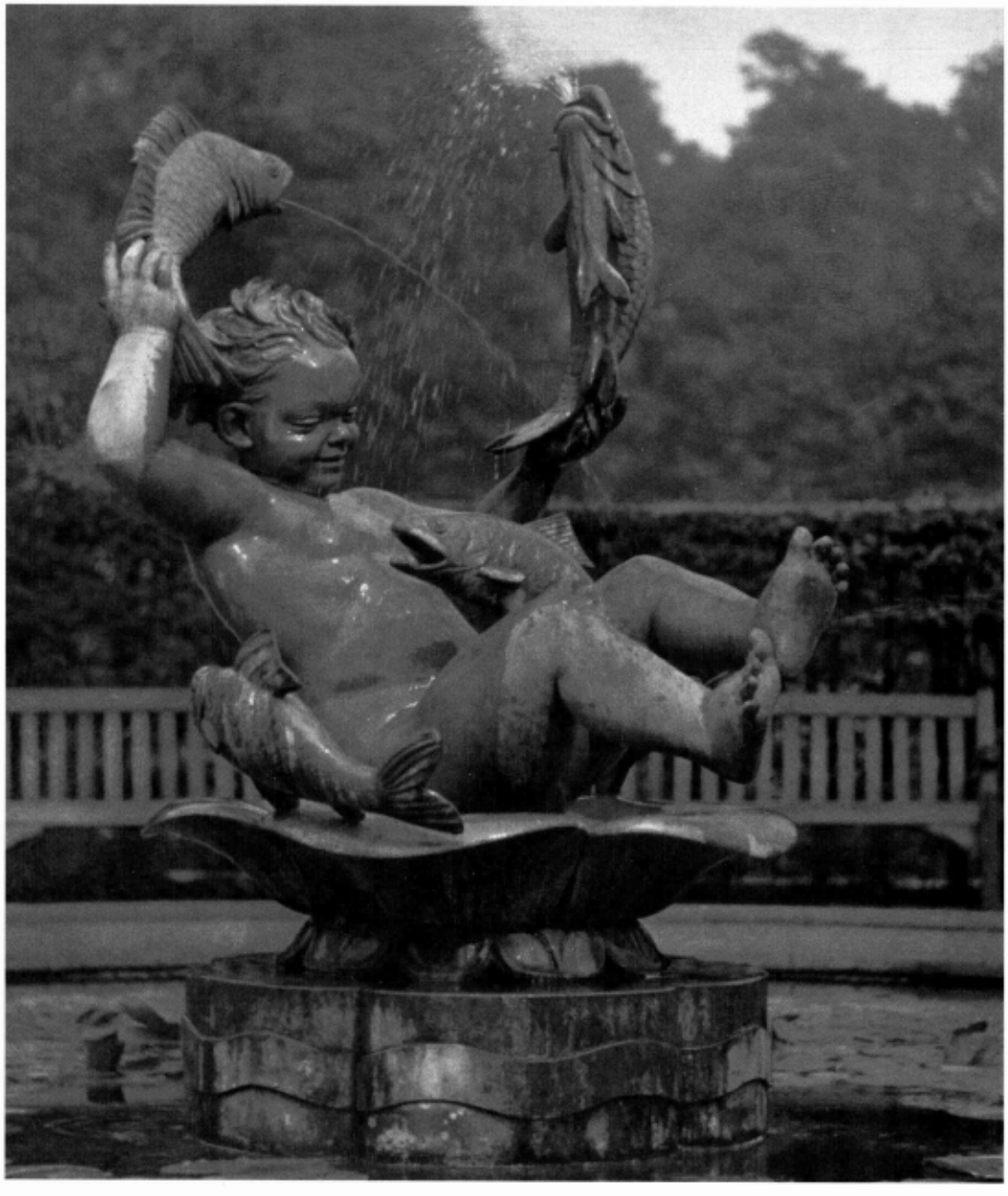
East London History Society

NEWSLETTER

Volume 2 Issue 3 Summer 2002

50TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY

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 Doreen Kendall, David Behr, Philip Mernick and Doreen Osborn.

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!

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Web site: htpp://www.eastlondonhistory.org.uk for up-to-date information and interesting features.

The present committee are: Philip Mernick, Chairman; Doreen Kendall, Secretary; Harold Mernick, Membership; David Behr, Programme; Ann Sansom, Doreen Osbom, Bob Dunn, and Rosemary Taylor.

This special 50th anniversary issue is in the format of the East London Record of which 19 editions were produced between 1978 and 1998. It was edited by Philip Mernick with the assistance of Rosemary Taylor and Doreen Kendal and printed by Doppler Press of Brentwood.

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Front cover illustration: Photograph of "Young Tom" exhibited by William Turner at the Bethnal Green Camera Club's Exhibition of Pictorial Photography in 1952. The fountain was presented to Victoria Park by the Constance Fund in 1950 but was later moved to Golders Hill Park.

Rear cover illustration: Original notice announcing the proposed creation of an East London History Group in September 1952.

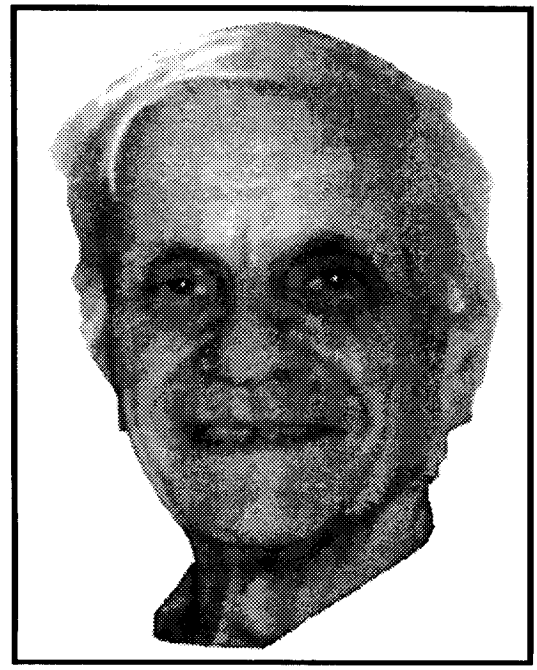
NEWSLETTER

Volume 2 Issue 3 **Summer 2002**

50th Anniversary Issue

JOHN E HARRIS

(10 December 1929 – 16 April 2002)



We were all greatly shocked and saddened by the sudden death of our friend and colleague, John Harris. As Membership Secretary, he was in constant touch with past and present members of the East London History Society, checking names and addresses, sending out forms and receiving subscriptions, and constantly updating the membership list. John also undertook an enormous amount of research on behalf of those members who were unable to make the journey to London to check the archives at Bancroft Local History Library, the Family Record Centre and the Metropolitan Archives.

John was born in Bow on the 10th December 1929, and lived with his parents, younger brother and two sisters in Poplar. He had not yet reached his tenth birthday, when war was declared. He and his family endured the bombing of the East End during the Blitz and later the V1 and V2 rocket attacks. In June 1943, a V2 rocket, intended for the local gas works exploded in the street where they lived. As it was early morning, John was in the house, getting ready for work, even though the air raid siren had sounded. The rocket fell on the houses directly opposite his house, demolishing it, along with the neighbouring houses. John, who was injured, had to be pulled from the wreckage. Several of his neighbours were killed or injured. Fortunately, his mother, brother and sisters who had taken refuge in the Anderson shelter, were unharmed.

After the war John, aged seventeen and a half, joined the Royal Navy, following in his father's footsteps. He served for seven years on various types of ships and submarines, travelling all over the world, and was on active duty during the Suez crisis. Following his service in the RN he tried his hand at various jobs in civvy street, but couldn't settle, and before long he was back at sea, having joined the Merchant Navy. He spent several years

as a merchant seaman, before deciding to settle for life on land, trying out several jobs, including a stint at the Bank Side Power Station, which is now the Tate Modern. Eventually he found employment with British Rail as a maintenance worker, and remained with them until his retirement. It was during this time that he became interested in local history, joining the East London History Society, and taking on research on behalf of the members. Research became his passion, and he took on some challenging tasks, helping to trace lost relatives in various parts of the world, including those who had become separated during the war. He also took on the task of tracing war memorials throughout the East End of London and recording the names of those listed on them. His family were well aware of how much this work meant to John, as he shared with them the numerous letters he received from all over the world. He was also very particular about dating all Christmas and Birthday cards for future reference.

John was membership secretary for the East London History Society for about ten years, and was responsible for mailing the newsletter out twice a year. His contributions to the newsletters were original and entertaining, and provided invaluable insights into various aspects of local history.

He spent hours at Bancroft Local History Library, poring over the pages of old newspapers, and would always pass on relevant information he happened to come across, to those of us researching particular subjects. At history society lectures, John could be found behind the counter, making and serving the teas. Members wishing to consult him would have to make their way into the kitchen!

John's illness was sudden and unexpected. He attended a committee meeting, then hurried away as usual to catch his train. His sister became concerned when he failed to respond to her telephone calls, and on 2nd April contacted the police, who found John collapsed on the bathroom floor. He was transferred to Oldchurch Hospital, and was in intensive care for two weeks, during which time the only visitors allowed were the immediate family. Sadly, he died on Tuesday the 16th April, and was cremated on the 22nd April at the City of London Cemetery.

1952 – FROM THE PAGES OF THE EAST LONDON ADVERTISER

All information and quotations reprinted with the publisher's permission.

From the Headlines

January
'Fruiter bought nylons from the "spiv boys"' He was fined £16 with 5 guineas costs 'for harbouring 20 pairs of American Nylon stockings with intent to defraud the Revenue of the duty due on them' Many commodities were still rationed in 1952 and every week there were reports of people prosecuted for buying, selling or possessing restricted items. Amongst these were tea, bacon, ham, butter and wood!
In August a man who "sold sugar confectionery without the surrender of points" was sentenced to nine months in prison and fined £300.
At the premier of the film "Where No Vultures Fly" at the Troxy, a vulture hired from Chipperfield's Circus for a publicity stunt, escaped and flew around the auditorium before it could be recaptured.

February
'East London Mourns' (death of King George the Sixth).
'Shortage of steel hits Bethnal Green building – has practically disappeared from the honest market'
'Homes in "skyscraper" for Bethnal Green" (plans for a 10 storey block of flats)
'Thieves strip lead from roof of Poplar Library. Metal valued at £40'
'Bombed Hospital building still eyesore' (damage caused by a flying bomb to St Clement's Hospital in 1944 had still not been repaired)

March
'66% - 100% bus fare increases "scandalous" says Poplar Councillor'
(Bank to London Hospital now 2d (0.8p) and Bank to Bow Bridge now 5d (2p)
'Lady Bennet L.C.C. (Conservative) attacks the plan for huge comprehensive schools'

April
'Bethnal Green sewermen to be paid 1d (0.4p) per hour boot money when required to work in water'
16,000 people on the waiting list for telephones in the East area (Poplar to Tilbury and Epping).
'Freddie Mills opens new Lasky Radio Store'

May
'St Katherines - large house in Brunswick Rd, 30 room, 3 storey mansion built three centuries ago – demolished – to be replaced by lock up garages.
'Lansbury Landmark Opened – 78 feet high clock tower, cost £9500' (Chrisp Street Market)
'Victoria Park Lido reopened after war damage'

August
'First children's outing from East London Mosque (to Southend)'
'Fire at Oxford House destroys greater part of roof'

September
'New Bow open air school replaces war damaged pre-war building' (Phoenix School, Bow Road)
October
'The Duke of Edinburgh opens King George's Fields, Rhodeswell Road'
'Wilfred Pickles visits Mann Crossman & Paulin's Brewery. Interviews staff for a radio programme, including some who

witnessed the siege of Sidney Street in 1911'

November
'Bow's Bells Ring Again – church to be re-hallowed and re-dedicated'

December
'Sixty deaths during the Great Fog - bus stoppage (because of the fog) isolates Isle of Dogs'
Sixty years will elapse before Bow Cemetery is full – future discussed at public enquiry' The last burial was actually only fourteen years later in 1966.
'PLA want Mudchute for a new dock, Poplar Allotment Society object at enquiry'

Some of the films shown in 1952.

The Day the Earth Stood Still
Michael Rennie and Patricia Neal
The Magic Box, Robert Donat
Outcast of the Islands, Ralph Richardson, Trevor Howard and Wendy Hiller
The African Queen, Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn
A Streetcar named Desire, Vivien Leigh and Marlon Brando
Fort Apache, John Wayne and Henry Fonda
The Greatest Show on Earth, Charlton Heston and Dorothy Lamour
High Noon, Gary Cooper and Grace Kelly
Singing in the Rain, Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor and Debbie Reynolds
The Quiet Man, John Wayne, Maureen O'Hara and Victor McLaglen (born in Stepney)
Carrie, Laurence Olivier and Jennifer Jones
The Importance of being Ernest, Michael Dennison, Edith Evans
Son of Paleface, Bob Hope and Jane Russell
Ivanhoe, Robert Taylor and Joan Fontaine

What things cost in 1952

Vincent Rapide Motor Cycle £375
Wolsey Hornet Car (prewar?) £120 o.n.o.
1935 Hillman Minx "offers over £100"
"The New Austin Somerset" £467 + £260/18s/11d Purchase Tax (the level of tax on "luxury" goods was much higher in 1952 than current V.A.T)
Sports jackets (Gardiner's Store) from 63 shillings (£3.15)
Televisions (from Lasky's) £69 to £167
Rail trips- Victoria to Margate 11 shillings (55p), to Brighton 8 shillings (40p)
Weekend day cruises by Eagle Steamer from Tower Pier – Southend 8 shillings (40p), Clacton 16 shillings (80p), Margate 18 shillings (90p). Weekdays were usually cheaper.
New houses at Hainault, Woodford, Upminster from £1795 "no hidden extra costs"

Information collated by Philip Mernick from copies of the East London Advertiser in Tower Hamlets Local History Library, Bancroft Road.

Coins from 1952 (1.8 times actual size). The first coins of Elizabeth II were dated 1953

"OUR SUSAN"

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ARABELLA SUSAN LAWRENCE

Susan Lawrence was a well known and respected politician who worked alongside George Lansbury in the East End of London in the years leading up to and after the First World War. She was one of the five women on the Poplar Council who went to prison along with the other councillors in September 1921, for refusing to levy council taxes.

However, unlike George Lansbury and the other councillors, including her women colleagues Susan Lawrence was not an East Ender. Her background and childhood were very different from those who grew up in the often harsh living conditions that prevailed in the East End of London, when men and women struggled to earn a living in the docks and in the factories, working long hours for poor wages.

Susan was born in Paddington on the 12th August 1871, at No. 44 Westbourne Terrace, Paddington. She was the fifth daughter of Nathaniel Tertius Lawrence and Laura J J Lawrence (nee Bacon), and was christened Arabella Susan Lawrence. Two years after Susan was born, came James, the youngest and only son.

The 1881 census shows the Lawrence family living at 44 Westbourne Terrace, Paddington. The household consisted of Nathaniel and Laura Lawrence and their six children, Laura, Jane, Lydia, Helen, Arabella Susan and James. Then there were Edmund Law, the butler, Richard Read, the footman, Elizabeth Frost, the cook, Mary Bayliss, the housemaid, Elizabeth Taylor, the nurse, Mary Jones, the ladysmaid, and Elizabeth Norman, the kitchen maid. Also in the house at the time of the census was Katherine Hill, a teacher and governess, who was visiting.

Susan Lawrence came from a distinguished legal family. Her father Nathaniel Lawrence was a wealthy solicitor at Lincoln's Inn; her grandfather, Sir James Bacon was at one time vice-chancellor of the old Court of Chancery. One of her uncles was Mr Justice Bacon, of Whitechapel and Marylebone County Court, another was Mr Justice Lawrence, a Chancery Judge. Her brother James continued the family tradition, by joining the legal profession.

Susan Lawrence was educated at Newnham College Cambridge, which she entered in 1895 at the age of 24, where she took the mathematical tripos and was awarded a BA. Her friend and colleague in the Fabian Society, Clara Rackham, who knew her at

college, recalled that she made a lasting impression there. She was not only tall, upright and dignified, but had a disconcerting habit of looking at people through a lorgnette, which she needed as she was extremely short-sighted. Her popularity at college was established when her fellow students discovered she had a piano in her room, although she was quite unmusical, and did not play. She also had a Dalmatian dog which followed her as she bicycled around the campus. Susan did not play any games, but spent her leisure time cycling and boating on the river, where she proved her skills in rowing and sculling. She also led the Tory Party in the College Political Society and during her college days was a passionate Conservative.

During her third year at college, Susan's father died, and so at the end of that year, she returned home to live with her mother in London.

As a Conservative she joined the London School Board in 1900, but Susan Lawrence found herself at odds with Tory policies. She stood for the London County Council in 1910 from Marylebone and was elected to the LCC from that safe Conservative seat, although she declared herself a Moderate. One of her main interests in education was securing for Church Schools the same advantages enjoyed by schools administered by the School Board and later the Council. Her conversion to Labour came about through an inquiry she conducted into the circumstances of the charwomen employed by the LCC. She was dismayed and horrified at the low wages and poor working conditions of women school cleaners, and when she found her colleagues on the LCC indifferent to the grievances of these women, Susan took the brave step of resigning not only from the Conservative Party but also relinquished her seat on the LCC, and in 1912 she joined the Labour Party. This was a difficult decision to make, as there seemed to be no possibility of her being re-elected as a Labour member.

It was through her efforts to secure better conditions for women school cleaners that she met Mary MacArthur, who was at that time Secretary of the Women's Trade Union League. From 1919 to 1921 she helped Mary MacArthur to organise the National Federation of Women Workers. One of her first tasks was to organise factory girls and women in the East End of London, and she threw herself enthusiastically into the fray, speaking outside factory gates to an initially sceptical audience, who were amused by her intellectual voice and manner as well as her monocle, which had by now replaced the lorgnette. Some of the girls mocked her by putting pennies on their eyes in imitation of her monocle. It was at this time that she sought George Lansbury's advice on how to gain the confidence and support of the East End working women, and his reply was honest and straightforward, with words to the effect: "Lose the monocle and cigarette-holder." Susan Lawrence persevered, and won the confidence of the factory girls and women, organising their trades unions and becoming a member of at least five trade boards.

In 1913 Susan Lawrence was elected by Poplar to represent them on the LCC, a post she continued to hold throughout her political career. As the first Labour woman in the London County Council, her chief concern was for children from poor homes and she fought a hard and initially solitary battle against proposals in 1923 to economise at the expense of meals to needy children.

In 1919 Susan was elected an Alderman to the Poplar Borough Council, where she focused her efforts on behalf of the unemployed. Together with her fellow councillors and aldermen, she took a firm stand against the policy which meant that

the poor of Poplar had to find the means to support the unemployed and destitute within their own borough, whilst the wealthier parts of London, such as Westminster, with few poor of their own to maintain, could levy lower rates from their communities. The resulting revolt by the Poplar Councillors led to their conviction for contempt of court, and in September 1921, the majority of the council were sent to prison for six weeks. Whilst the male councillors served their time in Brixton, the five women were sent to Holloway prison, where so many suffragettes were imprisoned during their great struggle for women's right to vote.

Sylvia Pankhurst, who worked closely with the working women of Poplar and Bow, organising the East London suffragette campaign from her headquarters in Bow, dismissed Susan Lawrence with the words, 'She was never a suffragist, but she was one of the first to receive the fruits of the struggle when women received the Parliamentary vote.' (The Home Front, page 428). This statement, however, is not borne out by the facts. Susan did belong to the National Union of Women's Suffrage, organised by Mrs Fawcett, and attended suffrage meetings held at the Poplar Town Hall on several occasions from 1913 onwards. But as she did not lend her wholehearted support to the militant suffragette movement, preferring the law-abiding, moderate movement to press women's claim for franchise and equality, she earned the disapproval of Sylvia Pankhurst. 'Susan Lawrence, like many other successful politicians, preferred to mount the political ladder by a reputation for being moderate, leaving the noisy work to other people.' This observation was a response to Susan's remark that Sylvia was 'so delightfully noisy!'

Until the death of her mother Susan continued to live at home, but after her election to the LCC as a member for Poplar, she moved to the East End. She lived at 212 East India Dock Road, near the Blackwall Tunnel. Nellie Cressall, who was a councillor for Poplar for many years, and was one of the five women who went to

The five women councillors on their way to Holloway, September 1921 (Susan standing).

prison, along with Susan, lived at 210 East India Dock Road. She remained in Poplar throughout the First World War, despite the many threats of air raids. Susan Lawrence moved house several times during the next few years. She lived with Mary MacArthur in Golders Green for a time, then at Adam House, 16a John Street, in the Adelphi, from 1922 to 1925, before moving to a flat in a house in Millbank, which had been the home of Sidney and Beatrice Webb. She had a wide circle of friends and loved entertaining them at evening parties. Susan also travelled widely, visiting Palestine, the West Indies, the USA, Mexico and Russia.

Susan Lawrence made her first attempt to enter Parliament in 1920, when she stood unsuccessfully in a by-election in Camberwell, but three years later she was elected Labour Member of Parliament for East Ham North in 1923-24. She was joined by two other Labour women MPs Margaret Bondfield and Dorothy Jewson. After the fall of the Labour government, Susan lost her seat, but was re-elected in 1926 -31, and from 1929-31 she was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

She was the first Labour woman Member to be announced as elected to Parliament, the first woman to be elected to Parliament from a London borough, and soon after her election made history as the first Labour woman to address the House. She made her maiden speech on the 16th January 1924, and spoke on question of the provision of school meals, on which the Board of Education had ordered drastic cuts, which she argued was contrary to the Act of Parliament in the Provision of Meals Act. Her passionate eloquence on the occasion gave ample evidence that her concern for the education and welfare of children was still of primary importance to her.

One particularly memorable speech Susan Lawrence made in Parliament was on 27th November 1928 during the debate on a new Local Government Bill. She spoke for fifty minutes, the longest speech any woman had made in Parliament up to that time. As the Daily Express reported it, few of her male colleagues on the opposition benches could follow the intricacies of her arguments in criticism of the financial clauses. They listened, it was reported, half in surprise at her ability and half in pride and pleasure that such a fine performance should come from their side. Her weapons were logic and derision, and she urged the government to abandon all the local government reforms proposed in the scheme. Her explanation of how the government had worked out its formula for distributing grants caused great amusement. It was put together, she said, piece by piece, and then some particularly bright young man came along and suggested: "Let's multiply instead of adding." She concluded her speech by declaring; "Mr Chamberlain won't go down to posterity as a reformer of local government, but as the man who tried to break up its fabric." She was given a great ovation when she sat down and was congratulated immediately by Ramsay MacDonald. One MP summed it all up by saying that nothing would ever convince the House that anybody except Mr Neville Chamberlain and Miss Susan Lawrence really understood what the Government's proposals were.

For this splendid effort Susan found herself caricatured in Punch as the Red Queen saying to Alice (the House of Commons): "She can't do sums a bit."

The next year Susan Lawrence was rewarded with the office of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health. Her main concerns during this time were the Poor Law and the relief of the unemployed. She was deeply concerned at the conditions prevailing in the tramp wards at the Workhouses and worked hard at bringing about improvements.

She was also elected Vice Chairman of the Labour Party and in 1930 became the first woman Chairman of the Labour Party. In her presidential address she described mass unemployment as the price of the continuance of capitalism.

In later years her tall, gaunt figure with rather close cropped grey hair, piercing eyes and husky voice, was still familiar in political circles. She was considered by many to be the most transparently honest and unegotistical of politically minded women. She has been described as a product of the 19th century's enthusiasm for the higher education of women. She was also deemed to be rather eccentric, and a trial to her fellow committee members, as she tended to become so obsessed by what interested her at the moment that she did not pay much attention to the views expressed by others. Clara Rackham states that Susan was a forceful, impressive and amusing speaker, but she sometimes forgot the audience and its needs in her absorption in pressing home her point of view. "You can't shift Susan" was one slogan adorning the walls in Poplar. She was referred to as 'Our Susan' by both the leading figures and the rank and file of the Labour Party.

Susan had an exasperating habit of losing her belongings. She was once asked what she would wish for, and suggested that perhaps it could be the return of all she had lost over the years, but at the thought of the fountain pens, umbrellas and handbags all winging their way back to her, she added that she would need to engage the Albert Hall to store them in!

During the Second World War the house in Millbank was damaged by bombs and for a time she moved to Berkshire, to the home of Lord Faringdon in Buscot Park. She spent her enforced retirement from London learning to transcribe books for the blind into Braille, before moving back to London in 1945. However ill-health forced her retirement from politics and public life, but despite being an invalid for the last two years of her life, she took a keen interest in public affairs right up to the end.

Susan Lawrence died aged 76 on Friday 24th October 1947, at her home in Braham Gardens, South Kensington. Her funeral took place at Golders Green Crematorium, on Wednesday 29th October at 2.30 pm.

Her assets when she died totalled £10,471. In her will she bequeathed an annuity of £104 to her housekeeper Emily Woodley.

The only memorial to her life and work with the Labour Party and in Poplar is the school named in her honour in Carmen Street, Poplar, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

c. Rosemary Taylor 2002

Sources:

Newspaper and magazine cuttings, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Local History Library archives, Bancroft Road.
The Home Front by E Sylvia Pankhurst, 1932.
Poplarism by Noreen Branson, 1979

Illustrations

Sketch of Susan Lawrence supplied by L.B. Newham Archive & Leisure Services
"Go to jail " supplied by Rosemary Taylor

DROUGHT AND DIVIDENDS.

It is certainly not unusual these days to read articles and letters in the press criticising directors of companies, including Water Companies, who receive high salaries and bonuses even when the companies fail their customers. However, this is not a modern phenomenon as the following situation illustrates.

At the end of the 19th century before the formation of the Metropolitan Water Board most domestic and industrial East London water users received their supplies from the East London Water Company —a public company with shareholders. Its supplies came mainly from the river Lea and if the river ran low its available supplies diminished with consequent shortages for the customers.

This was particularly so in 1898 yet during this shortage the Company announced that its dividends would be maintained at 7%, which although satisfactory for the shareholders was anathema to the customers who still had to pay full water rates for a diminished supply.

This situation prompted a poetic response in the 6 October 1898 issue of the magazine 'Truth' headed 'Drought and Dividends'.

Drought and Dividends

The East London Water Company
announces in its just published report that
the dividend for the last half year will be at
the unreduced rate of 7%.

'Tis true the water in the pipes
Has dwindled week by week away.
'Tis true the taps now only drip
At most four short hours a day.
'Tis true that inconveniences great
Pervade the East of London town.
But the, per contra, please to note
The dividend has not gone down.

The folks who pay the water rates
Are doubtless very vexed and sore.
But placid Mr Crookenden
Is optimistic as before
His Board can't understand at all
Why the poor customers should frown.
For after all this scare and fuss
The dividend has not gone down

That thousands cannot wash themselves
Is at the most a trivial thing
Which can't excuse the epithets
Which at the Board some people fling
But even should those epithets
Affect the Company's renown
They can't affect the cheering fact
The dividend has not gone down.

So what though Vestries meet and talk
In heated tones of what they'll do
What though East End MPs announce
The drastic course they will pursue
What matters anything so long
As still their policy to crown
The Board can cheerily announce
Our dividend has not gone down.

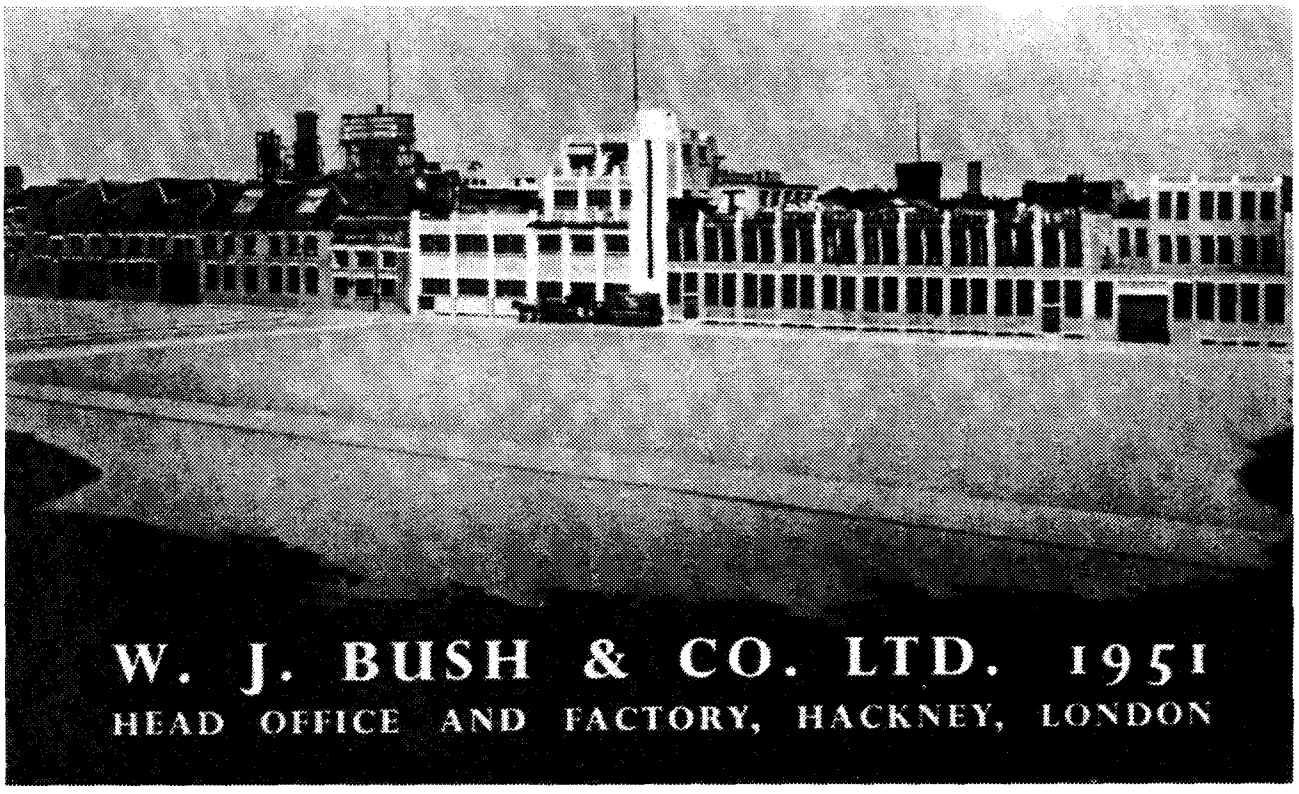
Do things change? If one can be facetious
so far as the Water company was concerned
this was just water off a duck's back.

John H Boyes
President, Chingford Historical Society.

W.J. BUSH, HACKNEY – BY AN OLD EMPLOYEE

This letter was found in a 1959 issue of "Bush Telegraph" the house magazine of W.J. Bush Limited of Ash Grove Hackney. W.J. Bush was founded in 1851 and became one of the world's largest manufacturers of food flavourings, perfumes and aromatic chemicals. It moved from it s original Artillery Lane site to Ash Grove in 1885 and remained there until the 1970s , by which time it had been taken over by Albright & Wilson and merged into its new Bush Boake Allen (BBA) conglomerate. After various changes of ownership BBA was purchased by International Flavours and Fragrances (IFF) in 2000 and the Bush name finally disappeared. The Editor, having worked for that Company for 35 years took on the task of ensuring that what remained of the archives of BBA and its three predecessor components (WJ Bush, A Boake Roberts and Stafford Allen) all with East London connections) were deposited with Hackney Archives.

The letter gives an insight into how an international business was run before the days of computers, emails, faxes and airplanes!



To The Editors of the Bush Telegraph
MELBOURNE, 1st March 1958

Dear Sirs,

Every time I read a copy of the above publication, I get quite a thrill, especially when there appears news of the olden days, so I think maybe some of your other readers would like to learn further information.

I started with the Company on the 25.6.1882, and although it is three-quarters of a century ago since my first day in the office, I can still picture it and all the staff.

All in the office, including Messrs. W. E. and R. A. BUSH, likewise Mr. MORTIMORE, were on high stools without any backs to lean against. Mr. C. SANSOM TAYLOR also had a desk table where he wrote out his order sheets. In addition to the aforementioned, the office staff consisted of the following: GREENSWARD and FRY, who attended to

town orders, GEORGE TAYLOR, who in conjunction with C. SANSOM TAYLOR, looked after the export department, HOPWOOD who attended to overdue accounts CLARKE who wrote up the Town and Country ledgers; JACQUES and BUDGE, who looked after country orders, J. BISCHOFF, a Swiss, who attended to some foreign correspondence in French or German, mostly the latter. There was another clerk whose name I have forgotten who looked after the Returned Empties, a most unenviable job, BENGER who did the advising of country travellers' visits and made out and sent lists of same to the travellers. I started as his assistant, but I did not stay long with him as I took the place of the aforementioned GEORGE TAYLOR in the Export Department, as I knew a lot about shipping which I had learned in my previous situation.
Later on as I realised there were great promises in the future of the Company, I looked about to see how I could be prepared for such. At school I had learned some French so I decided to continue by taking night lessons, which 1 did, and also German and Spanish, and I found these languages useful indeed in the business from time to time.

There was DAY who wrote up the Purchases and Foreign ledgers, but they were not loose leaf and they were huge tomes and heavy to carry, and by the time the pages were filled it was a job to wade through the sheets when wanting a name. There was CATO our cashier, who however was in a small separate room by himself. It was a very happy office and we all helped one another when and where necessary.

Our town travellers were WOOLLEY, C. S. TAYLOR and DRURY, but the first two mentioned also called regularly on customers in cities and towns adjacent to London. such as St. ALBANS, LUTON, BERKHAMSTED, STAINES, EPSOM, SLOUGH, CHATHAM, etc.

Our Country travellers were HANDS, who worked BIRMINGHAM, MANCHESTER, LIVERPOOL and SCOTLAND; OWEN the NORTH-EAST COUNTIES; FARMER, NORTH-WEST COUNTIES, NORTH WALES and IRELAND; SPAULL, SOUTH-WESTERN and SOUTHERN COUNTIES and also SOUTH WALES; WELLS did the SOUTH-EASTERN and EASTERN COUNTIES.

We had a traveller who covered most of EUROPE, HERR GRUNWALD, who was constantly on the move and 1 saw him only once between 1882 and 1892 and 1 do not think he visited LONDON except in 1892. He covered a lot of territory as far as TURKESTAN (BOKHARA), PERSIA (TEHERAN), SIBERIA as far north as (Tomsk) east (OMSK), etc., THE CAUCASUS, SOUTH RUSSIA, where he did a large business, TURKEY, GREECE, EGYPT, THE BALKAN COUNTRIES, AUSTRIA, ITALY, SWITZERLAND, GERMANY and POLAND. He was not allowed to go to NORTHERN RUSSIA, MOSCOW, PETERSBURG, etc., as we had an arrangement with two customers in HAMBURG who looked after NORTH RUSSIA. They were both named BEHR, but they had separate businesses. They ordered large quantities of a No. 1 Essence, packed in cases of 12 or 18 five-pound Winchesters and we shipped to REVAL or RIGA, according to whether the first mentioned port was frozen up in the winter.

We also had an agent in HAMBURG for the City only, but I do not remember his name. Our agent for BELGIUM was JAUMENNE VANDERVELD and GUSTAVE OULMANN of PARIS was our agent for FRANCE. We were not represented in any of the following countries, viz., HOLLAND, SPAIN, PORTUGAL, THE SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES or FINLAND.

We had a travelling representative who made an annual visit to the chief cities in Australia and New Zealand, but he also represented CLARKE, NICHOLS & COOMBES, CLARKES NIGHT (NITE) LIGHTS, PEARS SOAP, a line of Chest Protectors and a brand of Scotch Whisky, etc.

Our agent for U.S.A. was T. T. GROSSMITH, NEW YORK, but he was only able to send an occasional order for Fruit Oils (so called): Raspberry and Strawberry, they were known as TTG quality, as they were created specially for his business, but it was very small.

In Canada we had only one customer, who bought now and then ten pounds each of

Essence Raspberry and Strawberry No.1 qualities. The name of the customer was HESSUI, MONTREAL.

In South Africa we were represented by COLONEL CHRISTIE, CAPETOWN, but I was not at all satisfied with the business he was sending us and one day I spoke to the Founder what I thought about it and I said I felt confident were he to send me out there I could do much better. He thought for a while and said, "No, you are too young." This was, I believe, in 1888 when I was 23. I then decided to grow a beard to make myself appear older. I was passing through Paris in 1906 on one of my visits to London when I thought I would have my beard shaved off, but the barber I went to refused to do the job, he said it was wicked to do so as it was so fashionable then however, as he saw I was determined, he at last consented to do the job. Just then there was a great scare in France and spies were everywhere, and when boarding the steamer at BOULOGNE I was stopped on the gangway and it took me some time to convince the officials of my bona-fides. I was not altogether surprised as I did look strange, as though I wished to disguise myself with my face partly brown and partly white. I was wearing a Trilby or Homburg hat and I carried an attaché case, typical of a spy. I think that my growing a beard did have the desired effect and made me look older than I really was, as I found in the office everyone came to me if they had an unusual query and asked my advice and if there was any special mission I was picked for same. On two occasions I was very glad when they were finished satisfactorily, as I was really scared. The first was when I went down to BRIGHTON with an open but unsigned cheque to get the Founder's signature, as he was ill in bed and was the only one who could sign the cheques then. It was to pay the week's wages for HACKNEY and ARTILLERY LANE. The second was when the Founder entrusted me with an open cheque for about £3,000, a large sum in those days, which I was to cash at our Bankers, Roberts, Lubbock & Co., Lombard Street, in those days, and take the cash to another bank and collect some Bills of Lading in exchange.

On arrival at Artillery Lane one morning in 1884 or 1885, 1 found that during the previous night the building had been gutted by fire and all but I were dismissed for the day. I was kept back in case a messenger might be required. However, the Founder, who was a genius in arranging and getting things done, soon secured premises in Devonshire Square, and with carpenters and other workmen continuing through the night, the temporary building was available the next morning. We stayed at Devonshire Square until renovations were made to the old building, but we of the office suffered to some extent, as formerly we had a kitchen (with cook and maid) but it had not been provided again. We had been able to obtain a good wholesome meal midday for about 9d to 10d. The Founder also had his daily chop and water-cress, except on Wednesdays when he lunched in the City. We had a nice large room and we all, including Mr. MORTIMORE, sat at the one long table where we ate and talked. Messrs. W. E. and R. A. BUSH did not honour our table with their presence, but went to the City. There was no tea or coffee served, only water. Smoking was prohibited.

Our Warehouse in Artillery Lane opened at 8.30 a.m. and the office at 9 a.m. and closed at 6 p.m. throughout the year, with one hour for our midday meal, but on Saturday we closed at 2 p.m. without any break. Morning or afternoon teas were unheard of in those days. As many as could be spared on Saturday morning went out collecting accounts. I did the City, also NORTH and NORTH-EAST of LONDON. Incidentally, SKUSE, the original author of "THE COMPLETE CONFECTIONER ", was one I called on regularly. We had only five public holidays, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Whitsun Monday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. August Bank Holiday came later on. We had a week's holiday annually, from Saturday afternoon until the following Monday morning week, i.e., 7 days. If we had occasion to work back at night we were not paid overtime but we could draw a flat rate of 10d. for tea money.
The light in the office was very poor as we only

had gas jets with fantail burners, as there were no electric or neon lights, not even incandescent mantles but these came later to our benefit.
Letters were written in copying ink and in the Export Department most invoices also. Copies were taken on thin tissue paper in a copying press, three or four copies in some instances, and it was a messy job, as if the tissues were too wet they would smear, and if too dry the copies were illegible and we had to fill them in with pencil or ink. It may be interesting to know that our first Typist and Shorthand writer was Mr. I.H. KING, who joined up in 1891 or 1892. No female clerks were employed till later, after I left for Australia in 1893.

As compared with present salary or wages, our remuneration seems now very low, but taking into account the then value of the £, such was not the case. I do not know what any of my colleagues were receiving, but they all appeared to be quite satisfied and I never heard any complaint from them to the contrary. I was employed for three years in my first situation from 14 to 17 years of age at 5s. 6d. weekly, and I walked to and from Mincing Lane, about four miles each way, notwithstanding the state of the weather. A few days ago I read in a periodical that in about 1882 a bank junior clerk for the first five years received only from £10 to £12 per annum and afterwards increased to £50 per annum. When I applied for a position with the Company, Mr. W. E. BUSH asked me how much I wanted and I told him 8s. per week, he then said "How much are you getting in your present job?" I told him 5s. to which he replied "You are asking a lot." but I replied I think I am worth it ", so he said "You can start on Monday next ". From then on I received yearly rises until, at the age of 26, I was receiving £2 2s. per week, but in 1893, about four weeks before I left for Australia, I was advanced to £2 10s. All commodities such as foods generally, meat, vegetables, clothing, boots, etc., were very cheap and always plentiful. Meat was all home-killed, not frozen or imported. House rents were low, as a decent small villa with garden back and front and two bedrooms, parlour, large kitchen (but no gas or electric stoves) and laundry with copper, could be rented for about 10s. 6d, including all rates and taxes. Very few residences, large or small, had bathrooms, so if you wanted a bath you had to light up the copper and have a bath in a tub or go to the Municipal Baths. It was not an unusual thing for people when they went away for their annual vacation at the seaside or elsewhere, to take their bath with them and same would be with their luggage on top of a cab, growler or feverbox, as they were then called.

Doctors' fees were low. If you called on him or he visited your home, the family doctor only charged 2s. 6d. inclusive of medicine, as the doctors made up their own prescriptions. There were few dentists, who only charged 2s. 6d. to either treat a tooth or to extract a decayed tooth but without an anaesthetic. The fact of having a tooth out would often scare one so much as to drive the pain away and I myself have turned away and it is not a joke. However, most people went to the Barber, who charged 1s. for an extraction, but they were unskilled and not too gentle and sometimes they would pull the wrong tooth out and you would have to go through the agony once again. It was a curious sight - the barber kept the teeth and exhibited them in his window, possibly hundreds of them.

Travelling was quite cheap, either by train, tram or bus. The last two were horse-drawn but I did not avail myself of these services as I walked to and from Artillery Lane (about three miles each way) and I attribute somewhat my longevity to this exercise. I have kept up walking and I try to get out twice daily even now, when the weather is favourable.

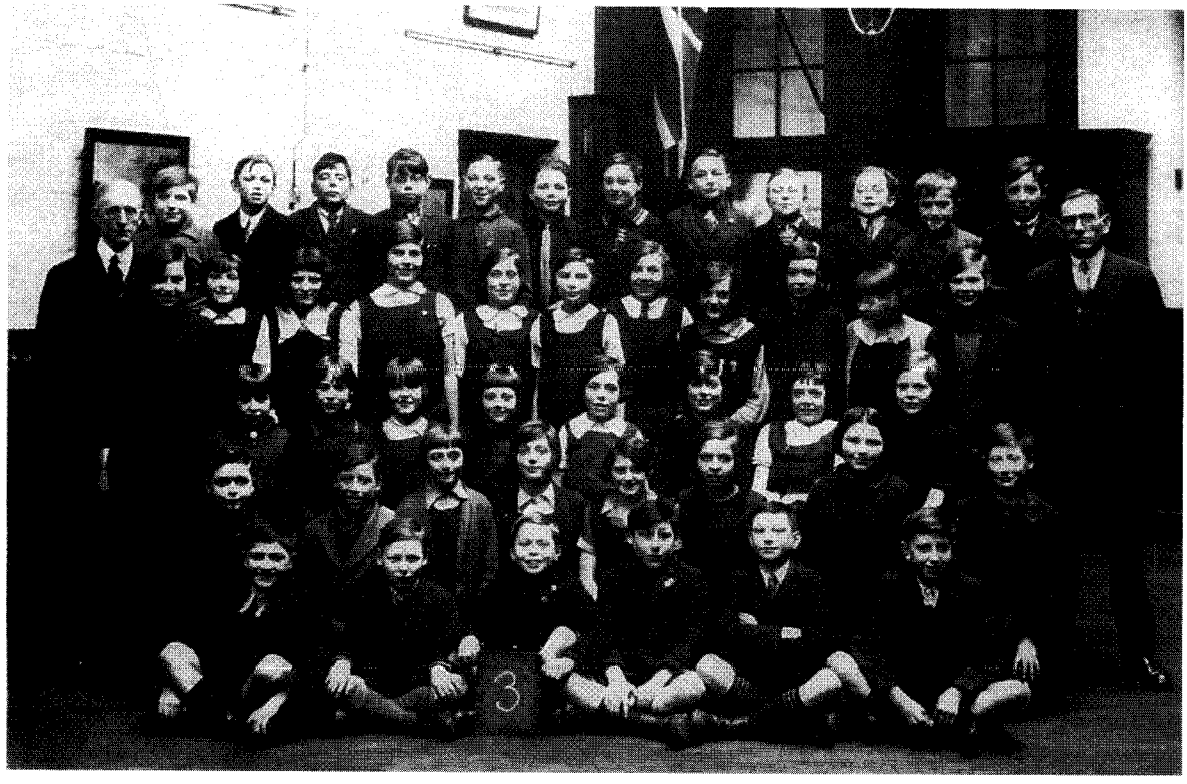
If there is any further information of the olden days in which you would be interested, let me know and I would be pleased to answer as far as I can remember.

With best wishes to you and to all those I have met and know.

Yours sincerely,
W. J. THOMAS. (age 93 years)

Pictures supplied by William Turner of himself in uniform and A.R.P. 'F' Post, Wilmot Street, Bethnal Green.

A.R.P. 'F' Post. Wilmot Street. Bethnal Green 1940



Pictures supplied by Mrs Joyce Garwood. Top: Thomas Street School, Poplar. Third child on right, front row, is her late husband Alexander Garwood, born 1918. Lower – Street party in Selsey Street, Limehouse to celebrate the Coronation of King George the Sixth in 1937. The young man on the far left hand side is Thomas Peat. The lady in dark coat and coloured hat on left hand side is Harriet Peat (Alexander's Aunt). Daughter Lillian is just behind her mother. Selsey Street was bombed early in 1940

EAST LONDON GLEANINGS

Since I came to live in East London ten years ago, the area has become my obsession and full-time 'hobby'.

As a relative newcomer, I obviously have no 'in depth' experience of this part of London, but here are some of the fascinating oddments of information I have discovered from various sources.

* ** * *** ** *

An early find was that **Elizabeth Barrett Browning's dog, 'Flush'** was once stolen by a Mr Taylor, from Whitechapel. He was one of a gang of thieves who specialised in stealing pets from wealthy areas of London and then demanding payment for their return. (Failure to pay could mean owners receiving parcels containing their pets' heads or paws!)

The ransom required from 'Flush's' release was 6 guineas plus half guinea for Taylor himself. Eventually, despite her family's warnings, Mrs Barrett Browning paid the sum and her dog was returned.

** ** * * *** *

The character, **Sweeney Todd** (The demon barber of Fleet Street) was born in Brick Lane, Spitalfields in 1756 - possibly in one of the houses at numbers 85, 87 or 89. His father was a silk-weaver and his mother, a silk-winder. However, the silk trade was experiencing hard times and his parents took to drink.

To escape conditions at home, the young Todd would often visit the Tower of London, where the public were encouraged to view the instruments of torture housed there in the hope that this would discourage crime. The Tower also ran a menagerie and keepers would sometimes poke at the animals with long poles to enrage them - for the entertainment of visitors.

During a very severe winter in 1768, many Londoners died from cold: at this time, Todd's parents both disappeared one evening and he never saw them again.

Somehow he survived and became apprenticed to a cutler in Holborn, whose speciality was razors!

In 1770 he was accused of theft and was imprisoned in Newgate for 5 years. During this period he met an old barber surgeon - Plummer - who, although himself a prisoner, was allowed to ply his trade in the jail: Todd became his assistant.

On leaving Newgate in 1775, aged 19, Todd's burning ambition was to make money and to establish himself as a 'flying barber' (i.e. to travel around, setting up stands in markets, fairs etc. offering service to passers by).

Eventually he was able to establish his own business at Hyde Park Corner but, in 1784, came the news that a barber had murdered a client by cutting his throat. Although not named in the press account, Todd's whereabouts matched the circumstances of the murder, but no charge was made.

He eventually surfaced at the business in Fleet Street where he would "combine the ingenuity of a cutter with the skill of a barber to begin an era of murder and bloodshed unique in the annals of crime!"

****

Conrad Dickel lived at 21 Poplar High Street and was a showman for 60 years. He

died in 1937 and is buried in Tower Hamlets Cemetery.

He travelled widely and was well known for his performing dogs and also for his trained monkeys. He was also a clown and made local appearances at the Limehouse Show and as 'Grandpa Dickel' at the Trinity Grandfathers Club; he entertained children at the Poplar Children's New Year Carnival.

(One of his dogs - Flossie - once raised the alarm when a fire occurred at his house; the dog received an award for saving his life).

* ***** * * * *

A recent discovery is that a copy of **Bailey's Dictionary** (11th edition, published 1745) is on display at Dr Johnson's House in Cough Square off Fleet Street.

(Prior to the publication of the more famous Dictionary by Dr Johnson, Bailey's had been considered the most comprehensive available). Nathan (or Nathaniel) Bailey kept a boarding school in Stepney: he died there in 1742.

The anecdote of Old Hob was quoted by Strype in his edition of 'Stow's Survey'. It concerns a horse that worked for 34 years at Poplar Dock in the early days of shipbuilding at the yard. Hob was always driven by one man and because so experienced in the running of the yard he would stop immediately when he heard the bell ring telling the men to leave work; when he heard the bell for the return to work, he would start up straight away.

He was much loved by the workman and, at his death, he was commemorated by the naming of one of the local pubs after him.

** ** ** * * * *

One of the items on display in the 'Spitalfields' section of the newly-opened British Galleries, at the Victoria and Albert museum is a 'chalice veil' (circa 1708) as used in the Roman Catholic mass. The veil is made from a length of dress fabric of **Spitalfields silk**.

It seems that - because of their value - lengths of silk in a design that had, possibly, become unfashionable, were often passed on the churches - an early example of recycling!

Doreen Osborne

Illustrations from "Sweeney Todd, The Real Story of the Demon Barber of Fleet Street by Peter Haining, published 1993, by Boxtree Limited. ISBN 1 85283 442 0

CHOLERA AND BETHNAL GREEN IN 1849

Arguably the most infamous killer in the history of the East End stalked the streets of Whitechapel in 1888. However, this killer was but a mere amateur in terms of numbers killed when compared to another killer. This killer was a disease and was named cholera.

Cholera killed "quickly and nastily".[1] Those who were affected died of "sudden dehydration, shrivelled like raisins with blackened extremities, pale, staring, pouring watery fluid from their bowel onto the place where they lie".[2] Cholera, unlike the other diseases of the period, appeared dramatically. In the first appearance of cholera in 1831-2 there were over 31,000 deaths ascribed to "cholera and diarrhoea".[3] This number of deaths doubled in the worst cholera outbreak in 1848-9 with some 62,000 deaths and from this point on the number of fatalities from the disease decreased, 31,000 in 1853-4 and 15,000 in 1866.[4]

Between the outbreak of 1833 and that of 1848-9 Dr. Southwood Smith in May 1838 published a report *On Some of the Physical Causes of Sickness and Mortality to Which the Poor are Particularly Exposed, and which are capable of removal by sanitary regulations.* [5] In this report Dr. Smith found that in Bethnal Green and Whitechapel fever "of a malignant and fatal character is always more or less prevalent".[6] He wrote that,

It is not possible, for any language to convey an adequate conception of the poisonous condition in which large portions of both these districts always remain, winter and summer, in dry and in rainy seasons, from the masses of putrefying matter which are allowed to accumulate.[7]

The outbreak of cholera that occurred in Bethnal Green in 1849 was arguably the most virulent to appear. The lack of adequate sanitary measures and other degenerative effects of urbanisation meant that cholera found an ideal ground to spread. So ideal in fact that in three days alone, the 12 - 15 August 1849, there were ninety-two deaths from cholera in the parish of St. Matthew Bethnal Green and in the weeks of the 18 August and the 25 August there were 125 and 127 deaths respectively from cholera.[8] It was prevalent in the East End and "there were deaths in almost every house in the Nichol Street area, between Shoreditch and the northern end of Brick Lane".[9] The registrar of Bethnal Green paints a vivid picture of the horrors of Bethnal Green at this time,

The 12th, 13th, and 14th of this month will long be remembered in this neighbourhood, the outbreak of this fatal disease being without any adequate preparation – surgeons wanted in many places at once: the hurried passing and repassing of messengers, and the wailing of the relatives filled the streets with confusion and woe, and impressed us all with a deep sense of an awful calamity.[10]

What did the vestry do to combat the disease? The issue of compliance regarding the vestry and cholera is one that is full of contrary evidence. An example of this can be seen from the following entry in the vestry minutes, which dates from 22 August 1849, five days after the reported devastating cholera attack in the parish. The following resolution was adopted unanimously and ordered to be published in *The Times* and *Morning Advertiser*.

That this vestry is imperatively called upon, at the present alarming period, when a mysterious and fatal epidemic is destroying a considerable number of the Inhabitants of this Parish to enquire (after a year's warning) whether the best means have been adopted to arrest the progress of such Disease. The population of Bethnal Green at the last census was upwards

of Seventy Thousand (now full Eighty Thousand Individuals) in a circuit of less than eight miles –nearly the whole of the Parish stands upon a fine bed of Gravel, at a good elevation from the River Thames – The Local commissioners have within the last few years expended upwards of £25,000 in paving and improving the parish, nevertheless all these advantages are rendered abortive for want of an efficient system of Sewers and Drainage. This vestry hailed with no ordinary satisfaction the dissolution of the old Irresponsible Commissioners of Sewers, believing that a more prompt and efficient system of management would be speedily adopted by the New commission but it is with unfeigned regret this vestry sees no improvement whatever as regards Bethnal Green – The returns of the Registrar – General form the current index, that the badly ventilated and undrained portion of the parish are the localities wherein cholera disease has been most prevalent and fatal, Believing that a through system of sewerage, at the same time rendering it imperative on the owners and occupiers of houses and premises to connect drains with such sewers, to be the only remedy that will make Bethnal Green as healthy a locality as any of the Metropolitan Districts, the vestry therefore in conclusion, thus earnestly and respectfully beg to call the prompt attention of the Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers to the drainage of Bethnal Green accordingly. [11]

This appears to show that the vestry was acutely aware of the problems of sanitation in the parish and was calling on the Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers which had been established in 1848 to act upon the matter. However, when one examines the following letter by George Alston of St. Phillip's Bethnal Green, which was published by *The Times* the day after the meeting and written on the same day of the meeting, another viewpoint of how the vestry coped with the cholera outbreak may be assumed,[12]

<u>*The Cholera in Bethnal Green*</u>

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir – I feel that I should not be doing my duty in the situation I now fill if I were to remain silent, and not to use my best endeavours to call the attention of those in authority to the state of the district of which I am the incumbent; and I am well satisfied that I cannot do this half so effectually as through the medium of your columns, if you will kindly permit me to use them. The district of St. Phillip's contains a population of 14,000 persons living in a space of less than a quarter of a mile square. This district is entirely without drainage of any kind, and the mortality that has taken place there from cholera within the last three weeks is enough to make the stoutest tremble. I have witnessed many painful scenes in the course of my life; I have seen the cockpit of a line-of-battle ship (the Boyne) filled with wounded seamen after a general engagement; but nothing that I have ever seen equals in intensity the extent of human suffering that I have been compelled to bear a part in during the last three weeks. Families rendered orphans, parents, bereft of their children, husbands deprived of their wives, and wives of their husbands, and in one instance, husband and wife, both lying dead in the same bed; in short, out of nearly 100 cases that I have visited as the clergyman of the parish, I believe not more than half a dozen at the most have recovered, the great majority of those attacked having expired after 24 hours acute suffering. Within the last day or two, however, the parish authorities have very properly fitted up an infirmary in Bonnor's fields, whither those seized with cholera are immediately taken, and I am happy to say that the great majority of those that have been removed are in a fair way of recovery. This fact, therefore, must I think lead to the conviction that the fearful mortality that has taken place in the district has arisen in part at least, if not entirely, from the impure state of the air, caused by the absence of any drainage whatever. It is therefore to such districts as these that the efforts of the Board of Health ought to be directed; but as far as I can learn, nothing whatever has yet been done, or even attempted, to remedy this grievous defect. At the close of last year, when the cholera slightly visited this neighbourhood, the water-plugs were drawn, and the streets were kept

constantly flowing with water; and the beneficial effects resulting from this wholesome step were visibly manifested in the restored health of the neighbourhood. But even this simple step has not been had recourse to now; or if at all, but very slightly, and not regularly from day to day. Pray, therefore, permit me to cry aloud in behalf of myself and my poor people, through the medium of your columns and earnestly to beseech the Board of Health to come and visit this charnelhouse, and, if possible, to divise some sanitary measure, that we may not every one of us be swept away into the land of the shadow of death.

It appears therefore that the entry from the vestry minutes and the plan it reveals is a defensive measure the aim of which was to deflect any criticism received by the vestry due to the publication of the above letter, which they may have had forewarning of, the dates are too close for mere coincidence to be used as an explanation, on to the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers. So the question must be asked, did the vestry of Bethnal Green do anything to combat the cholera outbreak of 1849?

The one weapon that the parish did use against cholera was the instigation of visitations, which appear in the cholera outbreak of 1848-9 to have had a beneficial effect on the inhabitants of the parish. Doctor Hector Gavin was medical superintendent of the district of Bethnal Green at the time of the cholera outbreak and it was through him that visitations were undertaken in the district to houses in known hotspots in an attempt to combat the outbreak. Before these visitations it appears that the vestry was indeed lacklustre in its efforts as *The Report of the General Board of Health on the Epidemic Cholera* testifies,

Under these circumstances we issued, on the report of the district, a special order directing the immediate appointment of four medical visitors, one additional medical officer to aid in treating cholera cases in the infirmary, a sufficient number of nurses to take charge of persons attacked; suitable hospital accommodation; a dispensary to be kept open day and night in the centre of each infected locality, two inspectors of nuisances, and a staff of lime washers. Under the urgent circumstances of the case, the Board of Guardians appointed no medical visitor for five days; they provided no nurses; they established no hospital; they opened no dispensary; they appointed one inspector of nuisances instead of two; and they made no provision for extensive and effectual lime washing.[13]

However when visitations were started in the area[14] from September 7 1849 it had a drastic effect on the reduction of disease in the area. Gavin wrote in his report,

That in 54 days, no less than 14,845 persons received gratuitous medical relief, of which number 9, 992 were discovered by the medical visitors to be actually suffering from choleriac disease . . . It further appears that, within four days after the visitation had been thoroughly organised, 47 cases of approaching cholera, 42 cases of cholera, and the corpses of five persons who had received no medical relief whatever were discovered . . .These numbers formed the following proportions of the total amount of the same kind of disease discovered in the whole of the remaining period of the visitation : - 39.2 percent, 61.5 percent, 62.5 percent; thus proving that immediately on the commencement of the visitation the disease received a marked and sudden check.[15]

Gavin estimated that out of the population of 85,000 in the parish of St. Matthew Bethnal Green, "10,000 received free medical treatment for cholera and less then one in ten of them died from the disease."[16] Dr Gavin then suggests that if these measures had been adopted early, "the lives of three-fourths of those who subsequently perished in the spots already defined as hotbeds of disease might have been saved".[17]

Gavin's detailed local knowledge of the area certainly helped in containing the

PROVIDENT
PENNY BANK,

HELD IN THE

School Room of the Independent Chapel,

BETHNAL GREEN ROAD.

Establish. 1861.

President.—REV. WILLIAM DORLING.

Trustees.

R. G. CLEMENTS, Esq. | J. G. MARTIN, Esq.

Auditors.

Mr. W. DABBS. | Mr. J. E. PASCALL.

Directors.

Mr. G. ABBEY. Mr. J. HAIGH. Mr. J. T. LOVEDAY.

Manager.—Mr. E. SKINNER.

The Committee have much pleasure in bearing testimony to the many benefits the Bank has been to the neighbourhood during the past year, especially when Cholera and sickness was so prevalent: the frugal habits engendered were the means of materially abating much of the distress that would otherwise have been so painfully felt during that time.

The Committee hope that during the new year, those who have not been in the habit of saving small sums weekly will do so, that they may be prepared for any unforeseen circumstances that may arise, in which a little money saved would prove very beneficial.

1866. Number of Depositors..... **318.**
Amount Deposited.....**£116 16s. 9d.**
Total Number of Depositors since Opening of Bank ..... **1841.**
Total Amount Deposited since Opening of Bank...**£707 12s. 7d.**

THE BANK WILL BE

RE-OPENED

ON MONDAY EVENING, JANUARY 7, 1867,

And every successive Monday Evening, from half-past Six till half-past Seven, to receive Deposits of ONE PENNY and upwards.

Deposits may be WITHDRAWN, at any time, by giving Seven days' Notice.

E. SKINNER, Manager.

Forsaith, Printer, Bethnal Green Road, Corner of Pollard Row.

The Provident Penny Bank issued one of these leaflets every year. This one of 1867 refers to the cholera outbreak in the previous year.

disease. However, it appears that although the outbreak of 1849 had highlighted the need for further improvements in the sanitary conditions in Bethnal Green there was still unwillingness on behalf of the vestry and the government once the threat of cholera had disappeared. Dr. Grainger, a respected medical officer of the Board of Health, wrote after the cholera outbreak of 1849,

In many of the most densely packed populated districts the inspectors of nuisances have been dismissed, the cleansing operations have been relaxed, and there is too much reason to apprehend that the courts and alleys will lapse back again into their accustomed filth, . . . that houses proved by the evidence of medical officers, inspectors, and local authorities to be unfit for human habitation will long continue to remain 'pest-houses', spreading disease around; and that, in the midst of these tolerated and accumulated evils, the industrious classes will continue as heretofore to be decimated by fever, or, should it again break out, by cholera.[18]

Dr. Grainger, unfortunately for the inhabitants of the parish of St. Matthew Bethnal Green, proved to be correct with further outbreaks of cholera occurring in 1854 and 1866.

Gary Haines

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[1] F. B. Smith, *The Peoples Health 1830-1910* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p. 230.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] Cited in F. Sheppard, *London 1808-1870: The Infernal Wen* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1971), p. 251.
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, London, L. C. 610.2, *Report of the General Board of Health on the Epidemic Cholera of 1848-1849*, (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1850), p. 111.
[9] A. Palmer, *The East End: Four Centuries of London Life* (London: John Murray, 2000), p. 61.
[10] Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, London, L. C. 610.2, *Report of the General Board of Health on the Epidemic Cholera of 1848-1849*, (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1850), p. 111.
[11] Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, London, L/MBG/A/1/12 [BG/284], Minute Book of Meetings of the Vestry of St. Matthew's Bethnal Green 1848-1853.
[12] *The Times, 23 August 1849*, p. 3.
[13] *Report of the General Board of Health on the Epidemic Cholera of 1848-1849*, p. 112.
[14] The area where cholera was most virulent in Bethnal Green was estimated by Dr. Gavin to be in a space some 400 yards by 150 yards, *Report of the General Board of Health on the Epidemic Cholera of 1848-1849*, p. 112.
[15] Cited in *Report of the General Board of Health on the Epidemic Cholera of 1848-1849*, p. 113.
[16] Alan Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
[17] *Report of the General Board of Health on the Epidemic Cholera of 1848-1849*, p. 113.
[18] H. Jephson, *The Sanitary Evolution of London* (New York, Benjamin Bloom, 1972). p. 49, citing *Parliamentary Papers*, 1850, vol. xxi., p. 147.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF THE EAST END IN THE 1940s

I must start with a confession; I am not an East Ender. I was neither born in East London, nor did I grow up there. My formative years were spent across the river Thames in the depths of South London. However, I think it was Michael Caine, who once said that the sound of Bow bells can easily drift across the river—so I think my Cockney credentials are safe!

But I do have memories of East London, because I am proud to say that, unlike me, my father—William Willis—was an East Ender by birth and upbringing. He was born in Bethnal Green in 1903 and spent his early years in Virginia Road. From there, his family moved to Mansfield Street (now Whiston Road) Haggerston, where he attended Laburnum Street School. His step-father (George Willis) was a manufacturer of rocking horses and from the early days of making deliveries by horse and cart, my father moved on to lorry driving with Joseph Eva & Son, which was eventually nationalised under the name of British Road Services. In fact, I have many happy childhood memories of going on journeys in the lorry, in those early post-Second World War years, when the country roads were relatively free of traffic. Having been a keen devotee of the East End music halls in his younger days, when he often went to the Hackney Empire and other local halls in Shoreditch and Bethnal Green, my father would sing all the old songs, as he piloted his lorry around the little country towns and villages. "I'm Henry the Eighth, I am, I am"; "Any Old Iron"; "Lily of Laguna"; "Waiting at the Church"—were all particular favourites, but his repertoire seemed endless and I would do my best to accompany him on the mouth organ, as we bowled along.

At weekends, with my young brother, my father would take us from our home in Brixton, to visit his mother—my Grandmother—in Graham Road, Dalston, where she then lived. All Londoners know that every part of London has its own special atmosphere and in the 1940s, it was still possible to sense how the Metropolis comprised a number of old Tudor villages. Also, the accent altered once you had crossed London Bridge on the 133 bus to Liverpool Street, where we changed to an open-backed bus, bound for Dalston. My father always spoke with an East London accent, spiced with rhyming slang and "back slang". In those days, before Television made all forms of East End slang more accessible (but often less authentic!) —these Cockney speech patterns conjured up images of the centuries-old traditions of the East End. In the streets of Poplar, Stepney and Bethnal Green, you could feel the presence of street vendors and other characters of days gone by.

But of course, there still were (and are) street vendors in the East End and nowhere more so than in the street markets. We had our street market in Brixton, but I found the sights, sounds and smells of the East London street markets, so much more exciting and compelling. A favourite stop on the way to see my Grandmother, was the apple fritter stall in the "Waste" street market in Kingsland Road, Sizzling from the hotplate and washed down with a glass of Sarspirilla this seemed like a feast with the Gods!

Petticoat Lane, with its bustling crowds and multitude of stalls, was always a treat. Club Row was alive with the sound of birds and animals and brought a feeling of the countryside to the grey, crowded East End streets. And one of the great pleasures of

visiting the street markets and other sights of the East End, was the fact that my father seemed to know everybody. Some of his friends were to be found in the strangest of places; even underground! To explain:- this particular friend was a lavatory attendant in the gentlemen's toilet in (if I remember correctly) Kingsland Road, which was beneath street level. We visited him in his cosy, subterranean lair one Saturday afternoon, where we sipped mugs of steaming tea and I heard tales of East End life from a man whose place of work was visited by all classes of society.

But one thing always puzzled me. My father referred to everyone he met -— newspaper vendors, shopkeepers, barbers, men he knew and men he did not know — as "George". "Ullo George". "Alright George?" "See you George". How could they all have the same name, I wondered? But I just assumed that this was one of the unexplained mysteries of this magical place called the East End.

Well, there are so many other memories of my childhood visits to the East End: the open spaces of Victoria Park; exciting trips in my father's lorry to the London Docks, where I was fascinated by the sight of sacks, barrels and crates being unloaded from the ships, which had come to London from all corners of the world. Then, there were all the different nationalities, with their inimitable languages, accents and modes of dress. I particularly remember a visit to Limehouse, with its Chinese community, which to a small boy like me, had all the magic and excitement of an imagined visit to Shanghai!

Yes, I will always have fond memories of my father's East End. I know now, from my family history research, that his family origins lay deep in the crowded streets and alleys of the Old Nichol area of Bethnal Green (immortalised by Arthur Morrison, in his book, "A Child of the Jago") and my ancestors lived out their humble lives in this picaresque area, in the shadow of St. Leonard's Church. It is a heritage to be proud of and although my father died many years ago in 1961, I can still imagine the sights and sounds of the East End of the 1940s—particularly when I pick up my mouth organ and play the strains of "I'm Henry the Eighth, I am, I am".

Alan Willis

Cartoon of Petticoat Lane from a guide published by Life Advertising of White Horse Lane Stepney

circa 1950

ANGELA JEAN WAIT

(21October 1946 – 30 March 2002)

Jean Wait, Angela to her family, spent nearly thirty years as an archivist. After graduation from St Anne's College Oxford, where she read English, she gained a place on the one year course run by the University College of Wales to train as an archivist. Following a spell as assistant archivist at Leicestershire, she joined Hackney Archives Department in 1973, then situated in the former Shoreditch Central Library in Pitfield Street, as assistant archivist to Stanley Tongue. The department moved to the present site in 1976 and Jean made vital contributions to ensure the smooth running of the archives. She created the subject indexes to the archives, and commenced the card index of street name changes and origins that supplement Hackney's topographical index to the archives.

Jean was always eager to explore new technology, and used the new computer systems to create on-line information about the archives. Among the acquisitions gained by the archives were several business collections, among them Bryant and May and the British Xylonite records, the latter forming the basis of an article for the East London Record in 1983.

Jean took on the role of acting borough archivist following the departure of Stanley Tongue at the end of 1981, and ran the service until David Mander was appointed in February 1983. She continued to be actively involved with much of the public service, providing help to many researchers. She gave considerable support to the formation of the Friends of Hackney Archives in 1985 and was the first editor of the Friends' newsletter, The Terrier, now the Hackney Terrier. She also lent invaluable support to the successful campaign to save Sutton House, and celebrated her fiftieth birthday party in the Wenlock Barn at Sutton House in October 1996.

Jean was promoted to the post of Lewisham Borough Archivist in 1992, where she supervised the move from the Manor House at Lee to the new Lewisham Library. She undertook the Lewisham edition of the Guide to London Local History Resources, which appeared in 1997 and produced Sources for Family History at Lewisham. A new series of Lewisham area histories had been planned, but sadly Jean was unable to do much work on it before her illness intervened.

A long time resident of Leyton, Jean was active in the Liberal Party and its successor the Liberal Democrats, and stood for election as a councillor, unsuccessfully, in the 1980s.

In December 2001 a general feeling of ill health was diagnosed as cancer of the liver and of the colon. After a short period in St Joseph's Hospice, Jean died on 30th March 2002, with her sister by her side.

(With grateful thanks to David Mander)

THE PROFESSIONALS AT OLD BOW RUNNING GROUNDS

The call to "get ready" had been awaited, anxiously, by the eight finalists, who had been doing their best to keep warm late in the afternoon of 27th March, 1904. Over their running-kit they wore an assortment of scarves, jerseys, and overcoats; there were no fancy track-suits for those taking part in Mrs. Connors Weekly £5 Handicap, at Old Bow Running Grounds, in Glaucus Street. Referee and Handicapper, Charley Newhall, placed each man on his mark, emphasising as he did so the penalties for getting over the mark, with either foot, before the starting gun fired. For the first offence the perpetrator would be pulled back one yard, the second time it would be two yards, and, after that, any further 'jumping the gun' would mean disqualification. Each man's lane on the rough shale track was marked by string, supported at about calf height by metal pins or spikes. Being a handicap none of the competitors would actually race the prescribed distance of 120 yards 109.728 metres], the front marker would cover 89 yards and even the back marker would start only *5½* yards behind him. Working for a good handicap was part of the art of Pedestrianism, as this type of racing was called, and the shrewd man would not show his true form until he had moved up to a starting mark from which he thought he could win.

The Starter, Mr. A. Wilson, primed his starting pistol as the eight adopted their lane positions. Crouch starts had become fashionable about twenty years earlier, usually supplemented by the runner digging shallow holes for his feet, thus being able to obtain a good push off. Starting-blocks, universally used to-day, were still thirty or forty years ahead. The finalists were now steady on their marks –

A. Stafford, *25½ yards start*
Hickey, *26 yards*
E. Richardson, *28½ yards*
Gadd, *28½ yards*
J. Warner, *29½ yards*
C. Bartlett, *29½ yards*
F. Hayes, *30½ yards*
A. Hewett, *31 yards*

"Get set", and they tensed on the mark, taking more weight on their hands and arms; the crack of the pistol disturbed the silence of expectation, the crowd roared, and, oblivious to all but their opponents, the eight sprinted for the finishing line.

That scene would have been duplicated in many similar venues throughout the country. In the London area there were other Running Grounds at Brompton and Hackney Wick, the latter, managed at one time by William Price, had witnessed the great 'Deerfoot', the so-called Red Indian long-distance runner, in the 1860s. Such a man could attract thousands of spectators and even the smaller tracks were well supported. Those who took part would now be called 'professional' sportsmen but for most it was only a means of trying to supplement their meagre working wages. Only the few 'at the top' could win enough for a reasonable living. The winner at Mrs. Connor's weekly event received £4, roughly equal to two weeks' wages, but would be expected to 'tip' his handler, or coach, a few shillings. Second prize was 12s. 6d. (£0.625) and for the third there was 7s. 6d. (£0.375). The programme emphasised 'BETTING STRICTLY PROHIBITED' but this did not stop much more money changing hands than was on offer as prizes. Most supporters were students of form and would know who was 'trying'; whether the runners bet on themselves, or one of their opponents, is best left to the imagination.

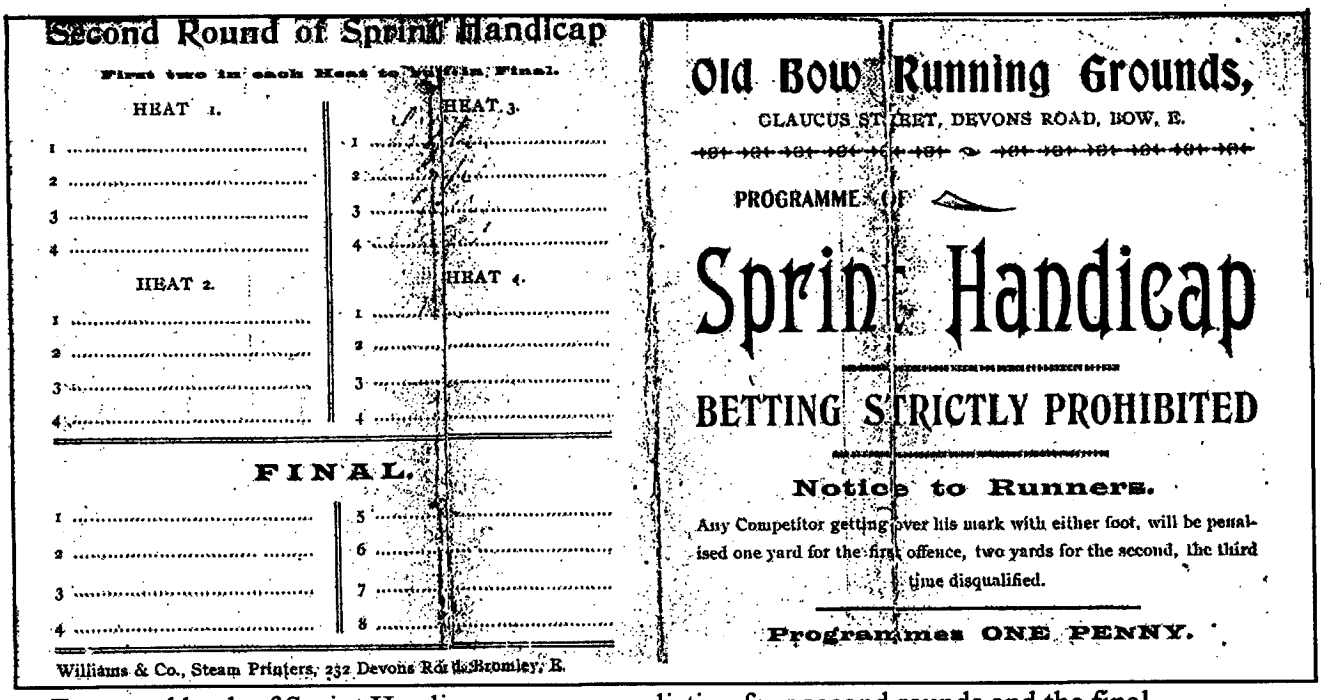
Pedestrianism, in some form or other, had been around for many years and had gradually evolved at two levels. Apart from the types already described, it attracted the 'gentlemen'; university types, city gents, or men of leisure, who would race each other for side-bets or a stake put up by their colleagues. Using an alias they would sometimes visit the smaller meetings and that was when a good Handicapper came into his own by being able to detect those hiding their true ability. Handicapping had actually been introduced to make the racing more interesting among a comparatively small number of athletes, mostly known to each other.

By the second half of the nineteenth century attempts were being made to bring more organisation into the sport of athletics. The Amateur Athletic Club was formed but the distinction between amateurs and professionals was very hazy. Its definition of an amateur was a 'gentleman who did not rely on running for a living' and most of the early attempts at clarity excluded mechanics, artisans and labourers from the amateur ranks. Thus the gentleman amateurs continued to run for money prizes or took part in private matches for staked bets or wagers. The Amateur Athletic Club, in fact, continued to organise Pedestrian meetings and at one such, in 1866, at Crystal Palace, a substantial sum of prize money was offered by the Earl of Jersey.

1880, however, saw the various amateur organisations more or less in agreement with the foundation of the Amateur Athletic Association and the first championship meeting was held. The first president of the A.A.A. was none other than Victor Albert George Child Villiers, 7th Earl of Jersey, the same man who had, not many years earlier, put up the cash prize for pedestrians. His son, Arthur George Child Villiers, was to follow some years later as a supporter of genuine amateur athletics, particularly in East London, and was eventually honoured by the Amateur Athletic Association.

The gradual emergence of properly organised athletics heralded the eventual demise of the small-time pedestrians, although grounds like the one in Glaucus Street were still capable of promoting weekly events. The end really came when the First World War, from 1914 onwards, took away most of the young men, coupled with the formation of amateur Athletic Clubs under the umbrella of the A.A.A. A few areas, mainly in the north, did continue to support professional handicap racing, probably the best known being the Powderhall Handicap Meeting, in Scotland, always held on New Year's Day. Nowadays, of course, there is no distinction between amateur and professional athletes and a number who, in days gone by, would have settled for a trophy or a prize of minimal value have become millionaires.

Spectators for Mrs. Connors Weekly £5 Handicap, on 27th March, 1904, certainly had plenty of running to maintain their interest. The first round consisted of twenty-one heats, then there were four second-round (or semi-final) heats, each of which was won by less than a yard, before the eight men lined up for the final. Even that did not conclude the proceedings. It was a tribute to the handicapping skills of Charley Newhall that a few yards covered them all at the finishing line and the judges declared a dead-heat between Hayes and Stafford, with Richardson in third place, only a foot behind. The rules of the meeting stated that 'All Dead Heats must be run off at once' and, after a brief recovery period, Hayes and Stafford lined up again, the former having a five-yards advantage in the handicap. This time there was a definite result and, in a race described as 'splendid' by the *Sporting Life*, Hayes was the winner - by one foot. Without the sophisticated track equipment we see now, a decision to give a dead-heat was more common.



Second Round of Sprint Handicap

First two in each Heat to Within Final.

HEAT 1.
1 .....
2 .....
3 .....
4 .....

HEAT 2.
1 .....
2 .....
3 .....
4 .....

HEAT 3.
1 .....
2 .....
3 .....
4 .....

HEAT 4.
1 .....
2 .....
3 .....
4 .....

FINAL.
1 .....
2 .....
3 .....
4 .....
5 .....
6 .....
7 .....
8 .....

Williams & Co., Steam Printers, 252 Devons Rd. Bromley, E.

Old Bow Running Grounds,

CLAUCUS STREET, DEVONS ROAD, BOW, E.

PROGRAMME OF

Sprint Handicap

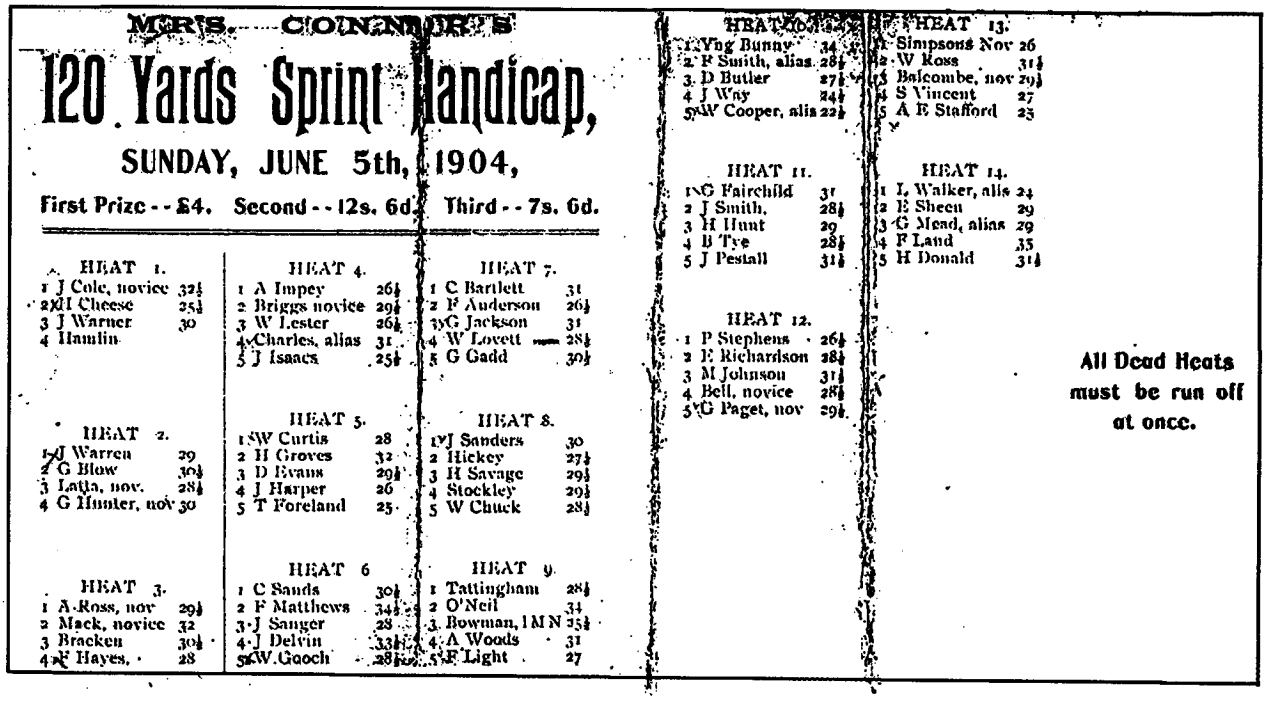
BETTING STRICTLY PROHIBITED

Notice to Runners.

Any Competitor getting over his mark with either foot, will be penalised one yard for the first offence, two yards for the second, the third time disqualified.

Programmes ONE PENNY.

Front and back of Sprint Handicap programme, listing four second rounds and the final
The printer, Williams & Co was situated locally, in Devons Road



MR'S. CONNOR'S

120 Yards Sprint Handicap,

SUNDAY, JUNE 5th, 1904,

First Prize - - £4. Second - - 12s. 6d. Third - - 7s. 6d.

HEAT 1.
1 J Cole, novice 32½
2 H Cheese 25½
3 J Warner 30
4 Hamlin

HEAT 2.
1 J Warren 29
2 G Blow 30½
3 Latta, nov. 28½
4 G Hunter, nov 30

HEAT 3.
1 A Ross, nov 29½
2 Mack, novice 32
3 Bracken 30½
4 F Hayes, 28

HEAT 4.
1 A Impey 26½
2 Briggs novice 29½
3 W Lester 26½
4 Charles, alias 31
5 J Isaacs 25½

HEAT 5.
1 W Curtis 28
2 H Groves 32
3 D Evans 29½
4 J Harper 26
5 T Foreland 25

HEAT 6
1 C Sands 30½
2 F Matthews 34½
3 J Sanger 28
4 J Delvin 33½
5 W Gooch 28½

HEAT 7.
1 C Bartlett 31
2 F Anderson 26½
3 G Jackson 31
4 W Lovett 28½
5 G Gadd 30½

HEAT 8.
1 J Sanders 30
2 Hickey 27½
3 H Savage 29½
4 Stockley 29½
5 W Chuck 28½

HEAT 9.
1 Tattingham 28½
2 O'Neil 34
3 Bowman, I M N 35½
4 A Woods 31
5 F Light 27

HEAT 10.
1 Yng Bunny 34
2 F Smith, alias 28½
3 D Butler 27½
4 J Way 24½
5 W Cooper, alia 22½

HEAT 11.
1 G Fairchild 31
2 J Smith, 28½
3 H Hunt 29
4 B Tye 28½
5 J Pestall 31½

HEAT 12.
1 P Stephens 26½
2 E Richardson 28½
3 M Johnson 31½
4 Bell, novice 28½
5 G Paget, nov 29½

HEAT 13.
1 Simpsons Nov 26
2 W Ross 31½
3 Balcombe, nov 29½
4 S Vincent 27
5 A E Stafford 23

HEAT 14.
1 L Walker, alia 24
2 E Sheen 29
3 G Mead, alias 29
4 F Land 35
5 H Donald 31½

All Dead Heats must be run off at once.

Typical programme from Bow Running Grounds, showing fourteen heats.
One more was added on the day but is now too faint to show in this copy.

Similarly, winning distances must be treated cautiously and little attention seems to have been given to the time taken to cover the course.

1904 was a good season for Hayes for, only a few weeks after his victory, he was back at Bow on the Friday preceding Whitsun, in another of Mrs. Connor's £5 Handicaps. Put back a yard he took one of the sixteen

heats, then a second-round heat, before triumphing in the final, by inches, from A. Barkaway, with F. Smith in third place. That win resulted in a further penalty and, at a meeting on Sunday, 5th June, he was put back to 28 yards. That proved to be a little too tough for him and, although he survived the first round heats, he was not among the final prizes. So began the road back to a good handicap from which it would be worth trying again.

Hayes, known in the family as Tom, was one of five brothers, of whom Alfred often accompanied him to the Running Grounds, sometimes with their father, Robert (or Bob). The others all played football, either for Eton Mission Boys' and Men's' Club or, in the case of the youngest, Ted, for the newly formed Eton Manor Boys' Club, but none showed any particular aptitude for sprinting. Miraculously all survived the Great War and, in later years, Tom worked as a meter reader for the Gas Light and Coke Company.

Glaucus Street is still there, now mainly residential. What was possibly the site of the Old Bow Running Grounds was later occupied by an open-air swimming pool which was very popular in the 1920s and 1930s. The pool fell into disuse, and was dismantled, but the spot still provides a public amenity area in the form of a Recreation Ground. As we marvel over the speed of modern Olympians, and the facilities they have, do the ghosts of Stafford, Hayes, Barkaway, and their Pedestrian colleagues, emerge to race, once again, for Mrs. Connor's five pounds prize money?

Roy Hayes

SOURCES -

For the 'heart of this piece I have drawn on cuttings from old copies of the *Sporting Life,* the race programme reproduced on pages 2 and 3, plus what I can remember from stories told to me by my father, Alfred Hayes. Peter Lovesey's *Official Centenary History of the Amateur Athletic Association* was useful for details of the transition to organised amateur athletics, whilst Philip Mernick, of the East London History Society (and another 'Old Cooperian) was very helpful regarding present-day Glaucus Street.

THE ELHS AND 50 YEARS OF ITS NEWSLETTER

The back cover of this anniversary issue reproduces the original notice announcing the intention to "form an organisation whose object will be the collection, preservation and study of materials relating to the history of East London and the publication of the results of such work". The report on this meeting, held at Toynbee Hall in September 1952, published in the Hackney Gazette (October 6th) stated that the name of the organisation and the geographical area of activity had not yet been determined, but indications were that its work may range from Aldgate to Stratford and from Hackney to Shadwell.

We changed our name from "Group" to "Society" for the 1969/70 season emphasising that we were not purely an academic group, but the geographic area of interest remained unchanged. The initial notice stated that future meetings would be held at the Mile End Library, Bancroft Road, but we were certainly meeting at Queen Mary College in the early 1960's. We used their History Department lecture room until their decision to charge commercial rents forced us to find a new venue for the 1972/3 season. September 1972 saw our first meeting at the Latimer Congregational Church, Ernest Street, when Gilda O'Neal gave us a lecture based on her book "Pull No More Bines". Ten years on, the informal setting, (and availability of a kitchen for brewing tea), still provides a welcoming atmosphere.

The adjoining page shows the covers of four decades of ELHS newsletters. It started as a single page duplicated "Bulletin" in September 1962 and must have only been produced once a year as issue 6 (top left) was 1968 (by then it had expanded to 8 pages). By issue 15 it was quarterly and had acquired a card cover printed with a map of Hoxton (top right). This ran to issue 35 (1976) when it was discontinued for lack of contributions. A twice yearly duplicated version (earliest seen is Summer 1979) then appeared (bottom left) and continued until 1990 when Rosemary Taylor, who had taken on the editorship, greatly improved the layout and content and added a pictorial cover. Series 1 ran to 20 issues and this "special" is Volume 2 issue 3.

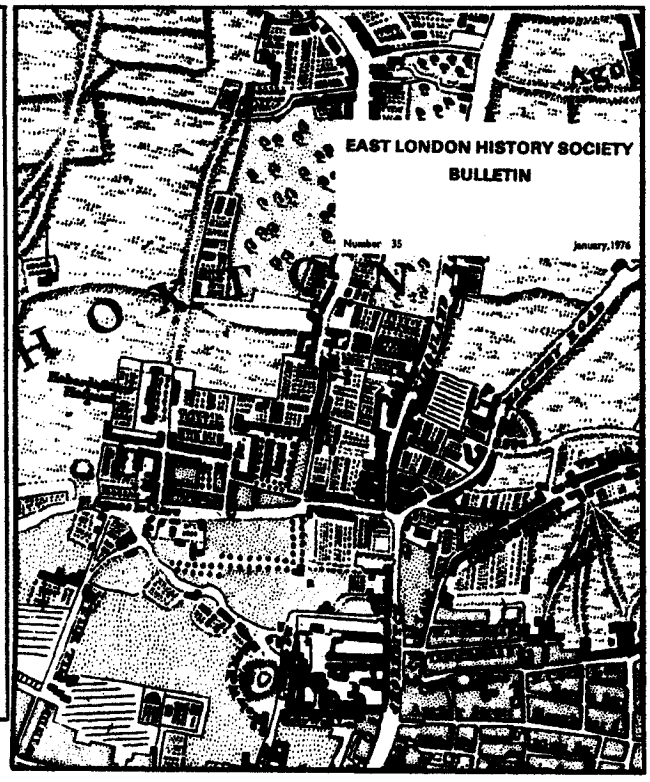
At the same time the Society, under the editorship of Colm Kerrigan, published the East London Record. This was an annual publication for sale to the general public. Starting in 1978 publication ran until 1998 (Record 19). In its earlier days the Society produced some monographs on specific subjects, but the only one I have seen is "Mile End Green, Famous residents and their Association with Historic Events" by Mr C.S. Truman (1968).

In more recent times we produced "An Illustrated History of Victoria Park (1996) and hope to publish soon a monograph on 18th century Mile End by Derek Morris.

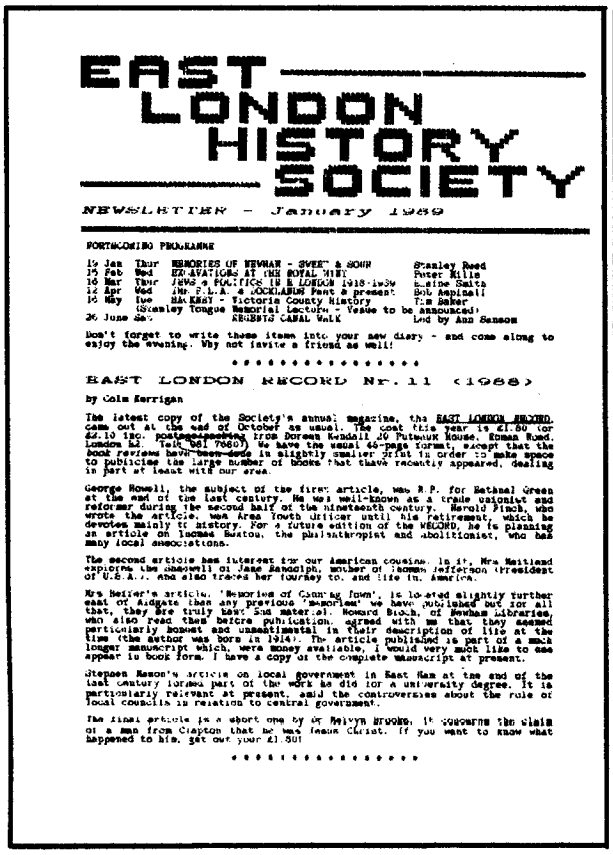
Over its 50 years of existence the Society has relied on a small number of long serving people to organise its activities. As far as I can tell only seven people have held the "chair" – Professors Bindoff and McDonnell, Mr C.S. Truman, Mr A.E. French, Caroline Merion, Rosemary Taylor and myself. Ann Sansom held the post of Secretary for 20 years and John Harris was Membership Secretary for 12 years. David Behr was first co-opted onto the committee in 1975 and Doreen Kendall in about 1986. Ann Sansom has also been organising coach trips certainly since 1984 and probably before!

Philip Mernick.

March 1968



January 1976


EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER - January 1989

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMME

19 Jan	Thur	MEMORIES OF NEWHAM - SWEET & SOUR	Stanley Reed
15 Feb	Wed	EXCAVATIONS AT THE ROYAL MINT	Peter Mills
16 Mar	Thur	JEWS & POLITICS IN E LONDON 1918-1939	Elaine Smith
12 Apr	Wed	AGM P.L.A. & DOCKLANDS Past & present	Bob Aspinall
16 May	Tue	HACKNEY - Victoria County History (Stanley Tongue Memorial Lecture - Venue to be announced)	Tim Baker
26 June	Mon	NEWBURY CANAL Walk	Led by Ann Benson

Don't forget to write these items into your new diary - and come along to enjoy the evening. Why not invite a friend as well!

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EAST LONDON RECORD Nr. 11 (1988)

by Colm Kerrigan

The latest copy of the Society's annual magazine, the EAST LONDON RECORD, came out at the end of October as usual. The cost this year is £1.50 (or £2.10 inc. postage/packing from Doreen Kendall 20 Puteaux House, Roman Road, London E2. Tele 981 7560). We have the usual 64-page format, except that the book reviews have been made in slightly smaller print in order to make space to publicise the large number of books that have recently appeared, dealing in part at least with our area.

George Rowell, the subject of the first article, was M.P. for Bethnal Green at the end of the last century. He was well-known as a trade unionist and reformer during the second half of the nineteenth century. Harold Finch, who wrote the article, was Area Youth Officer until his retirement, which he devotes mainly to history. For a future edition of the RECORD, he is planning an article on Isaac Saxton, the philanthropist and abolitionist, who had many local associations.

The second article has interest for our American cousins. Is it, Mrs Maitland explores the unknown of Jane Randolph, mother of Thomas Jefferson (President of U.S.A.), and also traces her journey to, and life in, America.

Mrs Reiter's article, 'Memories of Canning Town', is located slightly further east of Aldgate than any previous 'memories' we have published but for all that, they are truly East End material. Howard Brook, of Newham Libraries, who also read them before publication, agreed with us that they seemed particularly honest and unsentimental in their description of life at the time (the author was born in 1914). The article published is part of a much longer manuscript which, were money available, I would very much like to see appear in book form. I have a copy of the complete manuscript at present.

Stephen Mason's article on local government in East Ham at the end of the last century formed part of the work he did for a university degree. It is particularly relevant at present, amid the controversies about the role of local councils in relation to central government.

The final article is a short one by Dr Melvyn Brooks. It concerns the claim of a man from Clapton that he was Jesus Christ. If you want to know what happened to him, get our your £1.50!

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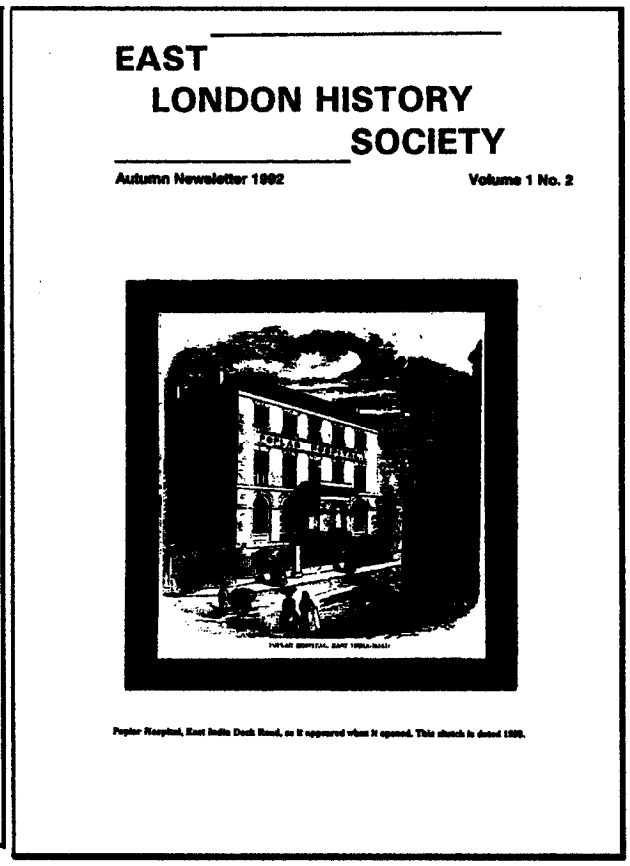
January 1989


EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY

Autumn Newsletter 1992 Volume 1 No. 2

Poplar Hospital, East India Dock Road, as it appeared when it opened. This sketch is dated 1869.

Autumn 1992

THE SKELETONS OF THE EAST END

It is well known that today's Salvation Army had its beginnings in the East End of London and that some of its biggest battles were in and around some of the area's most celebrated public houses. But how many people know that opposition to the Army and its works was also especially strong in the East End, and that the notorious "skeletons" began there and that local pubs were behind them?

Some years after he started the Christian mission, which later became the Salvation Army, in the East End of London, William Booth did not mince words about the area or about the East Enders themselves. They were, he declared, people who were living in what he called Paradise Lost, an area of "the grossest heathen darkness" which was a natural habitat for "the vile and the wicked". Another preacher, Andrew Mearns, who worked in the area, spoke of it as "the great dark region of poverty, misery, squalour and immorality..."

In other words, it was just the sort of area where Booth, a redoubtable workhorse of a man, thought he might do some good. Grittily, determined and full of fight, he waded in, and despite many tribulations along the way, he succeeded. Often though, he would reach home - in another part of London and a home already full of young children - late at night and sometimes after midnight, thoroughly worn out, sometimes battered and belaboured by opponents of his work, having walked for many miles, but always convinced the East End was where he was most urgently needed.

His methods, like his religion, were unorthodox and he was unable to use church or chapel buildings. The local police, furthermore, would not allow him to hold open evangelical meetings in public parks, so when he started in the mid-1860s, he had to make do with a borrowed shed, or a stable, or, on one occasion, a skittle alley. But then, once the crowds started flocking in - evangelism could provide great family entertainment - he obtained the use of the hall of a dancing school, then a theatre, and then - many in the "enemy" camp - he bought a pub, called The Eagle. (The Salvation Army bookshop has a useful little guide to Booth's East End.)

The mission started in earnest in a large tent, capable of holding up to 300 people, which was erected by an old Quaker burial ground on the patch of green which is still there in Vallance Road, close to Whitechapel tube station. Today there is a children's playground on the spot, and the shelter nearby has become the occasional haunt of homeless people and others who like a furtive drink and a chat. The tent sufficed for several weeks before its fabric deteriorated and was torn by strong winds.

About ten minutes walk away from Vallance Road, was Spencer Street, Shadwell, where, in 1864 (only a year before Booth started his preaching), my grandfather, Charles Jeffries, was born. Only a few feet of one end of Spencer Street now remains, because the Tarling Estate flats have been built over it. Today, there is some open space in the area between Commercial Road and The Highway; then, it was overcrowded, poverty-ridden and smelly and the boy was lucky to survive. He celebrated his first birthday in one of the coldest winters on record and when he was two-and-a-half survived a terrible epidemic of cholera which swept through the East End. Nearly 4000 East Enders died in that epidemic and in some streets, the livelihood of nine families was destroyed.

William Jeffries, my great-grandfather, worked - as so many did - by the Thames. His found work in rigging and equipping

the big sailing ships - but not for long. Creeping mechanisation did him out of this job, and he was forced to go to sea, but later returned to a shore job to do tin-plating, again for the big ships calling in for repair. But then, suddenly, he died - of dropsy, and a weak heart.

The young Charles grew up feckless and ill-disciplined, often breaking his widowed mother's heart as he drifted from job to job, slept rough, and stole from his employers. By the age of 15, he later admitted (in a Salvation Army publication!), he was a hardened drinker, and "night after night", he was frequenting many of the East End's most notorious music halls, theatres and pubs. Hard drinking was one of the biggest social problems in the East End, but it still had an extraordinarily high number of pubs per head of population.

Charles lived on the streets, leading a gang of like-minded yobboes and enjoying picking a fight with rival gangs whenever the opportunity arose. There was little or no lighting in many of the streets, and police intervention was rare because everyone scattered as soon as their heavy boots could be heard approaching. He liked going to Salvation Army meetings, some times listening, but often barracking and trying to pick a fight. He positively enjoyed, he once said, being turned out for making a disturbance and going to their meetings, he said was "better than the circus".

It was inevitable, as the Salvation Army grew and as opposition to it also grew, that my grandfather and some mates got together to form their own "opposition army". This was the beginning of the so-called "skeleton" armies. Grandpa and his mates would meet in the Veteran public house (of which I can find no trace; can anyone tell me where it was?) where the landlord gave them a room rent-free so long as they drank his beer. Many East End landlords and the brewers with whom they worked were only too willing to provide backing for people willing to oppose the tee-total Salvationists - they were bad for business, and their opponents were usually reliable customers at the bar.

My grandfather's gang created what they perhaps inevitably called the Opposition Army, 1st Corps, Whitechapel, and had their own slogans, hat bands - "Skeleton Army" - and their own flag. On some days, turnout would be in the hundreds and they would march alongside or in front of the Salvationists, singing their own abusive "hymns" to Army tunes, hurling refuse of all sorts and invective as they held rival meetings.

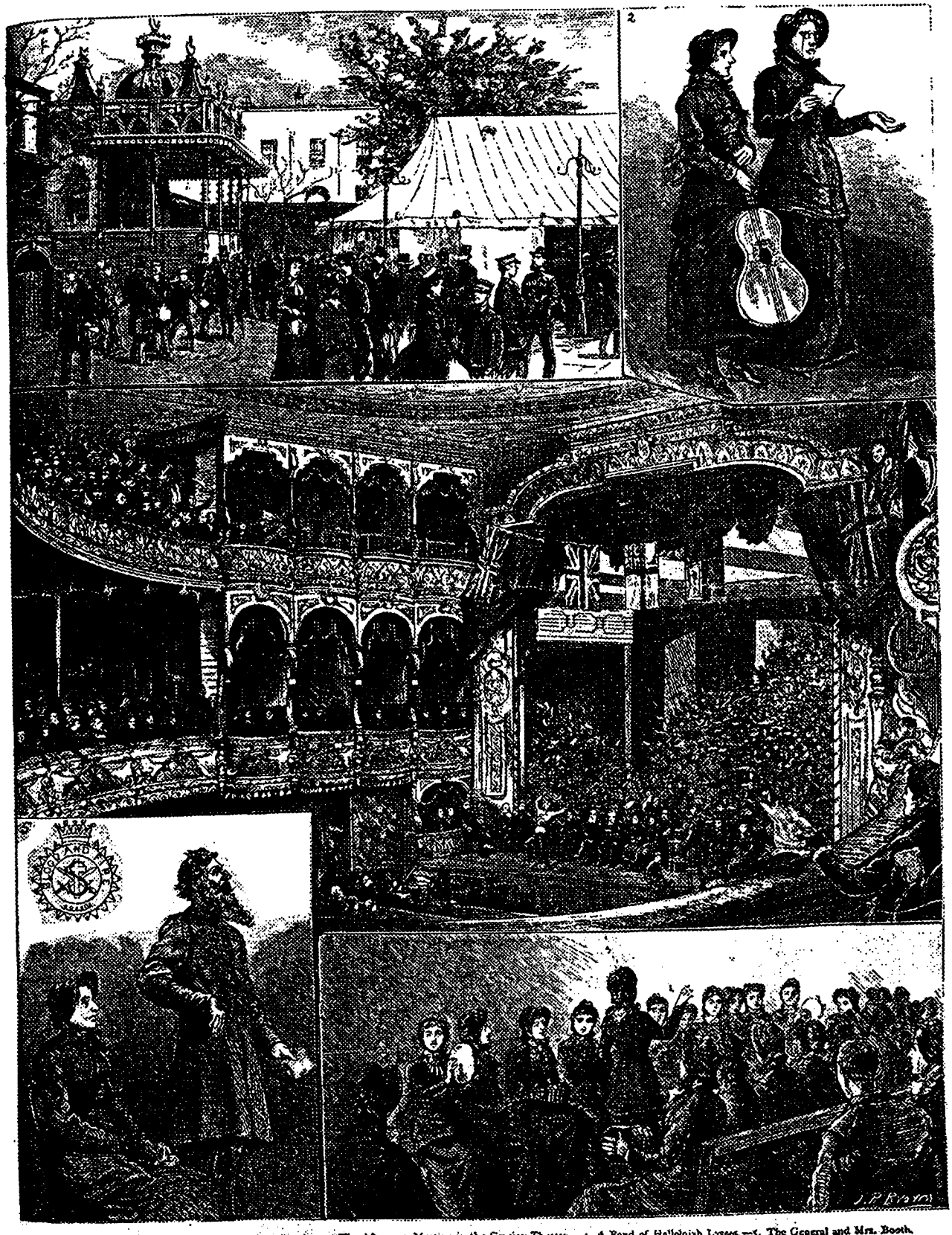
But then life at such a rumbustious, and ultimately pointless, pace could not go on. The turning point came on New Year's Eve, 1881, outside the Blind Beggar public house, still standing on the Whitechapel Road. The Army, despite being pelted by my grandfather and others with rotten fruit and with mud, went into a hall to hold a watch-night service. Twenty or thirty of the "skeletons" went into the hall, no doubt "just for a laugh", to join them.

But they hadn't reckoned with baby power. One of the Salvationists, a young mother, passed her baby to a "skeleton" to hold while she did something else. Baby was passed along from one Opposition fighter to the next, and the thought of heckling and abuse was apparently put to one side. By the end of that night - and it went on until the small hours - between twenty and thirty "souls" - my grandfather among them - had been saved.

Within three years, Charles Jeffries was running Salvation Army operations in Australia and was to find himself an Australian wife, who bore him seven children, including my mother. Later he pioneered Salvation Army work in China, and ultimately took on responsibilities for all Salvation Army operations in Britain. All his life he enjoyed a good fight, though now on a different side, and all his life, I have been told by people who knew him,

he kept his East London accent and, most emphatically, his Cockney sense of humour.

Michael Simmons



1. In the Grounds.—2. A Duet by the Misses Booth.—3. The Afternoon Meeting in the Grecian Theatre.—4. A Band of Hallelujah Lasses.—5. The General and Mrs. Booth.

THE SALVATION ARMY—"THE CAPTURE OF THE EAGLE"

Programme 2002/2003

2002

Thursday 26 September	From pram to pension by rail - Bob Dunn
Thursday 31 October	Crime in eighteenth century Stepney Derek Morris Preceded by AGM (7.00 pm.)
Thursday 21 November	Nineteenth century public parks and health Letta Jones
Thursday 5 December	Pictures that talk: The London City Mission in the East End 1835 to 1914 John Nicholls

2003

Thursday 30 January	Mad farming in East London 1800 to 1900 Elaine Murphy
Thursday 27 February	South of Commercial Road: Aldgate to Limehouse, then and now Steve Kentfield and Ray Newton
Thursday 13March	The Victorian celebration of death Danny Wells
Thursday 3 April	Two great Ferries: The great Steam Ferry at Greenwich and the great Hydraulic Ferry at Wapping Clive Chambers
Thursday 15 May	Open Evening. Favourite Buildings

All meetings are held at Latimer Congregational Church Hall, Ernest Street, E1. Ernest Street is between Hartford Street and White Horse Lane, off Mile End Road (opposite Queen Mary and Westfield College). Meetings start at 7:30pm. The nearest underground stations are Mile End and Stepney Green.

THE EAST LONDON HISTORY GROUP

As a result of meetings held between representatives of the Queen Mary College, Stepney Libraries and Toynbee Hall it is intended to form an organisation whose object will be the collection, preservation and study of materials relating to the history of East London and the publication of the results of such work.

A provisional committee has been formed on which Professor S. Bindoff, Mr. B.Lewis and Mr. W.J. Evans represent the above institutions respectively.

The co-operation of other East London municipal authorities and institutions is being sought and it is hoped that EAST LONDONERS AND OTHERS WHO ARE INTERESTED in this project WILL GIVE THEIR SUPPORT.

The inaugural meeting will be held at

TOYNBEE HALL, Commercial Street E.1.

on

Tuesday, 30th SEPTEMBER, 1952

at

6 p.m.

Subsequent meetings of the Group will be held normally at the Mile End Library, Bancroft Road, E.1. on Tuesdays at 6 p.m.

Please come along to the inaugural meeting to hear about the aims and aspirations of the Group.

REFRESHMENTS

ADMISSION FREE

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