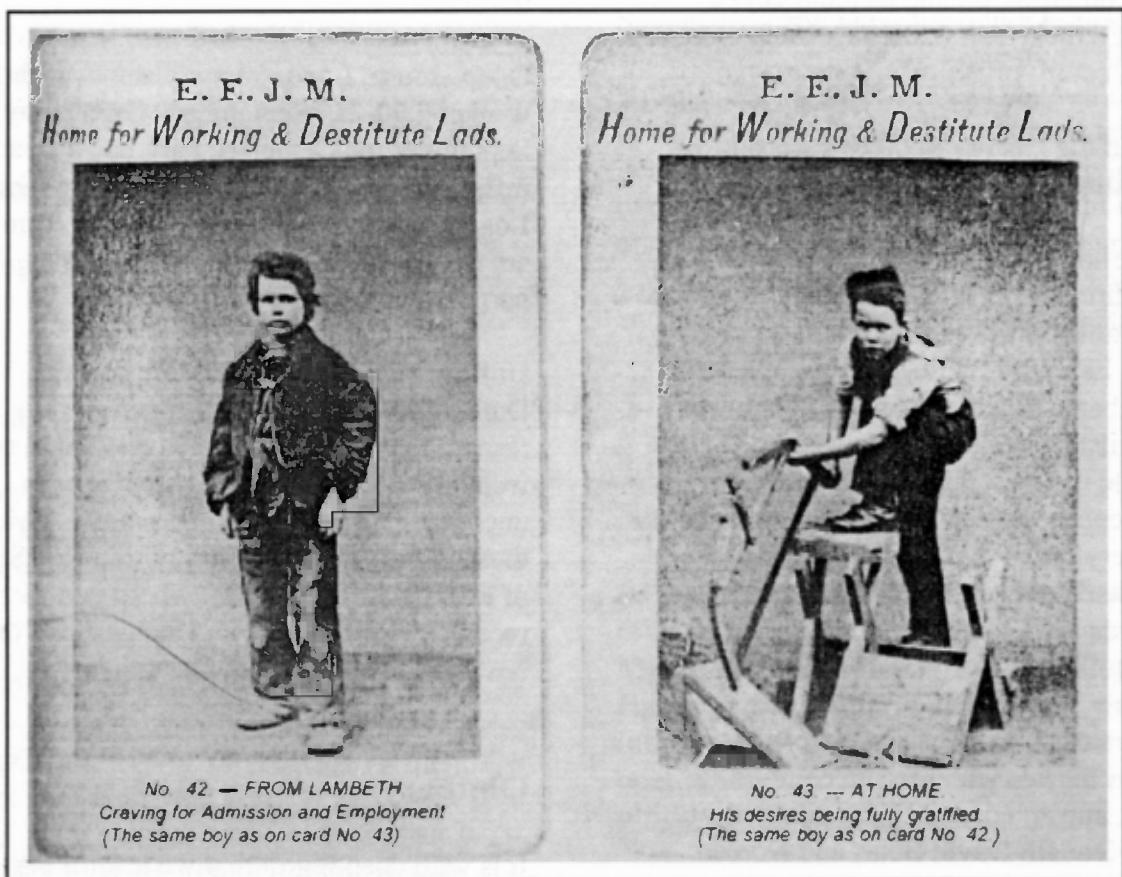


Volume 3 Issue 02

Winter 2008

## Season's Greetings



Thomas Barnes photographs for Dr. Barnardo

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## Editorial Note:

At the Annual General Meeting, held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2008, the following Committee members were re-elected: Philip Mernick, Chairman, Doreen Kendall, Secretary, Harold Mernick, Membership, David Behr, Programme, Ann Sansom, Doreen Osborne, and Rosemary Taylor. All queries regarding membership should be addressed to Harold Mernick, 42 Campbell Road, Bow, London E3 4DT.

Enquiries to Doreen Kendall, 20 Puteaux House, Cranbrook Estate, Bethnal Green, London E2 0RF, Tel: 0208 981 7680, or Philip Mernick, email: [phil@mernicks.com](mailto:phil@mernicks.com)

Check out the History Society's website at [www.eastlondonhistory.org.uk](http://www.eastlondonhistory.org.uk).

Our grateful thanks go to all the contributors of this edition of the newsletter, with a special mention to David Webb, for his fascinating series on East End Photographers. We trust our members will enjoy reading it as much as I have, whilst compiling the newsletter. 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, and any queries can be emailed to Philip Mernick.

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



## MEMORIAL RESEARCH

Doreen and Diane Kendall, with Doreen Osborne and other volunteers continue their work in the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park meticulously researching graves and recording memorial inscriptions. They would welcome any help members can offer. Their work has grown into a project of enormous proportions and complexity, with an impressive database of graves researched, with illustrations attached.

Open House, London took place over the weekend 20-21<sup>st</sup> September. On Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September the Cemetery Park had a steady influx of visitors. Walks were led by the East London History Society every hour from 11 am to 4 pm, and a total of 90 people participated in this event alone.

Unfortunately, due to pressure of work, Doreen and Diane cannot undertake any research on behalf of individuals, but would welcome any information that has been uncovered through personal searches. Meet them in the Cemetery Park on the **2nd Sunday of every month at 2 pm**, where you can receive helpful advice and suggestions on the best way to conduct your searches.

## Obituary

It is with deep regret that we inform our members that Ron Victory died at the end of October 2008. Ron was born on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1934 in Purdy Street Bow. His graphic recollections of his childhood in the East End of London during the Second World War, which he recounted to Mary Cable, one of our members, was published in our Summer 2008 newsletter. We offer our sincere condolences to Ron's family.

## East London History Society Programme 2009

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2009**

**Magic Lantern to Multiplex**  
Richard Gray

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

**Pray when will that be?  
Bell ringing at St. Dunstan**  
Elizabeth LeMoine

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

**Farthing Bundles: Fern Street Settlement**  
Michael Peet

**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009**

**Background to 'Chapters in the life of  
Arthur Harding'**  
Stan Newens

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2009**

**Spring Coach trip to Lavenham, Long  
Melford and Kentwell Hall**

**See Back Cover of Newsletter for details**

**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May 1009**

**Open Evening**

**Talking about shops and Trades that are no  
more.**

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.

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 get in touch with David Behr, our Programme co-ordinator, either at one of our lectures or, alternatively, email our Chairman Philip Mernick with your comments and suggestions. Email: [phil@mernicks.com](mailto:phil@mernicks.com)

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### Note from Philip Mernick:

So far Lilian Dell is the only member to take me on our offer to supply short videos. My attempt with the part of Morning Lane, Hackney now under a Tesco store was an interesting experiment and the offer is still open. Please email your requests to me at [phil@mernicks.com](mailto:phil@mernicks.com)

### Olympic site

Since August 2007 we have been recording the construction of the Olympic stadium from the one publicly accessible viewpoint (on The Greenway). You can see the images on the ELHS web site at:  
<http://www.mernick.org.uk/elhs/Stadium/Staduim.htm>

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## Notes and News

**The East London History Society** had a very successful day at The Maze, Guildhall in October. The Bancroft Road Reference Library and Archives was featured and Tom Ridge, Ann Quade and Doreen Osborne were on hand to explain the situation regarding the threatened closure of the Library, and collected 251 signatures for the campaign.

### St John on Bethnal Green

The only surviving ecclesiastical railings by Sir John Soane lie between Museum Gardens and St John on Bethnal Green. And lie really would be the operative word, were the dilapidated and rusting railings not held up by an eclectic range of old wire, bits of wood and other tat. Early in the new year, however, work will start on the restoration of the railings, thanks to the support of English Heritage and other funders. The brick foundations will be rebuilt and the railings will be restored using the techniques and materials that were employed in their original construction. Come the spring, they should be renewed and ready for another 180 years.

### Sebastian Sandys

Our member George Donovan asked me recently "As a kid I used to have a 'soap-box' cart that I used to use to convey my bottles and go and get them filled with 'Dissi' at the PBC depot in Violet Road. The filling was quite a smooth operation with me having an empty ready as the other was filled. But I never did know, what was the stuff in those giant carboys?"

Well just to show how amazing a research tool it is, I found this 1926 book review on the Internet.

**Twenty Years Working of the Electrolytic Disinfectant Plant of Poplar.**  
**Special Report by F. W. ALEXANDER,**  
**Medical Officer of Health, Metropolitan Borough of Poplar.**

Dr. Alexander produces a stable hypochlorite disinfectant by stabilizing a mixture of sodium and magnesium chlorides, or adding hydrate of sodium or magnesium as a stabilizing base during or after the electrolysis of brine. The process was introduced at Poplar in 1906 and recently a large new plant was installed, which is briefly described and illustrated in this report. In 1924, 140,700 gallons of fluid were issued and the total cost of manufacture was 3d. per gallon, a figure which will be considerably reduced with the new plant. An important use of the fluid is for the purification of swimming baths. The plant was introduced into Poplar in the face of considerable opposition and Dr. Alexander is to be congratulated on the success which has crowned his persistent efforts.

Nowadays Violet Road is pretty insignificant, running from Devons Road (by the famous Widow's Son Pub) southward, a few hundred yards, to the bridge over the Limehouse Cut; but the 1927 Poplar Borough Guide says: "In Violet Road are the huge depots of Pratts Motor Spirit Co. and the Anglo-American Oil Co. Ltd.

In this thoroughfare, too, are the extensive Borough Council Electric Light Works. The Council is desirous of promoting the use of Electricity for all purposes, and offer substantial inducements both with regard to light and power. Opposite the Works is the Disinfectant-producing Dept of the Public Health Department.

The Open-Air Swimming Bath, in Violet Road, is a keenly appreciated amenity of the borough. Mixed bathing is permitted. The bath is beautifully tiled, kept scrupulously clean, and provided with the necessary dressing rooms and appointments: there is also a suite of slipper baths in the same thoroughfare. The L.M.S. Railway has a Goods Depot also in Violet Road." Looking at it now, one thinks where did it all fit!

**Philip Mernick**

## **H Forman & Sons, Purveyors of the World's Finest Smoked Salmon.**

When Harry (Aaron) Forman arrived in London's East End from Russia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century he set up his own small business curing salmon, which he imported in barrels of brine from the Baltic. He soon discovered Scottish fresh wild salmon, and developed a cure that complemented its unrivalled flavour. He called it London Cure, and the family business went from strength to strength. A century later, H Forman & Sons remains a family concern, the last of the original London smokeries, with Lance Forman, Harry's great grandson, flying the flag for the famous London Cure – H Forman and Sons Genuine Wild Smoked Scottish Salmon.

The original buildings by Marsh Lane, were closed in 2001 for the construction of the Olympic Park. After a three year battle to be rehoused in the same area, they have now opened by the River Lea on Fish Island nearly opposite their old site. The building is very modern with walkways for visitors to view work in progress, with a large area overlooking the Olympic Park and canal, which will in future house a restaurant and is the closest private building to the Olympic Park. Seen from the air it is in the shape of a darne of salmon.

David Behr, our Programme Secretary has invited Mr Lance Forman to give us a talk on his family business, and we hope to have a firm date for our next season's programme list.

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In a previous issue of the newsletter we reported on the unveiling of a plaque to commemorate the lives of two young women firefighters who lost their lives during the Blitz of World War 2. Unfortunately, the plaque has been prised off the wall less than two months after the unveiling. A sad reflection of our times!

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## **500 YEARS OF LONDON HISTORY TO LAUNCH ONLINE – 77M NAMES**

### **Digitisation of genealogical sources at Guildhall Library and London Metropolitan Archives**

London Metropolitan Archives and Guildhall Library Manuscripts Section are delighted to announce a new partnership with Ancestry<sup>1</sup> to digitise genealogical sources.

The first records will launch on Ancestry.co.uk in early 2009, with the following prioritised for launch in the coming year:

- \* Parish records – records from more than 10,000 Greater London parish registers of baptisms, marriages and burials dating from the 1530s to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- \* Poor Law documents – relating to the administration of poor relief, including workhouse registers from 1834 onwards
- \* London school admissions – records from 843 individual London schools dating from the early Victorian times through to 1911, providing admission and personal details for millions of London students

It is anticipated that the full digitisation and indexing program will include:

- \* Parish baptisms, marriages and burials
- \* Bishops transcripts
- \* Parish poor law records
- \* Boards of Guardians records
- \* Diocesan marriage bonds and allegations
- \* Non-conformist baptisms, marriages and burials
- \* School admission and discharge registers
- \* Electoral registers, overseers returns and poll books
- \* Land tax records
- \* Wills
- \* City of London Freedoms
- \* Middlesex Sessions – Transportation Contracts
- \* Consistory Court of London Matrimonial and Testamentary Papers

We will provide free access to view the indexes and images through Ancestry.co.uk on the computer terminals in our public rooms. The program will start shortly and we will release further information about the project over the coming months.

You can keep up-to-date with news about the project on the Guildhall Library Manuscripts' website at [www.history.ac.uk/gh/digitisation.htm](http://www.history.ac.uk/gh/digitisation.htm)

Please contact us at this email address if you require any further information.

**The Minnie Lansbury Memorial Clock** has been restored and is now back to its original site. A plaque commemorating the restoration work was unveiled in October 2008. The plaque reads: *On the 16<sup>th</sup> October 2008 the restored Minnie Lansbury Clock was celebrated by those who helped to pay for its restoration, in honour of this East End suffragette and champion of local people.*

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## East End Connections

The death of Felicity Ashbee at the end of July, closed a chapter on East End history that had its beginnings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at Toynbee Hall, when her father, C R Ashbee began the Arts and Crafts Movement, which had such a profound effect on art, architecture, jewellery design and furnishing. Ashbee and his fellow craftsmen had their base at Essex House in Mile End, before moving to Chipping Camden.

In December 2008, the death was announced of Oliver Postgate, creator of many children's TV characters, his best known being the much loved Bagpuss. Oliver was the son of Raymond Postgate and Daisy Lansbury, daughter of George Lansbury.

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Daniel Mendoza, the East End boxing legend now has a bronze plaque in his memory, 172 years after his death. The plaque was unveiled at Queen Mary, University of London in September, by the great Sir Henry Cooper, former British and European Heavyweight champion. The plaque is at the site of the former Mile End Jewish cemetery, now part of Queen Mary college campus, where Daniel Mendoza was buried in 1836. Mendoza was born in Aldgate in 1764, and won his first professional fight at the age of 16. Despite his recognition as the father of scientific boxing, he died in a debtors' prison on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1836, leaving his wife and 11 children penniless.

Anyone who has paid a visit to Bromley Hall in the Bow Road would have seen a memorial to Arthur Lovell, who lost his life on Armistice Day 1928, whilst saving a young child from being run over. Having survived the Great War, and returned a hero, Lovell took up his former occupation of costermonger in Burgess Street, Limehouse. Ten years later, he stood by his barrow, marking the Armistice Day 'Great Silence'. Immediately it was over, he saw 4 year old Rose Wales run out into the road, in the path of a lorry. Lovell ran after her and pushed her out of the way. He was hit by the vehicle and died of his injuries later that day. The following May the memorial honouring his heroism was unveiled by Countess Haig.

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## Correspondence

**Mr J Crouch, 131 Hillcrest Road,  
Hornchurch, Essex, RM11 1EE, writes:**

I would like to know if any members of the East London History Society could help me with a request for information.

In the early 1950s there used to be an army cadet unit that met once a week in the hall behind the Old Ford Methodist Church in Old Ford Road.

I was a member of that unit and I would like to know if anyone could help me identify the actual regiment that the unit was attached to. I do know that it was not the Church Lads Brigade or similar organisation because when we were asked to sign a long-term commitment to the regiment, and as I was under age, my late father refused to give parental consent.

I do hope you can help me with my request.

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**By Email: From Hilary Lawden (Mrs) Re:  
Bancroft Library**

I am sorry for having missed the deadline for signing the petition. I was horrified to read about the threatened sale of the library. I have been sending small packages of local history material over the past years to the library, as I thought the best place for it was in the library of the area where my ancestors lived or were connected with.

The Atkinson material concerns Latimer Church where my great-grandfather, Rev. John William Atkinson, was the Congregational pastor for nearly 50 years until 1916. I have also sent material on Dr. Stanley Bean Atkinson, my great-uncle, who sadly died at 36 years, and whose bust is in the library. I sent a large packet of sympathy letters, as they were full of local names and organisations in 1910.

I decided not to send anything to the Society of Genealogists as I thought it would not be of any particular interest to anyone there, never dreaming that everything might disappear virtually through the possible sale of the library. In a family letter to his elder sister, my grandmother, Emily Ann Jacobs (wife of Labour Councillor George Saunders Jacobs) Stanley writes about the opening of the library by the Duke of Argyll in a letter dated 15 April 1906, suggesting she might like to come 'if she fancied the ceremony'! He had a great way of writing letters. I believe I sent a copy to the Bancroft some years ago.

Best wishes in your efforts

My subscription will be in the post tomorrow.

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### Update on Bancroft Library

Tower Hamlets Council has now changed its mind re the sale of the Bancroft Road Library building, and we can all breathe a sigh of relief. We may have won the battle, but the war is not yet over. The Council is now prepared to refurbish the building, but says it requires a substantial amount of funding in order to do so. A committee has been formed to look into how best the money can be raised. Our grateful thanks to all those who worked so hard and vigorously in mounting the campaign to save the Library and Archives, with a special mention to The East London Advertiser.

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## East End Photographers 4: Thomas Barnes

Next time you walk down Mile End Road, and stop for a pint at the Bancroft Arms, on the corner with Harford Street, just opposite Queen Mary & Westfield College and just round the corner from Ernest Street, where the Society holds its meetings in the Congregational Church Hall, spare a thought for one of the most famous photographic addresses in the whole of the Victorian East End. No 422 Mile End Road seems to have fallen down a black hole in time and space in the course of the last century; a rather unlovely sixties office block, currently used by the Thames Water Board occupies part of the space once the headquarters of Thomas Barnes, arguably East London's most distinguished Victorian photographer. And even sadder than the total disappearance of the studio is the almost total lack of recognition for Barnes himself - he has vanished behind a smokescreen labelled "Dr Barnardo's photographer".

Of course you've seen the photographs, reproduced endlessly in every history and social study of the Victorian East End ; the sad - eyed, ragged detritus of the back alleys, the waifs and strays of the throw - away society, the faces of every charitable appeal. But the man behind the lens has remained an enigma, barely hinted at in most accounts of the Charity's history. The American academic Seth Koven, in his "Slumming: sexual and social politics in Victorian London", (Princeton U.P, 2004), has a whole chapter on "Dr Barnardo's artistic fiction", but barely a passing mention of Barnes, and no reference to him in the index at all.

So why did it all go wrong for Barnes? Thomas John Barnes was very much an East Ender, born in Whitechapel in 1809. He married a local girl, Mary Towler, who came from just over the border in Cripplegate, in 1836, and they had two children, a boy and a girl. Barnes had started his career as a scientific instrument maker, but by the mid - 1850s had turned to the still new trade of

photography. He opened his first studio in Hope Place, a turning off the Mile End Road in 1858 and barely three years later had moved to larger premises in Crown Row, another segment of the Mile End Road. In October 1863 this terrace was formally incorporated into the main street, and the resulting street renumbering gave Barnes the address he was to use for the rest of his professional career: 422 Mile End Road. In the mid - 1860s, Barnes made a brief attempt to open a branch in Bedford Place, off Commercial Road East, but it proved unsuccessful and was sold off after 18 months. The Mile End Road studio, however, would remain his headquarters for almost thirty years until his retirement, and continue in use as a photographic studio until almost the end of World War I.

By the 1870s the Mile End Road had a dozen photographic studios scattered the length of the street, most, oddly enough being on Barnes' side of the road. They included Wakefield & Kemp at 108; Elias Gottheil at 120; John Flaxman Denman at 238; John Norton at 330; and Charles Brookes at 438. It did not quite rank with the East End's most favoured streets for studios - Whitechapel Road and Commercial Road East, each with 15 studios at the height of the carte de visite mania, but it was a good runner - up. In 1863 Thomas Barnes took his like-named son into partnership, and the firm's style was changed to Thomas John Barnes & Son. These were heady days for the firm, endeavouring to satisfy the insatiable demand for the new-fangled cartes de visite, the sheer quantity helping to drive the price down to two shillings and sixpence (12·5 p) per dozen. Towards the end of the decade, Barnes got his first contract to photograph the inmates of the local Bowman Stephenson Children's Home, which had opened in 1869. His work soon brought him to the attention of the most celebrated - and most notorious - charitable organisation in the East End at this period, the East End Juvenile Mission run by Thomas John Barnardo.

Barnardo was a charismatic and controversial figure, whose mission work in London's most

socially deprived areas had already, by the early 1870s, drawn vituperous criticism from rival bodies. He was damned by the brewery heir turned moral crusader, Frederick Charrington, who seemed to think that he had a proprietorial right in East End do-goodery; he was blasted by the Charity Organisation Society which disliked both his methods and his attitudes. But most of all he infuriated the powers that be with his aggressive advertising and publicity.

Almost from the start of his mission, Barnardo had recognised the value of setting his aims and intentions before the general public in an unashamed effort to raise funds for his homes. His recruitment of Thomas Barnes was seen at the time as a master stroke. Initially, Barnes was contracted to work at Barnardo's Stepney Causeway Mission once or twice a week, photographing each of the children as they were admitted to the home, clad in the rags in which they were discovered on Barnardo's moonlight forays. Some time later, after integration into the home, the children were rephotographed as model junior citizens, washed, fed and clothed. By 1874 the success of this scheme led to Barnes establishing a studio at the Mission where, as Barnardo put it, he could "obtain and retain an exact likeness of each child and enable them, when it is attached to his history, to trace the child's future career". It was an obvious extension to his fund - raising campaigns to make these images available in carte form for purchase, suitably packaged, by the public.

Barnardo's "before and after" photos may have been an astute advertising ploy, but they soon caused problems. The protests were led by an eccentric local clergyman, Rev. George Reynolds, Baptist minister of the wonderfully named "Cave of Adullam" church (from 2 Samuel in the Old Testament), who became Barnardo's gadfly in a series of increasingly outspoken and intemperate attacks on the whole system of photographic publicity. The culmination was Reynolds' publishing a frankly libellous pamphlet in 1877 "Dr Barnardo's homes, containing startling revelations". In this exposé, Reynolds claimed

that the photographs were all fakes. "The system of taking, and making capital of the children's photographs, is not only dishonest, but has a tendency to destroy the better feelings of the children. Dr Barnardo's method is to take the children as they are supposed to enter the Home, and then after they have been in the Home some time. He is not satisfied with taking them as they really are, but he tears their clothes, so as to make them appear worse than they really are. They are also taken in purely fictitious positions. A lad named Fletcher is taken with a shoeblock's box upon his back, although he never was a shoeblock". Reynolds cited the case of Kitty Smith as typical of the treatment by Barnardo's photographer of new arrivals "This girl was met by the "Boys Beadle" near the Bank, having run away from her mother. She was taken to the Home and photographed in several positions. First, as sleeping in the open street on a doorstep; secondly as sleeping on a bundle of straw under an arch; thirdly as rousing from sleep and washing herself in a mud puddle. To produce this picture, Mrs Barnardo supplied a comb, which the Doctor broke, and placed in her lap; whilst the cook supplied a dish-cloth as a substitute for a towel; fourthly she was taken in three other positions as a match seller".

The over-heated accusations and counter accusations, exacerbated still further by a series of grossly inflammatory letters in the local press, led inevitably to a judicial enquiry in the summer of 1877. To Reynolds unconcealed glee, the original intention of publicising Barnardo's "artistic fictions" quickly became an exposé of the conduct of the homes themselves. Among those questioned was Thomas Barnes, who told Reynolds' lawyer, St John Wontner, of the circumstances in which a boy named Samuel Reed was photographed on his admission in 1872. Barnardo had taken him to an upper room, where he took out a pen-knife and tore his clothes to pieces. He was then laid on the floor, and photographed. Soon afterwards, Reed was dressed in a new uniform, placed in a hammock, forced to affect an unnatural smile, and photographed accordingly in order

to provide a "before and after" contrast. Barnardo effectively won his case - he was acquitted on all charges of cruelty and child abuse, but received a censure for his misguided uses of photographic publicity. In future, all photography would need to be under much stricter control.

Like Barnardo, Barnes emerged from the court ordeal with his reputation, if anything, enhanced. But Barnes' troubles lay closer home. His son, Thomas Barnes Jr, despite being a full partner in the studio, and shouldering much of the contract work for Barnardo's, was very much the black sheep of the family. As a young man, his particular talent lay not so much with the manipulation of lenses as with getting the local girls into repeated trouble. A series of romantic dalliances in the summer of 1866 with a young lady named Ann Taylor led to her outraged father forcing a breach of promise court case in the New Year of 1868. The Tower Hamlets Independent provided a lip-smacking account of the proceedings which ended in a verdict for Miss Taylor, with damages of £250 (perhaps £5000 today). The sense of shame and annoyance was accentuated by the fact that all the participants were members of the same Masonic Lodge. On the rebound, the elder Barnes forced his wayward son to marry a young lady from Middlesborough, Emily Bowron, only to face a further humiliation a few months later when it was discovered that Emily was not "of full age (i.e. over 21)", as stated on the marriage certificate, but only 18; this led to a further court case, and Barnes Jr. was fined yet again.

It seems evident that Barnes' relationship with Barnardo was rather more distant after the court case. Barnardo took the opportunity to sub-contract some of the photographic duties to Roderick Johnstone (1852 - 1931), a Scot from Aberdeen who had established a studio almost opposite Barnes, where he was assisted by his nephew John Rae Johnstone (1863 - 1906). The sheer volume of work by the studios, however, never wavered; between the 1870s and Barnardo's death in 1905, upwards of 55,000 photographs were taken.

By the mid - 1880s, Barnes was beginning to wind down the studio in the Mile End Road. He was now in his mid-seventies, and had long wanted to retire and hand over the reins to his son. In November 1885, the partnership was formally dissolved, with the son continuing the studio under its old title. Almost immediately, the studio lurched into financial crisis; a series of county court judgements weakened both its viability and its local standing. The final collapse occurred in 1887, when Barnes shot his wife Emily with a pistol he was checking after winning it in a raffle. The magistrate was told that it was a tragic accident, that Emily Barnes had happened to cross the line of fire just as the pistol was being cocked. Barnes was acquitted. For Barnardo, this was the final straw; he took the opportunity to cancel Barnes' contract and pass it in its entirety to Johnstone. Within weeks, the studio had been sold to William Wright.

Thomas Barnes Sr, a widower since 1882 moved out of the East End to a rather lonely retirement in Leyton. His son's career spiralled downwards in a welter of debt and drink; he surfaced for the last time in the early 1890s as the inmate of a flophouse in Wadeson Street, just off Cambridge Heath Road. The rest is silence; he is thought to have died around the turn of the century, probably somewhere outside London. Thomas John Barnes Sr made a final move to Barclay Road, in Leytonstone at the end of the century, and died there on February 11 1901, at the great age of 91; his death was totally overshadowed by that of Queen Victoria just a few weeks earlier. The Mile End Road studio continued in use as a photographic establishment for another 30 years, passing fairly rapidly from one firm to another. The last photographer was Aimee Solomon, who was faced with the impossible task of keeping the studio open during the dire conditions of World War 1; she was finally forced to close in 1917. Thereafter the shop passed through a variety of hands before its post - war demolition. It seems rather ironic that George Reynolds, the clergyman at the centre of all Barnardo's troubles, should turn out to be the great

survivor; after his Cave of Adullam Chapel closed, despite being bailed out by Frederick Charrington, Reynolds eventually left the ministry and went into the printing trade. He comfortably outlived all the other participants, dying in Woodford in 1924, at the age of 84.

Barnes' photographs for Barnardo, pasted into vast albums, survived a century of neglect and damp basements before being "rediscovered" in the 1970s. It is now hoped to digitise the entire collection, and thus bring them into the 21st century. Even if Thomas Barnes failed to earn the recognition his work deserved in his lifetime, his amazing legacy lives on.

(To be continued)

### David Webb



## LIBERTY HALL Undenominational Mission, Lincoln Street (now Brookesley Street), Bow

### Some childhood recollections

My parents were born in the late 1890s and grew up in Bow, East London. My mother's family lived in Merchant Street; my father lived at Bow Common Lane and then in Lichfield Road. As a child my mother, Rose Plantin, attended Sunday School at Bow Wesleyan Church next door to the house in which she lived. My father, Tom Wright, was a choirboy at Holy Trinity Church, Mile End, which was the church where they were married in 1923.

I am not sure exactly when or how my parents became members of the Liberty Hall Mission. They were certainly involved when my father returned from four years in the trenches of the Western Front where his active Great War service came to an end after he was blinded for several weeks by gas in August 1918. My mother's sister, Lily Plantin, and her future husband, Wallace Hancock – another survivor of four years in the trenches – were also members of Liberty Hall at that time. My uncle wrote letters to the members of Liberty Hall from the trenches. He also received parcels from them – including one that contained some rock cakes about which he wrote an amusing poem in 1917, suggesting that the cakes could be used as shells with which to frighten the Germans. It seems likely that the two sisters were drawn into the fellowship during the war. After all, Liberty Hall in Lincoln Street was just a stone's throw from Merchant Street where they lived. The two sisters were very close and it would have been natural for them to worship together in the early days of their married lives. I suspect that Liberty Hall had another attraction for my father — its football team. A couple of faded photographs, probably from the early 1920s, show my father and a team in which Mr Green, the Superintendent of Liberty Hall is also clearly to be seen.

Until they left Bow in 1928 to move to Northolt Park in West London, my parents

were regular and strong supporters of Liberty Hall. Even after the move they would make the long journey from South Harrow (Piccadilly Line) to Mile End (District Line) on a Sunday to share in worship and conviviality with their friends at the mission. These friendships were deep and long-lasting and some of them only ended with old age or death some fifty years later. Old friends from Liberty Hall were frequent visitors to our home in Northolt Park, which was regarded as 'real country' by folk brought up in the streets of the East End and for whom the two hour journey was a major outing. It is clear from the strength of these relationships that the social element at Liberty Hall was very important. As a boy I grew up with the words 'Liberty Hall' frequently in my ears.

The Superintendent of Liberty Hall, Mr Albert Green, was very much its driving force, having founded it in 1913. He was a vigorous and forceful man, with a large hooked nose and a loud voice. He had a dominating personality and it was no accident that members of the Hall referred to him as "Boss". He worked for the paper manufacturers Pine Appleton and may have been a director of the firm. Green was a lively speaker – I recall a joke he once told about the soldier who was told to 'fall to' and who 'fell three and lost his beer money'. The Greens lived at 54 Antill Road, Bow, and I remember the house interior as being rather crowded very much in the Victorian fashion, with heavy dark furnishings and chairs stuffed with horsehair which pricked the bare legs of little boys like myself. I am pretty certain that on the wall was a framed list of friends who had been killed in the Great War and there was also the famous picture of Hope grieving over the world with her harp and its broken strings. The Great War and the terrible grief that was its legacy to the 1920s and the 1930s was a calamity from which my parents' generation and the founder members of Liberty Hall were never quite to recover. In the back yard of the house in Antill Road was an aviary in which lots of budgerigars flew and chattered, a variation on the pigeons that featured in many of the back yards of the old East End.

Mr Green and his wife Win were very hospitable and lunches at their home were a meeting occasion for friends. Mrs Green, a florid-faced woman, was the epitome of the hard working housewife and she devoted herself to providing food to huge numbers of people, either in her home or at parties in Liberty Hall. She seemed always to be toiling at domestic tasks. Certainly my parents were welcome visitors (and diners) at the Green home when they returned from the remote reaches of West London to their East London roots.

Liberty Hall was emphatically undenominational. Mr Green was no admirer of the Church of England and its status as an established church. Speakers were invited to Liberty Hall from local surrounding churches, invariably nonconformist organizations. One speaker was Rev Ted Sorensen a Unitarian minister who was later an MP and became Lord Sorensen of Leyton. My uncle's brother, Horace Hancock, who for many years was Superintendent of the Bow Wesleyan Church Sunday School, was an occasional speaker as was my uncle, Wallace Hancock. The independence of Liberty Hall was a matter in which its members took some pride.

Liberty Hall was a hive of activity. A card of the programme for January to June 1926 (which I recovered from the London Metropolitan Archive) shows that on Sundays there was a children's service at 11 o'clock (led by my father, Mr Tom Wright), Sunday School at 2.30, led by Mr Ashley Cronmire, followed by an afternoon Men's Class at 3.30 and an evening service at 7 o'clock. During the week Mr Green held a Junior Christian Endeavour on Tuesdays, Mr Willson led the Scouts on Wednesdays and the Girl Guides met on Thursdays under the leadership of Miss Gertie Woodruffe, Miss Emily Duck and Miss Edie Randall. The Fellowship of Reconciliation met on the first Monday in the month and I am sure that my uncle was the inspiration for this. And this crowded programme did not show the concerts and social events that were also regular features of the fellowship.

I have a few childhood memories of the services at Liberty Hall. The hall was just that - a hall with no religious furnishings save a harmonium to accompany the hymns. At one end of the hall was a raised platform, and preachers and those giving testimonies spoke from there. The hymn singing was very lusty and vigorous. The numbers were strong — I seem to think there were about 100 or more people on the couple of occasions when I was taken.

I have a clearer recollection of the social evenings or “reunions” to which my parents returned. Some of these took place after the end of WWII by which time Liberty Hall had ceased to operate and when most of its members had, like my parents, left Bow for the suburbs and less crowded places to live. I think the demise of Liberty Hall was brought about by the Blitz and the destruction of the bombing and the evacuation of many of those who lived in Bow. It never recovered. The post-war reunions were very jolly events with huge quantities of food (provided presumably by the indefatigable Win Green) and with members supplying entertainment by songs, recitations and monologues or by playing musical instruments. One of the stars of these entertainments was the daughter of one of the Liberty Hall stalwarts, Gladys Cronmire, who had a fine and strong voice. My own sister played the piano on one occasion. My father did recitations and played the one-stringed fiddle. My mother helped in the kitchen. These hearty gettogethers were the final flowering of Liberty Hall and took place in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The attenders and supporters of Liberty Hall were modest and typical East Enders. Some of those I remember were: Ashley and Emily Cronmire and their daughter Gladys. Ashley worked on the railways and had a dreadful impression on his forehead in which the corner of a crate or box that must have fallen on him could be clearly seen; Bill and Lil Berger and their small son Martin. Bill was a school teacher and during the war he and his family were evacuated to Wallingford. The family later lived at Wanstead; Tom and Elsie Sweeney who were neighbours of the Greens

in Antill Road. I think that Tom may have been a fireman; Harry Pike, a frequent speaker at the Hall and who was very prolix at all times; Frank Willson who became the Secretary of the Hall and who worked for the LCC. I believe that he, his wife and two daughters moved to Kent after WWII

As I have mentioned, WWII brought about the diaspora of the members of Liberty Hall. The building still stands in modern Brokesley Street, now converted to flats. Mr and Mrs Green left the East End during the war and came to live near my parents at Rayners Lane, close to Pinner. Mr Green became an attender at the Friends Meeting House in Rayners Lane, together with his friend Harry Pike. They were frequent visitors to our house at that time. Mrs Green fell seriously ill with heart weakness and my mother faithfully helped her with domestic chores every week. Poor Mrs Green died, perhaps worn out by her endless exertions in the home. Mr Green lived to a ripe and fruitful old age, remarrying and siring two sons.

#### A footnote:

Mr Green was always known in Liberty Hall days as “Boss” and he gave his name as Albert Green. After the death of his first wife he used the name Nathaniel: his second wife referred to him as ‘Nat’. In 2008 I looked the Green family up in the electoral register of Antill Road for a year in the 1930s and was mildly surprised to see that the strong-minded Christian ‘missioner’ had the given names of Albert Nathan. It would seem that he, and his parents, were probably from immigrant Jewish stock and had converted to Christianity at some point.

#### Clive Wright

## HMS WARRIOR

HMS *Warrior* was a fine ship, built in the East End; she can still be seen at Portsmouth, lying near another, more famous, historic ship, the *Victory*.

Ships which fought at Trafalgar in 1805 were wooden-hulled. The increasing power of armaments, particularly the development of shells, led to experiments with the use of iron in ship-building. The early years of Victoria's reign also saw the introduction of steam power and the screw-propeller.

By 1858 France was constructing *La Gloire*, a warship made with a frame of wood, but having an outer cladding of iron. Not to be outdone, the Admiralty ordered the world's first iron-hulled battleship, designed by the Navy's Chief Constructor, Isaac Watts. She needed strength, stability, speed, and firepower; Watts's innovations proved successful. Sails were added to steam to keep down the weight of coal that needed to be carried.

Admiralty shipyards could not handle all the needs of the British in its arms race against France, so Thames Ironworks was given the chance to build the world's first iron-hulled ship. The engines and boilers were built by John Penn & Sons of Woolwich.

Thames Ironworks had grown up on the Middlesex side of Bow Creek, and maintained its offices in Orchard Shipyard there; it took advantage, however, of Victoria Docks on the Essex side to expand the works into Canning Town. Victoria Docks (later Royal Victoria), completed on 200 acres of marsh in 1855, had a depth and length of water to accommodate large ships.

The keel of the new ship was laid down in May 1859, and the name *Warrior* decided on. *Warrior* was launched at Blackwall on 29 December 1860, and fitted out at Victoria Docks. She was ready for service by 1 August 1861, only a year later than *La Gloire*.

*Warrior* was, for a short time, 'the largest, fastest and most powerful warship in the world'.

She served for ten years as a first-line warship. But technology was evolving fast, and in 1871 she was demoted to reserve. From then on, her fortunes declined. She became a training ship and then, the final indignity, a floating oil jetty at Pembroke Dock. In 1979, however, she was towed to Hartlepool, and restoration began. After years of painstaking reconstruction, *Warrior* was finally moored at Portsmouth in June 1987, and very splendid she looks.

John Penn & Sons was absorbed into Thames Ironworks in 1899, but despite the successful launch of *HMS Thunderer* (the largest ship ever built on the Thames) in 1911, the company went into receivership in 1912.

*Warrior* is well worth a visit at Portsmouth. The story of Thames Ironworks can be found in the pages of *Borough over the Border: life in West Ham 1895-1915*, published by the East London History Society.

Sources: *HMS Warrior*, a Pitkin Guide  
*Iron Shipbuilding on the Thames, 1832-1915*  
 by A J Arnold, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000

**Pat Francis**

## Books etc.

### **Coming VERY SOON**

**Wapping 1600-1800**

**Derek Morris & Ken Cozens, East London History Society, ISBN 978-0-9506258-9-8**

For his latest venture Derek Morris has collaborated with Ken Cozens of the Greenwich Maritime Institute to produce a well illustrated book that Professor Sarah Palmer, a distinguished maritime historian of Greenwich University describes in her Preface as "fascinating, informative and ground-breaking". Most of the book is based on new research. The book follows a similar pattern to that on "Mile End Old Town 1740-1780" but with a much greater emphasis on the Wapping based merchants whose trading networks stretched world wide. These merchants were involved in timber from Scandinavia and the Baltic, the slave trade, sugar and rum, and were also responsible for supplying the ships that took convicts in the Second and Third Fleets to Australia and were also involved in whaling in the Pacific and the fur trade in north west Canada following Captain Cook's discoveries. They were major victualling contractors to the Royal Navy supplying everything from ships, Indian pale ale to beef, flags, slops, sails and rope.

Described in the book but neglected by John Stow in 1602 and by many more recent historians are descriptions of the larger houses, the connections to the centres of finance and patronage in the City of London and particularly Sir William Curtis a Wapping biscuit baker who became Lord Mayor and the world wide trading links of Camden, Calvert and King. One Wapping merchant had a town in New Hampshire USA named after him and others were well-known map and instrument makers. The book also has short chapters on St George in the East, a centre for gun making, and Well Close Square, and the authors have identified the many sugar refiners and Scandinavian timber merchants that lived around the Square.

**East London: A Hotbed of Football, 1867-1918,** Colm Kerrigan, 2007.

**ISBN 978-0-9535849-4-9, £12**

Colm, the editor of many of our East London Records has produced another fascinating book on his favourite subject – football.

Although I "inherited" support for Tottenham from my father (their improved position in the league now enables me to admit this) I would never call myself a football fan. However once I dipped into this book I was hooked. Colm gives amazing detail of how the sport developed in East London, first for amateurs and then for professionals. Follow the growth of clubs like Millwall, West Ham, Clapton, Ilford and many others. Highly recommended.  
Philip Mernick

### **The Boy From Nowhere – Volume 2 by David Mitchell**

The second part of the autobiography of David Mitchell, born and raised in Dockland, who went on to work for a confectionary firm in Czechoslovakia. After an eventful life under a communist regime, he decided to go it alone, gave up his lucrative job in Czechoslovakia to set up his own firm in England. "As a boy, born and brought up in the heart of Dockland, I would really like my book to be read by people in Tower Hamlets".

### **The Worst Street in London by Fiona Rule**

**Published by Ian Allen Publishing, Price £19.99**

The author has researched in meticulous detail the rise and fall of Dorset Street in Spitalfields, now just an inconsequential service road. From its beginnings at the centre of the 17<sup>th</sup> century silk weaving industry, through its gradual descent into vice and degradation, the murder of Mary Kelly, the Ripper's final victim, and its final demise at the hands of the demolition men, right up to the late 1960s, when a double murder confirmed the reputation of Dorset Street as the Worst Street in London.



## SPRING COACH TRIP

SUNDAY 26TH APRIL 2009

### LAVENHAM, LONG MELFORD AND KENTWELL HALL

We will first be visiting Lavenham. Extremely prosperous from the cloth trade, when this moved north, people lacked the money to rebuild or modernise, so its 15th and 16th century houses remain. The Guildhall is now National Trust, and houses exhibitions about its history.

Long Melford also was a centre of the cloth trade. The astonishingly large church was built by 15th century merchants. Kentwell Hall is a Jacobean mansion on the outskirts of the large village, which also has another mansion and a number of old houses. It is privately owned, and so has, I think more character. The entrance fee will be about £7.65. I will be collecting this later, on the coach or at meetings.

Tea is available at Kentwell Hall. Lunch will be at Lavenham, own arrangements.

The coach fare is £11.45. Please send this with your booking on the form below. The pick up will be at the bus pull in, in Grove Road, just round the corner from Mile End Station, at 9.30.

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



### SPRING TRIP SUNDAY 26TH APRIL 2009

I/We would like \_\_\_\_\_ Ticket/s for the coach trip to Lavenham and Long Melford

NAME/S \_\_\_\_\_

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

TEL NO. \_\_\_\_\_ I enclose a cheque/PO for £ \_\_\_\_\_

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