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Editorial Note

Philip Mernick, Chairman, Doreen Kendall, Secretary, Harold Mernick, Membership, David Behr, Programme, Ann Sansom, Doreen Osborne, Sigrid Werner 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.

The Newsletter is edited and typeset by Rosemary Taylor with collaboration of Philip Mernick, and an editorial team comprising, Doreen Kendall, David Behr, and Doreen Osborne. Contributions are welcomed from our members, on all aspects of East End history, as well as reminiscences, which provide a valuable source of information. Please send your articles, preferably by email, to Philip Mernick, who is also on hand to deal with any enquiries. Whilst we accept handwritten manuscripts, computer generated documents which can be sent as attachments, would be appreciated, as it saves us considerable time and energy, and helps us to get the newsletters completed on time!



The cover picture is of the How memorial arch, the only visible reminder of one of East London's most historic buildings: St. Leonard's

Priory, Bromley by Bow. The remains of the church yard, overgrown for many years, has now been laid out with new paths and information. This has been done by The Diocese of London in partnership with Trees for Cities and Poplar HARCA. One of the boards gives this summary of the site's history.

St Leonard's Priory was founded in the 11th Century during the time of William the Conqueror. It was home to between eight and thirty Benedictine nuns led by a prioress. Legend has it that the Prioress of St Leonard's was the inspiration for the prioress character in William Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

In 1536 King Henry VIII began his quest to reduce the power of the Catholic Church by closing the monasteries and priories. St Leonard's Priory was handed over to Sir Ralph Sadler, a top member of Henry's government. In 1635 new owner Sir John Jacob demolished most of the original buildings to make way for a manor house.

By the 17th Century only parts of the original church remained standing and were taken over by protestant wealthy merchants from France known as the Huguenot refugees. The chancel was altered and rebuilt in 1843 as the Parish Church of St Mary with St Leonard. It was one of the few Norman buildings left in London by that time.

Tragically during a bombing raid in the Second World War Blitz of 1941 the church took a direct hit and was completely destroyed. Then in 1969, the Blackwall Tunnel Northern Approach Road was built over most of the former site of the Convent and the Church, leaving just a small area of overgrown Huguenot graves and the Memorial Gate to the one-time Parish Rector Rev. G A How, erected in 1894.

These events in the history of this site are remembered in some of the block names of the Bow Bridge Estate: Prioress House, Canterbury House and Sadler House.

East London History Society Programme 2012

Thursday 26th April

Excavations of King John's Tower and Court - Worcester House a late medieval? and Tudor mansion at Stepney Green

Speaker - Dave Sankey

Thursday 17th May

East End film night

Introduced by Ray Newton and John Tarby

The lectures are usually 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.

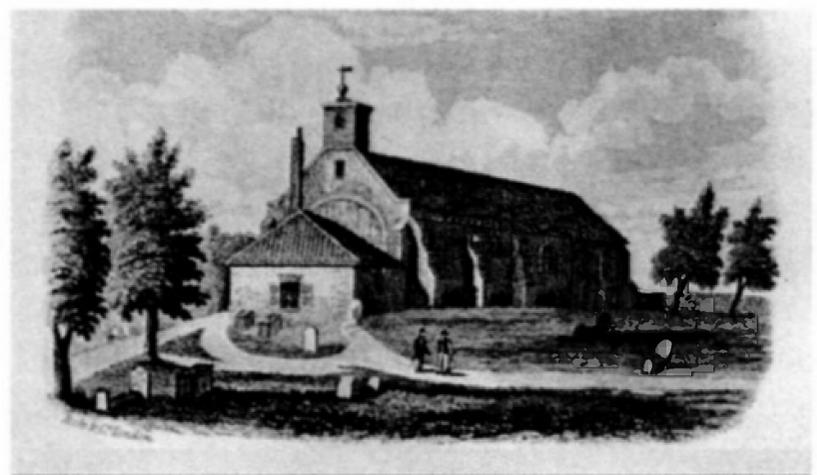
Email: phil@mernicks.com

Notes and News

Jennifer Worth, Update. Those who saw the BBC drama 'Call the Midwife' may recall that we were fortunate to have Jennifer Worth talk to the society about her books, Shadows of the Workhouse and Call the Midwife, based on her life and work in Poplar. Sadly Jennifer succumbed to terminal cancer shortly before filming started in June, but she did approve the script and choice of actors. The mini series was a great success, and I for one look forward to further programmes based on Jennifer's writing.

Whitechapel Bell Foundry will be casting what is going to be the largest bell in Europe, in honour of the 2012 Olympics. The bell, weighing 27 tonnes will hang at one end of the Stadium and will toll at 9 pm, signalling the opening of the ceremony. The idea was thought up by Danny Boyle who is masterminding the Opening Ceremony. He has named the ceremony the Isles of Wonder and will use 20,000 volunteers for the show.

The Bell Foundry, in Whitechapel Road is the oldest bell maker in Briatin and has been trading since 1570. It has cast some of the world's most famous bells, including Big Ben and the Liberty Bell.



Bromley Church before 1843

Letters, Queries, Requests etc.

Jubilee Documentary

Firstly, thank you so much (Philip Mernick) for taking the time to talk to me. As discussed I'm writing with some details of what we are looking for. I think my search could be described as the proverbial needle in a haystack. The programme is a social history documentary which will explore the changing face of Britain by recreating a Queen's Coronation street party from 1953, during her Diamond Jubilee celebrations in June this year.

The aim of the programme is to bring to life the spirit of Britain in the early 50's. With the help of local residents we'll dig deep into the past to discover and experience what home, family and community life were really like at that moment in history. Along with the modern residents we are hoping to find people who attended the original street party to add their memories of everyday life in the 50's.

With this in mind we are searching for a street which held a party in 1953, and for which there is good archive material of the event. In an ideal world we would also like to find a street where someone who attended the original street party still lives today. Their firsthand account will be crucial to authentically recreating the period.

If you were able to speak to the Secretary of the society and anyone else who is contactable I would be extremely grateful. I can be contacted either on this email, alex.scott@loveproductions.co.uk or by phone on 020 7067 4848. Many thanks, in advance, for any help you might be able to offer and I hope to hear from you soon.

Alex Scott
Producer
From Maggie Hewitt, TH Intergen
Coordinator

Intergen - an intergenerational project which started up in the Bethnal Green area in the autumn - is now looking for volunteers to go into **Morpeth School**, a highly achieving comprehensive. We are looking for volunteers in general but also in particular areas, one of which is **local history**.

Intergen works by encouraging older people (50 plus) to get involved in the life of three schools in Bethnal Green- **Bonner** and **Bangabandhu** and **Morpeth**. We now have volunteers going into both primary schools (although more are always welcome), including someone who went to Bonner school sixty years ago, but would welcome some volunteers who would be happy to support the secondary school Morpeth.

I know of your work from both Rosemary and Doreen having worked with them in the past and am aware of how much expertise you have as a group. I would be very grateful if you would pass this request on to Rosemary so she can include it in your next newsletter and hope that some people will feel inspired to volunteer.

If any of your group could give up a few hours a week, **Morpeth** would be delighted to welcome you. You would be making an important contribution to our schools and the community.

I am often in the Bethnal Green area and would be happy to meet with anyone who would like to discuss this further.

maggie.hewitt@intergen.org.uk or phone
07508 844 529(mob)

From Katy Jackson, Community and Outreach Officer, Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide.

If you haven't heard of us, we are Britain's largest and the world's oldest Holocaust memorial institution. The Library was founded by a German Jew named Alfred Wiener in 1933, he recognized how dangerous Nazi ideology could be and so he began collecting evidence of the persecution of the Jews in Germany throughout the 1930's. In 1939, Wiener brought the collection to Britain where it was used by the British intelligence and the BBC. In the post-war years, the Library held a vital collection of evidence for the Nuremberg Trials and the Eichmann Trial in the 1960's. The Wiener Library recently relocated to beautiful new premises in Russell Square and thanks to Heritage Lottery Funds, the collection is more accessible than ever. We have developed a vibrant events programme as well as creating a new exhibition space to showcase some of our unique collections, all free and open to the public. Our upcoming exhibition documents the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, "Hitler's Hangman" and one of the key architects of the Holocaust. His assassination was orchestrated by the British government and the Czech government in exile in London.

I would like to invite the members of the East London History Society to the Library. Our collection includes 60,000 books, 16,000 photographs, thousands of documents, pamphlets, personal testimonies and much more. We offer tours for booked groups, free of charge, which take you behind the scenes in our archive. I hope that you are interested in what the Wiener Library has to offer, if you have any questions or queries please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Katy Jackson

The Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust & Genocide
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Tel: 020 7636 7247 Fax: 020 7436 6428
www.wienerlibrary.co.uk

Mrs Stella Short, Ilminster, wrote to Doreen:

Thank you for your kindness in sending me a copy of last month's paper at my brother's request. The original postage has not been received, so I must assume it has been lost in the Xmas postal deliveries (or not delivered).

I was especially interested in the story of Hackney Wick as my brother and I lived in Wansbeck Road, the first turning off Wallis Road, till Sept 1st 1939, when we were evacuated to Taunton in Somerset. When we came home to London, the road was no longer there, having been wiped out by a landmine. Wansbeck Road backed onto the railway line, leading to Victoria Park Station, (no longer there). The railway line ran at the bottom of our garden.

We were evacuated from Coborn School in Bow, where I was a pupil. My brothers were allowed to come with me, as they were younger than me. We came home to London in 1943, but our house had been wiped out by a landmine in 1942.

The other thing my brother knew I would be interested in was the history behind Bow Church. I always knew that Prisca Coborn was buried there. It was part of the history of my school at Coborn Road.

I look forward to my copies of the history notes each quarter as they are part of my background as a child. I would appreciate it if you would check my name is on the mailing list when the next issue becomes due. Thank you for your help and interest in my story relating to Hackney Wick. I do hope you will be able to continue researching stories and news for all your ex-East Enders.

(Thank you for your letter and interesting comments. Philip Mernick has informed me that your subscription for 2010-11 was not received.)

*Doreen consulted the book first published in 1995 by Alan Sutton, called **Hackney at War** by Jennifer Golden. The book describes in words and vivid photographs how six years of war affected the people of the area. With a comprehensive list of bombs dropped, in fact three lists are printed in full, from those prepared by Council officers in Hackney and based on records of damage to all property. It shows that Wansbeck Road was destroyed by a landmine on Wednesday 19th March 1941.)*

From Bill Langworth, Sidcup, Kent:

Please find enclosed some reminiscences of my childhood in Poplar, I hope that it's not too long. It's difficult to reminisce without getting carried away.

I did consider e-mailing this to Philip Mernick, since he suggests that this method would achieve 'priority', but I doubt the wisdom of this suggestion in the latest newsletter. I am of the opinion that those of us with first-hand memories of life in the East End are fast leaving this mortal coil, and in perhaps ten years from now will all be gone! As there are very few 'senior citizens' who have, (or want) access to a computer, it would be a mistake to discourage anyone from penning their memories for posterity. Surely the opposite should be the case, and an all-out effort should be made by widespread publicity, to harvest as many memories as possible?

At the moment there are many Ex-pats around the world who originated in the East End, but in perhaps ten years from now there will be nothing left but Blue Plaques on walls!

Perhaps this is a point to be raised at your next meeting?

Reply from the Editor:

I read your letter with great interest, Bill, and I decided that I would respond to the points you raised, so that all our members would be able

to discuss this, not just the committee of the ELHS.

We make every effort to publish material sent in by our members and look forward to every contribution sent in. Over past few years we have had our regulars, and are very grateful to them for entertaining and enlightening us on a variety of topics.

Philip Mernick and I have been editing and typesetting the ELHS Newsletter for some years now, with the assistance of the other committee members, myself having originally taken on the task over 20 years ago, as one of the few with typing skills and computer knowhow. I have typed out dozens of handwritten manuscripts, over the years, as well as two or three contributions sent in via tapes. This has been a labour of love, and I am quite happy to continue doing so for as long as I am able, notwithstanding the creeping arthritis starting to afflict my fingers! I am currently awaiting an operation on my right wrist to relieve the carpal tunnel syndrome that has slowed down my work recently. Having just celebrated my 72nd Birthday I think I most definitely qualify as a Senior Citizen, as do the majority of our committee members!

So, really, the request to email your manuscripts is a plea from the editorial team to help lighten our load by providing material which can be easily slotted into the newsletter. The intention was not to deter members from contributing, quite the reverse. I note that your article was printed out from a computer, and consists of 8 pages! It would take me a few minutes to insert it into the newsletter template, were it sent via email.

Regrettably, I am unable to complete this task for this newsletter, and it will have to be held over. I do hope you understand and I am sorry for this, as it is a very interesting read and I am sure many of our members would enjoy reading it.

Rosemary Taylor

From Philip Mernick's Email Inbox:

From Paul Smith:

Subject: The Woodman Pub

With my sister, we are trying to find information on the Woodman pub that was situated on St. Leonards St. around the Four Mills bridge on the west side of the road. We are both born in the old St Andrews hospital by Bromley station and lived both in Spey and Teviot streets. We have memories and photos of the after-war period when parties that started in the pub finished with a couple of crates of brown ale back at the house. We know that the Woodman was situated roughly a hundred yards from the Cherry Tree pub on the old Brunswick road and must be buried today under the Tunnel approach road but cannot find a single mention anywhere on the 'web, whether that be on "deadpubs.org.uk" or elsewhere. Unfortunately of course all parents and family that had this knowledge have now passed on and you are practically our last hope for a photo or article or some memory of the Woodman. Thanking you in advance for any information that you may have.

Philip replied:

The Woodman was at 148 St Leonards Street but was only listed under that name after the war, before that it was just listed as Beer Retailer. Presumably that is why "DeadPubs" has missed it. It was still a Beer Retailer in 1948 but The Woodman in 1968 and gone (under the motorway as you say) by 1978. These are all the directories I have to hand, more information could be obtained from Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives. They might have a picture of the Woodman itself as local authorities often photograph areas that are about to be cleared. I have copied them in in the hope they may be able to help.

From George Donovan:

Subject: Albert Terrace

Can you help me with this one-----

Can't seem to find ALBERT TERRACE in Poplar around the years of 1920--1930. Any idea of it's location.

Philip replied:

Albert Terrace seems to have been a popular name in Poplar and Mike Elliston's topography lists the following!

- 1) Albert Terrace renumbered into Alpha Road (now Grove), 1895
- 2) Albert Terrace, Bow Lane, renumbered into Catherine Street, 1869, renamed Ida Street, 1876
- 3) Albert Terrace, High Street Bow, ran between Bow Road and Bromley High Street until 1940s, now the path between Canterbury and Baxter Houses on Bow Bridge Estate
- 4) Albert Terrace, renumbered into Ropemakers Fields, 1882
- 5) Albert Terrace, renumbered into St Leonard's Road, 1867
- 6) Albert Terrace, renumbered into East Ferry Road, 1887

Do any of these fit?

George responded:

Thanks for that info---number 3 is the one that seems to fit the bill. regards George.

From Gary Sawyer:

Re: 17th Poplar And Stepney Rifles Brigade

I wonder if you can help, I'm trying to find out anything I can about my grandfather's old brigade. I have War Diaries for the 17th and have read Mr Wilcox's book, I've also tried to find any remnants of the memorial that used to live in the church in Tredegar Road but haven't found it yet.

Do you have anything on the Poplar And Stepney Rifles? Would I be able to come over and see it?

Also, apparently, there was a report in the local papers after the war about him being a 'Work shy Soldier", would I have any chance in finding that article, if it existed?

Philip wrote:

Dear Gary, the book was entirely the work of Ron Wilcox and I have no further information on the regiment. St Stephens Church in Tredegar Road was destroyed in World War 2 and I don't think anything was recovered. Its old community Hall still survives (William Place E3 5ED) and the parish was merged with St Pauls Church (St Stevens Road) so that's where to look if anything did. Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives has copies of local newspapers but you would need to know in which one the report appeared and roughly when.

Gary Sawyer responded:

Many thanks for your help, I did try St. Paul's but they didn't have much of an idea where the plaque

may have gone or even if it had been saved. Completely understand about the newspaper and I haven't a clue!

Maybe the Community Hall would be a lead to follow. Thanks again.

From Gordon Lawson:

Subject: Louis Davis

I am preparing a listing of this stained glass artist's work. In 1909 Davis worked on a two-light window for St Hilda's Oratory in Bethnal Green. I wonder whether your society has any record of this building, which I suspect no longer exists, certainly as an Oratory, and, if the building survives whether the stained glass window is still there.

Philip Mernick replied:

St Hilda's is still going strong, although I am afraid I don't know if the stained glass window survived the blitz. I suggest you try to contact them.
<http://sthildaseastmemories.wordpress.com/>

Gordon: Brilliant! I shall contact St Hilda's. Very grateful.

From: Tony Simon

Subject: Flower & Dean Street Rookery

I wonder if you can help me with some research. I am a mature history student at the University of Westminster. I am doing a module on Victorian London. I am preparing a presentation on Flower & Dean street rookery but it has been quite difficult to gather information. If you have anything in your records that is available, it would be most appreciated. I could also visit you if you think that best.

From Philip Mernick:

I am afraid I know little of Flower & Dean Street beyond the bad press it received from sensationalist journalists of the 19th century such as James Greenwood and its proximity to the Jack the Ripper murders. The best place for your researches would be Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives in Bancroft Road, Mile End.

From: Pat Yates

Subject: shadwell/ratcliff records

I am trying to trace back from an 1811 commercial directory for John Murray Fishmonger of 47 Broad

Street Ratcliff. I understand that Ratcliffe was classed as Stepney at the time. Could you advise which office I can apply to or visit to discover possible tax records or any other information about him?

Philip Mernick responded:

There were two Broad Streets in the area. One ran from Ratcliff Highway towards Wapping and was in the parish of St George's in the East and the other was in Ratcliff itself, and was the continuation east of Shadwell High Street. Stepney at the time only existed as a parish, the county being Middlesex. Ratcliff was split between Limehouse and Stepney parishes but I think Broad Street was in Stepney. Surviving records could be in Tower Hamlets Local history Library or in London Metropolitan Archives.

From: John Clothier

Subject: Mile End

I am a member of the ELHS, principally as a result of the previous 3 generations of my family living in various parts of Stepney and Mile End, whilst I was born just up the road in Stratford. My father Ron, was born at No 1 Woodison Street as was his mother before him, but as you know all that is left of the road is a cul de sac, all buildings having made way for the park etc. Ron is still with us but suffers from Alzheimers and all he can recollect are his early days in Mile End. He was educated at Single Street, worked with the Milkman's horses from Bow Common lane, and caught typhoid from the canal!. His grandparents lived at 64 Bloomfield Road. My weekly visits center on discussions of his childhood and to that end I have been searching for some time now for photos of Woodison Street, Canal Road, Silas Sreet and Bow Common Lane at it's top end. The old library in Bancroft Road has some interesting pictures of the canal but nothing on the roads that formed dad's daily routine. I have plenty of photos of the back garden but that is it, I regret. Do you know of any collections that may help or indeed, other historians who might be in a position to help. I am trying desperately to help Ron cling onto his memories and do hope you do not mind my writing to you.

Philip replied:

I am afraid that area had no grand buildings and didn't attract much attention. In fact it went from empty space to densely packed and back to empty in the space of about 100 years. All I can suggest is

our book *The East End I Knew* by Alan Young which has many pictures taken in the early 1950s around the Mile End area. Also Ben Thomas's *My Limehouse* which may still be available from The Ragged School Museum – he lived a little further down Burdett Road.

You should be able to look at copies of both books in Bancroft Road and they should have some copies of the Alan Young book available for sale. If not I can definitely supply.

(Philip supplied a copy of *The East End I Knew* and the Ragged School supplied a copy of Ben Thomas's book.)



Interior of Bromley Church 1909.

Book Reviews

The City of London and Tower Hamlets Cemetery – 1841 -2011 .Published by the Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, Celebrating 21 years, 1990 -2011. Price £2.99

This booklet has been produced by Diane and Doreen Kendall on behalf of The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park. It features contributions from Sigrid Werner, Terry Lyle, Stewart Rayment and Ken Greenway.

The first part of the booklet features the history of the cemetery, which has been meticulously researched by Diane Kendall, with the help of Joyce Cracknell. Diane was able to draw upon information from the booklet *Every Stone Tells a Story*, published several years ago by Rosemary Taylor.

Stewart Rayment gives a graphic account of the setting up of the Friends, and their activities over the years, while Terry Lyle's account of the flora and fauna to be found in the cemetery, and the progress made with nature conservation is quite fascinating. Sigrid Werner's gives a detailed account of the workings of the Soanes Centre and Setpoint. Ken's offers a very personal account of his work with the Friends and his role as Liaison Officer.

The booklet concludes with hints and advice for those researching ancestors known to be buried in the cemetery. There is truly something here for everyone, and Diane is to be congratulated in her sterling efforts to get this publication together, and printed.

My only quibble is that the font sizes used make for difficult reading, and at times I had to resort to my trusty magnifier to read the text. But it was well worth it!

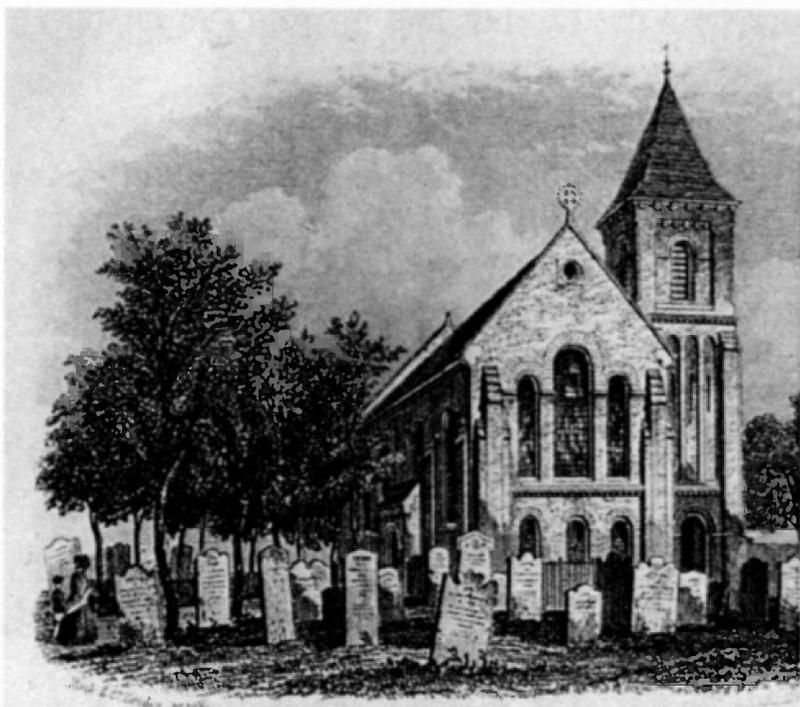
Rosemary Taylor

TRAVELS IN TANDEM The Writing of Women and Men Who Travelled Together
 By Susanna Hoe. Published by HOLO BOOKS: The Women's History Press, Clarendon House, 52 Cornmarket, Oxford OX2 6JD Pbk. ISBN: 978-0-9544056-9-4 GBP 19.99 holobooks@yahoo.co.uk www.holobooks.co.uk

Lucy Atkinson, born in Stepney and buried in Tower Hamlets Cemetery and her husband Thomas Atkinson are the subject of the first chapter in the book. Both wrote of their travel experiences, but their accounts differ considerably. You can read a brief account of Lucy and Thomas Atkinson's life together and their travels in this newsletter.

Susanna was once asked, 'Do women write with more immediacy, with more colour, more empathy and more attention to detail?' Using extensive quotations, the author pursues those and other questions through the relations and accounts of couples visiting or living in foreign places, from Liberia to Siberia, from Vanuatu to Chinese Turkestan, between 1664 and 1973. With 10 maps and 34 illustrations. I am certain this book will form a valuable addition to women's history publications.

Rosemary Taylor



Bromley Church after 1843

Titanic

15th April 2012 marks the 100th anniversary of the tragedy of the SS Titanic, the great passenger liner which sank on her maiden voyage, after having struck an iceberg off the coast of Newfoundland..

Whilst this tragic event is being commemorated in a variety of ways, TV documentaries and re-enactments, and exhibitions etc., we thought it appropriate to reproduce a summary of the article compiled on the occasion of the release of the movie **Titanic**. Doreen Kendall has also supplied information on two local men who were victims of that disaster, and who are remembered on a memorial in the Church of St Mary Magdalene in High Street South, East Ham.

Edward Henry Bagley and Edward James William Rogers, cousins, were crew members on that fateful voyage, and were among the 1513 passengers and crew who perished in the early hours of 15th April 1912.

Edward James William Rogers was born on 9th September 1880, to Robert James Rogers and his wife Priscilla Susan (nee Bagley). His father was a bricklayer and the family lived at 3 Robert Street, North Woolwich. Edward JW was baptized on 3rd November at St John the Evangelist, North Woolwich. He was one of at least 8 children born to the couple over the years, the others being Alice, Harriet, Nellie, Robert, Lily, Arthur, and Walter. By the 1881 census, the family lived at 3 Elizabeth Terrace. In 1891, they lived at 18 Robert Street, North Woolwich. Edward JW went to school in the area. By the 1901 census, Edward JW had left the area and was living in Bootle, Lancashire. He worked as a ship's storekeeper, and married on the 30th June 1901 to Elizabeth Matthews while living at 22 Kenilworth Street, Bootle. They had three children together. The family moved to Southampton in 1906 where he went to work on the SS Olympic, sister ship to the Titanic.

Edward Rogers' body was recovered from the sinking ship by a rescue boat. Wearing his uniform of a first-class steward, he was identified by his effects, and the butterfly tattoo on his right arm. He was buried in Nova Scotia, Canada on 8th May 1912.

Edward Henry Bagley was born to Edward Bagley and his wife Lucy Bagley (nee Longhurst) on the 4th March 1879. The family lived at 17 Wightman Street, Plaistow, London. His father worked as a labourer at a soap works, and by the time of the boy's baptism on the 29th October at St John the Evangelist Church, the family moved to 15 York Street, North Woolwich. Following the deaths of his parents, Edward lived with his grandmother and worked as a labourer. He then went to live with his aunt Priscilla Susannah Rogers and her family at 11 Southchurch Gardens, East Ham.

Edward Henry married local girl Edith Lily Inward at St Bartholomew's Church, East Ham on the 22nd August 1909, . His occupation was given as a ship's bedroom steward. They had at least one child, a daughter Gladys in early 1910. His body, if recovered, was never identified.

Also among those who lost their lives that night were 15 men, most of them stewards, and a stewardess, all from the East End.

Another victim was the journalist, W T Stead who campaigned against child prostitution in the East End and helped to publicise the Bryant and Mays Matchgirls Strike. The Revd Ernest Carter, vicar at St Jude's Whitechapel and his wife Lilian were 2nd class passengers, having embarked on the holiday of a lifetime. It is known that they refused to take their places in the lifeboats, so that others could be saved.

Our report on the Titanic and its East End connections was published in the Spring 1998 edition of the newsletter.

THE "WICK" **A Postscript from Roy Hayes**

Space prevented me from expanding on some of the items in my article in the previous Newsletter and I am grateful to the Editor for adding the pictures of A.F. Suter's Victory Works, at the corner of the Red Path, and of Eton Mission.

I had referred to the Eton Mission Men's Club which included an excellent Boxing Club with Trainer, Jerry Driscoll. In Vol.2, issue 13, I gave details of the Olympic, Gold Medal, performance of Fred Grace, from the Club, in 1908. He had a long career in amateur boxing during which, as can be seen from the photograph, he acquired a large number of trophies.

The Club also ran a football team, well known for its Easter tours. In more recent times, the 'Mission' was known as a centre for motor-cycle activity when the Revd. Bill Shergold (1919-2009), Vicar from 1959 until 1964, boosted the profile of the '59' Club, started by Curate John Oates and opened by Cliff Richard. At its peak the Club attracted more than 4,000 members, with Shergold on his Triumph machine along with the Reverend Mother and some Nuns from a nearby priory - also on their motor-bikes.

One bus service I omitted was the double-decker, No.178, plying between Clapton Pond and Maryland Point, mainly serving the factories along Carpenters Road. The vehicles previously had been on one of the country routes and were designed to clear the low bridges often encountered. Upstairs the aisle, on the right hand side, was 'dropped' to accommodate the lower roof, with rows of 'four-person' seats. That meant the one near the window had to give plenty of warning to get off or their stop would be missed.

Law and Order were not far away; there was a Police Section House in Wick Road, with its own cells where miscreants were sobered up,

probably to appear, next day, before the Magistrates. When the police vacated the building it remained empty for some time and was, eventually, converted to domestic accommodation.

During the War, in addition to the police, parts of the Wick were prepared against enemy assault. On the corner of Lea Conservancy Road and Eastway, just after the approach to the canal bridge, opposite Baker's Dining Room, the tenants of the end terrace house lost the use of their basement when, with lots of reinforced concrete, it was converted into a machine-gun post, presumably to defend the bridge. Tank-traps, in the form of large concrete blocks and angled pieces of railway line, were also located in strategic parts of the bridge approach, some of the blocks being within a foot, or so, of the houses. The iron railings were taken away from the very narrow front 'gardens', never to return.

The corner shop, which opened my previous piece, closed during the War and, after being empty for a while, was re-opened as a sub-Post Office, run by the Dwyer family who had a similar establishment in Wick Road.

Among other businesses, that I have not mentioned so far, there were at least three Off-Licences. They usually sold two or three types of ale and stout on draught, from the pumps, plus bottled beers such as Brown Ale, India Pale Ale, and Guinness, with Milk Stout also very popular (among the ladies). Soft Drinks, such as Lemonade and Cream Soda, usually came from R. White or Western. Sundry items might have included Crisps (*Smiths* with the salt in a blue paper twist), Arrowroot Biscuits and Cheese Biscuits, but certainly not the vast range the equivalent shops carry now. Simmonds was in Berkshire Road, near the junction with the curved part of Plover Street; Reader's in Prince Edward Road; and another in Osborne Road. The latter was close to Yude's, another Fish and Chip shop I omitted from the previous count.

In 1935 there was a General Election in mid-November, called by Stanley Baldwin. The youngsters of the Wick demonstrated their political skills, chanting "Vote, vote, for Herbert Morrison", although I doubt if any of us knew who he was, or his opponent, Marjorie Dawe, either. There was an overall, landslide, victory for the Conservatives but Morrison was successful in winning, for Labour, the South Hackney seat (which included the Wick), where he had been Member on two previous occasions, in 1923/24 and 1929/31. From 1935 he remained until the post-war election of 1945, when he transferred to Lewisham.

The Wick was no stranger to distinguished guests, in addition to Cliff Richard, mentioned above, and King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, who, as described in one of my earlier articles, performed the opening ceremony for the Public Baths in the late 1930s. That king's mother, Queen Mary, visited Eton Mission in 1930 or 1931 and met mothers and their offspring who attended the baby clinic. Much earlier, in 1913, Field Marshall the Lord Roberts, V.C., had been in Riseholme Street, to open the new premises for Eton Manor, of which he became the first President. Not long after the opening, the Great War was to claim the lives of twenty-one managers or members from over 200 who served. By WW2 the membership had grown and over 600 joined up, about sixty never to return.



Fred Grace

For the sake of 4d - Mary Ann Nichols

Mary Ann 'Polly' Nichols wrote in April 1888 the following letter to her Father after gaining a position as a domestic servant. Her relief of being out of the workhouse system and her hope for a fresh start is clear, 'I just write to say you will be glad to know that I am settled in my new place, and going on all right up to now. My people went out yesterday, and have not returned, so I am left in charge. It is a grand place inside, with trees and gardens back and front. All has been newly done up. They are teetotallers, and religious, so I ought to get on. They are very nice people, and I have not too much to do. I hope you are all right and the boy has work. So goodbye for the present. From yours truly, Polly

Answer soon, please, and let me know how you are.'

Her new employers were Samuel and Sarah Cowdry who resided at 'Ingleside' Rose Hill Road, Wandsworth. It is probable that the workhouse she resided in at the time, Lambeth Workhouse (where incidentally Charlie Chaplin aged seven, his brother and mother would go to in 1895) helped her gain this position as it was common practise for female inmates of workhouses to be found employment. 'Polly' needed help, her drinking had destroyed her life. She was the mother of five children. Her marriage to William Nichols, a printer, in 1864 had lasted fifteen years and produced Edward, Percy, Alice, Eliza and Henry. The marriage was a turbulent one and interrupted by splits and reconciliations. These were in the main caused by her ever worsening drinking and William Nichol's infidelity. They finally split in 1880.

After the final separation. William kept the children and paid Mary five shillings a week. By 1882 William had established that Mary had started selling the only thing she had to sale, herself, and he stopped the payments.

Mary's life from 1880 onwards was spent mostly in workhouses. She managed to escape them for a few years by living with a blacksmith, Thomas Dew, from 1883 – 1887 and when seen at a family funeral at this time it was remarked that she was respectfully dressed. By the end of October 1887 she was however back in the workhouse system. It was recorded that on the 2 December 1887 Mary was caught sleeping rough out in the open in Trafalgar Square, she was subsequently examined and sent to Lambeth workhouse as she had no means of sustenance and was poverty stricken.

Mary's Father replied to the letter of April 1888 but received no reply. He was later to learn that Mary had left her employment stealing clothing, worth £3. 10s perhaps to sell quickly to buy alcohol or possibly to enhance her appearance in the hope of attracting more up-market clients. Mary was 42 but looked younger, five foot two inches tall with greying hair. A mark on her forehead was a scar from an accident in her childhood. Her friends thought she was a very clean woman, always keeping herself clean despite her circumstances, and kept herself to herself. On the night of 30th August 1888, this mother of five, found herself thrown out onto the rain soaked streets of Whitechapel from her lodging house in Thrawl Street with a storm brewing in the distance and a red glow in the sky caused by a fire in the London docks as she did not have the four pence to pay for her bed. Four pence in 2011 is the equivalent of one pound.

Mary was not too troubled by these circumstances and thought that she would 'earn' her doss money with no trouble. She had a new black bonnet that she was proud of and thought this would pull in the clients. Her optimism seems to have been well founded as she was next seen at 2.30am in the morning of the 31st August by her friend Mrs Emily Holland at the corner of Osborn Street and Whitechapel Road. She was leaning against the wall keeping herself upright and was very

drunk. Mrs Holland tried to persuade her friend to come home but Mary refused, 'I've had my lodging money three times today and I've spent it. It won't be long before I'm back'.

However Mary would never be back. At 3.40am on the 31st August 1888 Charles Cross, a Carman, was walking to work along Buck's Row. As he told the inquest later, 'I could not tell in the dark what it was at first, it looked to me like a tarpaulin sheet, but stepping into the road, I saw it was the body of a woman'. This woman would later be identified by the means of a Lambeth Workhouse stencil mark on her petticoat as Mary Ann 'Polly' Nichols. The level of violence inflicted on Mary is sickening. The *East London Advertiser* on the 1 September 1888 reported the savage attack in all too graphic detail,

'The brutality of the murder is beyond conception and beyond description. The throat is cut in two gashes, the instrument, having been a sharp one, but used in a most ferocious and reckless way. There is a gash under the left ear, reaching nearly to the centre of the throat. Along half its length, however, it is accompanied by another one which reaches around the other ear, making a wide and horrible hole, and nearly severing the head from the body'.

The *East London Observer* continued the detailed description of the violence, 'the expression on the face was a deeply painful one and was evidently the result of an agonising death. . . The hands were still tightly clenched. The lower portion of the body, however, presented the most sickening spectacle of all. Commencing from the lower portion of the abdomen, a terrible gash extended nearly as far as the diaphragm – a gash from which the bowels protruded. . .'. The pain and terror that Mary was subjected too is evident in this description. This description is even more horrific when it is accompanied by the fact that Mary was

probably still alive when found (Cross and a fellow Carman, Robert Paul, whom he called over when he found the body thought she was faintly breathing) but died a few minutes before being found by a police officer PC Neil during his routine patrol. Whomever had killed Mary had probably been disturbed by Cross as he walked down Buck's Row.

At the mortuary an inventory of her possessions was taken. To show for being alive for 43 years, a marriage that produced five children Mary's worldly goods were as follows, black straw bonnet trimmed with black velvet, reddish brown Ulster coat, brown linsey frock dress, white flannel chest cloth, black ribbed woollen stockings, two petticoats, brown stays, flannel drawers, Men's elastic (spring) sided boots. As well as this clothing Mary owned, a comb, a white pocket handkerchief and a broken piece of mirror.

On the afternoon of the 6 September 1888 Mary Ann 'Polly' Nichols was interred in the City of London Cemetery. She was buried in a polished elm coffin which bore the simple engraved plaque, 'Mary Ann Nichols, aged 42, died August 31, 1888'. In attendance at the funeral were her Father, Edward Walker, William Nichols and two of her children. Crowds flocked to look at the coffin when the hearse was stopped in Hanbury Street but police stopped them. Houses in the local area draw their blinds as a mark of respect. Mary's murder attracted much attention by press and public alike due to the viciousness of the murder following the killing of Martha Tabram at the beginning of August 1888.

'High-Rip' gangs were known to operate in the area extorting money from prostitutes and four months before Mary's demise an Emma Smith had been gang raped and then robbed. This however had only attracted a sentence or so in the local press. Two days after the funeral of Mary another prostitute was viciously killed. Annie Chapman was found murdered on the 8 September 1888. Three more would follow, Elizabeth Stride 30 September 1888, Catherine

Eddows 30 September 1888 and Mary Kelly 9 November 1888. Today of course these four victims along with Mary are seen as the canonical victims of the Whitechapel murderer. These murders have generated a whole industry which is built on the blood of these women. Countless books, plays, websites, films, comic books, walking tours, even a musical, have been produced on the subject. More than seventy people have been accused at one time or another of being the main suspect. It seems for many to be a game. All of these however seem to forget one important factor, the women themselves.

The Whitechapel murders did not take place in foggy gas lit streets in the 'cor-blimey' East End as is often depicted in film, and enforced via many of the walks that take place in the locality today, that in many cases seem to thrill at the thought of standing in the place where a pool of blood, or worse, was once spilled.

These were real vicious killings, involving real blood, real violence and all-too-real terror on the part of the helpless women involved who had been driven onto the streets by circumstance. This examination of Mary's life is a small tribute to women who have suffered violence in the past, in the present and sadly in the future also. May 'Polly', Annie, Elizabeth, Catherine and Mary rest in peace.

GJ Haines

Gary Haines is the author of two books, *Britain in Old Photographs: Bow and Bromley-by-Bow* and *Images of London: Bethnal Green*. By profession he is an archivist beginning as a volunteer with Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archive and then moving to the Mercers' Company and is now archivist of the Whitechapel Gallery. He is currently working on two publications, *East End People and Places* from which this piece originates and also an investigation into the real lives of the women who were killed in 1888 titled *Left for Dead: the women victims of the Whitechapel murders*.

LUCY ATKINSON – OF STEPNEY AND SIBERIA

What is the link between Tower Hamlets Cemetery, St Dunstan's Church, Stepney, and Siberia? Lucy Atkinson's *Recollections of Tartar Steppes and their Inhabitants* (1863;1972) tells us only about her travels in Siberia on horseback between 1848 and 1853, and in her preface she only hints at how she came to be in Russia at all:

Being one of a large family it became my duty at an early period of life to seek support by my own exertion. I accordingly took myself to St Petersburg, where for eight years I remained in the family of General Mouravioff, superintending the education of his only daughter.

Lucy was born Lucy Sherrard Finley in Sunderland to Matthew Finley and Mary Ann Finley (née York). She was the fourth of their 10 children and the eldest daughter. Matthew Finley, born in Monkwearmouth, Sunderland, was a school teacher. Mary Ann Finley was from Stepney and they had married at St Dunstan's there in 1810. Mary Ann's father was a perfumer; Matthew's family background is unclear. It is to the East End that they returned between 1824 and 1826. Perhaps the move had something to do with finances for there is evidence that in 1831 Matthew Finley was an insolvent debtor. And what connection is there that in 1837 Matthew and Mary Ann Finley registered the births of eight of their children, including Lucy, in the Protestant Dissenters Registry?

Lucy left for St Petersburg soon after that. In 1846 she met there Thomas Witlam Atkinson (1799-1861). He was of humble origins from Yorkshire but had trained himself to become an architect and artist and established a practice in London where he too had problems with debt, even serving time in a debtors' prison. But he extricated himself and his arrival in Russia, and the travels in Siberia on which he embarked, seem to have been with the blessing of Tsar Nicholas I.

Thomas broke off his journey to marry Lucy in Moscow on 17 February 1848. Three days later he set off again, taking her with him. They were to explore Siberia together over five years – the first English travellers to visit the area and write about it. But in the two books that made him famous –

Oriental and Western Siberia (1858; 1970) and *Travels in the Regions of the Upper and Lower Amoor* (1860; 1971) – Thomas not only fails to mention Lucy's name but he does not even hint at her presence. Describing his departure from Moscow he does not have Lucy beside him on the sledge but a dog.

Does that suggest how he thought of her? Not if one reads her account. She never criticises his treatment of her in her letters though, in her published introduction to them, she does write of his books:

There is no allusion in them to the adventures we encountered during those journeys, and, especially, there is no mention of the strange incidents that befell myself, often left alone with an infant in arms, among a semi-savage people, to whom I was a perfect stranger (pv)

I have compared the accounts of their travels in *Travels in Tandem: The Writing of Women and Men Who Travelled Together*. Typical of the contrasts are passages from each account that occur at the beginning of their life together; Lucy writes:

On arriving at the ancient town of Nijni Novogorod, I was pleased to find that we should pass the night there, as I had a great desire to see this place. We drove to an hotel in the lower town, dirty in the extreme, and were taken into a small room. I was horrified at finding that everything must be taken out of the sledge. I asked whether it would not be better to proceed at once. Such could not be, Mr Atkinson having promised to call on Prince Ourousoff, the governor of the town. After partaking of some refreshment, I gladly spread the bear-skins, and stretched my limbs, which felt a little stiff. (p8)

And Thomas's version:

Having a letter to the governor, Prince Ourousoff, I determined to stay a few hours and deliver it, also to stroll through this ancient city, ... Entering the lower town I was taken to a sort of inn on the banks of the Volga; but as my stay was to be short it mattered little what accommodation it afforded. All those travellers who expect to find a Russian host very attentive to his guest will be disappointed. My postillion led the way upstairs, and showed me a whole flat of pens or private boxes in a filthy

condition, and with very little furniture; these were formed by dividing large rooms with inch and a half boards. My luggage was brought upstairs, as it could not be left with safety in the sledge. After a wash my man succeeded in getting (with some difficulty) breakfast. Having dispatched this meal I got into a sledge and paid my visit to the governor, who received me with much kindness, and insisted on my dining with him. ... Having spent a few pleasant hours, I returned to my dirty room, intending to get, if possible, a good night's rest, and start at daylight. At this place they provided neither bed, mattress, pillows, nor sheets; a bedstead there was with a boarded bottom on it. I rolled myself up in my fur and prepared to sleep. (pp19/20)

The brevity and lack of colour in Lucy's account - normally bouncy and full of detail - tells the reader everything about her memories of that sordid inn and suggests much about their relationship, at least at that stage. From Thomas's account one supposes that the squalidness of the place enhanced his feelings of stoicism.

It would be a pity to suggest that that incident epitomises Lucy's reactions more generally to their explorations; they were certainly gruelling and another passage from Lucy about the end of a particular stage of their journey and the remarks of their Cossack guide suggests how well she managed:

... with a look of pity, 'You must be very tired.' I said 'No, indeed I am not.' 'Well,' said he with astonishment, 'We are men and accustomed to riding, and you are not; there is not another lady could have done as you have done. And now that the journey is over, I have often wondered how you could go through all you have gone through.' This was sincere praise, and I can assure you I felt not a little proud to have merited it. (pp83/4)

And there was rather more to her stoicism than that praise suggests. A little later in that letter Lucy writes, 'I began this in October, and it is now the 14th November; you will naturally wonder what has prevented my finishing it; I am going to tell you. (p105) And so she does:

You must understand that I was in expectation of a little stranger, whom I thought might arrive about the end of December or the beginning of January; expecting to return to civilisation, I had not thought

of preparing anything for him, when, lo! and behold, on the 4th November ... he made his appearance. The young doctor here said he would not live more than seven days, but, thank Heaven, he is still alive and well ... the doctor says the premature birth was caused by excessive exercise on horseback.

If her son Alatau was due at the end of December, he was conceived at the beginning of April when they were already on the road. For the next seven months - he was two months premature - the journey was hardly one that a Victorian wife might have expected to undertake; even an early twenty-first century one, who might go to the office full time until the day before delivery, might have balked at it. Yet Thomas, if he suggested returning to Moscow or St Petersburg or even settling in Barnoul during Lucy's pregnancy, was turned down by this woman who, until then, had presumably led a rather sedentary life and who was having her first child far from family or competent doctors. She writes of the doctor available in Kopal, deep in the Southern Siberian mountains:

Doubtless, seeing I speak of the doctor; you imagine we have a competent one here. Far from it, he is but twenty-three years of age; theoretically he may be clever; practically certainly not. When my husband applied to him in my case, he declared he had not the slightest knowledge of anything of the kind. (p106)

Alatau Tamchiboulac Atkinson was the only baby born that winter in Kopal who survived.

Lucy's book is not all about herself; she writes in her preface:

My friends have so often importuned me to give them some account of what happened to me in countries where an English lady had never been seen before, and to describe the manners which characterise female society among the wild Kirghis, that I have bethought myself to collect some of the letters written on the spot to friends. (pvi)

She was true to her word but it is hardly plain description: she is not slow to add good strong comments that marry her own position with theirs. She describes how on one occasion her horse, Columbus, ran away with her, and when he had finally calmed down and their guide caught up with her; she writes:

... the man patted me on the back, and gave me to understand how proud he was of me; then he showed me what a Kirghis woman would have done under similar circumstances. First, he commenced screaming, and almost set my horse into another fright, and concluded by falling from his horse. He remounted, and again patted me with evident delight. ... On reaching our party, I received so many congratulations at my safe return, as also for my bravery, that I verily believe, if we had stopped longer in the steppe, a woman would not have been looked upon as such a contemptible being as they consider her to be; for the men now began to notice me, a thing they had scarcely deigned to do before. (p191)

On another page she writes of Alatau:

How lucky it is that he is a boy, and not a girl; the latter are most insignificant articles of barter. I am scarcely ever looked at excepting by the poor women, but the boy is somebody ... he is to be envied, lucky boy! Why was I not born a boy instead of a girl? - still, had it been so, I should not have been the fortunate mortal I am now - that is, the wife of my husband and the mother of my boy. But, I pray you, do not make them acquainted with my feelings; they are both capable of taking advantage of the knowledge you would impart. (p153)



'Lucy, Thomas and baby Alatau Atkinson with Chinese officials' from Recollections of Tartar Steppes

It is clear that Lucy kept up with Thomas every step of the way, in spite of her pregnancy and the encumbrance of an infant, and that they had a good relationship. So why did he fail to mention her in his narrative? Must it have been to emphasise that he had undertaken, alone, a long, hazardous and totally original journey - one that required great reserves of manly strength, stamina and courage? Or was there another reason? Did he fail to mention Lucy in his books because he was already married to someone else?

When he died in 1861, seven years after their return from Siberia - a time when they lived in London off the Old Brompton Road, while he wrote his books and basked in the acclaim which accompanied their publication - Lucy applied to the treasury for some money owed to her husband. It was then she discovered that the wife he had married in 1819, and whom he must have told her was dead (he is described as a widower in the register of marriages now in the Guildhall, London) was, in fact, alive. Rebecca (Rebekah) Atkinson had not heard of him for some years, until she was told by a friend of his death; thus she resurfaced. And it was then that Thomas and Lucy Atkinson's smart London friends such as Francis Galton confirmed that 'Atkinson had avoided bringing his wife (as we thought of her) to the forefront, and it had been remarked at the time of the publication of his book of travels that he made the scantiest references to her, and never used the word "wife."' Those 'scantiest references' are beyond detection.

This makes one look at Lucy and Thomas Atkinson's writing with new eyes. Lucy's account of their travels was published two years after his death and it proved a time-bomb to his reputation, for her simple and open account is an unspoken refutation of much that he claimed about his adventures in new areas; and the ethnographic information he collected in the far east of Siberia now seemed to be plagiarism from an earlier source.

Thomas's death could not fail to bring about a change in Lucy's circumstances. Following the discovery of his betrayal of her, of which she seems to have written nothing, Lucy published her book in 1863. But she was so short of money then, what

with her failure to receive the government money' owed to Thomas, that she had to draw on their connections for support. One of these, through her publishers, was the Literary Fund. Another fund, for their son Alatau's education, was set up by the Royal Geographical Society, probably at the instigation of its president, Sir Roderick Murchison. Galton and other friends contributed, enabling Lucy to send Alatau to Rugby. He later taught at Durham School, Murchison's old alma mater.

Francis Galton's last word on Lucy is that she returned to Russia. Of course she had contacts there, but that was hardly reason enough. A clue to what took her back lies in Alatau's 1906 obituary in Hawaii, where he had a successful career as a journalist and educationalist. It says that he visited Russia in 1867 as secretary to the Turko-Russia Boundary Commission. Did Lucy, then aged 50, accompany him for old times sake, and even to provide him with connections and to interpret for him?

In the years following Lucy's later visit to Russia, she may even have travelled elsewhere. Her mother, widowed in 1847, had emigrated to Australia with her three youngest children, and later been joined by four others. Alatau, his wife and seven children made their life in Hawaii, his elder son 'Jack', a lawyer, not only going into politics but, as Immigration Secretary, travelling to Russia to bring back much-needed Russian labourers for Hawaii's sugar plantations (an unsuccessful venture).

Unfortunately, neither the descendants of the emigration to Australia, nor those of Alatau, have any evidence that Lucy visited her family in either place, and she may well not have been able to afford it. I know from the family, though, that she sent a fabric length to each of Alatau's daughters for their first ball.

There is at least one other late sighting of Lucy. According to family history, she was 'housekeeper' to the family of Sergeant-at-Law Benjamin Coulson Robinson at 43 Mecklenburgh Square, Bloomsbury, London. The 1881 census has her there, together with Robinson's wife, Hannah (née White), and it calls Lucy a cousin. It seems likely, therefore, that a 'poor relation' was taken in, as would have been commonplace then. Certainly Robinson had given a substantial contribution to Alatau's 1860s school fund. But Robinson died in

1890. In the 1891 census, Lucy was listed with the family of another relative, Thomas Sampson, in Stepney.

Lucy died of bronchitis, aged 76, on 13 November 1893 at 45 Mecklenburgh Square. That much is certain, recorded on her death certificate; more speculative is the suggestion that the owner of that house was Edward J Conder, coffee roaster and dealer for the East India Company, who died two days later. Conder's mother was an Elizabeth Robinson. That is a common enough surname, but is it possible that Lucy moved next-door-but-one to another relative and that, in a final irony, she and Conder (aged 45) died in the Russian influenza pandemic that swept Western Europe from 1889-94?

Until recently, it was not known where Lucy was buried but, thanks to the determination of Atkinson researcher Sally Hayles, to whom I owe much, and the help of the Friends of the Tower Hamlets Cemetery, her grave has been discovered there. Its inscription is worn away but clear enough to identify; it seems to read:

*Sacred to the memory of
Lucy Sherrard Atkinson
Widow of
Thomas William [sic] Atkinson, FRGS, FGS
Born April 16th 1819
Died November 3rd 1893*

We know from a reliable source that, in fact, Lucy was born on 15 April 1817, and that she died on 13 November. Across the way from Lucy's grave – which cost 10 guineas and was paid for by Alatau, probably from Hawaii - is that of Benjamin Coulson Robinson. Matthew Finley's grave has not yet been found. The cemetery is divided into a Church of England section and that of Christians of other denominations, those of other faiths, and those of none. I suspect that Matthew, based on the evidence of his children in the Dissenters Registry, may be in the latter.

There are still questions to be answered. Thomas Weatherall Sampson in whose house in Stepney Lucy was at least staying the night of the 1891 census, was married to Robinson's sister Sarah. He was a ship-broker. The Robinsons' father, Thomas, was a master mariner and he, like Robinson, was baptised at St Dunstan's, well known for its long association with the sea, being responsible for

registration of British maritime births, marriages and deaths in the nineteenth century. Is there any connection – perhaps something to do with the sea - with Matthew Finley's birthplace, the port Monkwearmouth, Sunderland? Then there is Lucy's second name, Sherrard. In 1910, a descendant lived near a General Sherrard in Devon who was said to be a relative. Is there a connection with the William and Eleanor Sherrard buried in the Tower Hamlets Cemetery? Another descendant records that Coulson became a family second name – Benjamin Coulson Robinson's mother was Martha Morgan Coulson. All these names may be clues. Does a reader of this have some answers?

Susanna Hoe

About the Author:

Susanna Hoe, who has lived in both Papua New Guinea and Hong Kong with her husband Derek Roebuck, has written of her life in both places – *At Home in Paradise*, and *Watching the Flag Come Down*. They wrote together *The Taking of Hong Kong: Charles and Clara Elliot in China Waters*. Based in Oxford, she continues writing about women abroad. **Travels in Tandem**, *The Writing of Women and Men Who Travelled Together*, is her latest book, and feature among others, Thomas and Lucy Atkinson.

Spitalfields Life and The Gentle Author.

I can heartily recommend the Spitalfields life emails which you can sign up to receive daily by clicking on the link on the home page of the Spitalfields Life website at www.spitalfieldslife.com.

In 2009 the author who writes under the pseudonym The Gentle Author vowed to write at least 10,000 articles, which at the rate of one a day will take more than twenty seven years. Each article is well written and full of great pictures. They arrive every day but are short enough for even the busiest person to allocate enough time to read them. The Spitalfields Life book containing many of these articles was published very recently and is available for £20 from local bookshops and The Bishopsgate Institute.

Philip Mernick

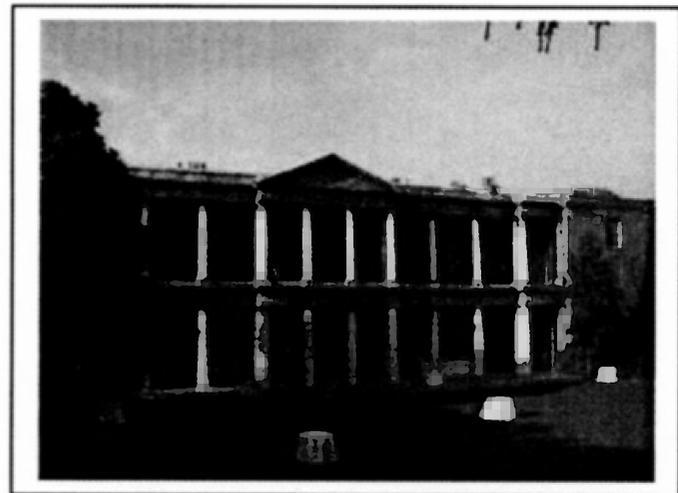


SPRING COACH TRIP

SUNDAY 6TH MAY 2012

WEST WYCOMBE PARK & WEST WYCOMBE

West Wycombe Park has not been visited by our group before & I have long wished to arrange a visit. On this particular date there is an air display as well as an exhibition of Windsor chairs.



The village is also well worth a visit, being owned by the National Trust. We will have time in the village before visiting the house & grounds when they open at 2.00.

The house has no catering but food is available at a number of places in the village.

Entrance is free for National Trust members: otherwise £7.50. Please say if you are a member on the form.

The coach fare will be £11.00 a person & the pick up at Mile End bus pull in, in Grove Road at 10.00. Please send the full amount of coach fare & entrance if you can when booking or if inconvenient, at least send the coach fare first & the entrance to arrive before the actual visit.

Please fill in the booking slip below and send to me, Ann Sansom, 18 Hawkdene, London E4 7PF. Tel. 020 8524 4506 for enquiries.

& -----

SPRING COACH TRIP
SUNDAY 6TH MAY 2012

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

NAME/S _____

ADDRESS _____

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

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

Nation Trust member YES / NO