



The former Poplar Labour Exchange at 307 Burdett Road

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Editorial Note:

The Committee members are as follows: 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.

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

Our grateful thanks go to all the contributors of this edition of the newsletter, and especially to David Webb, who has provided another fascinating account in his series on East End Photographers. 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.

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.

The cover picture is taken from a 1939 Ministry of Labour publication (courtesy of Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives). The former Poplar Labour Exchange at 307 Burdett Road was designed in 1931 by A Bullock FRIBA of His Majesties Board of Works, and completed by 1934. It was one of the earliest purpose built employment exchanges and reflected Poplar's high unemployment rate during the Great Depression. At the time of its design George Lansbury MP (Bow and Bromley) was First Commissioner of Works and Public Buildings (1929-1931) and its site was in Clement Attlee's Limehouse constituency. It is now under threat of demolition and its preservation as part of a Limehouse Cut Conservation Area is being urged by Tom Ridge the indefatigable campaigner for the protection of what little built heritage yet remains in Tower Hamlets.

East London History Society Programme 2009-2010

Thursday September 10th

**The Whitechapel Art Gallery, its history
and its archives by Gary Haines**

Thursday October 1st

**Captain Cook and his executors by Derek
Morris**

Thursday November 12th

**Visit to H. Foreman & Son and talk by
Lance Foreman**

***Please Note: 7.30pm at H. Foreman & Son,
Stour Wharf, Stour Road, Fish Island, Bow
E3 2NT.**

H. Foreman & Son is the last remaining salmon smokery in East London. Their brand new, salmon pink, factory faces the rising Olympic Stadium across the River Lea. Lance Foreman's campaign to preserve his family's business against the juggernaut of the Olympic Development Agency received much publicity and he has often been seen on television. It would help if members could let us know if they intend to come to this event. Refreshments will be available and we invite members to indicate their preference. We have been offered tea (or coffee) and biscuits for £3.50 per person; or tea (or coffee), smoked salmon beignets and homemade cake for £12.50 per person.

Thursday December 10th

**East London History illustrated
by its Coins, Medals and Tokens.
by Philip Mernick,**

Thursday January 14th

**Sources for family history in Tower
Hamlets Archives by Malcolm Bar-
Hamilton**

February TBA

Thursday March 25th

**The fight to save Epping Forest by Stan
Newens,**

April TBA

**Thursday May 13th
Open Evening, Aldgate Markets**

**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

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, Bancroft Road - Update

The first meeting of the Bancroft Road Steering Group was held on 29th July 2009. Under the chairmanship of Clive Wright, delegates from many local, London and National organisations met with representatives of Tower Hamlets Council and their architects Kennedy O'Callaghan.

The idea was to present the first proposals for the renovation of the Bancroft Road building. The detailed report given by the architects came as something of a bombshell to the members of Save Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives whose successful campaign had prevented the Council's earlier attempt to sell the building to Queen Mary College, as it proposed closing the upper floor while moving research facilities to the ground floor. Major, and expensive structural changes were also proposed. All of this contradicted the issued Project Initiation Document (P.I.D), and the declaration of the Council Leader that the use of the upper room was to be maintained and no unnecessary structural changes were to be made.

Tom Ridge called an interim meeting of the community representatives on the Steering Group for the 2nd of September and their position was put most energetically to the second Steering Group meeting held on the 9th of September. It is to be hoped that the local residents position has been accepted by TH, certainly the architects seemed very willing to co-operate. A sum of £255,000 is available for work in the current financial year, and probably can be carried over. This, however, is only a fraction of what would be needed to make proper repairs to the roof and other parts of the structure, and meet statutory requirements relating to fire safety and disabled access. The community members of the Steering Group urged the Council

representatives to seek further sources of funding both internal and external.

It was pointed out by representatives of both the Bishopsgate Institute and National Archives that a definitive statement of how the Bancroft building was to be used to benefit the community would be needed to have any chance of funding from The Heritage Lottery Fund and the experience of the Bishopsgate Institute proved that even if HLF money was received, many other and larger sources of funding would be still be needed.

East London History Society was represented by your Chairman at both meetings, and we see ourselves as both a local and national interest group, as our members are spread all over the UK and also around the world. Meetings are scheduled every six weeks and we will keep you advised.

Philip Mernick

Olympic site

Since August 2007 we have been recording the construction of the Olympic stadium from the one publicly accessible viewpoint (on the Greenway). The site is in a continuous state of flux. Presently the Greenway is closed between Pudding Mill Station (best point of access) and Stratford High Street with the next section being resurfaced although walkable. The stadium structure appears complete but a large number of bridges seem to be under construction. I recommend a ride on the DLR or main line trains out of Liverpool Street for good, if fleeting views of the Aquatic Centre going up. What is left of Angel Lane is now closed for the building of yet another new bridge. It is possible that the name of this historic market street may vanish completely when construction is finished. **You can see the Olympic Site images on the ELHS web site at:**

<http://www.mernick.org.uk/elhs/Stadium/Stadium.htm>

Correspondence

**Charles Harris, 124 Argyle Gardens,
Upminster, Essex, RM14 7EU:**

Many thanks for sending my copy of the Winter Newsletter which as usual I found very interesting.

Being a supported of Millwall FC since the 1930's, I lost no time in purchasing a copy of the book called *Hotbed of Football* referred to in the Book section. Imagine my surprise on finding the name BYRON well-documented, in particular Byron Street School, as in the 1930s I was living in Bryon Street, Poplar where I formed a group of boys living in the area into a Football Team. We played in the street first of all, then the school playground and finally in Victoria Park. By then other boys had joined us and one became Secretary and we founded the name of Byron United. I managed to get us made a member of the Sunday Sportsman Newspaper league and we started playing on Hackney Marshes. In 1935 we won the Championship Shield. (see photograph enclosed).

The reason for writing this letter is that whilst living in Byron Street I attended the school in that street which was named Hay Currie School and at no time have I heard of a school named Byron Street School. The school was always Hay Currie until the alteration to Langdon Park School in later years.

If you are able to clarify the above, perhaps via Colm Kerrigan, I would be most grateful. Am I reading about the little team I founded or not?

Colm Kerrigan replied:

An earlier name for Hay Currie School was indeed Byron Street School, and before that again it was called Bromley Saint Michael's. It got the name Byron Street School when it came under the control of the School Board

for London in 1878. It was as Byron Street School that the boys there successfully took part in the competitions of the Poplar Schools' Football Association, founded in 1886 and the Tower Hamlets' Schools' Football Association, founded in 1888. The school received its new name from Hay Currie, one of the family that had the distillery at Bromley by Bow (now the film studios by the renovated tide mill buildings at Three Mills). This Hay Currie was active on the School Board for London, which funded the Byron Street School through a rate imposed on Londoners for the School Board's work. By the time you attended the school, the new name of Hay Currie was clearly well established and the old name forgotten. It is now, as you say, Langdon Park School.

Hay Currie supported local schoolboy football, as did Robert Wild, an early headmaster of Byron Street School (he retired around 1906). I have a newspaper cutting somewhere that describes him presenting prizes to winning football teams. He died in 1916, so I do not suppose you have ever heard of him.

The team you founded is of great interest to me. A friend of mine, David Chapman, and myself are at present working on a picture book of football in the East End from the earliest times to the present day. While we have lots of material on the big clubs, both amateur and professional, we have very little on clubs lower down the football hierarchy. Could we reproduce the photograph of your team? We would also like to use the extract from your letter explaining how the team was formed and the matches it played. Would you by any chance have a programme or handbook for the Sportsman League, or a fixture list? Finally, if you can identify all or even some of the players in the photograph, that would complete a very interesting page of our book, which we hope to have published in 2010, economic conditions permitting.

Caroline Berlyn from Adelaide, South Australia emailed:

Hello - I have just discovered your website and the wonderful collection of images that you have on your virtual tour of Mile End - Bow Road. I am trying to find an image of a house that was referred to as Coborn House, No 31 Bow Rd. I have already tried contacting the Tower Hamlets Library & Archive by email with no success and realise that I may need to write them a formal letter of request for assistance, unfortunately they do not have detailed listing of their collections online.

The images that you have on-line have confirmed the picture of the area that I had formed for the period of c.1890-1900 and I am assuming that Coborn House was perhaps between Coborn Road and Coborn St. The house was lived in by my great, great grandfather George Cohen (founder of George Cohen Sons & Co), his wife Sarah and many of his extended family in the late 19th century. I am planning to visit London late in 2010 to undertake some personal family history research and would be most appreciative if you are able to confirm my guess for the location of this house. You may also be able to give me some more hints on where/who may have an old image of the house. Parts of the area appear relatively unchanged but I can see that some sections of the street have been demolished and modernised over the past 100+ years, especially where the new, wide road cuts through the area.

I am a member of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain and recently posted a query on the web pages of the group asking for help on finding this house. I've had many helpful suggestions but most directed me to the Tower Hamlets Library.

Philip Mernick wrote: Tower Hamlets are usually very helpful and quick so I am surprised they did not reply. I did a quick

check in one of the on-line Post Office Directories (1895) and 31 Bow Road was on the north side between Coborn Street and Harley Street (now Harley Grove). Those houses ran from 25 to 39 and Moss (sic) Cohen was then living at 31. In 1898, 29-31 became Coborn School. I assume this necessitated the demolition of the old house. It also complicates finding a picture of Coborn House, as demolition would predate the use of photographic post cards. It is just possible that one of the schools retains an old picture. Coborn has moved to Essex and the Bow Road building is now used by Central Foundation School.

<http://www.cooperscoborn.org.uk/schoolhistory.html> I will check with Bancroft Road (TH Archives) when I next go there.

Carolyn's reply: I'm astounded! Thank you so much for your very quick reply. Moss Cohen was George's father (d 1845) but his 5th child was a son also called Moss (1858-1900). George & Sarah Cohen both died in 1890 but several daughters (Levy & Harris, plus the unmarried ones) appear to have also stayed in the house in the 1890s - it was a very large family of 11 children. The site's redevelopment into the school makes sense of my inability to find any references to the house at No 31 however it is doubly interesting to me as my paternal grandmother (the other side of the family to this enquiry) attended the Spital Square CFS school in the early 1900s, though not presumably at this site.

Philip's Reply: Central Foundation moved out of Spital Square in 1975 when the area was redeveloped and took over the empty Bow Road buildings after Coborn relocated to Essex.. Parts of the original building survive and can be seen on this page

<http://www.jewisheastend.com/spitalfields.html>

Notes and News

The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park would like to invite you to this year's FoTHCP AGM 2009 on Thursday 24th September 2009 at 7pm followed by a free DVD presentation and Q & A session - **'Weed it & Reap' - By Paul Pulford @ 7.30pm**

THCP is one of London's Magnificent Seven Cemeteries and Tower Hamlets first Local Nature Reserve. Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park is a little bit of the countryside in amongst the tower blocks and old Victorian streets in East London. The Cemetery Park is a unique sanctuary for people, education and wildlife.

Like all charities we are dependent on the kind support and invaluable work undertaken by volunteers. We work with approximately 2600 volunteers on practical projects every year. One volunteer over the last several years has shone brightly and to celebrate their invaluable contributions and the work of all our volunteers we have asked Paul Pulford to share with you his particular story.

Come along. The evening is FREE – Everyone Welcome.

All enquiries: **email:**

thcemeterypark@yahoo.co.uk

Mobile: 07904 186 981

Light refreshments will be available.

The Raphael Samuel History Centre has organised some history courses that might be of interest to your members, and I would be grateful if you would please circulate this information to them.

We'll be convening a range of modules exploring London's past – from Roman times to the present – in some of the capital's leading museums, archives and galleries. These modules are offered by Birkbeck College and the University of East London,

working with the Raphael Samuel History Centre. The modules can be taken individually or as part of a Certificate in Higher Education in History, which can be the first step to a degree in history. No previous qualifications are needed – just an interest in London's history. For more details, go to http://www.raphael-samuel.org/cw/london_history.php, or please get in touch with me if you have any queries.

Katy Pettit
Administrator
Raphael Samuel History Centre
www.raphael-samuel.org.uk

The Revd Samuel Henshall who became Rector of St Mary's Bow Church 1802-1807 and in 1795 was granted a patent for his new invention the corkscrew.



On 24th August 2009 the exact anniversary of the patent being granted, a plaque was presented to the church by the members of the International Correspondence of Corkscrew Addicts (ICCA). Membership of the society is strictly limited to 50 and members must specify "size and nature of collection, number of years collecting, how addiction was developed, and any research done."

The Revd Peat dedicated the plaque and it is hoped that the plaque will be installed near the final resting place of Revd Henshall who died in 1807 and is buried in the left hand corner of the chancel along with other Rectors of the church.

The plaque can be viewed at the church on Open House weekend 19th-20th September. There is also a cartoon by Noel Ford of Bow Church with a corkscrew on top of the tower at WWW.churchtimes.co.uk

Diane Kendall

A War Memorial from St Clement's Hospital, in Bow Road, Mile End, has been moved to a new home. The Western Front Association, a World War One charity, contributed £200 towards the refurbishment and installation of the City of London Union memorial at its new home, the Tower Hamlets Centre for Mental health in Bancroft Road, Mile End.

Nine members of the association paid a visit on the 8th June to see the memorial in its new home. John Taylor, Facilities officer at East London NHS Foundation Trust, said: "It has been nice to be involved in restoring some of the artifacts from St Clement's".

Bill Fulton, honorary chairman of the Essex branch of the Western Front Association was one of the visitors. He said: "I would like to thank John and the Trust for their hard work in seeing through the initial removal and restoration of the memorial."

St Clement's Hospital was formerly the City of London Union Workhouse, and later, Bow Infirmary. When the hospital closed in April 2005, care was taken to ensure that any items of historical significance were stored carefully until a new home was found for them. Some of them are in the Royal London Hospital Museum in Whitechapel.

Note: The Western front Association was formed with the aim of furthering interest in the Great War of 1914-1918. Its aim is to perpetuate the memory, courage and comradeship of all those on all sides who served their countries in France and Flanders and their own countries during WW1.

Royal Fusilier Museum consultation

I am writing on behalf of the Royal Fusilier Museum which is based at the Tower of London. The museum will soon be applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding to redevelop the museum's exhibition and develop a programme of activities which engage the Tower Hamlets community.

We are currently conducting a round of consultations with local groups and people to see how the museum could make itself more attractive through its interpretation and activities. I would like to know if one or more representatives from your Society would be interested in taking part in a consultation? It shouldn't take longer than 40 minutes. I am in London between 12-14 August and would be happy to travel to a location convenient to yourselves.

Owen Dawson

Philip and Harold Mernick attended the consultation, and Owen later wrote: Thanks once again for taking part in the Royal Fusiliers Museum consultation, it was greatly appreciated.

New Lock at Three Mills

The first new lock in London for 20 years was officially opened near Three Mills in Bromley by Bow, appropriately, on World Environment Day, in the presence of the British Waterways chairman Tony Hales and the Olympic Delivery Authority chairman John Armitt.

The Lock opens up the Bow Back rivers network of waterways in and around the Olympic Park for the first time in decades. It is hoped that the lock will help create a 'Water City' for pleasure boats, water taxis, and floating restaurants, and turn the area into a mini 'Amsterdam of the East End.'

East End Photographers 6 – William Wright

The concept of the multiple photographic studio was established at an early period in the development of the art. Probably the first photographer to franchise a studio was Samuel Prout Newcombe (1823-1912), a former schoolmaster and children's author, whose London School of Photography chain started in Newgate Street, in the City of London in 1854, and comprised some ten studios throughout the City and Westminster by the time of his retirement in 1890. At the end of the 19th century, Robert Hellis (1835 - 95), with the help of his large family, was responsible for a string of studios throughout the Greater London area, from Kensington to Clapham, and from St Pancras to Greenwich, which eventually ran to 24, some of which were still in operation down to the 1930s.

The uncrowned "king" of the multiple photographic studio in late Victorian England was undoubtedly George Taylor, an enterprising Scot from Aberdeen who opened his first studio in the 1860s. By the time he died in 1911, Taylor had set up studios in nearly 70 towns throughout Great Britain, including multiples within particular towns, a further ten in London, and at least half a dozen in Europe and the United States. In later years, through a series of unwise investments and incompetent managers, Taylor's considerable fortune collapsed and virtually disappeared, though he still managed to maintain his mansion at Margery Hall, near Kingswood in Surrey. He had at least the satisfaction of knowing that his photographic empire was infinitely larger than his nearest rival, the Liverpool - based conglomerate of Brown, Barnes & Bell, whose 40 - odd studios were almost all concentrated in the North of England.

In the East End of London, the only photographer to essay the franchising of photographic studios was William Edward Wright (1852-1931). The son of a colour

manufacturer, Wright arrived in London from his native Banbury in the mid - 1870s, and settled in West Ham, where he started a fancy goods business before diversifying into photography in 1877.

Wright's first studio was in Millfield Place, a long - vanished terrace on Green Lanes, in Stoke Newington. In 1881, the terrace was absorbed into Green Lanes, and soon afterwards in the Spring of 1882, the studio was almost destroyed by a serious fire which obliterated the printing works. This was unfortunately, an occupational hazard at early photographic studios, given the noxious and lethal nature of the chemicals employed and the extremely primitive health and safety regulations, usually conspicuous by their absence. Wright was lucky that no staff was injured and the premises were swiftly rebuilt. Business in fact prospered, and the premises were extended in the mid - 1880s to take in the adjacent building.

The 1880s proved to be Wright's greatest period of expansion. He had opened a studio at 189 Bethnal Green Road in 1879, and in 1884 expanded it to take in the buildings on either side. It remained his flagship East End studio until almost the end of the century, differing from most of the others by acquisition from scratch, as distinct from buying an existing studio.

Like most photographers of his day, Wright was continually on the look out for bargains in studios, and was always keen to obtain the tail ends of leases, or places where the owner wanted to retire. It worked both ways - both the Stoke Newington printing works and an unsuccessful studio on Mare Street, Hackney, bought for a considerable sum from Robert Beckett were sold in unsentimental manner to the already mentioned Robert Hellis in the mid - 1890s. Hellis then proceeded to squeeze more business from them right into the 20th century.

It was during the 1880s that Wright branched out into his first City studio, on Cheapside,

skied up on the third floor of an office block, but close enough to the Bank of England and Stock Exchange to be extremely profitable. A simultaneous venture into Upper Street, in Islington, was adjudged a failure after five years, and ruthlessly disposed of, but a studio opened in the same year, 1886, on Whitechapel High Street, acquired for a pittance from William Hobbs, turned out to be a little gold mine. When the lease expired in 1895, Wright renewed his interest in the area by acquiring a substitute studio a mere fifty yards further down the street which he ran until the end of the century.

It was in 1889 that Wright acquired his most iconic studio, at 422 Mile End Road. This was of course Thomas Barnes' old studio, a landmark of the area in its day. But by the late 1880s, Barnes was elderly and disillusioned and desperate to sell up and retire. The family firm had lost the Barnardo's contract, and the irresponsible and erratic behaviour of Barnes junior had contributed to the current collapse of confidence. Reputedly, Wright acquired the premises for a nominal £50, and Barnes was at last able to move out to Leyton. Wright ran the studio for a decade, selling it off in turn to Henry Turner at the end of the century.

Wright's three sons and even his wife, Sarah, all helped at various times to run the different branches, but for the most part it was Wright himself who supervised the day to day operations. It was probably this concentration on business that saw Wright involuntarily caught up in a silly fraud in the mid - 1880s involving photographs of babies, concocted by a plausible conman named Harry Hunt. Hunt had already duped George Taylor's firm, A & G Taylor in similar fashion, but this time seems to have overreached himself and was arrested on charges of demanding money with menaces. At a subsequent court hearing, Hunt was sentenced to 18 months hard labour.

The East End studios, some of which had been in existence for upwards of a quarter of a century, were beginning to wind down by the

start of the new century. Wright's last major studio was opened in 1891 just outside the East End boundary, in Bishopsgate Without, as it was known at the time. Situated like the Cheapside studio on the third floor of the building, the studio was given added interest by being situated in one of the few remaining Tudor buildings in the City to escape the Great Fire. It faced Sir Paul Pindar's House, which had just been demolished for an extension to the Great Eastern Hotel, alongside Liverpool Street Station. Fortunately, the facade had been saved and was re-erected at the Victoria & Albert Museum.

The Bishopsgate studio building was known locally as Adam & Eve Buildings, from a couple of quaint carved figures on either side of the main entrance. In 1909, after years of opposition, the Corporation of London finally managed to have the block and surrounding buildings demolished, and at the same time tidied up the street by amalgamating the two halves of Bishopsgate - Within & Without - into simply Bishopsgate. Thus, in the last year of its existence, Wright's last studio went from 83 Bishopsgate Without to 266 Bishopsgate.

Overall, Bishopsgate had probably been Wright's most profitable studio - close enough to the railway station even without the huge numbers of passing traffic further up the street. Wright demonstrated his confidence in its capabilities by appointing Alfred Lewis a partner in the studio. Lewis had previously briefly run his own studio in Wandsworth under the rather cheesy name of the Opalette Co, and Wright clearly regarded him as the face of the future.

In the event, Lewis only stayed for a few years, before moving on to the brave new world of animated pictures, and becoming one of the first managers of a moving picture establishment in Newbury. It may well be that the departure of Lewis marked the downturn in Wright's fortunes, for after a dismal few years of unpaid loans, Wright was formally declared bankrupt in June 1909. It was a sad

end to almost 35 years of photographic activity. Wright retired to Southend, but at the end of his life returned to West Ham where he died in 1931.

David Webb



A typical Wright back. Many of his photographs are dated, this is from 1886



A sailor from HMS Champion, a steam corvette built in 1878. The star shaped medal is a Khedive's star first awarded in 1882

Book Reviews

A BETHNAL GREEN MEMOIR

Recollections of life in the 1930s-1950s by Derek Houghton. The History Press. Price £14.99. ISBN 978-7509-5126-5.

32 family photos. 22 photos of the local area, including two of H.M. Queen Elizabeth in St Peters Avenue.

A book that recalls the memories of St Peters Avenue a street in Bethnal Green, as seen through the eyes of child growing up in the depression of the thirties until joining the Merchant Navy in 1952. Friendships that were formed at the age of four, in the church school of St Peters Church between the children of the families of the Arrow-smiths, the Baldwins, the Mills, the Dearings, the Herberts the Hudsons, the Gardeners and my late husband John Kendall our best man Peter Ward, and a very dear friend Iris Renfrew. The lessons and values they learnt and the street games they played to the annoyance of neighbours are all told with humour, inter woven with local history of the area.

The cramped conditions of his Grandparents house number 74 St Peters Avenue with its six rooms on two floors, outside toilet and no bathroom and where a total of fourteen people lived must have helped in the breakdown of his parents marriage. The War brought evacuation of St Peters school where the friendships had been formed, the school was never to re open and the Author enjoyed his months spent in Bicester before returning to the bombing and destruction of the surrounding area, including the Oxford Arms Public House half way down the street and the Grand Pavilion Cinema at the top of the turning.

The Author's Grandmother's love of the shops and stalls along Bethnal Green Road are vividly told, for his Grandmother was a

terrible cook and with all the wartime rations it was a pleasure to have mash and liquor at either Cookes or Kellys the pie shops. His Grand father's pride was the flower garden he created in the back garden, so many Sundays were spent down Columbia Flower Market and on to Brick Lane Market. Pocket money was earned by chopping wood, running errands and making and selling vinegar in Hoxton streets. Mr Iron's sweet shop or one of the six local cinemas benefited from his enterprise.

The Author's teenage years after leaving Teesdale Street School were spent learning engineering in Clerkenwell and joining the Mansford Youth Club where the Krays were also members. His National Service spent around the Durham Area, his exploits and his army training which any of our members called up in the late 1940s will relate to. I enjoyed reading the exploits of the Author's childhood and teenage years - even today some areas will be familiar to members although sadly in the 1960s the street and its community was cleared for "slum clearance" by Bethnal Green Council, even after a Public Enquiry hope remained that the street would be saved, it was such a shame the area was cleared, for a few years on modern technology would have upgraded the houses. For today similar streets can be found around Columbia Road

I watched by St Peters Church in the autumn of 1963 my home, number 30 being destroyed by a ball and chain, the three storey six roomed house no more, except for its airy and walled garden with its deep well, a relic from the 1840s when the street was built.

A chance email from our Chairman to review this book led to lunch at Kellys Pie shop with Derek and Peter Ward and we relived many happy memories.

Doreen Kendall.



The Author Derek Houghton left of photo, outside Pellicci's café, meeting Peter Ward

FAREWELL TO THE EAST END by Jennifer Worth. Publisher Weidenfeld and Nicolson. ISBN 978-0-297-84465-5 Hard back . Price £12.99. 320 pages of print. 8 photos of area plus map and one of Jennifer.

Members will remember the lecture given to us by Jennifer Worth on her life as a District Nurse in the Poplar area. This is the third book and sadly the final one. The Convent of St Raymund Nonnatas (a pseudonym used by the author for the Convent) struggled through the war years with the area being devastated by bombing, shortages, and the loss of life of so many civilians. With some of the nuns having served thirty years at the Convent. The poor housing conditions did not help the Nuns or the District Nurses in their fight to help patients survive. In the 1960s a vast housing programme was implemented and the area around Commercial Road and East India Docks changed slowly out of all recognition.

We follow the nuns and nurses lives. Sister Julienne rules with inspiration and humour. Sister Monica Joan in her nineties found guilty of shop lifting. The wonderful Mrs B whose cooking still inspired the nurses to enjoy the delights of her bread and cakes. Nurse Cynthia's fright when cycling on her rounds, unfortunately got in the wrong lane and ended up cycling the mile long Blackwall Tunnel in those days two way traffic, and then having to

return the same way. The romance of Chummy and her police man David, are all here to enjoy.

Living as I do near the London Chest Hospital I can remember the rows of patients in beds on the verandahs, Jennifer's account of a family destroyed by tuberculosis is devastating. In 1978 the Convent was closed with the nuns returning to their Christian order. For the sick of the East end the National Health Service started in 1948 meant better facilities for everyone.

It's a shame that Jennifer's life took another turning and this is the last book of her life as a District Nurse told with passion for her patients and humour for all the incidents that happened.

Doreen Kendall

Remembering Three Mills, Brian Strong (editor), River Lea Tidal Trust Ltd, 2008. A4, 40 pages, ISBN 0-9544094-9-3.

Available from Beverley Charters, The Millers House, Three Mill Lane, Bow, London E3 3DU. £6.00 including p&p

The introduction tells us that "In May 2001, the Lower Lea Project (now the Lea Rivers Trust), in association with the River Lea Tidal Mill Trust, held a meeting to record people's memories of Three Mills, Bromley-by-Bow, London, E3. They invited people with whom either body had already been in touch, who were known to have lived or worked in the area and advertised the event locally. A number of people responded and regular meetings were held over the following 18 months. The project was taken over by the River Lea Tidal Mill Trust in December 2002, with financial support from the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority. The group became over 60 strong and meets at The Miller's House in Three Mill Lane on the first Monday in each month, to hear a talk, visit another

project, or exchange recollections of Three Mills in the past."

The Three Mills buildings have been preserved but this excellent book shows what has been lost and the people who worked or lived in the buildings themselves or the surrounding streets. Now it only takes a few seconds to drive from Bow Bridge to the Bromley Tesco past pretty anonymous warehouses and print works but there were streets of houses here before the area was almost obliterated by the new Blackwall Tunnel approach road. This book has photographs of streets, shops and people – in their houses, gardens, schools and at their street parties. The "museum" comes to life!

Philip Mernick

THE LEA VALLEY SERIES

New series of books about the history of the Lea Valley by Jim Lewis, published by Middlesex University Press. Information supplied by publisher.

Middlesex University press recently published a history of the Lea Valley in a series of five books illustrated with contemporary photographs and images that bring to life the fascinating history of the region. The first three titles are available now, with two further titles publishing in autumn 2009.

From Gunpowder to Guns - the story of two Lea Valley armouries charts the growth of the Royal Gunpowder Mills at Waltham Abbey from basic explosives to Barnes Wallis's bouncing bombs, the development of rocket propellants, space exploration and the spin-off of modern materials used in everyday objects. Paperback — ISBN: 978 1904750 857 - £9.99.

Water and Waste - four hundred years of health improvements in the Lea Valley documents four hundred years of improvements in public health and the

challenges faced by early engineers to eradicate cholera and typhoid from London and the Lea Valley. Paperback — ISBN: 978 1 904750 86 4 - £9.99.

Battleships, Buses and Bombers - a history of transport in the Lea Valley describes the remarkable range of transport innovation pioneered in the region. It also describes many transports firsts, one of the most momentous being A.V. Roe's historic flight at Walthamstow Marshes in 1909. Paperback ISBN: 978 1904750 87 1 £9.99.

Forthcoming titles:

Industry and Innovation: the technological revolution in the Lea Valley
From Eton Manor to the Olympics: more Lea Valley secrets revealed

THE WARS OF ROSIE, hard knocks, endurance and the 'George Davis is Innocent' Campaign, by Rose Dean-davis. Pennant Books 2009 Price £15.99

Rose Dean Davis died of cancer on 31st January this year. Her life may not have been all that memorable outside of her family if it had not been for the 'George Davis is Innocent' Campaign. East End folklore now, but George Davis was banged up for something he didn't do – the LEB robbery in Ilford, 4th April 1974. A number of people, most notably Peter Chappell knew Davis could not have been involved, but a constable was wounded in the incident, so the police were pretty keen to get a conviction. Davis was done on identification.

I suppose you could say that a lot of people were getting fed up with police behaviour at that time – there were a number of high profile cases against conviction solely on identification, and many people in the community rallied to the cause. The Davis's lived in Belton Way on the Lincoln estate at this time. 'George Davis is Innocent' graffiti became ubiquitous; a few examples still exist

– on the railway bridge in Bow Common Lane between the Cemetery Park and the Ackroyd Drive Green Link for instance, and these really should be listed as part of our history.

The rest is pretty well known. Davis was released (but not pardoned) and 18 months later was caught on the job; no question of a frame-up this time. Rose was shattered, especially when it transpired he was having an affair with another woman. She left him then and there; who'd blame her?

Actually, I didn't find the 'George Davis is Innocent' Campaign the strength of this book. As the sub-title reads 'hard knocks, endurance' and Rose had plenty of both, what with her daughter Deana dying before her and the rest. The way I see it this is the autobiography of an ordinary (albeit extraordinary) East End woman. Take out the George, and it is not far removed from the experiences of many of her neighbours, and in this, as a record of East End life in the last half of the 20th century it is invaluable.

These are the people who are buried all over Tower Hamlets Cemetery and the record of them is scant. May they rest in peace; a well-earned peace in Rose's case.

Stewart Rayment

(This review first appeared in the May 2009 edition of Stone Stories, the newsletter of the Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park.)

Seen on the Internet

Teddy Baldock – The Pride of Poplar

Brian Belton, 2008, Pennant Books
 ISBN: 1906015155 RRP £16.99

"A powerful glory and tears story of an East End boxing idol who went from national hero to fallen star".

Born in Poplar in 1908, Teddy Baldock won the world bantamweight title when aged only 19, but died penniless in 1971.

A Shortcut to School

I was just five years old at the start of the Second World War, and six years old when the Blitz began in earnest.

Despite living in the East End, very close to the Dock area, I was not evacuated along with many other children. My parents had decided that if we were going to die, 'We will die together!'

Fortunately they were not alone in this philosophy, because a few of my street friends came from like-minded parent, thus there was a small group of boys and girls with whom I was destined to share my childhood experience of war. Although this may seem a brash thing to say, this suited us fine, because war to us was no more than an exciting adventure! There is something about the exuberance of youth that convinces us that bad things can only happen to other people, 'bombs would never hurt me!'

Born in Hind Grove, I remember it in detail, and vaguely remember the surrounding streets when they were complete and whole; that is to say, before the bombs began to slice out large chunks of houses, and in some cases whole streets.

I remember the terraced houses with their front area, (known colloquially as 'airies') surrounded by cast-iron railings and iron gates.

Halfway along the road, was a quaint little road called 'Paris Terrace' linking Hind Grove with Gough Grove, and opposite Paris Terrace in Hind Grove, stood the 'Victoria Public House', with its raised forecourt, into which a wooden trapdoor gave access to the cellars below, so that barrels of beer could be lowered down. They were unloaded from a Dray, pulled by two magnificent Shire horses owned by Whitbreads.

On Sunday mornings, a cockles and whelks stall occupied the forecourt, offering locals their favourite Sunday tea. Further along on the opposite side of the road, was an entrance between two little shops, where an alleyway led to the rear door of another public house, 'The Waterloo Hero'. This pub was really situated in Gough Grove, but the Brewers cleverly realised that with this rear entrance they could poach customers from both streets. Local pubs were after all the community meeting place, where local residents relaxed after their day's work.

The shop on the left hand side of the entrance to the alley was a dairy, and on the other side a wool and knitting pattern shop.

At the top of the street, on the right hand corner, was a Pawn-Broker's known by everyone as 'Bert Moffat's', though exactly who Bert Moffat was I have no idea. At the bottom end of Hind Grove, on the left hand corner, was the post office, the counter being managed by a young lady named Joan; and as is the custom of close-knit communities, she was known by everyone as 'Joan down the post office.'

On the other corner was an electrical sub-station, with railing surrounding the enclosed area. Through air-vents in the wall it was possible to hear the 'humming' of the transformers labouring within. (That sub-station is the only remaining structure of the original Hind Grove).

At the top end of Hind Grove the skyline was presided over by Farrance Street School, a beautiful red-bricked building with two lightning conductors on its apex roof, looking rather like devil's horns. It was there I had my first experience of school in the infant's section. My mother insists she took me there when I was just four year old, because she 'needed some peace and quiet.'

Hind Grove was truncated at the top by Stainsby Road, which ran from East India

Dock Road to the left, and continued into Cottal Street to the right. Cottal Street ran alongside Limehouse Cut, and junctioned with Upper North Street at the bridge, which had the curious name of 'Stinkhouse Bridge,' so called I believe, because of its close proximity to a chemical works that had once existed nearby.

At the other end of Stainsby Road, on the corner of East India Dock Road, stood the Hippodrome Cinema, a rather grand theatre, on a par with any in the West End. Thought children weren't normally permitted there, my parents often went there to see the latest show or film. On those occasions my father would give my older sister enough money for us to both pop along to the Gaiety Cinema on the corner of Peking Street, where 'U' films were shown, with Gene Autry, Roy Rogers and Tom Mix; the heroic cowboys in white hats. Fighting 'baddies' who wore dark hats.

On the other corner of Peking Street was Nanking Street, a short cul-de-sac running alongside a church vestry, and beyond that a convent standing in its own grounds. We kids preferred to call it 'The Monastery', perhaps because it sounded more mysterious.

No doubt the predominance of 'oriental' street names in the area evolved from the nearby West India Docks, where Tea clippers frequently arrived from China, and many crew members subsequently settled in the area. So much so that the locality around West India Docks became known as 'China Town,' with possibly the first known Chinese 'Take Away'.

Peking Street curved round from East India Dock Road until it ran parallel with Canton Street, finally joining Upper North Street opposite the school. Sadly, the whole of Peking Street, Swale Street, and the eastern end of Canton Street were wiped out by bombs early in the blitz, leaving that whole area as open waste ground. Nanking Street and the Gaiety Cinema suffered the same fate.

Although the convent (Howrah House) survived the onslaught, it was abandoned by the Nuns who once occupied it, and remained derelict thereafter.

On the corner of Upper North Street and East India Dock Road stood the beautiful St Stephen's Church, built in traditional Christopher Wren style. Sadly that church too was badly blasted never to re-open. Ironically, despite being structurally intact for the rest of the war, it was finally struck by a V2 rocket in 1945, sealing its fate for good. All that remains of that fine church are some of the original white stone blocks incorporated in the boundary wall adjacent to East India Dock Road.

Making our way back along Upper North street, we come to yet another beautiful church – St Mary and St Joseph's, on the corner of Canton Street, once again built in wren style, with traditional white stone. This church had a garden bordering Upper North Street. Set back behind railings, in the corner facing the road, was a statue of Christ on the crucifix. We were taught a great deal about Jesus at school, and what a kind man he was, so one day I went round there on my scooter and gave it to Him. When I told my mother, she hurried round there dragging me by the hand to reclaim the scooter, but unfortunately it had gone! Whether Jesus had actually taken it, I never did find out!

The next road on the left we come to is Gough Grove, and here on the corner stands a rather officious looking building, with white cornice stones decorating its impressive architecture. Along the top of its walls is a wide parapet, made from the same white stone. I learned in later years that this building had once been 'The Office of the Guardians,' a rather austere name for a place where the poor and destitute went for help when times became desperate. My mother always referred to it as 'The R.O.' (Relief Office), and spat the words out in disgust. She had unpleasant memories of the iniquitous 'Means Testing' days, when those

asking for help were 'interrogated.' She told me how when my father had been out of work during the depression, she had applied there for help, and was duly visited by an 'Inspector' to decide whether we were a worthy cause or not.

The Inspector had been dismayed to see that we had curtains at the windows, as well as nets! We also had mats on the floor as well as lino! And when inspecting the food cupboard, he'd been amazed to see meat! 'As a working class family, did we really expect to have meat?' My mother chased him from the house, flicking a duster at him, and told him, in a language that only a Cockney would understand, exactly what he could do with his charity.

On the other side of Upper North Street is Ricardo Street, which will take us to Chrisp Street Market. On the left hand side is Ricardo Street School. There are numerous schools in the area, to cater for the high child population existing at that time. Because of its sturdy construction, locals were in the habit of sheltering in that school during air-raids. Unfortunately, the school was struck by a high explosive bomb early in the blitz, killing many people.

A small section of Ricardo Street was pedestrianised with spur posts, apparently dating back to a time when this area had once been 'Randall's Market', a market long extinct, perhaps superseded by Chrisp Street Market in later years.

The front entrance of another school is St Mathias School in Grundy Street, next to a very narrow alley called Elizabeth Place. This in turn leads us into a somewhat secluded area centred around Chilcott Street, bordered on one side by the rear of Grundy Street's dwellings and on the other by Ricardo Street. The whole of that area was also wiped out by bombs, and I only remember it as open space.

Chrisp Street is a very narrow road, commencing at East India Dock Road, and continuing northerly into Violet Road, then into Campbell Road, and finally to its junction with Bow Road. Chrisp Street was used as a market on certain days of the week, but especially on Saturday, when it catered for housewives over a large area. The stalls lined the road on either side, making the road impassable to traffic, but with crowds thronging the stalls, no sensible motorist would have attempted to even try.

On one corner of Chrisp Street is Barclays Bank, and on the other Burton's Tailors. The next shop of much interest in Chrisp Street is Cook's Pie and Mash Shop, where many shoppers rounded off their shopping excursion with the traditional tasty meal. Those delicious soggy pies, along with mashed potatoes covered in parsley liquor, were a treat no East Ender could resist.

On the corner of Grundy Street and Chrisp Street is Neaves Furniture Shop. Neaves made most of their furniture in their own workshops, and were happy to create pieces of furniture to customer's own requirements. My grandmother, who considered herself a connoisseur of such things, had an oak table created there for her parlour. In the East End, the 'parlour' was the 'best' room of the house, in which all the 'best' furniture was kept under lock and key, to be seen only on high days and holidays.

If we proceed along Grundy Street, back to the junction with Upper North Street, we see on our left Upper North Street School, later to be called Mayflower primary. It is poignant to recall that this school was built to replace the original school, which had stood further along, at the other end of the row of terraced Alms Houses. Somehow, those alms Houses still exist! The original school was hit by a bomb, dropped from a German plane during the First World War, killing 18 infants, most of whom were just five years old. Opposite the new school is a row of shops, commencing with a

bakers on the corner of Canton Street, and an Off Licence on the corner of Peking Street. On the other corner of Canton Street, we find ourselves back at the beautiful church of St Mary and St Joseph.

Canton Street, Gough Grove and Lindfield Streets are lengthy roads, connecting Upper North Street with Stainsby Road, thus if you lived midway along any of these roads, and wished to visit someone in the next road, it would have entailed a lengthy walk round the block.. Perhaps with that in mind, each of the roads had a short link road about halfway along connecting the two. These link roads had exotic place names like Paris Terrace, Bermuda Street or Calcutta Street. I seem to recall that the one linking Canton Street with Peking Street however, was for some reason named 'Randall Buildings.'

At the beginning of the war, my walk to Upper North Street School was quite a lengthy one for a six year old. From the middle of Hind Grove, I had to walk to the bottom of the road, then along Upper North Street, or perhaps cut through Paris Terrace into Gough Grove, and then to the bottom; but being a right angle there was nothing to be gained, because everywhere you wanted to go was 'round the block!'

Little did I realise that Hitler was to change all that for me, and short cuts were to be made plentiful throughout the area.

Very soon, sticks of bombs wiped out all the property in Cotall Street and Latham Street, along with a few houses at the top of Hind Grove and Lindfield Street. A parachute mine struck the beautiful St Mary and St Joseph's church, reducing it to rubble, and wiping out the adjacent houses in Canton Street. Yet another stick of bombs cut a swathe across Gough Grove, Canton Street, Peking Street and Swale Street, badly blasting St Stephen's Church corner of Upper North Street and East India Dock Road. Ironically, that church

managed to survive the remainder of the war, only to be struck by a V2 rocket in 1945!

I was now able to stand in Hind Grove and gaze across open space all the way to East India Dock Road. On the plus side, my journey to Upper North Street School was greatly reduced, because I could now amble across 'open ground' right up to the gates!

Soon the Council made use of these spaces to build Emergency Water Supplies (EWS) and a huge reservoir appeared between Canton Street and Gough Grove. The earth removed to create the reservoir was heaped on the other side between Canton Street and Peking Street, and became known locally as 'the Hills', a place relished by local kids as a playground.

The grand Hippodrome Theatre on the corner of Stainsby Road was blasted out of use, never to reopen, thus entertainment was rapidly diminishing. Curiously, the Queen's Theatre in Poplar High Street survived, and continued to entertain local people for most of the war.

In these modern 'politically correct' times we live in, I sometimes chuckle when I hear of the 'counselling' everyone needs when something unusual happens. In the war years, we huddled in our Anderson Shelters whilst bombs rained down all around, and next morning when the 'All Clear' siren sounded, people cleared up their broken glass and swept out the ceiling plaster with ribald comments to neighbours about what they were going to do when they got their hands on Adolph Hitler! I remember my mother buttoning up my coat ready for school and saying: 'Now go straight to school. Don't play in any bombed houses; and if the school is gone, or no one is there, you come straight home again. D'you hear me?' Such was my 'counselling.'

Bill Langworth

St Clements Hospital.

St Clement's started life in 1849 as a workhouse for The City of London. Designed by Richard Tress at a cost in excess of £55,000 it could house 800 inmates. For a workhouse it must have been quite exceptional with central heating, a dining-hall measuring 100 feet by 50 feet, marble pillars, and a chapel with organ and stained glass windows.

When in 1869 the City of London Union merged with the East and West London Unions the Bow Road building became the infirmary for the new grouping. It became the Bow Institution in 1912 after the City of London moved its infirmary to Homerton and provided medical facilities to other Unions including Poplar. In 1936 it was converted into a psychiatric hospital and renamed St Clement's. Surviving major bomb damage in 1944 it was incorporated into the NHS and into London Hospital in 1968. After various changes of "ownership" it finally closed in 2005 and the site has remained unused until now.

The current owner the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is due, this month, to put the site out to competitive tender. The charity group London Citizens is hoping to draw up a bid to create a Community Land Trust that would build family sized homes rather than the 1 and 2 bedroom flats that developers seem to love.

Community Land Trusts, used in many parts of the USA own the land to be built on and grant leases (commonly 99 years) to the properties that can be assigned to heirs but must be handed back to the trust when the property is vacated. Without the cost of the land to be considered the price of the houses should be more affordable. To publicise their scheme representatives of many local organisations met outside St Clement's on Wednesday 9th September, the event also making the local TV news.

Your "roving reporter" (me) saw them on his way back from the Bancroft Road Steering Group meeting (see elsewhere in this newsletter) and got this information.

A more detailed history of St Clement's can be found on London Citizens web site.

www.londoncitizens.org.uk/affordablehomes/stclements-hospital-history.html

Philip Mernick

RECENTLY PUBLISHED

The Shoreditch Tales

Carolyn Clark & Linda Wilkinson, Shoreditch Trust, 2009. ISBN 978-0-9563222-1-0.

RRP £9.95, 172 pages.

Available from Centerprise and Eastside bookshops and amazon.co.uk

This is a very interesting book and worthy of a longer review. Full of maps and illustrations, many coloured, it is a visual treat. The ancient parish of St Leonard's Shoreditch became part of the Metropolitan Borough of Shoreditch in 1899 and was incorporated into the new Borough of Hackney in 1965. Chapters on historical aspects of the area are combined with others on the present community and complimented by many interviews with local residents.



Aerial view of MAPLEDURHAM HOUSE
(see back page for Coach Trip details)



AUTUMN COACH TRIP

SPRING COACH TRIP

1ST MAY 2010

MAPLEDURHAM HOUSE, WATERMILL AND CRAFT FAIR

Mapledurham is a little village on a quiet stretch of the Thames near Pangbourne. The Elizabethan House is still lived in by descendants of the original family. It has fine furniture, portraits and plasterwork. There are literary associations with Pope, the Forsyte Saga, and the Wind in the Willows.

The watermill, near by, is the only working mill on the Thames, and still grinds corn for sale to the public and local bakers.

On the 1st of May there will also be a Craft Fair in the grounds.

The entrance fee will be £7.50, which includes house, mill, and craft fair.

Food will be available for lunch and tea, or you can bring a picnic.

Please send no money now; the coach fare is not available yet. To reserve seats provisionally please send me the form below.

The pick-up will be at the bus pull-in in Grove Road, round the corner from Mile End Station, at 9.30 am.

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



SPRING COACH TRIP 1st May 2010 PROVISIONAL BOOKING FORM	
I/We would like _____	Ticket/s for the forthcoming coach trip.
NAME/S _____	
ADDRESS _____	

TEL NO. _____	