always reach her grave and from there could find the graves of other members of the family, the most important of which was that of my sister who died in 1939. Two of my mother's sisters, a brother in law and my paternal grandmother were buried fairly close by. Although I realised that some graves had been cleared, I foolishly expected to find my grandmother's grave so, as you can imagine, I was upset when we couldn't find it.

The Soanes Centre looked closed down and I have been trying to ring but the number is always engaged. Can you tell me what, if anything, is happening to the cemetery? My sister and I plan to come again, next time armed with gardening

tools and try again but I am concerned that my late sister's grave may have been one of those that were cleared. If there is any organisation that looks after the cemetery, I would be grateful if you could put me in touch.

*Ed. Note: I have promised to do all I can to assist Celia Lacey in rediscovering the whereabouts of her family's graves. As many of you may know, cuts by Tower Hamlets Council resulted in the Soanes Centre being depleted of staff. In Council double-speak, the Centre has not been closed, but as there are no staff on duty, the Centre will not be opened, except by special arrangements. SATRO will be taking over the premises in Sept.*

**Constance Kemp, 37 Downs Avenue, Chislehurst Kent BR7 6HQ has asked for help in her research:**

I had an ancestor who travelled from Norfolk to East London c. 1825. He was a sawyer by trade. I would like to find the route he took, especially his arrival into London. Would you be able to tell me how far north east your Society covers and whereabouts entry into London would have begun around this period of time. I had in mind timber yards as land marks where it is possible he obtained work.

As far as I know there are no records available on sawyers also I am not sure whether apprenticeships were needed for this type of job.

Could you recommend a comprehensive book to read, especially on routes used by travellers from Norfolk to London.

I know my ancestor married and settled in Ratcliffe, Limehouse around 1830. His spouse was born in Shoreditch. Any information you can offer will be appreciated.

*Doreen Kendall suggested 'Furnishing the World 1830-1980' published by friends of Geffrye Museum, and An East End Album, published by Peter Marcan.*

**Martin Lee, 35 Balfour Road, Southport, PR8 6LE has written to us for information on the Cassland Estate:**

Your name has been passed to me by the Hornsey Historical Society, as I am interested in the Cassland Estate in Hackney. As Hackney Archives seem to have nothing on it, I wonder if your society are able to add to my knowledge, or point me in some direction?

My interest is my Great Grandfather, one John Sparks, his brother George and the rest of the family. The 1891 census for Cassland House, 18 Cassland Road shows that living in the house were: George, aged 70, Estate Agent, surveyor and architect (to the estate), his brother John aged 67, Builder, along with two of his sons, George and Owen. There were three other children living at home, Arthur, Maude and Herbert. The eldest daughter, Mary Edlestone had married George Frederick Lee, who was my grandfather, in 1887, and there was another son Charles who was up at Cambridge University.

John Sparks died in 1896, and left £25,000 in his will. George, senior, died in Finchley in 1900. John seems to have had two other addresses, 14 King Street, Tower Hill and Gowers Walk, Whitechapel, which was the builders yard.

The father of George Frederick Lee was John Lee, who left the army as a Captain in 1865/6 and settled in Hackney. The 1871 census shows him at Stubbings Place, Cassland Road, and in 1881 he was in Groomsbridge Road, position 'Private Secretary'. One wonders why he chose Hackney in 1865 and if the Cassland Road address in 1871 means he was Private Secretary to whoever owned the Cassland Estate at that time. Clearly I have more details which are available, if you would like them, and if you can add to my knowledge I will be very grateful. I can easily get to London if someone would rather talk than write letters.

*Doreen Kendall has come up with: 'Gentlemen of the Building Trade' by Isobel Watson (£4.95) has two entries with relevance to the above enquiry, and also mention Sparks, Estate Surveyor, 1878.*

**Violet Howlett, 2 Durham Avenue, Gidea Park, Romford RM2 6JS writes:**

I spent much of my childhood in the East End. A short spell in Acorn Cottage, situated at the top of Fairfield Road, Bow, where once my father discovered there was a stable with the property he promptly went out and bought a pony and trap. Dear little Kitty took us kids on many a ride over to Victoria Park. Sadly the cottage was demolished to make way for a flyover in later years. Around 1944/45/46 we lived in Selwyn Road, Bow. My mother, Sybil, played the piano in The Duke of York pub which was on the corner of our road and Antill Road, and my father George was the potman. My two brothers, George, four years my senior and Patrick, four years my junior, enjoyed the bags of crisps handed out the door or the occasional treat of a plate of whelks or cockles off the stall outside when we were especially good.

I attended Hawrah House Convent School for girls which during that time was billeted on the second floor of a boys school in (I believe) Farrance Street, off Burdett Road, due to bomb damage to our school.

My friends where I lived at that time were: Betty Vickers, Selwyn Road, Mary Vanner, corner of Selwyn Road and Saxon Road, Ann Tighe, in the buildings behind Bromley by Bow Railway station, Bobby Hayward, St Stephen's Road, Bow, Leslie Bannister and Eddy Stiff, who I used to wallop when he teased my little brother.

In 1946, when I was twelve, my family were rehoused in Romford, Essex, where we remained. If any of the people I have mentioned are still around (they would be in their sixties now) I'd love to hear from them, or anyone else in that area at the time who may remember my family.

**Florence Rist, St Bartholomew's Day Centre, East Ham, reminisces on times past in Ilford:**

The horse trough that was situated on Ilford Hill on the Romford Road was where my father stopped to rest and water the horses on his way to the Whitechapel Hay Market. A team of two or four horses pulled the cart with a ladder like structure behind the driver's seat. These carts would wake residents up at four in the morning as they rumbled along the Romford Road.

At holiday times and the Collier Row Horse Show the horses were dressed with white ribbons in their tails and rosettes on the front harness. My father was one of the Stringer brothers who farmed Stringers Farm, Barley Lane, Romford. Unfortunately, he died after a long illness caused by a stack of hay falling on him when loading the cart in 1914.

My Grandmother lived in one of four cottages on the farm sharing one pump. I was the only girl with ten brothers. We moved to Grantham Road, Manor Park and from here my brother aged 4 and myself aged 5 would walk on our own at weekends to my Grandmother's cottage, picking corn and blowing the husks off for something to eat. My Grandmother kept her home baked cottage loaf in a scrubbed wooden box.

My brother at the age of 8 spent 10 years in Dr Barnardo's and Watts Naval School, Diss, Norfolk. When I went into service I worked for a Newsagent on Little Ilford Hill call Levinia, whose family house was in Leman Street Aldgate. Their daughter was the actress Dora Day. I used to dust her room which was full of beautiful stage dresses.

**Kathleen Darby, 40 Durant Street, London E2 7BP, has an urgent request:**

I was wondering if you could put an item in your next newsletter about a photograph I am looking for. The photograph in question is of a VE Day street party in Durant Street, Bethnal Green. It was lent to me by a neighbour so that I could get a copy made. The photographic lab has lost the photograph and are prepared to pay my neighbour some compensation. She understandably regards this as a last resort, as it was one of the few photos she had of her mother. I believe the photograph was probably taken by a professional photographer and so there is a slight chance that other copies of it may still exist. If any of your members were able to help at all I should be extremely grateful!

**Professor Peter Malpass, UWE Bristol, Frenchay Campus, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol, BS16 1QY has written to us for information on East End Model Dwellings Companies:**

I wonder whether you can help me with a little historical mystery? I am currently researching a book on the history of housing associations, and in the course of trying to piece together a continuous account I have come up against a lack of information about what happened to a number of 19th century 'model dwellings' companies. Academic housing historians tend to write about these companies only in terms of their pre-1914 activities, and the trail then goes cold. I have found a number of references to organisations such as the East End Dwellings Company and the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company still being active between the wars, but it is proving to be very difficult to establish what eventually happened to them or any of the others (apart from the 4% Industrial Dwellings Company, which has transformed itself into the Industrial Dwellings Society).

If you know of anyone who might know the answer, or of any relevant publications I would be most grateful for your help. By the way, I have a copy of the pamphlet, *The Red Cliffs of Stepney*, by Connor and Critchley, but it refers only to the continued existence of the dwellings, without saying what had become of the East End Dwellings Company itself.

**Frank Sainsbury, Secretary, Newham History Society, Newbury Park, Ilford has written informing us of his retirement:**

I have had a spell in hospital, am resigning the secretaryship and will be moving to Southport, Lancs, towards the end of May to live with my sister. Will you please send a specimen copy of the *Pictorial History of Victoria Park* to Mr Mark Galloway, the editor of our newsletter and the new secretary-designate. I will be dealing with the East Ham Football query before I go. It has been nice having contact with you and send very good wishes for the future.

**ELHS wishes Frank a happy retirement!**

## **The County of Middlesex Trust**

The Trust exists, in the main to inform and explain the continual existence of the traditional, historical County. With this in mind the Trust have decided to produce an educational pack for libraries, schools, colleges (and anyone else who may be interested) covering the whole of the County, its history, culture, topography, wildlife, industry and all aspects of its heritage both past and present. The ELHS has been invited to be involved in this project. The Trust would welcome articles on the East End, which as the map shows, falls within the boundaries of the County of Middlesex (All Saints Church in Poplar has it inscribed on the exterior east facing wall).

**For further information on how you can support the Trust and get involved in the project, please contact Terence Frisch at The County of Middlesex Trust, P O Box 602, Harrow, Middlesex, HA2 9TQ.**

### **A L Hellicar**

Deborah Lindsay wrote in recently with the sad news that her father, Arthur Hellicar of Benfleet, Essex, died on the 16th July.

Arthur was a keen local historian, for many years a librarian in Poplar, and was a founder member of the East London History Society, well known to many of our long-established members. Though in poor health for the past few years, he kept up a lively correspondence with the newsletter, and I looked forward to his comments and informed opinion, penned in beautiful handwriting, which remained immaculate to the end. His death is indeed a great loss to the Society, and I feel I have lost a valued friend and correspondent.

**Rosemary Taylor**

## Memories of Upper North Street School

Perhaps the most interesting thing to you will be the fact that I was born in the old Upper North Street School, and until I was 18 years old (when Winston Churchill and Montgomery insisted I helped them finish off the Hun) I lived in the new Upper North Street School. My father, William Hunt, was the Schoolkeeper, a term peculiar I think to the LCC - everywhere else the job was known as the Caretaker. My parents came to the old school, in I believe 1924. The school received a direct hit from a Zeppelin in, again I believe 1917. (ED: the planes were German Gothas). I was born in the school in 1925 and recall tales from my mother how the accommodation was upstairs and the work entailed in dragging the pram up and down etc. Anyway, I don't know what date the new school became operational (ED: 1928), but it was one of the wonders of the age and father was justly proud of his position, which he retained until ill-health (gassed and buried by shell burst in the First World War) forced his retirement in 1953, so he was the incumbent for nearly 25 years.

I could find my way round that school blindfolded! I used to have special friends in and play in the playground at weekends etc. When the 1939 War commenced the school was turned into a rest centre for bombed-out families - nothing happened until Sept 7th 1940, a Saturday, when the world collapsed around us with the horrendous daylight raid, the precursor of so many. The school was crammed, on the ground floor, with homeless families, and my parents and I used to work very hard along with the staff of the rest-centre to feed and clean everything and everybody. I recall vividly - though I guess many details have cleared from memory - how we had days without water and gas, and used oil lamps as lighting.

After the day raids abated, 'Jerry' went over to sustained night bombing, and as a family we used to shelter in the boiler house of the school - the Vicar of St. Stephen's and his lady church worker used to come and share it with us, along with three other families from the church - a Mr and

Mrs Major, Mr Trevaskas and family. I recall one night when Swale Street was effectively obliterated - no warning- a parachute mine we supposed - a tremendous explosion and we thought it was our time to go. The whole street disappeared and the detonation lifted the school boilers safety valves and we all got drenched with water - funny things you remember.

So I lived in the new school from 1925 to leaving for the forces in 1944. One curious fact comes to mind - and I emphasise 'fact' - I mentioned about the old school receiving a direct bomb hit, well, the site of the school became the playground for the new school and towards the end of 1944, after I'd left home, a bomb landed in that playground, and my father averred it was just in the same spot as the one that landed on the old school. He was mad about it because it was against where Trinity church churchyard was he'd got a bit of an allotment going there (for the first time in his life he'd got a garden) and it blew his cabbages up!

Chrisp Street has of course always been a market. It was a sight on a Saturday night - clearly I can see the (Naphtha?) lamps swaying in the wind, hissing with a yellowish light - I can even recall some of the costermongers shouts the whole street crowded end to end. Jones, the Butchers, was crowded and we had to elbow our way in. A local scandal I recall was that Mr Jones was not actually married to Mrs Jones! But the meat was good and cheap. Newalls was a furniture shop on the corner of Grundy Street and Chrisp Street, down the bottom end was Coppins, the bacon and egg shop, and just below that the 'bad egg shop' as my Mother used to call it, 'cos they sold cheap eggs which she said came from China! And rabbits, too, hundreds of them hanging up!

The Rev. J V Pixell of St Stephen's Church was a local character, and used to do his parochial visits in his cassock, which was literally green with age. The church was bitterly cold in winter and there was an on-going 'farthing' fund to buy coke. My father was a church-warden, being a bit of a late-comer to religion. I was in the choir. On the day ware broke out, Sunday 3rd September, I was the only one in the choir when the sirens sounded, we didn't know whether to dive for cover or just carry on with the service - Rev Pixell carried on! I had a distant memory that Mother had told me

that he'd left Poplar when the church was bombed, and gone to Radley, near Oxford. The other week we had occasion to go to Oxford, so we detoured around and went to Radley. The morning service was in progress in the village church, but wandering around the churchyard, we found his grave, so he DID go there! In the church, after the service, we saw a picture of him. I also had the idea he had married his lady parish worker, a Miss Lilian Fox, who was also Akela (cub-mistress) 19th South Poplar cubs (we are the boys who make no noise). She was, I believe, crippled with arthritis in her latter years (no wonder, after all the hours she used to sit in St Stephen's in the bitter cold). There was no mention of her death in the churchyard that we could find. It was somehow satisfying to trace Rev. Pixell's grave.

The almshouses on Upper North Street have survived. There was a widish passage way connecting the new school to the playground, where the old school used to be. This ran to the rear of the almshouses. The old ladies who lived there, some of whom I can still picture, used to have lots of cats.

You should have heard the racket at midnight on New Year's Eve, each year, all the docks, then packed with ships, would sound off their sirens, and round about the factories, all then equipped with steam hooters, would add to the din. Lusty's factory (Lloyd Loom, at the bottom end of Upper North Street) was particularly strident, and of course, in the week, you could set your house clock by it, at the various fixed times. When the wind was from the south, you'd get a whiff of mingled 'ship smell' - hot engine room, steam and smoke, wafted over from the West India Docks, masts and funnels visible over the roof tops of Lower North Street.

About the Pier at the end of Tunnel Gardens - I believe it has gone, replaced with a Power Station I believe (the Power Station has since been demolished), I must have spent literally years down there watching the boats. Occasionally one of the Banana boats, painted white and to me huge, would dock in the East India Docks, the entrance to which was right by the pier. And then there was the thrill of seeing the Cunard single funnel Atlantic cargo-liners that did the Surrey

Commercial Docks to Quebec - the names come to mind now, Ausonia, Ascania, Aurania, they always had two Sun tugs at the bows, and sometimes one at the stern, to assist them in their negotiation of the river turns, particularly if it was very windy. 'Sun' was the name of the premier Towing and Salvage Co. All the tugs were 'Sun' something. Black funnel, red broad band with a narrow white band either side of the red one. There was frantic activity on the river. At the pier itself there were always barges alongside, and towing tugs arriving and departing. On the road leading to the pier, after traversing the Tunnel Gardens, a railway line ran across. I clearly remember being lifted up onto the engine one afternoon, with Mother having fits, so she said afterwards, in case my coat got dirty.

We used to see, in the summer, the paddle-steamers Crested and Gold Eagle, Tower Bridge to Southend and Margate. When it was low water they used to turn round at the pier and go stern first for the rest of the way to the Tower, because there was (so I understood) insufficient water/room to turn where they docked. Of course at that time the wharves at Tower Bridge were choked with ships loading and discharging, and with rows of barges alongside - no fancy marinas then. I always yearned to go on the Golden/Crested Eagle, but for some reason we never went.

I can't remember the name of the road that ran at the rear of the school, the one that the school fire gates open out onto, it's still there, so are the gates, although I see they've been moved slightly. This road, leading off East India Dock Road, was used extensively by Hays Wharf Cartage meat wagons. Nothing wonderful about this, except that for most of my life I remember they were steam-hauled. A steam tractor, one man operated and with solid tyres, used to pull the meat container. The depot was at Bow, right at the end of Upper North Street, but where Thomas Road turned off to the left. Latterly, I remember that the wagons started to be pulled by motor engaged tractor. Recently I found a book in our local library with lots of steam traction engine pictures in, but I did not see one of Hays Wharf Cartage.

**Allan Hunt**

**Extract from  
"As Much As I Want You to Know"  
The Memoirs of Douglas Cairns.**

During 1992, Joe Moore arranged for a reunion to be held of former pupils of St Anne's Church of England School. This was held in the Ragged School Museum, Bow, on Monday 30th November. Joe had borrowed the photographs which my mother had kept of various classes of the school and had them copied and he arranged for two of them to appear with an article in the East London Advertiser, on 7th August 1992. The two photographs were of Mr Winkworth, our headmaster, with a class of forty boys, and the School's football team of about the year 1935, the members of the team being about 13 years of age. A photograph of Joe appeared with the article which asked readers if they remembered St Anne's School which had been in Dixon Street and had been destroyed by enemy action during the last war. Following a few phone calls from former pupils, it was decided that a reunion be arranged.

At the reunion we were met by Mr Jim Tellis, a former teacher of the school, now in his eighties. Thirty-two people attended the reunion, which was addressed by Tom Ridge. He referred to the history of St Anne's School. A charity school for boys was founded in Limehouse at the beginning of the 18th century and was followed in 1779 by the St Anne's charity School for girls and boys. The two schools were united in 1807 and became Church of England for National Schools in 1811. By 1816 the boys and girls were in separate newly-built school in Three Colt Street. The Boys' School was acquired by the London and Blackwall Railway Company in 1840 and the boys and girls moved to a new school in Dixon Street in 1841 when the guest of honour at the official opening was Lord Shaftsbury.

The Limehouse Church Institute was built through the initiative of the Rector, the Rev. Francis Gurdon. The foundation stone was laid by HRH Princess Christian of Schleswig Holstein on 7th November 1903 and the Institute was opened by the Bishop of London on 14th May 1904. It was built on the site of the former Girls School. The annual bazaar of the church, meetings of the

Scout Troop, Cub Pack and other organisations were held in the Institute and occasionally plays were presented and dances held in the building. When I was 15 to 17 years of age, I played table-tennis, billiards and snooker there. The building has now been converted into 18 flats.

Mr William (Bill) T Delaney, a former student of our school, who now lived in Poplar had written a letter in 1985 to the students of The Stepney Greencoat (Church of England) Primary School which had been opened in 1970 on the site of our former school. At the entrance of the school is a plaque which reads: 'Hamlet of Ratcliffe School founded 1710 rebuilt on the site of St Anne's School destroyed by enemy action in 1941.' The Hamlet of Ratcliffe School used to be situated in White Horse Road, Stepney, known locally as 'The Old Road'.

Bill included in his letter an interesting history of St Anne's School as he had remembered it during the period 1928 to 1938. He wrote of the visits in summer made by the students to the Limehouse Playing Fields at Hainault in Essex. The platform of the railway station at Hainault consisted of a few planks of wood and the platform was lit by three or four hurricane lamps. The staff of the station had been one elderly gentleman who had sat in a little sentry box, and there was not a house in sight. The students walked through the small country lanes and over five-bar gates and eventually arrived at the 'Playing Fields' in which was a small but welcome pavilion. Bill also mentioned the club formed by Mr Soko for the boys of the top form, which was called the Cannon Wheel Club, taken from the phrase 'I can and I will.' The members had worn a small badge in the form of a cannon wheel.

Bill enclosed with his letter a drawing of the exterior of St Anne's School as it was before it was destroyed. The title 'Limehouse National School' appeared across the front of the building with six windows above and six windows below it. Beneath the drawing was another one showing the ruins of the building after the bombing.

Joe and Bill also recalled some of the words of the school song: *On St Anne, On St Anne, On St Anne we proudly cry, Play the man, Play the man Play the man our destiny.*

## Notes and News

The Committee of the ELHS have been very active over the past year, and with so much happening, it is difficult to know where to begin!

The Open Evening which marked the end of the Programme year was a lively affair, though we could have wished for a bigger attendance. There is a marked reluctance on the part of our members to come forward with their own efforts and achievements in researching and collecting memorabilia on local history. But we do feel that we are slowly breaking through this barrier and hopefully, come next summer, we will have a good response to David's idea of a themed evening 'East London Then and Now'.

David Behr has provided an excellent and varied programme for the coming year. We hope to do even better in attendances, although at times the hall has been filled to capacity.

### Commemorative Plaques

The highlight of the year for Doreen Kendall and myself was the installation of a plaque to the memory of Dr Hannah Billig, at 198 Cable Street, where she lived and ran her surgery. The plaque was unveiled in the presence of the Mayor of Tower Hamlets and Councillor Denise Jones. The guest of honour was Mrs Rossi Billig, Dr Hannah's sister-in-law, accompanied by members of the family, not only from various parts of Britain, but from Ireland, and even Australia. To say we were overwhelmed is an understatement.

A couple of months earlier, a plaque was unveiled at No. 17 Princelet Street, the home of Miriam Moses, after which Springboard gave a slide show on the life and times of this extraordinary woman, Stepney Councillor, Justice of the Peace and the first Jewish woman to become a Mayor in Britain. She was also a founder member and long time warden of the Brady Girls Club.

Councillor Denise Jones is the inspiration behind this scheme of getting the achievements of East

End women recognised and acknowledged. It goes without saying that we are only pleased to support her sterling efforts.

### Cemetery Update

On Bank Holiday Monday 26th May, the Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery held an Open Day.

The weather was very kind to us, and hundreds of people turned up to enjoy themselves. Doreen and Diane Kendall set up an information table, with the cemetery plans and sheets, and the information they have collected on burials. Our books sold well and several people who had travelled long distances to research their family graves were able to consult with Doreen, who offered to assist them in their research, and was able to point them in the right direction (often literally). I know she had many satisfied customers!

Throughout the day, walks on various aspects of life (if that's the right word!) in the cemetery i.e. birds, butterflies and nature study were run by the Friends, and the two History Walks were attended by around 30 people each time. At least, we began with 30, I have a feeling the numbers increased as we went along! All in all, it was a very enjoyable day and we were able to publicise our work in the cemetery very successfully.

I have just been speaking to Liz Helm, of SATRO, the science and technology people, who are taking over the Soanes Centre from the 1st of September. Incidentally, she was one of those who joined the walk. She has offered the ELHS her full support in our research work in the cemetery, and I will be meeting her in September to discuss how best we can implement this to our mutual advantage.

We have also been in contact with other London cemeteries, the Friends of Abney Park were taken on a walk around the cemetery, followed by a visit to the Ragged School Museum. Recently, the Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery paid a special visit to Highgate Cemetery, and in October we will be welcoming the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery on a guided walk.

## Victoria Park

Doreen and Diane Kendall and myself had the dubious pleasure of having a stall at the RESPECT Festival in Victoria Park. After Doreen had successfully negotiated a free stall, and made sure it was set up on time, we sat in the scorching sun, hour after blazing hour, watching an astonishing array of humanity pass us by. We had been told that 80,000 people would be attending the festival, and that it would be of enormous benefit to the Society. In fact, 99% of those who came to Victoria Park cared not one jot where they were. Their interest in the East End and its history was minimal, to say the least. At the end of the day we sold 4 books on Victoria Park, and even the 10p postcards of the Victoria Fountain attracted barely a dozen passers-by. Mind you, the Che Guevara T-shirts being sold on the stall next to ours, were selling like hot cakes, in fact, at one stage, they had to recruit extra volunteers to help with their sales!

For those of you who may be wondering what happened to the East London Record, the good news is that Philip Mernick has taken on the task of getting the next edition together. We have some excellent articles, and hopefully, the Record should be out before the end of the year. An interesting result of our work in putting it together has been getting advance information on an exhibition to be held in October 1998, at the Geffrye Museum on "Ashbee and the Guild of Handicraft in the East End of London." I had offered an article on CR Ashbee, and anxious not to be accused of plagiarism, I visited Chipping Campden, where Ashbee and the Guild moved to from Bow, where I met a very helpful gentleman who put me in touch with Alan Crawford, the author of the definitive book on CR Ashbee. The response was beyond my wildest expectations. Alan Crawford read my piece, made some very helpful comments and suggestions on the text, and sent me the advance details of the Ashbee exhibition. Needless to say, next year cannot come soon enough for me (and Doreen Osborne, another Ashbee fan).

## Local History

Adult Education classes will be starting shortly, and there will be a term of local history classes led by myself at the Tredegar Centre, Stafford Road, Bow. These will be on Wednesday evenings from 7 - 9 pm and will cover the history of the East End from the Domesday Book onwards. A highlight of the classes will be a series of walks, so that participants can get a firsthand experience of history. Visits will include Victoria Park, Bow Church, the Bryant and Mays Factory and other sites accessible during the evening hours.

For further information, please pick up a leaflet from Bancroft Library, or ring Tredegar Centre on 0181 983 1047. I would also be pleased to hear from anyone, if they have any questions or queries. Tel: 0171 515 2960.

## Stop Press:

East End Life has just published the news that St Dunstan's Church has been awarded a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This is to refurbish and restore the churchyard, with new benches, footpaths and signs, with a play area for children. The church will be open during the whole of August, but perhaps this newsletter won't be out for many of you to take advantage of this opportunity to visit the East End's oldest and most historic building. However, it is good to know that the Lottery money is occasionally spent on something worthwhile, and that we will benefit as a result.

Following on from the success of the Victoria Park book, Doreen Kendall is planning the ELHS' next publication. If any members have any thoughts on what they would like to see in print, please do let her know. One suggestion, which Doreen is already acting on, is for a publication on the interesting, unusual and historic parish stones, toll posts, bollards, statues, war memorials, etc, which have survived through to the present times. We would welcome information and photographs from members, as well as offers for help in any way, e.g. going around taking pictures of existing sites.

**Rosemary Taylor**

# EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY

## LECTURE PROGRAMME - 1997-98

Thursdays at 7.30 pm

### 4th September 1997:

The History and Development of Tower  
Hamlets Cinemas (*Illustrated*)  
*Speaker Brian Oakaby*

### 30th October 1997:

AGM of ELHS at 7:15 pm, followed by

New River: Waters Sweet and Fresh for  
London (*Illustrated*)  
*Speaker Michael Essex-Lopresti*

### 20th November 1997:

Germans in East London c.1800-1918  
*Speaker Panikos Panayi*

### 4th December 1997:

Homeworking Women in Spitalfields  
1880-1909  
*Speaker Diane Atkinson*

### January 1998 - to be confirmed

### 26th February 1998:

The Jewish Workhouse - from the Lane to  
Nightingale Lane  
*Speaker Samuel C Melnick*

### 19th March 1998:

The Mass and the Masses: Church of  
England Anglo-catholic Slum Priests in the  
East End, 1840-1900  
*Speaker Paul Hullyer*

### 23rd April 1998:

Will Crooks of Poplar and Woolwich:  
Labour Pioneer and Servant of the People  
*Speaker Paul Tyler*

### 21st May 1998:

East London Then and Now - Open  
Evening, bring your photographs and  
memories.

### Note:

The lectures are held on Thursday  
evenings at 7.30 pm in the Latimer  
Congregational Church Hall, Ernest Street,  
E1. Ernest Street is between Harford Street  
and WhiteHorse Lane, off Mile End Road  
(opposite Queen Mary and Westfield  
College). The nearest Underground  
Stations are Mile End and Stepney Green.  
Bus No. 25.

For further information, please contact Rosemary  
Taylor Tele: 0171 515 2960

**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, 13 Three Crowns Road, Colchester, CO4 5AD. (Please note John Harris's change of address - he has moved next door to his previous residence!)

The membership year runs from October to September. Please make sure you fill in your membership renewal forms and return them to John Harris, so that you can keep abreast of events and news. I occasionally get calls from members, concerned that they haven't received a newsletter, only to discover that they have forgotten to renew their membership. The form is enclosed with this newsletter, or will be available at the lectures.

**The Annual General Meeting** of the East London History Society will be held on Thursday the 30th October 1997 at 7.15 pm. **Please** consider joining the committee, we do need new committee members. The present committee is:

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

**The Way We Worked**

A group of senior citizens were talking about their work experiences when they were young and single, in the years between the wars. Here are some of their recollections.

Carpenters Road was not the derelict road it is today. It was a thriving area of employment for men and women, with factories all with display boards stating 'Hands Wanted'. You could change your job if the foreman upset you, no problem getting work, although always long hours and poor pay. The girls had all worked at different times in 'Clarnicos', the sweet factory. They talked of their first job when leaving school, of being spoken for by other members of their families who worked there, of being part of a group, of friendships formed, the good food in the works canteen, subsidised by the company to ensure that all were well fed in the thirties, of leaving to get married, then returning during the war, the jokes played on the men, of singing the latest hits from the shows together, and the boredom of repetitive work. They worked long hours, including Saturdays, and walked to and from work to save on bus fares. They spoke of the social club provided by the company and how well you were looked after when ill, the convalescent home at Clacton, the Provident Money Club and the pleasure of new clothes or linen when your turn came to spend it. The anticipation of pennies saved for a day trip to Epping and the Christmas Clubs.

Clarnicos began as a company called Clark Nicholls and Coombs in 1872 at Hackney Wick on the west side of Hackney cut. Expanding in the 1890s it built a larger factory situated near the Great Eastern railway bridge in Carpenters Road and became one of the largest employers of female labour. In 1944 the factory was bombed and production stopped until new works were built in Waterden Road. In 1946 the company changed its name to Clarnicos, one of its names associated with its produce, and the best seller Mitcham Mints. In the 1970s Clarnicos closed when the firm was bought out by Trebor Mints, which later merged with Bassets and today is part of the Cadbury Schweppes group.

Jean started work at fourteen at Boardmans, founded in 1871, the large drapers and furnishings store in the Stratford Broadway. Progressing from linens to the china department after two years, the hours got the better of her, and much to her mother's disgust, Jean gave in her notice. It was not just the clocking on from eight to six, it was the all day Saturday work that upset her as she could never go out with her mates, being so tired with working long hours. Jean then started work in the Imperial Tobacco Company, Old Street and loved it all, progressing through all the stages of hand rolling cigars for the toffs. You had to have nimble fingers to roll the cigars. The tobacco leaves, bigger than rhubarb and as large as the work table came in bundles imported from Cuba. Some days beautiful fresh roses were pulled apart to lay between the leaves as they were rolled. Wages were for piece work with a company bonus for time keeping and there was a staff canteen. Jean worked there until her wartime marriage in 1940.

Fairfield Road today still has the original buildings turned into apartments that was the factory of Bryant and May, one of the biggest employers in the area. This is the famous Bryant and May Match factory made famous by the Matchgirls strike, which has gone down in history as being the first ever successful strike by female workers, and where the first trade union for women was formed. Eileen said that girls in the thirties aimed to sit their Business Studies exam after a six month course at school, leaving at the age of fourteen. You could always get a City job, but local jobs were better because there were no fares to pay and time was saved in travelling. To work in the factory in the office between the wars was a prestige job. Employees had the facilities of a social club and swimming pool.

When you started work after an entrance exam, at Bryant and May, even if spoken for, you wore a coloured overall to save your clothes from ink. The office was large, with big windows and plenty of space between the desks. All the daily stock control, wages, accountancy and invoicing of amounts due from customers was carried out in the office. You used punch cards and standard accounting machines fitted with tape conversion units and a mechanised pay roll which also

analysed labour costs. The office machines made quite a lot of noise. It was classed as war work, so you were not called up and only left when you started a family.

Bryant and May Match Factory was opened on 9th July 1861 by the joint owners, William Bryant (1804-1874) and Francis May (1803-1885) with £8,000 capital and a workforce of 3,000. Bryant was born in Plymouth of a Quaker family and began his career as a soap and grease maker, then worked for 14 years as an excise man. May was the fourth son of a London Quaker Merchant and originally had a shop in Bishopsgate before teaming up with Bryant. Wilberforce Bryant, son of William and Ann Tago Bryant turned the company into a public limited company and was the last family member to hold office. In the 1960s the factory had a work force of 700, but by the 1970s the company moved upto Liverpool and the derelict factory was bought by Kentish Homes to be developed into private luxury apartments.

#### Doreen Kendall

### BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

Two books to put on your Christmas list:

- **A Pictorial History of Victoria Park** - now you've read and enjoyed it, why not buy some copies for your friends and family! Details from Doreen Kendall, 0181 981 7680
- **The Changing East End - Stepney, Bethnal Green and Poplar, Volume 2.** Publication date end October. Check with Bancroft Library or Rosemary Taylor, 0171 515 2960.

Celebrate Christmas with East End nostalgia!

# AUTUMN COACH TRIP

Saturday 27th September 1997

We will be visiting Upton House, Warwickshire, between Banbury and Stratford on Avon. We shall also have a stop in Banbury to allow for lunch (own arrangements) and a look around.

Upton House is National Trust. The oldest part dates from 1695, but it was largely remodelled in 1927-9. It is not so much the building that we come to see, as the wonderful collections it houses, and the splendid gardens.

Have you ever wondered why the giant oil company is called Shell? The man who remodelled the house was Walter Samuel, the 2nd Viscount Bearsted. He also made the collections out of the oil company's wealth. His family history explains the name.

His grandfather, an East End Jew, built up a business making boxes from exotic shells which sailors brought back from the East. His father and uncle, Marcus and Sam, were also born in the East End, and developed a huge company which they called Shell Trading and Transport. When the Suez Canal opened they began operating oil tankers, and as the market for oil grew so did that side of their business.

The collection of pictures is really splendid and includes works by El Greco, Holbein, Brueghel, Steen, Tintoretto, Hogarth and Stubbs. There are also important collections of porcelain and fine furniture.

The gardens are very varied and beautiful, laid out in terraces down to the valley. There is a tea room available.

The pick-up will be at Mile End, opposite the station, at 9.30 am.

Entrance to Upton House is free to National Trust members (please remember your card), £4.80 to others - sorry there are no reductions. I shall collect this on the coach.

The coach fare is £6.90. Please send this with your booking on the form below to: Ann Samson, 18 Hawkdene, London E4 7PF. Tele: 0181 524 4506

## Autumn Coach Trip 27th September 1997

I/we would like \_\_\_\_\_ seat/s for the trip. Please find enclosed PO/cheque for £ \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NO. \_\_\_\_\_