



View of the interior of Poplar Baths, East India Dock Road, taken by Philip Memick, on a recent visit (see page 2)

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Editorial Note:

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

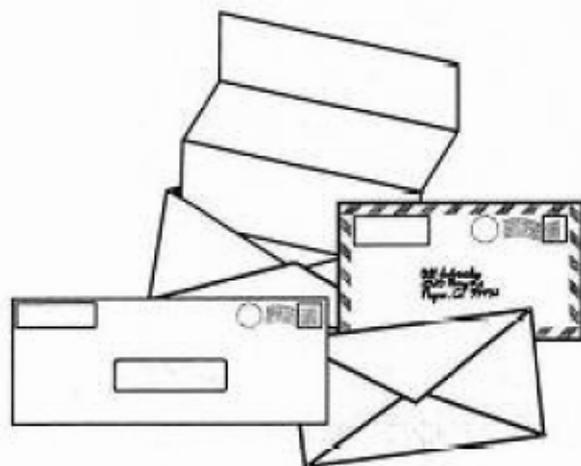
Letters and articles on East End history and reminiscences are always welcome and we make every effort to publish suitable material. Whilst hand-written articles are acceptable, items of interest that are typewritten or even better still, on disk will get priority!!

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All queries regarding membership should be addressed to Harold Mernick, 42 Campbell Road, Bow, London E3 4DT

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

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



Subscriptions are due! If you haven't received a form you don't need to pay!

Cover Picture:

Poplar Baths was built and opened in 1852 following the Baths & Wash Houses Acts in 1846-47 and cost £10,395. In the 1880s a large swimming pool with provision for spectators was introduced in what used to be the laundry area. There were further enlargements in the 1890s, and the washhouse section was moved to Sophia Street in 1931.

In January 1934 the fabric of the new building was completed and the whole much admired. The larger pool, known as East India Hall, was floored over in the winter and used as a theatre (capacity 1,400), dance hall, exhibition room and sports hall.

Wartime bomb damage forced the closure of the hall until 1947 when following required works, programmes resumed. However, poor repairs, lack of investment and the changing nature of leisure and swimming pool design meant that when structural repairs were required on the roof in 1985, it was decided to close the baths.

In 1988 the LIDDC took over the building as a Construction Training Centre – they filled in the pools with concrete and partitioned the interior but, on a positive note, had some rather nice murals painted in the entrance area.

The baths remain empty, in the state you can see on the cover picture. They are Grade 2 listed but occupy an important site on the south side of East India Dock Road (A 13). The Council says "it is seeking a high quality, high density development, incorporating a balance of uses which will optimize the excellent accessibility of the site". That sounds ominous.

On July 22nd and 23rd public consultations were held at The Salvation Army Hall in Kerbey Street, Poplar. The two proposed options were either to replace the old main pool with a new chlorine-free pool and convert the eastern part of the complex to housing and small work units or to demolish the whole structure and start again. The views of the public visible when I visited (on both days) were strongly in favour of reinstating the swimming facilities, they seemed rather cool to the idea of yet more housing and business units.

Philip Mernick

**EAST LONDON HISTORY
SOCIETY PROGRAMME
2005-2006**

Saturday 24 September 2005

Coach Trip to Maldon Essex – see back cover for details and booking slip.

Thursday 29th September 2005

A Riverside Journey from Greenwich to Tilbury in old Picture Postcards

Speakers: Steve Kentfield & Ray Newton

Thursday 27th October 2005

A History of the Blackwall Shipyard and a voyage to India on a Blackwall Frigate

Speaker: Clive Chambers

Preceded by A.G.M. at 7.00

Thursday 10th November 2005

Shadows of The Workhouse: Recollections of Workhouse Life

Speaker: Jennifer Worth

Thursday 8th December 2005

The History of Faiths in Tower Hamlets

Speaker: Sigrid Werner

Thursday 26th January 2005

The Poplar Council Dispute 1921

Speaker: Chris Sumner

Thursday 23rd February 2006

The Mercers Company, its Treasures, its East End Links and its East End Archivist

Speaker: Gary Haines

Thursday 23rd March 2006

Kicking and Screaming: Early Football in East London

Speaker: Colm Kerrigan

April 27th 2006

A Tour of the ELHS Web Site

Speaker: Harold Mernick

Thursday 18th May 2006

Open Evening – Subject is: Food and Drink

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

The Programme

Suggestions and ideas for future topics and/or speakers for our Lecture Programme are always welcomed. If you can suggest someone or indeed if you would like to give a talk yourself, please do come along to the Open Evening in May, and meet David Behr, our Programme co-ordinator.

Alternatively, email our Chairman Philip Mernick at phil@mernicks.com with your comments and suggestions.

Correspondence Pages

Mr George Dafter, 52 Upland Drive, Plymouth PL6 6BD wrote:

Last year I wrote to ELHS addressing it to Doreen Kendall. I asked a number of questions about the East End during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as I tried to flesh out my knowledge of my family tree. Doreen kindly replied with information and photos.

I was surprised to see the letter published in the 2004 Winter edition of the newsletter. That has so far generated two very interesting letters from fellow ELHS members:

A gentleman living in North London was able to give me a great deal of information about Edward Francis Coke, the Vicar of St James the Great (The Red Church) at the time my great grandparents were married. He also provided much information about Croyley Street, including a very nice photo, as it has recently been up for sale.

He added to my carman knowledge, as did a lady from Epping. Her grandfather had been a carman, and was able to provide much first hand knowledge.

Thank you again to all the above, and to ELHS. I keep all my copies, it is surprising that what seems trivial at first suddenly becomes relevant when added to knowledge from another source.

Letter from the Headteacher of Stepney Green School to Derek Morris, who was enquiring about the ceramic mural on the school wall:

Thank you for your letter of 26th May. I am very pleased you are interested in the ceramic mural. The mural was put in place in April 2002. The artist who was responsible for the design is Jean Powell of Craig Bragdy Design Ltd. in Denbighshire in North Wales. The central feature of the river is made up of 900 individual tiles and each student of the school, plus staff and some governors, made these. It took two weeks for these 900 tiles to be made in school and then the whole mural was completed in the factory up in Denbighshire. Two of our students went up to North Wales to do their work experience at the

factory. The design above the river shows the local houses and well known buildings of London, and the tiles underneath are representational of Bengali art.

The project was funded by the New Deal for Communities and cost £70,000. The mural is 30 plus metres wide. The tiles are mounted on galvanised zinc panels and therefore can be unbolted if necessary. The purpose behind it was to fill in an ugly expanse of wall that was constantly being graffitied and I took advice from the local architect's department who said that a ceramic finish was the best way of dealing with graffiti and even better if there would be community involvement. It was felt to be a risky place to put a piece of public art, but at the time of writing it has never been damaged and is as sparkling and fresh as the day it was unveiled by Stephen Timms, MP, then Minister for Schools.

Jean Powell has a long history of ceramic tile making, both in this country and abroad. I first became aware of her work in the 70s and I was delighted that she undertook the commission and came up with such a stunning design. I have passed a copy of your letter on to her.

Unfortunately we do not have a leaflet about the mural but we may well produce one in the light of your letter. Thank you again for your interest and I hope you will find the above information useful.

Yours sincerely,

Sean McGrath, Headteacher

Via email from Trevor Hollingsbee:

I was interested to see reference to the Samuda shipyards in the Bishop Grimes article in the latest ELHS newsletter.

The world's oldest operational warship- by a very wide margin - was completed by Samuda in Poplar in 1865.

The Egyptian Navy training ship and Royal Yacht EL HORRIYA (original name MAHROUSA) is reportedly still fully operational. I can, incidentally, remember her sailing to the States in

1976 for the USA bicentenary review. Jane's Fighting Ships, available in most reference libraries, has a photo and details.

The following is correspondence between Angela O'Donnell and Philip Mernick via email:

Angela O'Donnell wrote:

I would be most grateful for a copy of one of your past issue's of your Newsletters. It is Issue 13 (1997). My mother is now 87 years old and I am compiling her memories - she lived in Upper North Street, Poplar and attended Howarth House Convent. I noticed that Issue 13 had articles on Upper North Street and Howarth House and I would be most interested to read them. My mother actually knew the lady that wrote about Howarth House and I think they were at school together. I would appreciate a reply from you and am willing to pay for a copy of the Issue.

Thank you in advance.

Philip Mernick wrote:

I assume you mean the Howrah House item in Issue 12. I can't supply back copies of Newsletters because we only print enough for the membership but I attach the articles in PDF format. Please let me know if you can read them. If not I can print them out for you.

Angela replied:

Thank you so very much for sending me the articles I requested. My mother will be over the moon, especially the one about Howrah House. Ms Youles and her sister lived round the corner here in our Parish for years. I am not quite sure if she is still alive. My mother met up with her years ago at our Church and I remember her telling me she went to the same school. I was lucky enough to find some pictures of Howrah House on the East London Picture Postcard site and printed them off for my mother who was overcome to see the inside of her old school again. She lived in Poplar and my grandmother owned a sweet shop in Upper North Street and it was here she met my late father who was a Policeman at Limehouse for 33 years. Thank you very much for your help I am really delighted.

Philip Mernick wrote:

I am glad you were happy with the items I sent you. I am afraid I don't know if Miss Youles is still alive, all I can say is that she is not a current

member. I also have a large collection of postcards of the Tower Hamlets area and if there is anything you are specifically looking for I could send you a scan.

Angela replied:

Thank you for replying so quickly. I have just put together an album of pictures and photographs of the East End during the time my mum and dad lived there and was lucky enough to find one of The Eastern (where Dad did his point duty) - Howrah House - Petticoat Lane - Commercial Road. I was unable to find any of Upper North Street and I doubt very much if any of the postcards you have are of that area but if so I would be very pleased to see them. I also lived in the Police Flats in Arbour Square. In fact anything you may have on Poplar, Limehouse or Stepney. Please don't put yourself out as you have been very kind so far.

Philip responded:

Sorry about delayed reply. There are very few postcards apart from the main roads. All I have from Upper North Street is the Church of S.S. Mary & Joseph. I do have a card of the Police Court in Arbour Square.

(Ed. Note: The above rang a bell, and I checked through my files. The picture below was found at the Clergy House in Pekin Street, and I am indebted to Father Bill for allowing me to make a copy of it. However, I do not appear to have used it in any of my publications!)



The inauguration of the Wayside Cross, at the corner of Gates St. and Upper North St. October 1919.

Via email from Jill Macdonald:

I have an elderly aunt, aged 82, who now lives in Bocontree, Essex. She was brought up in Whitethorn Street, Poplar, Bow - along with my mother and other siblings - and in this street there was a community hall on a corner commonly called "The Bus House". I understand that this Hall was named after Francis Mary Bus who was a philanthropist who helped East London families. She was apparently a lady of fine upbringing and though my aunt and mother never met her they had learnt how she had used her contacts with her upper class lady friends and obtained much help from them for the poor of East London. For example, my mother well remembered receiving packs of old Christmas Cards from a place called "The Farthing Bundles" and how pretty they were and they cut them out and made scraps of them. These Christmas Cards were used and were obviously sent between the more privileged group of friends of Francis May Bus - my mother and her family never sent or received Christmas Cards so they were quite a novelty. They were often included in 'Farthing Bundles' which also contained used clothes etc for the poor of East London. In fact I remember my maternal grandmother brought over some American jeans when I was a small child - the first jeans we'd seen and which were worn often.

I wondered if you had any history on **Francis Mary Bus** and the good works she did for the East End people. My aunt and father would love to read about it.

For your information, my Mother was brought up in Whitethorn Street, Poplar, East London and my father was brought up in St. Anne's Street, Limehouse. My father is still alive and well at 92 years and we recently made a visit to my aunt in Essex, weaving our way through the city of London, Commercial road, Becton road etc., he said he would love to visit Limehouse again in the daytime and this is something we intend to do.

I also have another query that you may be able to help me with. Opposite St. Anne Street, Limehouse where my father was born and lived his early years, is St. Anne's Church, Limehouse - in fact my paternal aunts were married here and my elder brother was christened here - though he died of pneumonia at 18 months. I remember my paternal grandmother and grandfather talk of

an amazing story concerning this magnificent church. Obviously the East End - Limehouse and the surrounding areas - have for many, many years been a deprived area of London, but this church seems incongruous with its surroundings. I was told by my grandparents (and repeated by my father and aunts and uncles) that in fact this church was meant to be built in the city. The mystery continues that the architect designed two churches, the one in Limehouse and Shoreditch Church which is apparently much smaller.

The designs got mixed up and by mistake St. Anne's, Limehouse was built on the site instead of the much smaller Shoreditch Church. I have tried to trace the internet to discover if there is any truth in this family story but have been unlucky. The only glint that this story is slightly distorted is that the bell tower in St. Annes, Limehouse - was originally designed for another large church in the City but they ran out of funds and was not built. Later the architect used the plans for the belltower at St. Annes, Limehouse.

I wonder if you could help me with any of these queries. The answers would greatly please my aunts and uncles. I am debarking since my retirement - on tracing my family history, and these are questions that have been raised by my family whilst trying to discover as much family history as I can. I am so pleased I have found your site and will definitely be showing my father it.

Philip Mernick replied:

Thank you for your very interesting enquiry. I have to admit that I had never heard of **Frances Mary Buss** (correct spelling) but a quick search of the Internet found out quite a bit about her. She was obviously one of the pioneers in girls' education. These two web sites will give you some information about her.

<http://www.nls.org.uk/history/index.shtml> and <http://athena.english.vt.edu/~jmooney/3044biosage/buss.html>

She doesn't seem to have had much direct connection with the East End but there is a mention in the Timeline section of the North London Collegiate College web site "1926 Cow shed in Bramley is purchased to commemorate 100 years since Frances Mary Buss' birth and is converted for social services / club premises for local people - Frances Mary Buss House" I will check this out further and see what I can find out. The "Farthing Bundles Place" you

refer to will have been The Fern Street Settlement run by Clara Grant. Another prominent educationalist she came from a quiet country background to start as a teacher in Victorian Bromley and stayed for the rest of her life. She saw so much poverty in the area that she set up the settlement. A notable feature was the gifts of "Farthing Bundles" to local children. The gifts were only made to youngsters small enough to pass **under** a wooden barrier. The settlement is still in operation although a farthing wouldn't buy much nowadays!

Although I agree that St Anne's is a very fine church, I am sure it was meant to be like that. It was one of the 50 new churches authorised at the beginning of the eighteenth century and was designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor who also designed Christ Church Spitalfields, St George's in the East Wapping and St Alphege Greenwich. A lot of money was spent on the scheme hence the impressive building. It cost more than £32,000 an enormous sum at the time (1730). Unfortunately it was badly damaged by fire in 1850. It is very likely that Limehouse was more prosperous in 1730 than in 1930!

Jill's reply:

Thank you so very much for your information. I have already relayed the information to my father who was so pleased to hear it and I will be sending this to those aunts who are interested. I am going to join the East London History Society and would like to offer you the opportunity of gaining any information that any of my family may be able to help with.

My father remembered as a young child in St. Anne's Street listening to the banging of dustbins and other metal objects to welcome in the Chinese New Year as he lived very close to Chinatown. He has a fairly good memory - once prompted - so if we can help with any other queries we would be delighted to do so.

I remember also speaking with my paternal grandfather who died aged 94 - I asked him if he'd seen Queen Victoria - Oh Yes, he said, she came down to the East End in a landau - she was a very little woman. I couldn't believe that he had seen five generations of sovereigns!

We also have a claim to fame concerning the betterment of the conditions of the East End - my

maternal grandmother's cousin was called Julia Spur and she did great works as she was on the Labour Council in the early 1900's and went to prison for using council funds to help the poor. We have documentation and pictures of this which was obtained by my father from the Labour Party Museum.

Philip responded:

I am happy you found the information of help. We would love to publish any reminiscences you can provide in our newsletter. When you mentioned Julia Spur did you mean Julia Scurr (nee O'Sullivan) she was a prominent Suffragette and one of the Poplar councillors who went to prison in 1921 over rate equalisation.

Paul Cowdell, 53 Rutland Road, London E7 8PQ writes:

I was very interested to read your article on the Forest Gate School fire. I research popular music traditions, in particular old songs, and I have seen a fragment of a song about the fire. In 1973 the folksong collector Roy Palmer recorded songs from a Samuel Webber in Birmingham. Mr Webber (1874-1973) was born in Poplar, and among his songs was this verse:

O Hark what dreadful tidings is this we have to hear
 Before the bells cease ringing to end a dreary year!
 A fatal fire was raging which spread dismay
 around.
 Twenty-four children lost their lives in a fire at
 Forest Gate School.

It is quoted in Roy Palmer, *The Sound of History* (OUP 1988; repr. London: Pimlico, 1992), p.22. Palmer suggests that the song began life as a broadside ballad. He also speculates that it might belong with a verse quoted by George Macaulay Trevelyan, which began 'O London County Council....'

A letter to the Newham Recorder in September 2001 produced no responses, although as your article explained, the fire would have had as big an impact, if not bigger, in Poplar than in Forest Gate itself. I wondered if any of your readers remembered hearing the song? I would be particularly interested in hearing from anybody who might be able to sing it, or who remembers

any more of it. I would, of course, also be keen to hear from any of your readers who recall other old music/singing traditions (in pubs, down hopping etc.) and the songs that were sung.

(Anyone wishing to contact Paul may also do so via email: Paul.Cowdell@talk21.com or tel: (020) 8470 4511)

Notes and News

Priceless Porcelain

A 250 year old porcelain Chinaman found in a box of bric-a-brac could fetch £20,000 at auction. The rare figure was dumped in a load of junk offered for £20 by the owner, who had cleared out her loft in Salisbury. Ceramics expert John Axford, who spotted the 10 cm figure among old copper kettles and broken plates, discovered the piece was made at the **Linchouse** pottery in London between 1746 and 1748 and is probably the only human figure in existence. Mr Axford asserted that there was not a museum in the world that had one of these figures.

ELHS Member Mrs Lottie Caldwell (1915-2005)

Mr A.E. Hewston has written to inform us that his sister, Mrs Lottie Caldwell died recently at The Grange Residential Home in Wickford, Essex.

Lottie was born in Old Ford Road in 1915 and attended Monteith Road School until the age of 14. At the start of the Second World War she was living with her family and in-laws in Cawley Road (opposite Victoria Park Fountain). They moved to Wickford in 1940 to escape the blitz.

On behalf of the East London History Society members, we offer our sincere condolences to Mr Hewston and family.

The Pearlies:

Our Spring 2005 cover featured a picture taken by Philip Mernick of the Pearlies collecting for charity at Stratford, to the surprise and delight of the couple! Doreen Kendall met up with Doreen Golding, Pearlie Queen of Old Kent Road, at the East of London Family History Society meeting, a delightful person, who was 'thrilled to bits' to have her photograph featured on our cover.

Doreen Golding is descended from a Jewish family who settled in Aldgate in 1886. She went to school locally and eventually married Larry, a taxi driver. She became involved with charity work through her husband, who is on the committee of a society which organises trips to the seaside for underprivileged children. The titles of Pearly King and Queen are honorary ones, conferred on them by the Pearly Kings and Queens Association. Although the couple hope to continue with their charity work, because of Larry's poor health these days, engagements are usually close to home.

Stop Press:

East End Neighbourhoods, Brian Girling, Tempus, 2005, £12.99.
ISBN 0 7524 3519 1. 128 pages and 184 illustrations.

Another in the Tempus Images of London series, and only released this July. The author has concentrated on parts of the borough that have completely changed in character, and it is nice to see Bow and Mile End featuring as well as the more western end of the borough. I have only had the book two days so haven't read it in detail but I am sure I saw a picture of Canning Town, how did that get in Brian! There is a higher emphasis, than usual, on photographs here rather than postcards, from both private and public collections and I think the books benefits from it. I have lost track of how many books the author has already published on the East End, but I think this is one of the best.

Philip Mernick

CAPTAIN JAMES COOK AND FRIENDS IN MILE END OLD TOWN, 1765-1779

When walking from the Bancroft Road library through the Ocean Estate to our meetings in Ernest Street one passes [Sir Hugh] Palliser House, one of the few reminders in Tower Hamlets of the friends, patrons and colleagues of Captain James Cook, navigator and explorer. Given the world wide and continuing interest in Cook I am always ashamed that Yorkshire can provide four superb museums to commemorate Cook, even though he spent more time in East London than in Yorkshire.

Cook's early connections with the East End were well researched by Julia Rae in her book "Captain James Cook Endeavours" 1997.

But why in 1765 did Captain James Cook and his family move from Shadwell to Assembly Row in Mile End Old Town? In a series of articles in *Cook's Log*, the Journal of the Captain Cook Society, I have suggested that one important advantage to such a move was that in the immediate vicinity of their new home were hundreds of men with wide experience of taking ships from England to the Far East. The majority of these mariners were from the East India Company but there were also a few Royal Navy men living locally. I expect that Cook realised that living in the more exalted hamlet of MEOT would bring him into contact with many men, whose sailing experience was far greater than his own. Now with the publication by the EoLFHS of my database of 6900 MEOT residents between 1740 and 1790 it has been possible to discover a great deal more about the connections between Cook and local residents.

This recent research has thrown up several interesting connections between Cook and his Stepney neighbours. In particular the merchants involved in the North American and Russian fur and timber trades, and the support

possibly available to Elizabeth Cook during Cook's voyages from the Binmer, Blade, Honeychurch, Lieber, North and Sayer families.

In the early part of the 1760s a group of men, all connected with Cook, moved to the hamlet of Mile End Old Town, a rapidly-growing and up-market eastern suburb of London. The first to arrive were Cook's two executors, Thomas Dyall a prominent timber merchant, who moved into the hamlet in 1762, and Richard Wise, who became a proprietor of several houses in MEOT in 1764. Then came William Honeychurch in 1764, Admiral Abraham North in 1765, Henry Lieber in 1770, John Binmer in 1771, Sade Blade in 1773 and Stephen Sayer in 1777.

All of the men and their families were attracted by the higher quality of both the housing and the improved social life available in Mile End Old Town since the Assembly Rooms were opened in 1765.

THE NAVAL AND TRADE CONNECTIONS

Cook's Passing Certificate

On 29 June 1757 James Cook attended at Trinity House Deptford, passed his examination, and came away with a certificate stating that he was qualified "to take charge as Master of any of His Majesty's Ships from the Downs thro' the Channel to the Westward and to Lisbon".

Andrew David in 1999 pointed out that before it was possible for Cook to take command of the *Endeavour* on the first voyage in 1768 it was necessary for him to pass the Lieutenant examination, for the ship had been set at six 4-powder guns and 8 swivels. It was also necessary to ensure Cook's seniority vis-à-vis the other two lieutenant posts.

So on the 13 May 1768 Cook after taking his examination was granted his passing certificate and on the 25 May 1768 took

command of the *Endeavour*, and his seniority dates from then. So who was Admiral Abraham North, one of the two Admiralty men who signed Cook's passing certificate?

Admiral Abraham North

Was it coincidental that one of the men chosen by the Admiralty to conduct the examination was a neighbour of Cook's in the East London suburb of Mile End Old Town? Indeed Admiral North arrived in MEOT in 1765 within a year of Cook and remained there until his death in 1781. So the two families lived within a few hundred yards of each other for over fifteen years, and both wives had endured long separations from their husbands.

In 1768, when Cook sat his examination, North was living in Redman Row, MEOT, in an old house, of considerable size as shown by the rack rent of £22 and his wealth was indicated by his "stock" of £100. In 1777 North moved from Redman Row to Ireland Row on the north side of the Mile End Road, and just opposite Cook's house in Assembly Row. North's house can still be seen.

North and Cook not only shared living in the same hamlet but also had shared experiences sailing with the Royal Navy across the North Atlantic and operating in Canadian waters, and it would be interesting to know whether during the examination North and Cook chatted about their common experiences and their neighbours or was the examination more formal?

The Exploration of New Albion and the Fur Trade

Beaglehole described the background in 1770s to Cook's third voyage and the search for a passage from the Pacific to the Atlantic. The Admiralty's secret instructions to Cook included the need to "carefully observe the nature of the soil, and the produce thereof; the animals and fowls that inhabit or frequent it ... and if you find any metals, minerals ... to bring home specimens of each".

Amongst those interested in the trade prospects that might arise from this voyage were a group of Cook's neighbours in Mile End Old Town, who were active in the Russia Company, (founded in 1553), and the Hudson's Bay Company, (founded in 1670). These merchants were importing furs, hemp, tar, timber and tallow.

The man who moved into Admiral Abraham North's house in Redman Row in 1777 was Stephen Sayer who had become free of the Russia Company in 1763. Further along the Mile End Road lived John Thornton, whilst close to St Dunstan's church lived Captain Gilbert Slater, who was also prominent in the East India Company, as well as a having an interest in plant collectors. Ralph Keddey who in 1775 and 1778 was trading in St Petersburg and Riga, and his son Thomas Keddey, were both free of the Russia Company and lived close to Thomas Dyall a timber merchant, and one of Cook's executors. Mile End was also the home to directors of the Hudson Bay Company such as Samuel Jones III.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Colnett And Binmer Families

Mile End Old Town attracted mariners and seamen from many British ports such as Newcastle, Whitby, Hull, Yarmouth, Dover, and along the south coast to Devon and Cornwall. There is not space in this article to mention all of these links but one of interest involves two Devon men, James Colnett [1753-1806] and John Binmer [1741?-1806], who lived in MEOT.

James Colnett

The closeness of these two men is revealed by James Colnett's will (PRO 11/1451) in which he desired to be "buried at Mile End by the side of the late Mr. Binmer". The will was proved 3 November 1806.

James Colnett was baptised 18 October 1753 at Stoke Damarel in Devon, a parish near to the area that the Binmore family lived in.

Perhaps this parish is better known now because it became the site of one of the Admiralty's dockyards, which we know as Devonport, a western suburb of Plymouth.

James Colnett sailed on the second voyage on the *Resolution* as a midshipman in 1772-75. He was made a lieutenant in 1779 and commanded several commercial fur trading voyages to the North Pacific. He rejoined the Navy and led a surveying expedition to the southeast Pacific from 1793 to 1796. Colnett became a commander in 1794 and a captain in 1796. He justifies entries in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online* and John Robson's *The Captain Cook Encyclopaedia*.

Clearly he felt very close to Binmer and probably had been recommended to Cook, whilst Binmer was working at the Navy Board on the preparations for the Second Voyage.

John Binmer

The name is variously spelt Binmer, Biner, Binner and Binmore and the IGI shows that this family name comes from a limited area in Devon between Buckfastleigh and Torquay in the mid 18th century.

John Binmer was apprenticed at the age of 14 or so in 1755 to John Williams, who was Foreman at the Navy's Dockyard in Portsmouth, and this formed the basis for a very successful career. Binmer stayed with Williams in Portsmouth and Sheerness and then moved to the Navy Board when Williams became Surveyor to the Navy in 1765. Williams held the most senior position in the Royal Navy concerned with the design and construction of its sailing ships, and this emphasises Binmer's importance.

Subsequently Binmer was promoted as follows:
1771-1790: Second Assistant on £200 pa plus £30 for rent
1791-1805: First Assistant on £300 pa plus £50 for rent

Dr Roger Knight commented that Binmer's promotion to Second Assistant was an exceptional case, "since such a blatant disregard of experience in promotion was rare".

John Binmer's promotion in 1771 was immediately followed by his marriage to Alice Clemens on 20 April 1771 at St. Dunstan's Church, Stepney. They then lived in Mile End Old Town for the next 35 years and so were always near Captain James Cook and then his widow after 1779.

For Binmer to choose to live in Mile End Old Town may have been based on its location convenient for both the Navy Office and the Deptford and Sheerness dockyards. He lived in MEOT from 1771 until at least 1790 (the last date I have looked at so far). During this time he became increasingly prosperous. The rent on his first house was £14 and in 1781 Binmer finally moved into a house (rent £26 with 12 or so rooms) in Assembly Row, even closer to Elizabeth Cook, now a widow, and her family. His final promotion occurred on 23 January 1790 when he became First Assistant on a salary of £300 pa plus a rent allowance of £50.

Derek Morris

REFERENCES

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MEMORIAL RESEARCH

Don't forget, Doreen and Diane Kendall, with Doreen Osborne and a dedicated group of volunteers are in the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park on the second Sunday of every month at 2 pm, meticulously researching graves and recording memorial inscriptions. They would welcome any help members can offer. This labour of love has grown into a project of enormous proportions and complexity, with an impressive database of graves researched, with illustrations attached.

Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park Open Day 2005

Monday, May 30th dawned wet and windy. We were not deterred and started to put out the festive bunting and our brand new 'Open Day' banner. The Bouncy Castle was inflated and a noisy group of birds arrived from the Mudchute Farm.

On the dot of 11 our first visitors arrived. By early afternoon the rain had stopped and more children joined the brave and wet early bouncers. There was a pause in the face painting and massage whilst more tea was drunk and cakes eaten.

The Morris Dancers were never daunted; they danced and danced, in between and even during the lighter rain. Their music was a welcome draw to passers by.

Walkers enjoyed a rather muddy series of Nature and History walks and the pond was well and truly dipped. Through all of this, under a wonderfully improvised umbrella, newspapers were rolled and made into all manner of pieces of furniture.

Spider Man visited the Children's Pet Competition, but didn't win any thing! Many visitors to the History stall bought plants, as well as consulting about graves.

Our new logo T-shirts were a huge success. Tired, but satisfied we all trudged home. We had not had as many visitors as sunnier Open Days, but all those who came had a happy and peaceful day. Many thanks to all and to our two visitors from the Police.

*Janice Gwilliam,
Chair of the Friends*

Graves Discovered

A long-forgotten burial ground has been uncovered at St Mary's and St Michael's Primary School in Stepney. The school is adjacent to the Catholic Church of the same name, built in 1856. The burial ground was used between 1843 and 1854. The land is earmarked for Bishop Challoner Collegiate College, and if planning permission is granted, the bodies will be removed and re-interred in another Catholic cemetery. However, until the site is dug up, it is impossible to ascertain how many bodies there are, as there are no records for the site. This may disappoint family historians in search of their ancestors who had connections with the parish.

William Morris in the East End

Following the Spring Coach Trip to Red House, built by William Morris and now the Home of the Arts and Crafts Movement, I thought the following might be of interest:

William Morris was born in 1834 at Walthamstow, then a suburban village on the edge of Epping Forest. It was, in Morris's own words, "*once a pleasant enough place, but now terribly cocknified and choked up by the jerry-builder.*" Walthamstow's postcode 'E17' now places it within the East London area, although I doubt the people of that area consider themselves part of the East End of London.

Whilst at Oxford Morris came under the influence of Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement. But he was greatly attracted towards medievalism, and it was the latter that formed the basis of his art, poetry and design. Upon marrying the beautiful Jane Burden, Morris searched in vain for the perfect house, then in 1859 commissioned his friend Philip Webb to build one for him in Bexleyheath, Red House. It was indeed perfect, but had to be completed with the perfect furnishings. Morris, with the aid of his friends and fellow designers and artists, Philip Webb, P P Marshall, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Ford Madox Brown amongst others designed everything from furniture to glassware and cutlery. This collaboration culminated in the setting up of the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., which marked the beginning of a new era in Western art. As a commercial enterprise the Firm was a great success, and as William Morris and Co., continued to trade until the Second World War. But for Morris its great failure lay in its inability to cater for any but the rich. "*I don't want art for a few, any more than education for a few or freedom for a few.*" Gradually his questioning of the nature of the relationship between art and society led him into social action, and ultimately, into socialism.

William Morris was a familiar figure in the East End of London for six eventful years, as he formulated his socialist ideals and sought to impart them to the workingman. Morris travelled extensively around the country during these years, often taking in two and sometimes three meetings a day. But he returned to the East End, making regular appearances at the workingmen's clubs and in Victoria Park, lecturing and addressing the *East Enders*, as he liked to call them, always with the feeling that somehow he was not really getting his message of socialism across and deeply conscious of the great class divide that separated them.

The name of William Morris crops up frequently in accounts of the work of East End activists, such as Annie Besant and Eleanor Marx and of events such as the Dock Strike, the Match Girls Strike, and Alfred Linnell's funeral. However, the local history enthusiast who seeks details of Morris's activities in the East End within the published accounts his life and work meets with disappointing results. There is barely a passing mention, and it was this that prompted my quest in search of William Morris's East End connections. What I have gleaned, mainly from Morris's letters to friends and family, his Socialist Diary and *The Commonwealth* I present here, not as a critique of the great man and his work, but a celebration of our pride in being able to claim with justification that "William Morris was here in the East End."

On 8th June 1881 Henry Mayers Hyndman announced the formation of the Social Democratic Federation. William Morris joined them on 13 January 1883. By June 1884 he had established the Hammersmith branch.

But Hyndman's autocratic manner and attitude was soon to alienate his fellow socialists, among them Eleanor Marx (daughter of Karl Marx) and her common-law husband Edward Aveling and together with a few other like-minded socialists they broke away to form their own group, the Socialist League.

William Morris became leader on 30 December 1884, and with Edward Aveling as sub-editor, he edited the League's weekly paper *The Commonweal*. The Socialist League began spreading the gospel of socialism which led to Morris's appearances in the East End, which was to continue intermittently for six eventful years.

At first, Morris expressed his views in lectures given in working men's clubs. *The Commonweal* gave dates and times of the many and varied meetings held throughout the year. Whilst the headquarters of the League was in Hammersmith, a major branch of the League was located at the spacious Mile End Radical Club at 108 Bridge Street (now Hamlets Way), off Burdett Road, another branch was opened at 110 White Horse Street, just off Cayley Street, Stepney. White Horse Street is now a lane alongside the eastern boundary of St Dunstan's Churchyard, and the area has been cleared of all housing.

Weekly open air meetings were organised outside the Salmon and Ball public house in Cambridge Heath Road, Bethnal Green on Sunday mornings and in Victoria Park in the afternoons. The pub is diagonally opposite St John's Church, at the junction of Bethnal Green Road and Cambridge Heath Road, and adjacent to Bethnal Green underground station.

Volunteers distributed the four page leaflet *What Socialists Want*, written by Morris, making house to house calls with lists of future meetings. Mile End Waste, in front of Trinity Almshouses and Charrington's Great Assembly Hall was another popular spot for the League's open air meetings.

One of the earliest references to William Morris in the East End was a visit on 8th April 1884 to St Jude's Church, Commercial Street, Whitechapel, where he gave a speech at the opening of the Fourth Annual Art Exhibition. The Vicar was Augustus Barnett, who had taken on St Jude's in 1872, at the age of 28.

With his wife Henrietta, Barnett set to work in the "worst parish in London". He believed the influence of intellectual and talented young men would have an uplifting effect on the minds and morals of the inhabitants of East End slums, and to this end he appealed for University undergraduates to spend some time working to improve the lot of their less fortunate brothers in and around Whitechapel.¹

William Morris addressed meetings at the *Tea-To-Tum*, a coffee house at 166 Bethnal Green Road on two occasions in 1884, in January and in April. During the following year, 1885, spoke at the Radical Club at 110 White Horse Street, Stepney in March and again in May. Morris wrote to Georgiana Burne-Jones, wife of Edward Burne-Jones, and a life-long friend and confidante, of a meeting he had addressed on 27 May 1885. "*On Sunday I went a-preaching Stepney way,*" he wrote. "*My visit intensely depressed me as these Eastwards visits always do; the mere stretch of houses, the vast mass of utter shabbiness and uneventfulness, sits upon one like a nightmare; of course what slums there are one doesn't see. You would perhaps have smiled at my congregation; some 20 persons in a little room as dirty as convenient and stinking a good deal. It took the fire out of my fine periods, I can tell you; it is a great drawback that I can't talk to them roughly and unaffectedly. Also I would like to know what amount of real feeling underlies their bombastic revolutionary talk.*" He concludes with these melancholy words, "*I don't seem to have got at them yet - you see this great class gulf lies between us.*"²

Morris was also to make his first appearance in Victoria Park, Bow, on the 26th July 1885. But it was through the incidents at Dod Street, Limehouse which attracted unwelcome police attention, and landed Morris in court, that his role as a socialist and champion of the working classes was given wider coverage in the media.

¹ Toynebee Hall - Asa Briggs etc.

² Letters of William Morris etc. - Philip Henderson

Morris had become embroiled in the exploits of the Free Speech Vigilance Committee, formed with the Social Democratic Federation, the Socialist League and the Radical Union to defend their right to speak at what had become a traditional spot, at the corner of Piggot Street and Dod Street at Limehouse. This densely populated factory area of East London was usually deserted and quiet on Sundays, and the open space afforded an ideal venue for open air meetings. Several leading lights in the socialist world addressed the crowds at Dod Street, including Edward Aveling, Eleanor Marx and Lewis Lyons, Jewish Tailors' Trade Union leader.

On 20 September 1885, at the end of a meeting, the police launched a violent attack on the speakers, arresting and charging eight men, among them Jack Williams and Lewis Lyons. The hearing was set for Tuesday 22 September. At the Thames Police Court, Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx gave evidence on the men's behalf; nevertheless Lewis Lyons was sentenced to two months imprisonment. Morris was amongst the spectators who cried "*Shame*," when the sentence was passed. Two hours later he was in Thames Police Court in front of the magistrate on the charge of disorderly conduct. When the magistrate, Mr Saunders asked, "*Who are you?*" Morris replied, "*I am an artist and a literary man, pretty well known, I think, throughout Europe.*" This reply evidently impressed Mr Saunders who dismissed the charges against him.³

Victoria Park was a popular spot for Sunday orators, and among them could be seen the unmistakable figure of William Morris. On 26th July 1885 Tom Mann, one of the leaders of the 1889 Dockers' Tanner Strike, saw Morris on what was to be the first of several visits he made to the Park. He was being heartily applauded by his audience of workers, but to Mann's mind Morris looked "*the picture of Bluff King Hal.*"⁴

³ Eleanor Marx Vol. II - Yvonne Kapp

⁴ Tom Mann's Memoirs (1923)

Morris was in the Park on 11th October 1885, but shortly afterwards he fell ill. Morris made only one visit to the Park in 1886, on 8th August, after which he wrote to his daughter Jenny: "*.....and then away Eastward Ho to Victoria Park rather sulky at having to turn out so soon after dinner. Though Victoria Park is rather a pretty place with water (dirty though) and lots of trees.*"⁵

Notwithstanding Mann's reference to his regal appearance, Morris was aware he presented a somewhat different profile to the young working lads who frequented the Park. In a letter to his daughter Jenny, dated 30th March 1887, Morris wrote: "*Last Sunday it befell me to go to Victoria Park (beyond Bethnal Green) to a meeting. Now I have mounted a cape or cloak grey in colour so that people doubt whether I be a brigand or a parson; this seemed too picturesque for some 'Arrys' who were passing by and they sung out after me, Shakespeare - Yah!*"⁶

Morris was a regular visitor to Victoria Park in 1887 and addressed the crowds there no less than five times, on 27th March, 21st May, 23rd July, 21st August and 11th September.

On Wednesday 30th March 1887, Morris noted in his diary: "*On Sunday (27th March) I gave my 'Monopoly' (a set speech, with the full title of 'Monopoly: or How Labour is Robbed', which he delivered on several occasions) at the Borough of Hackney Club, which was one of the first workmen's clubs founded, if not the first; it is a big club numbering 1,600 members: a dirty wretched place enough giving a sad idea of the artisans' standard of comfort: the meeting was a full one, and I suppose I must say attentive; but the coming and going all the time, the pie-boy and the pot-boy was rather trying to my nerves: the audience was civil and inclined to agree, but I couldn't flatter myself that they mostly understood me, simple as the lecture was....I went afterwards to the Demonstration*

⁵ Letters, page 258

⁶ Letters, page 267

on Free Speech in Victoria Park: as a demonstration it was a failure, I suppose enough fuss hadn't been made about it: but it was a good Sunday afternoon gathering the crowd very quiet and attentive 300 or 400 I should suppose."⁷

In August 1887 he penned a letter to Georgiana Burne-Jones: "*It is a beautiful bright Autumn morning here, as fresh as daisies; and I am not over-inclined for my morning preachment at Waltham Green but go I must, as also to Victoria Park in the afternoon. I had a sort of dastardly hope that it might rain. Mind you, I don't pretend to say that I don't like it in some way or other, when I am on my legs. I fear I am an inveterate word-spinner and not good for much else.*"⁸

Morris's enthusiasm for speaking in the Park now began to diminish and he came to dread the occasions. He was in the Park in September 1887 and did not return there until May the following year.

The culmination of the Socialists' struggle for the right to free speech came on 'Bloody Sunday', 13th November 1887, when 3 people died and over 200 others were injured, some seriously. William Morris and Annie Besant addressed the marchers on the need to resist all attempts to gag free speech. 300 demonstrators were arrested, among them two Members of Parliament, who later received prison sentences for their part in the event. 126 of these were charged and sentenced to anything from a fortnight to 6 months hard labour. In all 160 people were sent to gaol. Of the over 200 people who were injured, some seriously, 3 later died of their injuries.

The following Sunday the police were out again in force, charging their horses at the crowds who had collected in Trafalgar Square. Alfred Linnell, a law clerk, took a walk up the road to see what was going on in Trafalgar

Square. In Northumberland Avenue he suddenly found himself being charged by a police horse, which trampled upon him, smashing his thigh bone. He was taken to Charing Cross Hospital, but after two weeks of agony, Alfred Linnell died on 2 December.

The Law and Liberty League found in Linnell a martyr for their cause. They took over all the arrangements for his funeral, which was held on Sunday 18th December. All the arrangements were supervised by Annie Besant.

The route took them through Coventry Street and Cranbourne Street and then they were diverted to Long Acre, Covent Garden and the Strand, up Fleet Street and on to Aldgate, Whitechapel Road and Mile End Road to the City of London and Tower Hamlets Cemetery. Annie Besant paced slowly on the left of the hearse with WT Stead, Herbert Burrows and Robert Cunninghame Graham. On the right walked William Morris, Robert Darling of the Irish Land League, Frank Scott of the Salvation Army and James Seddon. Following in a coach with Linnell's family were Dr Richard Pankhurst and his wife Emmeline, and John Burns MP. Eleanor Marx was in one of the other coaches.

Reverend Stewart Headlam, the controversial clergyman from St Matthew's Church, Bethnal Green, officiated. It was estimated that close on 100,000 people followed the cortege. It was half past four, raining and dark by the time they reached the entrance, to discover that the main gate was guarded by 100 policemen, and the procession had to squeeze through the narrow path, now called Hamlets Way, and enter from a side gate.

Linnell's grave is situated in Square No. 73 close to the entrance on the right hand side. The plot was paid for by the Law and Liberty League. The walls of the grave were decorated with holly and evergreens. By the aid of a lantern and in an increasing downpour, the Reverend Stewart Headlam read the burial

⁷ William Morris's Socialist Diary - edited by Florence Boos

⁸ Letters (etc.) page 275

service. By matchlight the choir sang *A Death Song* composed by Morris and set to music by Malcolm Lawson.

The press attacked Morris for his role in the funeral, but as a result of the publicity he became the recognised champion of the workers all over England.

On 17th June 1888, Morris was once again seen in Victoria Park when he appeared on the platform with other members of the Socialist League. Morris was one of the star attractions in the Park and the authorities began to fear a recurrence of the Trafalgar Square incidents. The Metropolitan Board of Works, who controlled the Park secured the consent of the Home Secretary to a bye-law forbidding collections to be made in the Park. Since this was a popular way of augmenting funds, the Socialist League took the initiative and called a protest meeting on 10 June at 3.30 pm. The main speaker was Annie Besant who was greeted enthusiastically by a crowd of around 2,000. After her address she made a collection to ensure that her name was taken down. However, the bye-law was not enforced and appeared to die a natural death.

In July 1888 Annie Besant interviewed women workers at the Bryant and May Match Factory in Bow. She published her findings, and the furore they caused culminated in a general strike at the factory. The Match Girls Strike and the proceedings of the House of Lords Sweating Committee prompted a joint radical anti-sweating demonstration in Hyde Park on Sunday 22 July in which both the SDF and the Socialist League groups from East London participated. The march began at Beckton Road, Canning Town down to East India Dock Road, then turned right on to Burdett Road where they were met by the Limehouse branch of the SDF. Then they moved on to Mile End Waste where they were met by the Bethnal Green Socialist League, the East London Tailors and Machinists Society, and the Berner Street International Working Men's Club.

The march continued picking up groups on its way to Hyde Park where there were platforms ranged around the park from where speakers such as John Burns, George Bernard Shaw, Herbert Burrows and Annie Besant addressed the crowd. No. 6 platform was occupied by the Socialist League, with William Morris.

The Berner Street International Working Men's Club who joined in the Hyde Park rally were by already well known to William Morris. In 1884 a Society of Jewish Socialists had set up an International Workers Educational Club and its founders became patrons of the *Der Arbeter Fraint*. In February 1885 the club took over premises at 40 Berner Street (now Henriques Street), described as a narrow slum thoroughfare off Commercial Road, where they now called themselves the International Workingmen's Educational Association. No. 40 was an old wooden two storey building and the club room could hold about 200 people and contained a stage.

The predominantly Jewish club was open to Socialist League branches, and Morris lectured there to mixed ethnic groups. On Tuesday 27 March 1888 his play, *The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened* was performed here as part of a benefit concert in aid of the Yiddish radical newspaper *Der Arbeter Fraint*.

Morris addressed the Berner Street Club on 2nd February 1886, 22nd September 1888 and again on 8th June 1890. On 17th June his *Tables Turned* was repeated at the Princes Square Club to a crowded house, after which recitations and songs both in English and German, as well as dancing continued to a late hour.

On 9th April 1889 Morris was once again at Commercial Street, this time delivering a lecture "*Gothic Architecture*" at a meeting sponsored by the Guild and School of Handicraft in the lecture room of Toynbee Hall for students of the University Settlements scheme. The lecture was illustrated by lantern-slides.

E P Thompson⁹ makes the point that despite Morris's earnestness in trying to fill the role of the active agitator and propagandist, he often felt that his reputation as a poet and artist-designer hindered his progress. However, his wealthy middle-class background provided an even greater divide. It would be true to say he did not really understand the people he most wanted to reach. His forays into the East End only served to underline the intellectual and spiritual deprivation of the worker and this knowledge filled him with a sense of shame: "a sense of shame in one's own better luck not possible to express - that the conditions under which they live and work make it difficult for them even to conceive the sort of life that a man should live."¹⁰

On the fifth anniversary of the Berner Street Club, 8 June 1890 the hall was packed with workers in their holiday attire accompanied by their wives and children. At halfpast five, William Morris in his capacity of Chairman, opened the meeting with a brief speech. Later a collection was taken by May, his daughter, and Sergius Stepniak whilst the choir of the Hammersmith branch of the Socialist League sang Morris's lyric: *Down among the Dead Men*.

The Commonweal and *Der Arbeter Fraint* announced a meeting on 1 November 1890 organised by the Club in the Great Assembly Hall at Mile End to protest against the persecution of Jewish brethren in Russia. An impressive line-up of speakers was announced, but on the Thursday before the meeting Charrington withdrew his permission for use of the hall. The demonstration took place instead outside on the Waste and attracted a massive audience. Along with William Morris were Eleanor Marx, Edward Aveling and Cunninghame Graham MP. This was to be Morris's last known appearance in the East End.

In 1890 after falling out with the Socialist League William Morris formed the Hammersmith Socialist Society from the Hammersmith branch of the League. From that year onwards his forays into the East End ceased. When William Morris died on 3 October 1896, his family doctor said of him "he died a victim to his enthusiasm for spreading the principles of Socialism." The East End of London can say with justifiable pride that they were privileged to have shared in that enthusiasm.

Rosemary Taylor

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- William Morris's Socialist Diary - Edited by Florence Boas
- William Morris: A Life for Our Time - Fiona MacCarthy
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⁹ William Morris - Romantic to Revolutionary - E P Thompson

¹⁰ The Commonweal, 19th February 1887

BOOK SHELF

Below are listed some recent publications with East End connections which may be of interest to our members. Doreen has reviewed ELHS member Jennifer Worth's latest book. Please check Eastside Bookshop Whitechapel, or Newham Bookshop, Plaistow for copies of any of these:

An Acre of Barren Ground by Jeremy Gavron, is a blend of fiction, history and archaeology, which takes the reader on a tour of Brick Lane through the centuries, making connections between the one time and another.

London 5: East by Cherry, O'Brien and Pevsner, is an architectural guide that focuses on east London. The book includes Barking, Dagenham, Newham, Havering, Redbridge and Waltham Forest, which makes it good value for money. The guide provides a full and detailed account of the area's historic buildings, located by detailed maps, and sets them in the context of the long process of change that has occurred within the area.

East End Chronicles, Three Hundred Years of Mystery and Mayhem by Ed Glinert. The book looks at the metamorphosis of the East End from an area closely associated with crime to one of the most dynamic and progressive quarters of London.

Shadows of the Workhouse by Jennifer Worth. Published by Merton Books. Price £14.99. 252 pages A5 size, paperback form, edition. ISBN 1-872560-13-X

Members will remember a lecture to our Society by Jennifer Worth on her first book "Call the Midwife" how her training to become a midwife in a order of Nuns at Nonnatus House gave her an insight into the harsh conditions, lack of housing and poor wages, all resulting in many illnesses which the Nuns treated, after the Second World War in Poplar.

This book, the second of a trilogy is about people whose lives had been marred by the harsh conditions of the workhouse. Living in the East End we are all familiar with the large overpowering Victorian workhouse buildings that are part of our landscape. To read the Royal Commission Reports which closed down the workhouses in 1930 or the Minutes of Committee Guardian Meetings or the lists of inmates, do not bring home to us the horror that any East Ender, committed to the workhouse through lack of work, illness or loss of a parent, endured. The cruel separations from loved ones, the daily workhouse grind of working in the laundries or kitchens, the lack of privacy, and poor education. Children were subjected to bullying by older children and staff, the fear of a misdemeanour which could mean the shaving of ones head or the cane given with the ferocity of a grown man.

Two of Jennifer's reminiscences which made it hard to put the book down, are of people whose lives she shared. Jane, born in the workhouse, frail with a delicate appearance and an assurance through her good looks that she had a secret - that her father was a high born gentleman. Jane's life unfolds with horror, how she is treated by the staff and master of the workhouse who whips her to a hair's breath of dying.

Frank was four when his sister Peggy was born. On losing both parents they entered the workhouse and separated when Frank reached the age of seven. Despite all the hardships that followed, at the age of sixteen, through hard work in the fish trade, he made a home and rescued his sister from the workhouse. Their love and devotion to each other, then Frank's illness are all told with compassion. This book is compelling reading to everyone who reads social history.

Doreen Kendall



AUTUMN COACH TRIP

SATURDAY 24th SEPTEMBER 2004 TO MALDON, ESSEX

The old port of Maldon was the site of a famous battle between the Saxons and Vikings over 1000 years ago. Many historic buildings remain from centuries since.

We shall be having conducted tours for the morning, and visiting the church and the tapestry commemorating the battle of 'Maeldune'.

In the afternoon, I have arranged tours of the Moot Hall, the old council offices which used also to include a police station, a prison, and a court room. We shall have to split into two groups, one at 2.00 and one at 3.30. There are a number of other places of interest to see if time permits. There is a local museum, and recently a museum barge has opened, with material on Thames sailing barges and how they were built.

The tours will cost about £1.50 to £2.00 each, depending on numbers. The Moot Hall visit is £1, concessions 50p. I will collect the tour money on the coach; the Moot Hall can be paid individually. I am not sure at present about the barge visit, they could not confirm if it will be open. It costs £2.50 or £1.50 concessions, but we might get a party rate.

The Maldon Regatta will be taking place on the 24th, so we may be able to see barges sailing. There may be rather a lot of other people, and perhaps it may be best to take a packed lunch.

I am hoping to arrange tea for the party at a place in Heybridge Basin where we could watch the regatta.

The pick up will be the bus pull in on Grove Road, near Mile End Station, at 9.30. The coach fare will be £8.00 please send this to me with your booking on the slip below.

Please fill in the booking slip below and send to me, Ann Sanson, 18 Hawkdene, London E4 7PF. Tel. 020 8524 4506. (Photocopy it if you don't wish to spoil your newsletter.)



AUTUMN TRIP Saturday 24th September 2005

I/We would like _____ Ticket/s for the coach trip to Maldon.

NAME/S _____

ADDRESS _____

TEL NO. _____ I enclose a cheque/PO for £ _____

(Cheques made payable to the East London History Society.)

NATIONAL TRUST MEMBERSHIP (IMPORTANT)

YES NO Some of us (please give number)