



1934: The largest salmon ever sold in Billingsgate Fish Market weighing in at 74lbs. This beauty came from Norway and was sold for 2/10 a lb when typical prices were 2/3. Louis Forman stands behind the salmon wearing a black Homberg hat.

1934: The largest salmon ever sold in Billingsgate Fish Market, weighing in at 74lbs. This beauty came from Norway and sold for 2/10 a pound when typical prices were 2/3. Louis Forman stands behind the salmon wearing a black Homberg hat.

CONTENTS:

Editorial Note & Memorial Research	2	Book Etc	8
Programme Details & Olympic Site Update	3	Bethnal Green Tube Disaster	9
Tower Hamlets Archives	4	East End Photographers 7 – James Pitt	12
St Georges Lutheran Church Talks	5	Missionaries in Bow	14
Correspondence	6	Strange Death from Chloroform	15
Notes and News	7	Spring Coach Trip 2010	16

Editorial Note:

The Committee members are as follows: Philip Mernick, Chairman, Doreen Kendall, Secretary, Harold Mernick, Membership, David Behr, Programme, Ann Sansom, Doreen Osborne, Howard Isenberg 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

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

On the second Sunday of every month members of our Society can be found recording memorials in Tower Hamlets Cemetery known locally as Bow Cemetery. Every memorial gives clues to the family interred such as relationships and careers.

With modern technology it is possible to call up at the L.M.A. all leading newspapers till 1900. It gives us a great feeling when we discover another clue to the hidden history of the cemetery. If members walk to the east end of the cemetery past the Poplar Civilian War Memorial towards the railway line, in squares 15, 22, and 23 we have found eleven memorials written in French, the plots being bought by the manager of the Rothschild refinery at 19 Royal Mint Street. The article we found is reproduced on page 15. We need to call up the Registers at the L.M.A. to check where Mr Pelcher is buried, the grave not being registered in his name in the Owners Registers.

Doreen Kendall

The cover picture was generously supplied by Lance Forman of H. Forman & Son, salmon smokers and offerers of gourmet foods on the appropriately named Fish Island. Lance welcomed a party from ELHS to his new factory in November of last year and gave us a very entertaining and educational talk about the history of the Company founded in 1905 by Jewish immigrant Harris Forman who introduced Eastern European processes to England.

The firm has suffered from fire and flood and much more recently was 2012'd when their Marshgate Lane factory was compulsorily purchased. Their new site, however, is spectacularly placed on the west bank of the Lea facing their former nemesis. With its curving shape and pink colour, from the opposite bank, it looks just like a giant --- salmon!

East London History Society Programme 2009-2010

Thursday January 14th

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

Thursday February 11th

Shoreditch tales, by Carolyn Clark

Thursday March 25th

The fight to save Epping Forest by Stan Newens,

Thursday April 22nd

London's working river: London Bridge to Tilbury in picture postcards, by Ray Newton and John Tarby

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

Olympic Site Update

Work continues apace with the stadium structure appearing to be complete and the aquatic centre filling in. A (bright yellow) viewing station, with café, has been built by the Greenway and offers good views from its upper floor. The Olympic Village is well underway but only visible if you get off a Javelin train at Stratford International Station. While Stratford City is being built passengers alighting at Stratford International have to take a bus to Stratford Regional, as it is now officially called. The compensation is a view of building works not otherwise visible. The new Stratford DLR and Central Line platforms are almost complete and the giant stairway from Stratford City to the current shopping centre is under construction. Elsewhere in East London the new Overground Shoreditch Station sits high above Bethnal Green Road and Crossrail's Canary Wharf Station is being built under the old West India Dock

Our Olympic Site images can be seen on the ELHS web site at:

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

Tower Hamlets Archives Collection

Tower Hamlets Archives Collection is kept in a specially adapted strongroom beneath the Local History Library in Bancroft Road E1. It is a large and growing collection of archives estimated at about 200 cubic metres or over three quarters of a mile in length.

The archives collection is unique being comprised mainly of manuscript items. For administrative purposes the archives are divided up into a number "management groups". The principal ones are:

- Local authority records
- Business records
- Records of societies and associations
- Records of institutions
- Records of places of worship
- Personal papers

Local authority records

As in any local authority records office these make up the bulk of the archives collection. These are the records generated by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets itself and its predecessors (from 1901-1965 the three metropolitan boroughs of Bethnal Green, Poplar and Stepney and before 1901, over 20 smaller units of local administration). Many of these records consist of minute books. The earliest is volume of minutes of meetings of The Inhabitants of the Hamlet of Poplar and Blackwall which dates from 1593. These, among other things, record the names of those elected to various offices within the hamlet. Other useful records which survive are rate books. Rates were a form of local taxation and the rate books provide, street-by-street, a list occupants (and sometimes owners) of property and the rateable value. These can be extremely useful when tracing the history of a building or family or researching the development of a district.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the chief area of expense for local authorities was the maintenance of the poor. The records created for this purpose provide a fascinating resource for social history. Records include

lists of men, boys, women and girls in the workhouse, details of pensions and "out-relief" payments and most interesting of all "pauper examinations". The latter record statements by the paupers themselves, almost potted biographies. Following the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, Boards of Guardians of the Poor were created and the records of these bodies are now in the London Metropolitan Archives.

Later local authority records are a good source for the development of public housing and public health and for example, the Poplar rates Dispute and the Second World War. Records held include the registers of the Poplar Mortuary, and registers of civilian war deaths and casualty lists.

Business Records

The collection of business records is relatively small but growing. It includes records of the Cubitt Town Estate Company, the East End Dwellings Company, W Badger Ltd, marine engineers and ship repairers of Millwall dry Dock, the Pemberton Barnes Estate Company and of G S Fish, pawnbroker and jeweller of Commercial Road.

Records of Societies and Associations

A growing number of archives of local societies and associations are held. These include the records of political parties such as the Bethnal Green Labour Party and the Poplar Municipal Alliance, trade unions such as the East London Teachers' Association, and community and youth groups such as Poplar Old People's Welfare Committee and the Highway Clubs. Among the more unusual records are those of the Relief Services Unit (Poplar), a group of mainly pacifists engaged during the Second World War in relief work for those who were taking refuge in the air raid shelters in Poplar.

Records of institutions

This section includes records of some local schools though most have been deposited in the London Metropolitan Archives. Among

those we do hold are admission registers of George Green's School, Poplar, 1898-1946 and extensive records of the Central Foundation Girls School and its predecessors. Records of some of the university settlements are held including Oxford House and St Margaret's House in Bethnal Green and also of the Dockland Settlement on the Isle of Dogs. A recent acquisition has been the records of the Little Hoppers Hospital near Paddock Wood, Kent which records the names and addresses of very many East London families engaged in hop picking.

Records of Places of Worship

All records of local Anglican churches are held at the London Metropolitan Archives but we hold a growing number of records of non-conformist churches and other places of worship. The oldest of these are the records of Stepney meeting House which begin in 1644. Also held are the extensive records of the St George's German Lutheran Church dating back to the 18th century. In recent years, Trinity Methodist Church, East India Dock Road deposited its archives here which include extensive records of the Poplar Methodist Mission and Trinity Congregational Church.

Personal papers

Included here are well over 8,000 title deeds to properties across the borough of Tower Hamlets mainly dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth century although some date back to the 1500s. The oldest is dated 1384. Also included are diaries such as those of Elijah Goff a Wapping coal merchant, 1788-1799 and those of Dr John Wheler (1734-1818) chaplain of the East India Company's chapel, Poplar entered in at the back of his manuscript sermons. Of particular interest are the papers of Edith Ramsay (1895-1983) of Stepney, educationalist and community worker which deal with her tireless efforts to improve the social conditions in Stepney in the 1950s and 1960s

All the archives, once catalogued, are available for study at Tower Hamlets Local

History Library and Archives, 277 Bancroft Road E1 4DQ. Opening hours are Tuesday 10-8, Thursday 9-8, Friday 9-6 and Saturday 9-5. We are always pleased to see you. A summary guide to the archive collections is available on our website www.idcastore.co.uk where a selection of digitised images of items from the archives can also be seen. Many catalogues are available on line at the Access to Archives site (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/A2A)

Malcolm Barr-Hamilton Borough Archivist

St. George's German Lutheran Church TALKS 2010 (1st Georgian History talks series)

Tuesday 23rd February 6.30pm
Wapping in the 18th Century.

A talk by Derek Morris, Author of the recent book on 18th Century Wapping.

Thursday 11th March 6.30pm

The Splendours of the City Churches

A lecture by Tony Tucker, highlighting the variety of the City of London's historic churches.

Thursday 13th May 6.30pm

The Courts of Chancery and Exchequer - All Human Life is There!

A talk by Michael Gandy about the Records of the Great Courts

Thursday 10th June 6.30pm

The repair of Georgian buildings in London.

A talk by Stephen Bull, carpenter and SPAB committee member

Light refreshments afterwards.

Talks £5 on the door. £16 if all four talks booked and paid in advance.

Please make cheques payable to Friends of St. George's German Lutheran church and send to:-

Historic Chapels Trust, St George's German Lutheran Church, 55 Alie Street, London E1 8EB. Sae appreciated.

CORRESPONDENCE

**From Mrs P J Trotter, 47 Nash Road,
Margate CT9 4BT:**

I notice from your website that there was an article in your newsletter, 1992, volume 1, issue 2, titled 'Welsh Connection – Richard Jones,' by David Sullivan. Is it possible to obtain a copy of this article? (Doreen has sent this).

The Librarian at the Tower Hamlets Local History Archive has suggested that I contact you as I am researching the Reverend Richard Cynfyn Jones. He was born near Aberystwyth, Cardiganshire and was the vicar of St Paul's Church Bethnal Green, from 1921 until he retired in 1952. He died on the 5th April 1964, at the Hostel of God in Clapham, Wandsworth.

My interest in the Revd Jones is that he arranged for 3 children to be 'fostered' with my Grandmother. I am wondering if you can put me in touch with anybody who has researched the Revd Jones. Particularly, his charitable works and whether there were any reports in the local newspapers following his retirement/death.

Any help you can give me would be very much appreciated.

(Ed: Can any of our members help with this query?)

Barry Canterford wrote:

I am researching my family tree and have hit a brick wall. I have a Great Uncle Leslie John Hart Jones who was born in Brentford Union Workhouse in 1900. His mothers name was Elizabeth Ann Jones with an address of 40 St Stephens Road Bow.

The family do not appear in the 1901 census but appear in the 1911 census at 69 Campbell

Road. In 1918 Leslie joined the Royal Navy. His address was given as 31 xxxlins Grove Bow and next of kin as Ann Parish Aunt.

Do you have maps of Bow from 1911 so I can trace xxxlins Grove. Do you have any details of Bow/Stepney Workhouse or could you direct me to a source of information.

Philip responded:

I live in Campbell Road and can tell you instantly that your mystery road is, almost certainly, Tomlins Grove which runs parallel. Just enter Tomlins Grove into Multimap <http://www.multimap.com/>

In case you don't have pictures, this is the infirmary of the Poplar & Stepney Workhouse. I have also seen it called the Bow & Bromley Infirmary. Later renamed St Andrews Hospital it was demolished earlier this year. The workhouse building itself was opposite, across the LT&SR tracks, by Bromley Station, and was demolished about 20 years ago. Tower Hamlets Local History Library may have more information. I believe that workhouse records are shortly to become available on ancestry.co.uk.

Hope this helps
Philip Memick, ELHS

Andrew Phillips wrote:

I have recently discovered that my great grandfather, Benjamin Phillips, owned (or used) the large Ropery off Bow Common Lane, still marked by Ropery Street. This is a speculative enquiry in case you can help me discover if any image of that ropery survives. As you will discover I am not a member, though, as the Librarian for the Essex Society for Archaeology & History, I was responsible for purchasing for the University of Essex a complete run of your excellent journal which, sadly, appears to have ceased appearing. If not, I would like to know. The only other *quid pro quo* I can offer is some insight into my

ancestors' business (3 generations) in rigging the great East Indianmen in the age of sail (1820s to 1890s) until iron hawsers put them somewhat out of business.

Philip Mernick replied:

If you are referring to East London Record, we stopped publication in 1998 and replaced it with occasional books and a 2 to 3 times a year newsletter.

I don't think I have seen a photograph, or print of the ropewalk, have you asked Tower Hamlets Local History Library? I will ask somebody who knows the Cemetery better than me.

Brian Mooney wrote:

I am researching and writing a book on the life of the author Frank Baines. His grandfather, Samuel Baines (b 1840c), was a coppersmith living at 1 Maria Terra, just off the Mile End Road. Are there any archives where I could find out more about Samuel's business? What were coppersmiths doing in that part of London then? Making pipes and other equipment for ships and their engines?

I would be most grateful for any assistance.

Philip's reply:

There would have been a lot of call for coppersmiths as boiler making and shipbuilding were major industries in Poplar. Being in the Mile End Road could indicate he was involved in the brewing trade. Most vats were made of copper and there were many local breweries. First point of call for anything relating to Tower Hamlets should be Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives at Bancroft Road, Mile End.

Notes and News

FAMILY HISTORY FAIR on Saturday 23rd January 2010 – Admission Free

The venue is Eastbury Comprehensive School, Barking Essex IG11 9TR. The theme for this year is Health and Social Welfare. There will be a display loaned from the Royal London Hospital, and book signings by Sarah Wise, author of *The Blackest Streets*, Gilda O'Neill, and Fiona Rule, author of *Worst Street in London*. Talks will be by Michael Peet on Clara Grant, the *Farthing Bundle Lady of Bow*, Christine Wagg on *Healthy Housing for Working People*, and Sarah Wise on *Health and Social Conditions in the East End*.

For further details check the website www.eolfhs.org.uk

Victoria Park is all set for a facelift, if the multimillion pound plan goes ahead. Proposals for the Park include a restoration of the Fountain, planting of Victorian flower beds and even a plan to manufacture replacement Dogs of Alcibiades, the guardians of Bonner Gate, who have unfortunately been the target of vandals over the years.

All this work will be carried out if the bid for funding through the Parks and People scheme is successful.

The Ragged School Museum has launched an appeal for donations towards its latest restoration programme, which they hope to complete by 2012. The Samson post crane which adorned the front of the building has been removed for specialist repair, and the museum is urgently looking for sources of funding to enable it to complete the rest of the work on schedule, so that more of the building may be opened to the public, and hopefully increase the museum's revenue.

Books etc.

The Coborn School for Girls in Taunton 1939-1945, published by Dorothy Organ, 2009 ISBN 978-0-9562733-0-7. A5, card covers, 89 pages. £12 from Dorothy Organ, 37 Station Road, Epping, Essex CM16 4HJ

On September 1st 1939, pupils of Coborn School, Mile End Road, took an Underground train from Bow Road Station to Ealing and then a G.W.R. train to Taunton. The school remained there until July 19th 1945. Even then they had to return to the Coopers Company School buildings as their own had been badly damaged by a VI flying bomb in 1944. They finally managed to move back to their old premises in September 1947.

This book gives the story, from school log books and the personal stories of the evacuees of how they set themselves up in Taunton, a country town very different from inner city Mile End. First sharing with a local school (Bishop Fox's) and then taking over their buildings when their "hosts" moved to a new site. Coborn at that time also had a preparatory school for younger pupils using a separate building nearby. Girls matriculating in war time East London could qualify for Coborn even though it was far away. The system apparently being that you qualified for your "local" secondary school even if either had been temporarily evacuated. Ex pupils vividly describe their outside school activities such as dancing and country walking which had to be expanded during the summer to cater for all those staying over during the "holidays". Their experiences both good and bad of their billets with local families are also included in this very interesting book which is dedicated to Miss M(ary) G(ladys) Philpott, Coborn's head mistress from 1929 to 1956 and all the other staff who went with her to Somerset.

Dorothy also sent me a copy of this book about Coopers' evacuation that we missed when first published.

The Coopers' Company's School in Frome 1939 – 1945, edited by George S. Perry, 2006. ISBN 978-0-9553734-0-4, A5, card covers, 135 pages. £12 from The Frome Society for Local Study, email address info@fsls.org.uk

Coopers' was evacuated on the same day as Coborn, 1st September 1939. 307 of their boys plus 90 small brothers and sisters, 27 staff, 7 wives and 6 helpers took a similar journey via Ealing, this time from Mile End Station. Their train took them to Ramsbury in Wiltshire, which was not expecting them and had no suitable schools to accommodate them! After several weeks dispersed around local villages they entrained again this time to Frome, Somerset, where they were to stay until the end of the war. They took over a series of "tin huts" first built in 1919 for Frome Grammar School, but unused once that school had moved into more suitable accommodation in the 1920s. This book is also full of stories told by ex pupils of their adventures and misadventures. Like Coborn, Coopers' also had a long serving head teacher, in this case Mr Alfred J. White (head 1930-1953) to keep them running efficiently. Not all pupils went to Frome. From a normal compliment of about 540, and 307 going in 1939 the role rose to a high of 345 in 1940 but was down to 163 by July 1945 when they moved back to London. The book has a number of class pictures and in one of them I found a picture of one of my former work colleagues. He is also a member of ELH, so he will know who I mean!

Philip Mernick

In the Driving Seat, by Alex Haymer. ISBN 978-1-905523-96-2. 264 pages, 8 pages of photographs. Price £9.95. Published by Old Pond Publishing, Dencora Business Centre, 36 White House Road, Ipswich IP1 5LT or visit www.oldpond.com

Alex Haymer introduces himself:

A little about myself is that my parents came from Eagling road Bow and moved to Plaistow and then Stratford, I was born December 1932 and at age 14 I started work at Jessups on the corner of Sugar house lane and my father worked for Towler and Sons (Boiler makers) at the bottom of Sugar house lane, I drove trolleybuses RT and RMs at West Ham bus garage and Galleon coaches out of the old Grey Green coach garage at Mile End and eventually petrol tankers for Gulf oil from Silvertown,

In this book Alex Haymer recalls a lifetime spent in the transport industry. This started with him becoming an apprentice fitter before being trained to drive all manner of vehicles while doing his National Service in the RAF. After being demobbed, he went to work for a brewery, driving a five ton Bedford, before moving on to drive trolleybuses for London Transport. Later in life he took coach parties all over Britain, but the main part of the book is given over to his time driving tankers for Gulf Oil, which totalled almost 30 years.

The book is full of nostalgic recollections, anecdotes and tales of misadventure.

Recently published is a new book on the Poplar Rates Dispute. Titled Guilty and Proud of It – Poplar's rebel Councillors and Guardians 1919-1925 by Janine Booth. It is published by Merling Press and priced at £12.99. We have not received a copy to review, but should any of our members get to read it, perhaps we could have a review of the book at a later date.

Extracts from Sean Dettmans forthcoming book about the 1943 Bethnal Green Tube Disaster. To be published by ELHS, we hope to have it available in time for the 67th anniversary in March. Any profits will go to The Stairway To Heaven Memorial Trust.

On 1 March 1943, the Allies undertook a successful bombing raid over German occupied areas, including Berlin. The people of London, especially in the East End, quickly became aware of the Luftwaffe's new bombing tactics, which consisted mainly of nuisance and reprisal raids. On the evening of 2 March the Bethnal Green tube shelter saw a large number of shelter seekers in fear of a reprisal raid from the previous night's Allied activity over Berlin. To their relief, there was not a raid that evening. However, on the night of 3 March, the air-raid warning sounded and the reprisal raid that everyone was so anxiously waiting finally arrived. While the details of the evening vary from account to account, according to Alf Morris, the wireless radio cut out sometime around 8 o'clock, and this was a sure indication that there was going to be an air raid.

"My father instructed me and my aunt, which is my mother's sister, her name was Lillian Hall, to go to the shelter from 106 Old Ford Road. We went out the door and started walking towards the tube; we were walking along Old Ford Road. As we got to Globe Road the air raid warning started sounding. We got up as far as Victoria Park Square and then the air aid warning was dying away... We got to the entrance of the tube and started to walk down. I was at the top and my Aunt was to the right and I was walking down the center. I got to the middle of the staircase and the rockets fired.

As they went up [they made] a tremendous 'swooshing' noise and we all thought it was a bomb. Everybody started to shout 'there's a bomb, there's a bomb, get down, get down.' As they [the crowd] got down, they surged downstairs and I got separated from my Aunt.

I got separated, my aunt went to the right and I went to the left. I got pushed and shoved and pushed and I got carried, and I ended up at the third stair from the bottom. When I got to the third stair from the bottom, the people were just falling around me. I was standing upright. There was a little handrail and there was rough concrete that I was lying against. These people were dropping all around me and [I] went to move and I couldn't move. A lady air raid warden, she could see me. She put her arms underneath my arms and got a hold of me. She dragged me out just like a piece of rubber...Mrs. Chumbley; I can see her face now. She went "you go downstairs and you say nothing."

I was crying and I walked down the stairs and at the bottom of the stairs there was a thick steel door. I pressed the bell and the man pushed the door open and said 'what are you crying for boy?' I was frightened, I didn't say a thing. I walked down to my bunk and I was still crying and sat on my bunk. All the women and men kept saying 'What's the matter Alfie?' 'Why are you crying?' 'Where is your mother?' 'Where's Lily?' I didn't say anything.

My Aunt came down about fifteen minutes later. She was short of her coat, her shoes and her stockings were all torn and she was all bruised down one side. They said to her what's the matter? She didn't say anything. I think they told her, because she was an older person, 'don't you say nothing' because of the morale, because of the panic...We got in the beds and we were worrying about my mum. Well my mother was walking up Old Ford Road with my sister in her arms, my sister was four weeks old. She heard the rockets and went to the Catholic Church on the corner of Victoria Park Sq. My dad locked the house up and walked past the shelter to the tube and he saw all the bodies being brought out. When he came home my mum and sister were sitting in doors. My aunt and I were still missing. The worry now is who is killed and who is alive. At about half past nine, three rescue people

walked from one end of the tunnel, starting at Carlton Square back by Mile End, and climbed down an air shaft and walked all the way down the tunnel. People naturally were like 'Why are you walking down there when you can't come that way.' People started to have a bit of an idea, they never knew but they had an idea. It was kept very quiet."

James and Mary Barber lived on Russia Lane and had six children; Mary, the eldest, Jimmy, Bella, Gene, Teddy and David. According to Mrs. Mary Nesling (nee Barber), her mother was terrified of the bombings and always took refuge in a shelter when there was a raid. She stated that her mother on more than one occasion took all six children as far as Marble Arch. On 3 March, Mrs. Barber followed her strict routine, Mary remembers:

"I was fourteen at the time and I was learning to dance round St. Margaret's House down Old Ford Road. The siren went and because I was the eldest my mother came around and got me because I had to help her with the kids. We were going over to the Arches (Salmon & Ball) but they were full up. So we had to cross over the road and go down to the tube and that's when we got caught in it. This noise went on, whatever it was, everyone seemed to panic and from that moment we never walked down the stairs- we just got carried down. I had my brother, who was one year old, and my mum had Teddy, who was about three or four, and as we fell, because there was a landing and because there were people there, they sort of took them off of us. We never saw them any more that night, Teddy or David.

We were there, trapped, for I don't know how long. I fell asleep, maybe three hours. We all kept passing out because there was no air. As they piled up the entrance got smaller at the top and we were at the bottom near the landing. I was next to my mum, I could see my mum and I could see my two sisters. I said good-bye to my mum because I didn't think we would get out of there alive because we all kept fainting, because it was so hot and there

was no air. They came with hose pipes and because we were so hot they just put the hose pipes on. After, I don't know how long it was, they started trying to... I suppose we were one of the first to be pulled out, because we were at the bottom. They got me out and they wouldn't let us walk down the escalator, they carried us down, all my family, because they were frightened we had broken our legs.

Then my dad came with my other brother who had been to the pictures with him. We tried to find my mum and we couldn't. We looked at a lot of the people that had passed away. We couldn't find a soul. I walked home with my dad that night and the two youngest [Teddy and David] and my two sisters [Bella and Gene]. I never had shoes on, I lost my shoes. We didn't know what happened to my mum until the next morning we found out they took her to hospital. She was alright."

Not long after, Mrs. Nesling stated that her whole family was sent on a two week holiday to Portsmouth, because of "the trauma...a sort of compensation." She stated that it must have been paid for by someone other than her parents, because they could not have afforded it."

Hand in Hand with Time. A memoir.
Author Ken Gay. ISBN 979-0-9562659-0-4.
 Paperback. Pages 268. 56 personal photos.
 Printer Honeysuckle Books 201 Alexander
 Park Road London N22 7BJ. Price £14.99.

The author has written thirteen books about the Muswell Hill and Hornsey area. As President of the Hornsey Historical Society gives many lectures and walks around the area.

Ernest his brother born 1920 and Kenneth born 1923 were the third generation to be born in West Ham. Their parents Edgar a postman and Clara nee Adams were both from close knit families and enjoyed family evenings together, visiting the local cinemas, markets, trips up west and long cycle rides from their home at

12 White Street later buying a house in 22 Upton Lane, Forest Gate, where Clara lived till her death in 1987 at the age of 93 years. The author's Tennyson School was first evacuated to Brentwood then a year in Cornwall. Vivid recollections of being bombed out twice then later the V1 and V2s and the devastation they caused in the area.

A scholarship in 1941 from the County Borough of West Ham Education Department for Professional Training included tuition fees for the three years at seventy pound a year, books and travel. The author would attend the London School of Economics evacuated to Cambridge; the College awarded him a means tested lodging allowance of thirty five shillings a week (one pound seventy five pence in today's money). Friends he made were to last through out the authors life. After obtaining a Upper Second Cambridge Degree, his first job in a printing works in Bournemouth was to last thirteen weeks then he worked for the Miners Welfare Newspaper in Surrey. Changing course he became Production Manager of Documentary Films for the National Coal Board, organizing travel to the coal fields and funding, employing film crews and contracts, all described in great detail. The thirty nine years he spent in the film industry has given the author a absorbing hobby in the creation of books for the Hornsey Historical Society. The authors facts were checked in the dairies and letters he has kept since his school days, along with the prices paid and locations were he has bought the thirteen thousand books in his collection having lovingly read every book, he has decided not to worry about disposal of them leaving their disposal to his two sons from his happy forty four marriage to Theresa who died in 1997. Readers will enjoy the West Ham local history and the achievements of the author.

Doreen Kendall

East End Photographers - 7

James Pitt

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the once flourishing Spitalfields silk industry was in terminal decline. Impoverished living conditions, a bitter price war over the vast quantities of silk imported from the continent of Europe, and the volatility of the fashion business, all contributed to the collapse of the silk industry. By the end of the century, only a few isolated pockets still remained, gradually, if somewhat unwillingly, turning themselves into an extension of the tourist industry, especially for those intrepid sightseers who found the adventure of "slumming" in the East End the ultimate thrill trip.

The Pitt family of Bethnal Green was one of the many faced with the need to find a new line of business after many generations in the silk weaving trade. James Pitt senior had been a weaver all his life, but his son, James Pitt junior, though apprenticed to his father, took an early opportunity to break out on his own in the brave new world of photography. The Pitt family had moved around Bethnal Green over the decades - Pitt junior was born in Church Row on June 25 1828, but by the middle of the century was working as a labourer in Hart's Lane. It was presumably the only work available; however, at the time of his marriage to Ann Gay in 1855 at St Jude's, he was living in Essex Street, and still describing himself as a weaver. In later life, he would claim that his photographic studio had been established in 1857, despite the fact that the first mention of him in this trade is on the birth certificate of his third child, Louis, in 1860. In all, there were 6 children, though sadly, Louis seems to have died as an infant.

Pitt's first photographic studio was opened probably in 1859 or 1860, at 4 Bethnal Green Road, "near the Post Office", as his cartes de visite put it, almost on the corner of Turin Street, facing the Bethnal Green Parochial

School, and close to St Matthew's Church. It was a prime site on a busy main road, and for the first decade or so - the crucial period of the 1860s, and the establishment and consolidation of the carte de visite mania - Pitt had no rivals within easy walking distance.

In 1866 Bethnal Green Road was renumbered, and Pitt's studio became 215. This studio eventually proved too small, and in 1873 he moved next door to 213, an address which the studio would keep for the rest of its existence.

An advertisement in Garman's Almanack for 1892- an annual local classified directory issued on behalf of shopkeepers in Bethnal Green and Stepney - emphasises the claimed establishment of the studio in 1857 (by then, it would here been unlikely that anybody in the area would have remembered the exact year), and that Pitt had been awarded a medal in 1865. No details are given of this latter honour, nor are any of Pitt's cartes more specific. Roger Taylor's comprehensive listing of photographic medal winners from the 1840s to the end of the century in major British exhibitions, on his website, makes no mention of Pitt anywhere in Great Britain, so it has to be assumed that the medal was a strictly local award - perhaps for a beautiful baby competition? The advertisement goes on to note that the studio was open on Sundays - a rare and technically illegal practice at the time - and quotes some of his tariffs:

12 cartes cost 3/6d; 1 cabinet (large format) and 3 cartes 2/6d; "A grand portrait, painted in oils, 12" x 10", in a massive gold frame, 24" x 20", 12/6d, usual price 30/-, not to be equalled by any other establishment". One can't help wondering how many of the local population, the majority living barely above the breadline, in conditions of appalling squalor, would ever have been able even to contemplate such figures.

The business, however, clearly prospered. A scattering of rival photographers began to appear in the 1880s, but when James Pitt died

on March 24 1886, he left a flourishing studio, and an estate of £4000 - perhaps £50,000 in today's money - to his eldest son, George James Pitt, who continued the studio in his father's name; the firm had been known as Pitt & Son since 1881. James Pitt's wife, Ann, died at the family home, 170 Grove Road, in 1889.

George Pitt was 28 at the time of his father's death, having been born at the Hart's Lane address on New Year's Day 1858. In 1884, he married Emma Quittenton, a milliner from Thomas Street. They had 5 children, of whom the eldest, Beatrice, acted as her father's manager and front of studio receptionist. Business proved a lot harder in the 1890s, with nearly a dozen studios spread out along the street, including two owned by William Wright who was featured in the previous article. In 1902, George Pitt finally gave up the unequal struggle, and sold the Bethnal Green Road studio to Joseph Pettingall, who had previously run a studio in Chingford. Pettingall's tenure was relatively brief, after the several decades of ownership by the Pitt family, and he closed it in 1907 when he was invited to return to Chingford - as a poor rate collector for the local council. It marked the end of the studio, after roughly half a century of continuous occupation.

George Pitt seems to have grown disillusioned with photography even before the studio was sold. At the turn of the century, he was briefly landlord of a public house in Wilmot Road, though by the time he moved to West Ham in the early 1900s, he was again working as a photographer, albeit this time privately. Pitt died in Whitechapel in the Spring of 1918, an early victim of the influenza epidemic then sweeping across Europe.

James and Ann Pitt and their children are buried in a family grave at Tower Hamlets cemetery.

The children both died from TB the commonest cause of death in an overcrowded

slum environment. Sydney, the third son, was only 23, while Ann, the eldest daughter, was 34.

Their memorial pedestal bears this tribute:

They are gone, the friends we all loved best,
Life's labour done, their gentle souls have rest.
They cannot die who live in every heart;
Whose good deeds form of every life a part;
Whose spirits are with God and yet with us;
It is not death to live in memory thus;
Not death, but rest - eternal rest above.

I should like to thank Moira Allan, a descendant of James Pitt, for allowing me access to her research on the Pitt family in the preparation of this article.

DAVID WEBB



Pitt Studio 'cartes de visite' 1860s and 1880s.

Missionaries living in Bow.

The Regions Beyond Mission (1903) was founded, by Mr & Mrs Grattan Guinness, in 1872, as The East London Institute for Home and Foreign Missions. In 1874 they purchased Harley House in Bow Road. A training college was built in the back garden and remained their headquarters until 1919?



Harley House, Bow Road c1905

These paragraphs come from Mrs Grattan Guinness's 1887 book "The Wide World and Our Life In It" and reflect another way of life compared with most contemporary Eastenders.

HARLEY HOUSE, Bow.

Harley House is neither so old nor so ugly as 29, Stepney Green. It is more substantial and more convenient, considerably larger also, and capable of further enlargement. Though by no means a modern house, it has been modernized by its late occupier - a gentleman who, being an architect by profession, expended to the best advantage the sum he laid out upon it, in alterations and additions, which are radical improvements. It stands in the great thoroughfare of East London, the Bow Road. As we hope many of our kind friends will pay us a visit, we will add that omnibuses from the Bank, and trams from Aldgate, pass the door every five minutes.

The disadvantages of Harley House are therefore the dust and noise of a busy thoroughfare, where there is an incessant traffic from four in the morning until long past

midnight. But as it stands a little back from the road, and has a small garden with high trees in front, the noise is endurable when the windows are shut, and its inmates can hear each other speak even when they are open. The high trees form a valuable blind to screen us from the sun, and give besides some measure of privacy, without quite depriving the passengers on the tops of the trams and omnibuses of a view of what goes on inside.

But the beauty of Harley house lies all at the back! Many friends who come to see us labour under the popular delusion that nothing even passably decent is to be found in the poor plebeian "East of London." As to meeting anything in the least degree pleasant or pretty in Stepney, Limehouse, Bow, and Poplar, they have considered that an impossibility! We have seen such open their eyes with astonishment, on looking through the glass panels of our front door, to see the fine old fruit trees throwing their pleasant shadows over a good lawn in a garden of an acre in extent, filled with flowers and refreshed by a fine fountain!



Harley College built in back garden.

We have been amused at times at the hesitation with which some of our friends have treated an invitation to Bow "Is it not a - a - very disagreeable neighbourhood?" "Do you find it tolerably healthy?" "How do your dear children stand the close atmosphere?" etc., etc. We are in honour bound to justify our ancient and respectable suburb from such insinuations! True its noise is trying, its dirt and dust disagreeable, and its atmosphere anything but invigorating. We sometimes gasp

for a fresh breeze, and sigh for other sights than a never-ending succession of omnibuses and market carts, and for other sounds than the shriek of the railway whistle and the tinkle of the tram-bell. But when we recall the lot of our missionary friends in the narrow lanes and streets of undrained Chinese cities, unable to secure in their comfortless dwellings even privacy from rude and curious crowds, or freedom from fever-breeding odours, we feel the lines have fallen unto us in comparatively pleasant places, and that we have good reason to be content with such things as we have. We know many a worse place that has a better reputation, and for our own part would quite as soon live in the broad, cheerful, airy Bow Road, as in many a dull, confined, and built up Westend square, or in many an elevated, cage-like apartment on the palace-lined Boulevards of Paris.

Strange Death from Chloroform

(The Reynolds News. Article 89. Sunday June 1st 1862)

On Wednesday morning, at ten o'clock, much excitement prevailed at the east end of the metropolis in consequence of the exhumation of the body of a Frenchman named Pierre Pelcher aged thirty five years, from Tower Hamlets Cemetery, Bow Road, by the warrant of Mr Humphrey's, the coroner.

It appears that the deceased, about a fortnight since had been in the service of Sir Anthony Rothschild, the proprietor of the extensive refinery, situated in Royal Mint Street, Tower Hill, where he had been engaged in the manufacture of new coin for the government. He was afflicted with a painful disease, although he followed up his daily avocation. On Monday week the 19th May, he wished to have an operation preformed on him, and he was persuaded to have the assistance of two French physicians, who were sent for, in conjunction with Dr Marshall of Great Titchbourn street, Leicester square. The three gentlemen arrived at the residence of the deceased in Royal Mint street where measures were adopted to perform the operation. They

then proceeded to administer a quantity of chloroform in the usual way, when one of the medical attendants discovered that pulsation had suddenly ceased, and the patient was dead before the operation could be performed. The gentlemen became alarmed, and the friends of the deceased sent for Dr Cook of the Minorities, and his assistant promptly attended, and found life to be extinct. He endeavoured to restore animation, but his efforts were in vain. The deceased expired on Monday morning, and was buried two days afterwards at the cemetery above named, and it seems that the registrar of the death received a certificate from the medicinal gentlemen to the effect that the deceased had died a natural death. These facts came under the notice of Mr Humphreys, who at once ordered to have the body exhumed. An inquest was commenced on Thursday, by Mr Waitheew, when the following additional particulars were obtained. Mr Fredrick James Grant, surgeon and pathological anatomist of the Royal Free hospital, was then called, and said that he had performed a post mortem examination of the body since the exhumation. He found sufficient to account for death if chloroform was administrated. There was a long existing disease of the heart, and death would inevitably ensue from the administration of such an agent. He was of the opinion that the feebleness of heart and lungs the administration of chloroform would stop the action of the first named organ, and produce paralysis and death without any warning. It was very essential to ascertain the condition of the lungs before administration of chloroform. The coroner asked if the medical gentleman was present who had administered the chloroform, when Mr Perry, the summoning officer, answered in the negative. The coroner then gave instructions to the constable to summon the three medical gentlemen who had the case under their joint charge, and adjourned the investigation for their attendance. The proceedings were accordingly adjourned.

Doreen Kendall



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.

The coach fare will be £12 and it would save time if you could send your payment with your reservation. To reserve seats 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

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

NAME/S _____

ADDRESS _____

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

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