



Chinese children in Pennyfields, Limehouse 1932 (see page 2)

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Index of articles from Newsletters Volume 1 issues 1-20 published from 1992 – 2001 is included in this newsletter.
All illustrations used in the newsletter are from Tower Hamlets Local History Library, Bancroft Road, E1.

Editorial Note:

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

The Newsletter is edited, typeset and produced by Rosemary Taylor with the assistance of an editorial team comprising John Harris, Doreen Kendall, David Behr, Philip Mernick and Doreen Osborne.

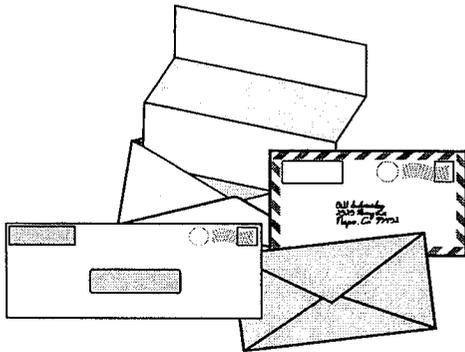
Letters and articles on East End history and reminiscences are always welcome and we make every effort to publish suitable material. Whilst hand-written articles are acceptable, items of interest that are typewritten or even better still, on disk will get priority!!

Enquiries to Doreen Kendall, 20 Puteaux House, Cranbrook Estate, Bethnal Green, E2 0RF, Tel: 0208 981 7680, or Philip Mernick, email: harry@mernicks.freemove.co.uk.

All queries regarding membership should be addressed to John Harris, 13 Three Crowns Road, Colchester CO4 5AD.

Check out the History Society's website at www.eastlondonhistory.org.uk.

The present committee are: Philip Mernick, Chairman, Doreen Kendall, Secretary, John Harris, Membership, David Behr, Programme, Ann Sansom, Doreen Osborne, Bob Dunn, Howard Penberg and Rosemary Taylor.



The Chinese Community in Limehouse

Les Hearson and Hsiao Hung have set up a history project to record the experiences of Chinese immigrants to Britain in the early to mid-twentieth century. They are hoping to interview people with first-hand knowledge of the Chinese community in Limehouse, whether immigrants themselves or their descendants, or people who lived in Limehouse Chinatown and remember what it was like.

If you have any memories you would like to share, please get in touch with Les Hearson, tele: 020 8586 7821 or write to him at 224 Caledon Road, London E6 2EX, or email him at chineseineastlondon@hotmail.com.

Les Hearson or Hsiao Hung would be delighted to hear from you.

The War Years

In October 1940, the 4th battalion Grenadier Guards camped on Wanstead Flats. They were there to assist the police in the event of large scale rioting and looting which the government assumed would take place during air raids. All police stations in the east end also stocked large amounts of weapons ready for issue to the police.

When war was declared in September 1939, the RSPCA was overwhelmed by people who were being evacuated from London, and wanted to have their pets put down. No livestock were allowed in public bomb shelters and there were no measures taken to protect animals against gas attacks. 60,000 pets, mostly cats and dogs were put down and buried in a secret mass grave somewhere in East London.

John Harris

**EAST LONDON
HISTORY SOCIETY
PROGRAMME
2001-2002**

Thursday 20th September

**Southwark and the Archaeology of
the Jubilee Line**

Speaker: James Drummond-Murray

Saturday 30th September

**Coach Trip to the Royal Gunpowder
Mills and the town of Waltham
Abbey**

See back page of newsletter for
details and booking form.

Thursday 18th October

**Pearl Binder, an artist in the East
End 1925-35 (Illustrated)**

Speaker: Dan Jones

Thursday 22nd November

The Spirit of Spitalfields

Speaker: Anne J Kershen

Thursday 6th December

Mudchute Farm

Speaker: Maggie Lipscombe

Thursday 31st January

Collecting Tower Hamlets

Speaker: Philip Mernick

Thursday 28th February

**So Your Ancestor Worked in the
Docks?**

Speaker: Bob Aspinall

March and April

To Be Arranged

Thursday 23rd May

Open Evening

Memories and Photos

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.

Notes and News

Mile End Park

In June 2001 the second phase of the park opened with earth sheltered buildings, new lakes and wind power electricity. Many events are scheduled, including sculpture, art and walks. A great future beckons as the park follows the Regents Canal from Victoria Park to the Ragged School Museum.

It has been an interesting three years watching the clearance of roads, buildings and trees making way for huge diggers to create the lakes, and the green bridge, when traffic along the Mile End Road came to a halt for a day, to the recycling of road bricks to create paths, and the instant huge trees and wild plants planted in very wet weather, when the whole site looked as if it would never be finished for mud.

Millennium Trail

Look out for the Millennium Trail map of Tower Hamlets Cemetery; it has been printed to celebrate the Borough's first Local Nature Reserve by the Tower Hamlets Parks Department and Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery. The 22 posts, bought with the £5000 grant for the Millennium will guide you around the cemetery park, where you will find described on a map by Terry Lyle, outstanding memorials, trees, flowers, animals, butterflies and bird areas, all drawn by Andy Maguire. English Heritage has listed 7 of the memorials this year.

Open House Weekend

While we're on the subject of the cemetery, you can come along on Open House Weekend, 22nd and 23rd September, when you can join in guided walks, or browse through the maps in search of that illusive ancestor, and bring

yourself up to date on Diane's monumental database.

St Matthias Old Church will also be open on that weekend, so please do put it on to your tour. I know many of our members try to fit in as many places as possible, as this weekend is a rare opportunity to explore buildings that are often inaccessible to the public.

Family History Society

The East of London Family History Society plan to rent a room at Valentine's Park to house their research. This centre will be kept open and run by volunteers from the society.

Doreen Kendall

Strange But True

January 1900

At Bethnal Green Coroners Court, three separate inquests were heard. All three concerned infants, one aged 2 days, and two aged 3 months. All the deaths had taken place on a Saturday night, all had been accidentally suffocated.

The Coroner remarked that this type of infant death was becoming common in Bethnal Green when the infant shared a bed with three other people, and always on a Saturday night. He advised mothers to buy a 2 shilling 'Moses Basket' for use as a cradle, then these deaths could be avoided. He also advised mothers to go to bed early.

A Verdict of accidental death was recorded on all three infants.

John Harris

The Brown Bread of Bethnal Green

A small mill run by the Cyclone Flour and Meal Company at 21a Patriot Square, Bethnal Green, behind a terrace of 18th century houses, was the embryo of the more highly capitalised Natural Food Company which took it over within the first five years.

The mill was enlarged four times in its first twenty years up to 1915, and an imposing clock tower and offices fronting 210-214 Cambridge Road, on the corner of Patriot Square, with a factory and mill behind it was built. Bethnal Green had become the centre of the largest wholesale milling company in the country.

After the third expansion, in 1911, the production was doubled, and enabled ten to eleven million loaves to be made from their wholemeal flour. 1500 agents sold the company's flour and bread at the time.

This achievement within 16 years of operating was all the more remarkable because the method of milling wheat that it practised was by millstones, which had almost entirely been replaced elsewhere by the 1890s with the more economical roller mill for making flour whiter and quicker. The Natural Food Company kept the traditional work alive, producing their brown bread and wholemeal.

The company grew because it identified itself closely with the wave of public support for the health improvement ideas of Dr. Allinson. The strict allegiance to high standards of production and quality, and a zealous and educative advertising policy was hard to match by others. Bread competitions for the baking trade and for the housewife became enormously popular, and Dr. Allinson judged some of these.

This publicity-seeking physician, whose surgery was in Marylebone, owned one share

in both the companies, and was a director. He allowed his name on a wide range of the manufactures. The brand loyalty concept worked well for Dr. Allinson's Natural Food for Babies and Invalids, Prepared Barley, Oats, Custards, Blancmange, N.F. Cocoa, Anti-Tea, Brunak (beverage), Power (breakfast food), lunch biscuits, Petroleum Hair Restorer, Hair Tonic, Hair Dyes, Coal Tar Soap, Simple Ointment, Depilatory, Tooth Powder, and Benzoin Toilet Cream. These were also sold through chain stores such as Boots, the cash chemists, and co-operative stores. The products, including Allinson wholemeal bread and flour, were mentioned in the company's publications, and several of Dr. Allinson's five lengthy 'Medical Essays' acquired a new lease of life this way, after initial popularity 15-20 years before.

From the 1880s to the early 1900s, Dr. Allinson issued personal testimonial certificates of wholemeal bread quality to complying bakers. They found it advantageous to display the certificate in their shop windows to attract more customers into changing from white bread to wholemeal bread. The public had read about, and heard of Dr. Allinson being a successful dietician for ailments, advocating vegetarian foods with wholemeal bread at every meal. His patients and supporters in the 1890s, at the most controversial part of his career, even called themselves Allinsonians.

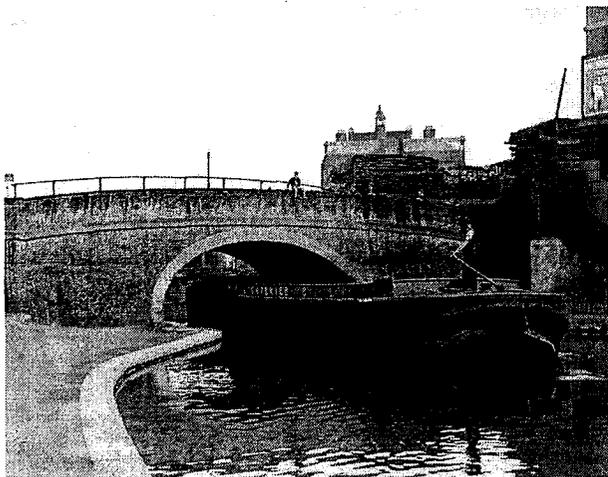
The specialness of his wholemeal was that the wheat was pure whole-wheat, and was ground between two traditional millstones. Its flour thus retained more of the essential minerals and nutrients the body needs, than other white flour millers could ever produce. The company claimed that the whole meal was from pure wheat which had nothing added and nothing taken away. This is why Dr. Allinson was willing to give his name as a guarantee that none of the products were made of chemicals or of impure additives. He knew, and the

public sometimes knew, and the local government food inspectors knew that there were many fraudulent producers to be wary of.

A river bank site in Castleford, and a site near the docks in Newport, Monmouthshire were chosen to enable the milling capacity to increase, and to bring about a more efficient transportation system for their country-wide operations by 1922. At that time the business was renamed Allinson Ltd.

The Bethnal Green site closed in 1971 when a multi-national company, Booker-McConnell took over, and the Allinson brand name was utilised by the new business to promote a new recipe of wholemeal bread which revived the industry and made its Castleford mill the largest producer of wholemeal in Europe.

Christopher Lloyd



Cricketers Bridge, Victoria Park

A Pictorial History of Victoria Park, published by the East London History Society is still available at £6.95 plus £2 postage and packing. Please send your orders to Doreen Kendall, 20 Puteaux House, Cranbrook Estate, Bethnal Green, London E2 0RF.

Letters from Near and Far

Doreen Kendall continues her sterling work answering the many queries she receives from all parts of the world, and provides valuable information, through books and photocopies, to those seeking to know where and how their ancestors lived in the East End of London.

Eileen and Fred Drew, from Bideford, Devon, write:

Thank you for the information (Doreen) sent me at the request of my Goddaughter. Both my wife and I were born and brought up in Bow, and both went to Bow Central School in Coborn Street, until 1936. We moved out to Epping after the War, and in retirement have come to Devon. Victoria Park was our happy hunting ground as children, and used very much for leisure by our families. We still have friends we were at school with, and from these contacts information about Bow trickles through.

Charles W Buckingham JP, 6 Rees James Road, Raymond Terrace, NSW 2324, writes:

Many thanks (to Doreen) for your letter and enclosures. I was very interested in the East London Record No. 12, as I was seeking some info of my youth from school age at 5 years to 14 years plus. Went to Subday School at Pott Street, the famous Congregational Church first of all, and later to St Andrews, Viaduct Street, Bethnal Green. I was confirmed by the Bishop of London at age 9 years, sang in the choir and as a junior joined the Church Lads Brigade, and at the age of 12 became a Cadet in Training on military lines, as then approved by the army and War Office. During this period a small group of us trained Choir Boys did stints with St Paul's Cathedral Choir to augment the very important royal and national days etc.

As cadets we trained during the evenings each week, we had all the equipment, uniforms, rifles, bayonets, foot drill etc. There were quite a number of CLB companies in London and England, and locally in the East End, Hackney, Bow, Bethnal Green, Poplar etc and were inspected annually at local drill halls, one of which was at Tredegar Road, Bow, and at St Simon's Church Hall, Roman Road area, between Globe Road and the Aberdeen, where the Rector was Major Peerless, during 1925 to 1932/34. It would delight me if the Church of St Simons still operates, and if there is any historic memories of these happenings, and appreciate the Revd. Major Peerless has no doubt passed over in recent years. I am 88 years with failing eyesight, so please excuse mistakes.

Ed. Note: There are several pictures in Bancroft Library of the Revd. Peerless standing in the ruins of the Church of St Simon Zelotes, the day after it was bombed during the Blitz. The church was demolished after the Second World War.

Roger A Hobday, Harbourne, Birmingham:

Thank you (Doreen) for sending me the book **Bow Then and Now**. It was most kind of you, and I have found an excellent photo in the book of Tredegar Road in the 1890s, which shows me what my great grandparents neighbourhood looked like, along with all the excellent photos and information of and about the Bow area, which help me to imagine and understand how and where my family lived. It was always one of my fondest dreams to come to England and visit the area where my grandfather lived with his brothers and parents. I am most grateful to you, Ms Kendall, and I look forward to any postcards that hopefully might surface. I think the search for ancestral information can be really quite exciting and fun.

**Joan Barker (Turpin), 'Merrythought'
Mendlesham Green, Stowmarket, Suffolk,
IP14 5RQ:**

I was brought up in Bethnal Green leaving in 1965 when I got married. My father (Albert Edward Turpin) was born in Ravenscroft Buildings, Columbia Road in 1900, his parents were married in Hackney Parish Church, and his grandparents were married at St Leonard's Church, Shoreditch.

My father died in 1964 but during his lifetime he took a leading part in the Anti-Fascist movement and was a Labour Councillor and Mayor in Bethnal Green.

He wrote his life story in 1947, which I am currently transferring to disc. This has been typed on A4 paper and runs to 144 pages. It covers his childhood, his participation in the First World War, the Anti-Fascist Movement, and his time as a fireman during the Second World War. He was also an artist and a member of the East London Group of artists that I understand are now being written about and recognized. I have at home fifty oil paintings of the East End of London mainly painted between 1943 and 1964 when he died, plus a number of drawings showing areas of the East End that have now vanished.

I have photographed all the paintings, which I won, some that are in the Bancroft Road Library and a number of his drawings. I also have four scrapbooks of paper cuttings.

I wonder if any of this is of interest to your members.

A Bad Night on Bow Common

8.34 pm on Wednesday 11th September 1940, the air raid warning sounded over London, nothing unusual for the time of year, the east end had been raided three times that day, the docks and surrounding streets had fires that were out of control. The BBC had been broadcasting warnings all day that the invasion may be launched at any time in the next week and that these air raids were part of the invasion plan.

The fourth air raid was something special, it was the biggest air raid carried out on London and it was met by the biggest anti aircraft barrage ever seen, the sky was full of exploding shells and the shrapnel rained down on the roof tops. This drove off the first wave of bombers who were heading for Central London carrying incendiaries. They turned, and flew across the east end as they made their way down the Thames and (you guessed it) dropped all the bombs on the east enders.

As the Police, Air Raid Wardens, and Fire Fighters struggled to get some order among the blocked roads and burning buildings, one man stood out, this is the story of that man on that particular night.

George Wiseman, born in 1892, left school at the age of eleven to train as a horse keeper. George was the manager of Wiseman's stables situated in Furze Street, which was a street leading off from Devon's Road, Bow. The stables held fifty shire horses. On this night George would need all his expertise because the stables had been hit by incendiaries, and set on fire. It looked as if the horses were doomed, because the stables were on two levels, twenty two being housed at ground level and twenty eight on the first floor reached by a steep cobble stoned ramp. To add to the danger, a gas main had been broken and was burning in the middle of the road.

George Wiseman led the horses out of the stables one by one, leading them through the flames and smoke with a sack over their heads to stop them from becoming panic-stricken. When out in the street they were handed over to volunteers who then tied them to people's doorknockers, and the old-fashioned foot scrapers which most of the old houses had in those days. A rope was also tied between a lamppost and a telegraph pole and more horse tied to that. At this time the second wave of bombers had arrived and they were carrying high explosive bombs. They began bombing the burning area, and some of the horses were wounded, but George doctored their wounds, and they recovered.

After the raid was over the horses were taken to a yard in Canning Town while their own stables were repaired. Three months later they were back and carrying out their usual job, which was delivering meat supplies from the docks.

In 1947 all the horses were retired to the country. They were replaced by motor vehicles. George Wiseman also decided to retire, he was manager for his uncle who owned Union Cartage in Bow Common Lane, whose name was also Wiseman. For his bravery and courage, George Wiseman was awarded a certificate by the National Horse Association of Great Britain, which stated:

To George Wiseman who is justly entitled to the recognition of the Association for having on the 11th of September 1940 exhibited gallantry in saving equine life by assisting in rescuing 50 horses at Bow from a burning stables adjoining a blazing gas main during an air raid.

Harry Salton

The "Island"

In the last newsletter we published Jean Hewitt's article on Dr Bragg, and the Mission on the 'Island'. She follows it up with her interview of John Payne, who was closely connected to Dr Bragg, and who lived on the Island. Jean's first article inspired Jim Crouch, also a resident of the Island to set down his reminiscences, and I received both articles simultaneously. John Payne moved to the Island in 1917, Jim Crouch in 1947, so I have included extracts from both in this newsletter. Editor.

John Payne's Story, told to Jean Hewitt

I am the eldest of three. After David, Ada arrived making the family overcrowded in our upstairs flat in Cheviot Street, Hackney. My father found a bigger place. We moved to a terraced house in Monier Road when I was about seven in 1917. It was small, but we had it all to ourselves and we could keep chickens in the back yard.

We went to Smeed Road School round the corner. It was a tall building with a floor each for Infants, Juniors and Seniors. There was a good big playground around it.

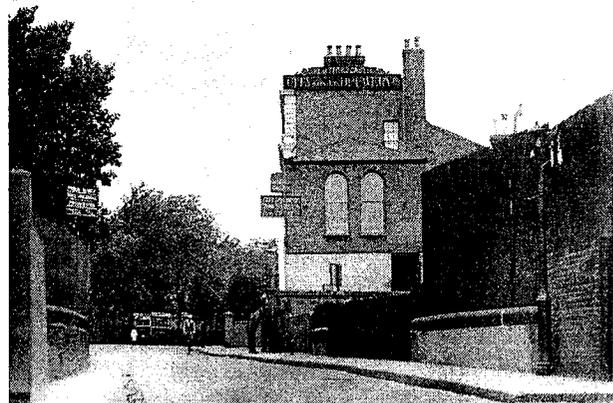
The Island got its name from being a tightly-packed community with four clear boundaries and only one road in and out which was our Monier Road. It led up a steep slope into Wick Lane. When well-laden carts travelled that way they had to harness an extra horse to pull the load up the slope to the Wick Lane Canal Bridge.

The boundaries of the Island were like this. A railway line between Victoria Park and Old Ford stations formed the western boundary and beyond that, Victoria Park. A timber yard lay to the north, bordering onto the Hertford Union Canal. This ran into the Hackney Cut Navigation stretch of the River Lea, which formed the eastern boundary. To the south an embankment twenty feet high, created the effect of a prison-like enclosure. Some five hundred dwellings were crammed into the dozen roads of the Island, interspersed with several

factories, including Yardley's Sunlight Soap and the Broadwood Piano Factory.

There was a firm called Crane who had a horse and two-wheeled cart. He transported all sorts of stuff. One of his regular assignments was to carry a load of dark brown 'foot'sugar' to a factory where it was used to make syrup. We children would follow the cart and help ourselves to some of the sugar. The only traffic was horse-drawn so the cobbled streets were safe to play in. Keen gardeners would run out to collect the horse-droppings as manure for their back gardens.

There were several shops near us. There was a butcher's, a barber's and a fish shop. One shop collected rags and bones. The baker was a German. He kept his ovens heated all the week. On Sundays he didn't bake bread but he let people bring their joints or stews and put them in his ovens for their Sunday dinners. All the week the men were out at work so the family only sat down together once a week, on Sundays. The nearest street market was the Roman Road. We went to the swimming baths there from school once a week. When we came out we could buy a bag of dates for three pence. Whoever bought the bag would share it round the whole class.



Old Mitford Bridge and Mitford Castle

There were no pubs in the Island – only an off-licence. People would take a jug to the Mitford Arms, the nearest pub in Cadogan Terrace, and get it filled with ale or beer during the week. At weekends they would go into the pubs. The only other amenities in the Island included the Municipal Baths where one could have a hot bath or do a load of washing for sixpence. Then there was a small, independent church called the Tin

Tabernacle, on the corner of Smeed Road and Beechy Road.

But the biggest social centre was the Old Ford Medical Mission which took place in Park Hall. This was a big hall owned by the Anglican St Mark's Church on the corner of Victoria Park. They rented it out to a Committee of Christian men who saw the need of medical care in such a poor district. In 1919 they appointed Dr Bragg to head the medical and evangelistic work.

This is how I was introduced to the Mission. Soon after we came to live in the Island I became ill with pneumonia. Although it was Sunday night my father was so anxious about me that he went across the road to Park Hall and asked Dr Bragg to come and see me, which he did. He was a well-built, stocky man, a perfect gentleman. He had been a Major in the Army was he was a man to be obeyed! After seeing me he said, 'Now when you're better you must come across to the children's meeting.' That's how I started, and David and Amy came too.

Park Hall was a big hall seating up to 300 people on long wooden benches. That's where we sat to wait for the doctor's surgery, which took place in the next house. It was reached through an adjoining doorway. Working men were treated free. Others had to pay sixpence. Mid-week meetings were held there too, for boys and girls separately. I also attended the clubs, which were run by a team of helpers that Dr Bragg introduced to the Mission. Some were medical students from London hospitals; others were missionary candidates preparing to go to China. We had a lot of fun and I especially enjoyed the annual outings and camps.

My father had an unusual occupation. He was a dealer in cereals like oats and maize. He went to India to assess a whole field of maize (or corn on the cob). If he liked the look of it he would agree to buy the lot.

I loved my mother and I think she was a Christian lady because she had Bible texts on all the walls. Sadly, she died in child-birth when I was only ten. My father went haywire and took to drink. The he remarried a most unpleasant woman who was

unkind to the three of us as well as to her own daughter who she brought into our home.

I left school at 14 and began to work. My father felt that we boys should have a trade behind us. I wanted to be a chemist, but that was not possible so I became a French polisher.

Miss Morrow was a deaconess at St Mark's Church. She lived in Cadogan Terrace and she used to invite me and a friend in to have tea and swill rolls – a treat we didn't get at home. The mission became an outlet for us. But I was so upset at my mother's death that I turned away from God and the Mission. I went around with a gang of mates and we made a nuisance of ourselves by disrupting the meetings and playing pranks. Eventually, however, I returned to the Mission, thanks to Dr Bragg, and I began to help, rather than hinder the work of the Mission.

There was much more open drunkenness in those days. You could tell the time the pubs closed because you would see a string of men staggering home. We had the privilege of seeing a number of local characters converted. One of them was a notorious chap called Mr Evans. He was known to terrorise his family and he had even done time in prison for manslaughter. One afternoon he astonished everyone by wandering into the men's meeting, drunk as usual. Everyone thought he was planning some trouble but, undaunted, Mr Keeble went to welcome him. 'Mr Evans, it's good to see you here. Why not come along to the meeting tonight?' 'I'll be here,' he promised, and he came dressed for the first time, in collar and tie. That night he responded to Dr Bragg's gospel message.

Another chap I remember had been a sergeant major during the 1914-18 War. He had an allotment and on his way home he would go to the pub. Every Saturday he was drunk. If he fell down in the pub they would send for his son who was teetotal. He would go to the pub and yell, 'Soldier, on your feet,' and drunk as he was, he would get on his feet and so long as the son drilled him, 'left, right, left, right' he kept going. If he stopped he would fall over. He'd get to his home and the son would say, 'right turn.' In he would walk and he'd be using his gardening fork as a rifle. He would 'Shoulder arms' and 'Present arms'. The army

training made him respond like that. It was an entertainment for us children and we would turn out to watch the spectacle.

Then there was 'Mad Lou'. I have seen her floor many a Policeman and it would take several of them to hold her. They would arrest her for drunkenness in the street and walk her to the Police Station at Bow. Her husband came afterwards and he would be drunk too. Neighbours told him, 'They've just taken your old woman in.' 'Where?' 'Up at Bow Road.' He'd go up and create at Bow Road and they'd let his wife off. They'd go to the Magistrate on Mondays and he would regularly fine them half a crown. Out she would come, with her husband and knock the helmet off the policeman on duty. Back in the court they'd be fined another five shillings for assaulting the policeman.

An extract from Jim Crouch's reminiscences of living on the Island

In 1947 my family moved from Libra Road in Bow, to Monier Road, which was also in Bow and was part of a very close knit East End community situated in an area known locally as 'the island'. On the day that we chose to make our visit to view our new home there had been an accident when a boy attempting to gain access to the library in Wick Lane via the roof, had fallen through the glass roof lights, what a welcome!

There were rows of terraced houses and local shops which were broken only by derelict bomb sites, or houses, which at the time had not been demolished, and were still showing the signs of bombing caused by the Second World War. Where roads had not been temporarily repaired as a result of bomb damage, the surfaces were mainly cobbled.

The community that lived in the area that we were soon to become part of was known locally as the islanders or as 'people that came from the island'. Apparently the reason for the

small local community being known by this name was that several streets in the area had river type connotations such as Roach Road, Dace Road, Bream Street and Stour Road. The island was on a peninsular that was virtually placed centrally in between two waterways. The Hackney Cut which joined the River Lea at the Old Ford Locks, and the Hertford Union Canal that we also call the 'Cut'. The canals seemed to snake round two sides of the island almost as if they were forming a protective barrier from outsiders for the residents. From Wick Lane the entrance to the Northern Outfall Sewer and the Wick Lane Railway Bridge formed the unofficial borders. The bridge was notorious locally for the number of high-sided lorries that became trapped underneath it as a result of the low headroom. Unfortunately, when there was a modernisation of the railway system the Victoria Park branch line which formed a direct link to the Docks, became one of the casualties. Over the years the old Victoria Park Station was demolished and the track fell into disrepair and became a victim of the rebuilding programme for the East Cross link motorway until finally in 1999 the bridge was demolished.

Situated on the land by the side of the Old Ford Locks was a row of brick built cottages with their immaculately kept gardens, which seemed to act as sentinels of the locks. The cottages were also on a peninsular that was bounded by the River Lea on one side and the Hackney Cut on the other. Over the years the cottages which provided accommodation for the resident lock keepers, have changed hands several times, eventually being purchased by a television company and is the venue for the Big Breakfast programme.

There were occasions when the Hackney Cut overflowed and it was not uncommon for police to drive around the streets informing residents of the possible risk of localised flooding. The areas most likely to be affected

were the lower ends of Dace Road where there was a pedestrianised access to the locks and the towpath, and the factories that actually backed onto the river. The Hackney Cut ran parallel to the small terraced houses that formed Bream Street and to the rear of the factories in Roach Road. This road passed the end of Monier Road and Wyke Road where it eventually joined Rippoth Road.

The first impression of Monier Road was looking from the Wick Lane end down towards the far end where there was a tall brick built factory chimney which seemed to stand out like a commanding local monument. The chimney was in fact the smokestack of a large timber company by the name of Youngers, which was identified by the name that was fixed in place in big white letters on its outward facing area, and went from the top of the chimney to the bottom.

Monier Road was the only road capable of taking motorised vehicles and horse drawn traffic on to the island and apart from the two other pedestrian access routes was the only means of access. The sounds of rubber tyres of the motor vehicles and the iron rims of the wagon wheels from horse drawn vehicles as they drove and clattered over the cobbled roads always gave plenty of advance warnings of their approach.

The pedestrian routes consisted of a small alleyway, which lead from Wick Lane into Remus Road, and a set of steps, locally known as the "Thirty Nine Steps". The steps, which according to local legend were haunted, lead from the Northern Outfall sewer embankment in Wick Lane. They provided access from the end of Dace Road for the many factory workers that were employed in this area. The steps were also a short cut and escape route for locals in an emergency. Having used them during the winter months, not only were they dark, but also often shrouded in mist or fog and could be quite eerie. It is easy to

understand why they were reputed to be haunted.

When we moved to the house, which was to be our new home, it was one of the recently erected prefabs at the bottom end of Monier Road, I became a pupil of Smeed Road School. I remained here until I changed schools in 1951. Because of the close proximity of the school to the Pilgrim House Settlement in Dace Road, it was natural to attend the after school club in the nearby brick built Pilgrim House hall. The hall is marked on the ordnance survey map of 1893. To the newcomer the interior of the hall, which had a wooden floor, and glazed roof lights, which framed the large stage at the end of the hall, was most impressive. Behind the curtains on the stage, which were always drawn, was a large upright piano, which on occasions was played by Miss Dawson, who was also the music teacher at Smeed Road School. The hall was accessible from the school by a small side entrance, which was situated adjacent to Snoxells' Dairy, which lead from the school playground into Dace Road.

For the privilege of becoming a member of the club we had to pay the princely sum of one half penny 'subs' which was given on entrance to the Hall, and we also had our names put down in the attendance register. Not many children were ever refused entry as not every child had the entrance fee and the promise of payment on the next visit was the usual practice. The after school club for children between the ages of 7-9 which was held about three times a week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, subject to school holidays, was always well attended. The added bonus of attending the club was the large amount of decent toys that you could play with. There were not many of us with the luxury of large rocking horses, wooden train sets and pedal cars and for the girls large prams, dolls and dolls houses etc. The women in charge were

very strict by also very fair. One of them was Miss Catty, who was also well respected.

During the summer the club would organise picnics to nearby Victoria Park or even coach outings to the countryside, which was normally Epping Forest. For some unknown reason it always seemed to rain on these special days, but it did not dampen our spirits and we usually had a good time. We had to take our own lunch and bottles of water and jam sandwiches were the order of the day.

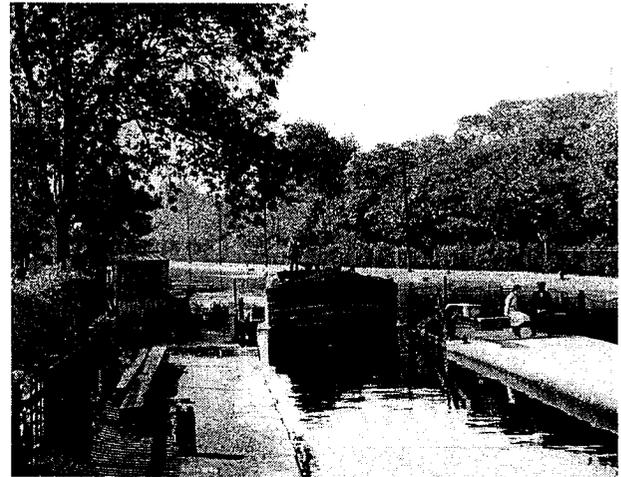
On special occasions there were film shows put on at the settlement where a projector was set up at one end of the hall. When we were all seated either on chairs or on the floor, a selection of flickering black and white silent movies were shown, favourites like Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, Harold Lloyd etc and the occasional silent western with Tom Mix or Buck Jones, which were well received. The added bonus was that the show did not cost us anything other than the half penny subs.

At Christmas time there was an annual party in the hall where we all received a portion of jelly and ice cream and a few sandwiches, biscuits and cakes all washed down with a glass of lemonade. In addition to the party we each received a small present from Father Christmas. If you had above average attendance you had the chance to go to another party that was held at Queen Mary's College in the Mile End Road. There were even outings arranged to the local Christmas pantomime, which was held at the Poplar Civic Theatre in Fairfield Road.

I left Smeed Road School at the age of eleven and progressed to secondary education. There were no comprehensive schools at that time. The move coincided with acceptance into the Pilgrim House Under Fourteens Club. This was where we learned the basic skills of Table Tennis, Draughts, Chess, Darts, Dominoes and

a game that I had no knowledge of, Shove Halfpenny. At the time we did not realise this but the latter three were associated with pub games. On occasions we were even allowed to have the wireless on, this was considered to be very 'grown up.'

Jim Crouch



Old Ford Lock at Victoria Park, 1933

East London History Society – 50th Anniversary Call for Papers

The East London History Society will be celebrating its 50th anniversary next year 2002, with a special publication to commemorate the event.

Articles are welcomed from all our members, on any topic connected with the East End of London. If possible, please supply articles on disk and include photographs and illustrations.

Please send your material to Doreen Kendall, 20 Puteaux House, Cranbrook Estate, Bethnal Green, London E2 0RF, or Philip Mernick, 42 Campbell Road, Bow, London E3 4DT .

The deadline is 31st March 2002.

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AUTUMN COACH TRIP

SUNDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER 2001

THE ROYAL GUNPOWDER MILLS & THE TOWN OF WALTHAM ABBEY

Ever since the Middle Ages, the River Lea and its branches have worked many mills. Gunpowder mills have existed on this site since 1662, and explosives continued to be made here till the Second World War, when it became too vulnerable to enemy bombing. It continued to be used for research into explosives till 10 years ago.

Recently it has opened as a museum, with an exhibition and film show. A 'Land Train', towed by a tractor, takes visitors past the surviving buildings, and deep into the woods, where the remains of others are buried. If lucky, you may see deer and foxes.

We shall be visiting this first. Lunches are available in the café, or bring a picnic. Later in the afternoon, we shall visit the town of Waltham Abbey, where there is a local museum (free), and the fine church where King Harold was buried. Teas are available in the town.

The pick-up will be at Mile End, at the bus pull-in in Grove Road (not our usual place but just round the corner), at 9.45 am. We should not be too late back as it is a short journey.

The coach fare will be £7.00. Entrance to the Gunpowder Mills is £4.90 full rate, or £4.25 concessions, £2.50 children. If you have any queries, please ring me on 020 8524 4506. Please send your bookings to me, Ann Sansom, 18 Hawkdene, London E4 7PF

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AUTUMN COACH TRIP The Royal Gunpowder Mills and the Town of Waltham Abbey Sunday 30 th September 2001	
I/We would like _____	seat/s for the coach trip.
NAME/S _____	
ADDRESS _____	

TEL. NO. _____	I enclose a cheque/PO for £ _____
(Cheque made payable to the East London History Society.)	