

East London's unluckiest church?

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Editorial Note:

Philip Mernick, Chairman, Doreen Kendall, Secretary, Harold Mernick, Membership, David Behr, Programme, 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 assistance of Philip Mernick, and an editorial team comprising, Doreen Kendall, David Behr..



100 years ago. Wounded soldiers recuperating at the London Hospital, Whitechapel.

The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park

The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park are always seeking to augment their store of information on the burials in the cemetery, and any history related to the area.

If you have information or memorabilia you would like to share or allow the FTHCP to copy, please contact friendsthcp@yahoo.co.uk or contact Diane Kendall c/o The Soanes Centre Southern Grove London E3 4PX.

Join Doreen and Diane Kendall and assist in recording monumental inscriptions in Tower Hamlets Cemetery on the second Sunday of each month, from 2-4 pm.

All volunteers welcome.

Cover Picture

St Mary Matfelon church, Whitechapel, about 1870 from a carte-de-visite photograph by Elias Gottheil's studio at 120 Mile End Road. The original 14th century church became ruinous when it lost much of its congregation after the restoration of Charles II. It was demolished in 1673 and replaced by the structure illustrated. This was demolished in 1875 and replaced in gothic style in 1877. Three years later it burnt down due to workmen leaving a candle alight, inside the organ. It was replaced by another gothic building in 1882 and burned down yet again in December 1940 during the London Blitz. Cleared in 1952, its foundations can be seen in Altab Ali Park

East London History Society Lecture Programme

Thursday September 24

Wapping Stairs and River Walks

Ray Newton

**This meeting will be held at the
Stepney Community Centre, 2-8 Beaumont
Grove E1 (opposite Stepney Green station)**

Thursday October 22

East London Disasters

John Withington

Proceeded by short AGM at 7.15.

Thursday November 12

Gardens of the British Working Class

Margaret Willes

Thursday December 3

Find my past

Myco Clelland

Thursday January 14

*London's Rebel Footprints - the stories of
grassroots movements for change from the
1830s to the 1930s*

David Rosenberg

Thursday February 18

A Tour of Tower Hamlets in the 18th Century

Jane Cox

**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

ELHS Record and Newsletters. You can now download from our web site (no charge) PDFs of all issues of East London Record and all of the last three series of Newsletter (1992 to 2014). They can be found on our publications page together with indexes to aid selection. We have sold all hard copies of our Mile End and Wapping books but PDF copies can be supplied for £6 each – contact us for details. All of the PDFs can be searched for specific words. We also have older Newsletters (from 1962) scanned but the quality of printing means that the PDFs cannot be searched. If you have any Newsletters from the 1950s or 1960s please let us know, I am sure we are missing some issues.

Stop Press

From September to December, The Bishopsgate Institute will have a series of talks and walks featuring of Cries of London. There will also be an exhibition curated by The Gentle Author. (We hope that he will speak to ELHS on this subject during the final part of this lecture series).

For more information on the Bishopsgate Institute programme email them or look at their web site.

Notes and News

Whiffin's East End

Exhibition and events programme
20 August - 19 November 2015



Manchester Road, c1918

Exhibition Launch

Thursday 10 September, 6-7.30pm

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

All are welcome to attend the launch of our next exhibition which showcases a fantastic array of early-mid twentieth century photography, showing the East End as you have never seen it before.

William Whiffin (1878-1957) lived and worked in Poplar through two world wars. Pre-eminent in what today might be known as street photography, he captured daily life in the East End in the early- to mid-twentieth century, and his powerful, evocative, and sometimes playful images are among the finest photographic documentation of London's East End ever produced.

One of the earliest photographs on display in this exhibition depicts an airship looming over Cotton Street during the First World War; one of the latest depicts the Lansbury Estate, newly opened for the Festival of Britain in 1953. Elsewhere in Whiffin's work you will come across the Chinese

community of Limehouse, dock workers on strike, people thronging in local markets and at leisure in the art deco Poplar Baths, as well as shops, pubs and bomb sites, each image characterised by the photographer's expert eye for balance of composition.

We are delighted to be joined for the launch by Whiffin's grand-daughter, Hellen Martin, who has loaned memorabilia for display alongside the 40 photographs selected, and will give a brief talk sharing family memories and reflections.

A fantastic range of photography-related events accompanies the exhibition, which runs for four months from 20 August to 19 November - details of these are below. Pick up a leaflet in your local Idea Store or [click here for the listing on our website](#).

Introduction to Street Photography

Saturday 19 September, 1.00-4.30pm

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives and local area

Join [Michael Wayne Plant](#) for an introduction to street photography inspired by William Whiffin's work nearly one hundred years ago. Michael is a Sony Global Imaging Ambassador, a professional photographer and the Lead Photography Lecturer for Idea Store Learning. During the afternoon Michael will explain the basic principles of street photography - the art of capturing everyday life on the streets. He will give an introductory workshop followed by a photography walk in the local Stepney area, to practise some of the ideas explored in the workshop. Returning to the library for a group discussion afterwards to explore what you have learnt and to discuss the art of street photography.

The afternoon will be suitable for beginners, and will also give someone with more experience a chance to learn something as well. Bring your own camera. The walk will last approximately 90 minutes with stops. Please advise of any access needs when booking. Places are free but you must book your place in advance via localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk or 020 7364 1290.

Find out more about Idea Store Learning's photography courses [here](#).

Thursday 24 September, 6.00 - 7.30pm

Talk: The Life of William Whiffin

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Join historian David Webb for this fascinating talk on the life of William Whiffin, exploring early influences on his photography, in addition to his work for a number of commercial organisations, publications and Poplar Borough Council.

**East London Street Photography Photo Forum
Panel discussion**

Thursday 1 October, 6.30-8.30pm

Four Corners

Four Corners presents a Photo Forum discussion at their gallery space on Roman Road, Bethnal Green. Sarah Ainslie, Susan Andrews, David Hoffman and Ed Thompson discuss their differing approaches to street photography in East London, past and present. Free entry, refreshments provided.

Walk: Whiffin's Poplar

Saturday 3 October, 1.00-3.00pm

Meet outside All Saints DLR Station

Join Heritage Officer Perdita Jones on a guided walk around Poplar, the area depicted in many of William Whiffin's photographs. Focussing on East India Dock Road and the surrounding area, we will explore how Whiffin captured both extraordinary and everyday scenes through his work. Free, but booking required.

Email: localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk /

Telephone: 0207 364 1290. You may also be interested in Idea Store Learning's upcoming course [Walkie Talkie: Introduction to Guiding in Tower Hamlets.](#)

Saturday 17 October, 2.00-3.30pm

Talk: Early Photography Techniques

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Four Corners presents a talk on the early photography techniques used by Whiffin and his contemporaries and their reuse by contemporary photographers.

Antony Cairns will give an overview of Whiffin's glass plate techniques, and Almudena Romero discusses tintype, albumen and other early photographic processes, with reference to their own contemporary approaches.

Thursday 29 October, 6.-7.30pm

Talk: Photographers of the East End

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Join Mike Seaborne, former Curator of Photography at the Museum of London, for a fascinating talk on the work of Whiffin and his contemporaries, photographers who worked in the East End between 1900 and 1939. Included will be John Galt, Norah Smyth and Cyril Arapoff.

Thursday 5 November, 6-7.30pm

Talk: Chris Dorley-Brown: Revisiting Whiffin's East End

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Chris Dorley-Brown works in collaboration with artists, filmmakers, curators, groups and individuals in a variety of cultural contexts, primarily outside the art gallery. He has been building up a photographic archive of life in his home borough of Hackney for over ten years.

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives has invited Chris to revisit Whiffin's work, exploring sites and subjects depicted in our current exhibition, and to use his own contemporary photographic approach to capture and create a new archive of Whiffin's East End. In this talk, Chris will discuss and present the results of this project, which will be exhibited at Idea Store Whitechapel in mid-November. Watch this space for further details.

Tales from the Thames

An Oral History of the Thames Lightermen.

"Tales from the Thames" is an oral history project focussing on the Thames Lightermen and Watermen, the people who have operated the boats on the Thames with a history going back hundreds of years. The film was made by primary school children in London with digital:works and contains interviews with lots of lightermen as well as 8mm film shot by the lightermen themselves and original music. It is now available to watch online along with the full unedited interviews. The film can be viewed on-line at <http://www.thameslightermen.org.uk/index.html>

digital:works is an arts and educational charity that works with communities, providing training and creative assistance to produce arts and media projects – their web site is <http://www.digital-works.co.uk/>

Newham should have a museum

So says Kevin Jenkins O.B.E., life president of East London charity Community Links. He writes in an article published by Newham Recorder.

‘It has a long and proud heritage but I fear that there is a real danger of this being lost to today’s and future generations of those living in Newham.

Although there are a number of quality heritage initiatives locally, they are usually focused on specific buildings, artefact or collection. Sadly, since the council closed the Passmore Edwards Museum in the eighties, Newham has no overall Newham museum.

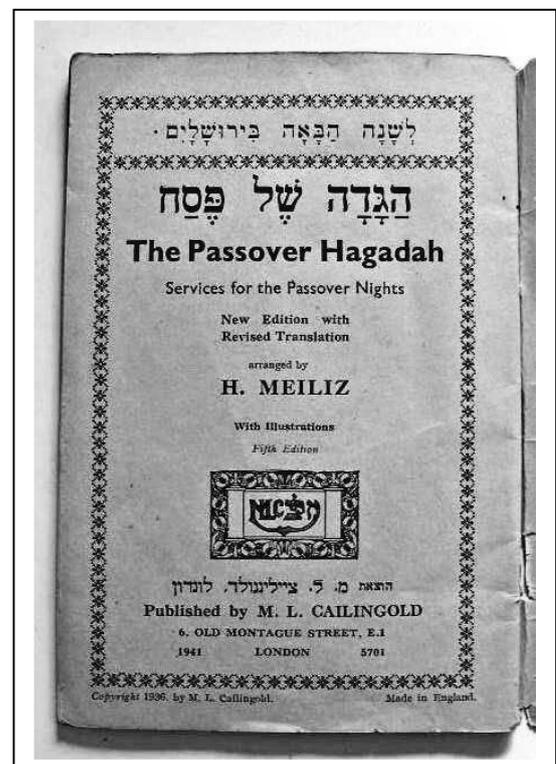
Spread around the borough are artefacts, archives and collections including many of the original exhibits from the Passmore Edwards museum and the Recorder archive. Sadly although well looked after, they are usually in buildings with little or no public access. What Newham needs is a modern interactive hands-on museum at is both an education and leisure resource that brings the past alive so that future generations can continue to celebrate, enjoy and learn lessons from Newham’s past.

Regardless of the current austere times Newham will be experiencing the greatest ever period of change in its history over the next 20 years. It has never been more important to protect and share our past. The value of such a facility to Newham’s future will far outweigh the initial costs of establishing the facility. Given the levels of private and public investment into Newham over the next 20 years surely the money can be found to give Newham the museum its history deserves.’

Remembering East End Jewish Bookshops

Of all the bookshops serving the Jewish population of the East End, by the nineteen-sixties only a handful remained. Of those, two in particular were remarkable to me – Cailingold in Old Montague St and Shapiro, Vallentine in Wentworth St.

‘M. L. Cailingold’ was owned by Moshe Leib Cailingold who came from a bookselling family in Warsaw and died in 1967. He arrived in England in 1920 to establish a branch of the family business and opened a tiny shop in Old Montague St, but what few people knew was that opposite the shop he had a narrow, ramshackle, five-storey warehouse which housed his stock. Moshe dealt in rare and scholarly books, maintaining an office at 37 Museum St, where he kept his most valuable items and from where he functioned, too, as Hebraica and Judaica adviser to the British Museum. As he got older, Moshe could no longer negotiate the stairs up to the upper floors of his East End warehouse and the stock lay undisturbed for years.



At the age of twenty-two, Moshe's daughter, Esther, had gone to Jerusalem to teach English at the Evelina de Rothschild School, headed for years by the legendary Miss Annie Landau, the aunt of Oliver Sacks. Esther was killed fighting in defence of the Old City of Jerusalem during the 1948 Israeli War of Independence and Moshe's other daughter, Miriam ('Mimi') married the distinguished Israeli diplomat and civil servant Yehudah Avner who at one time was Israeli ambassador to London.

So, in June 1967 when Moshe's health deteriorated, it was his son, Asher, who came to Spitalfields from Israel to care for him. "*I returned from the battle on the Golan Heights on June 18th 1967 and soon heard that my dad's health had taken a turn for the worst,*" Asher told me, "*and by the end of the month I was in London with my wife and children.*" Moshe Leib Cailingold passed away in August 1967 and, soon after, Asher and a cousin arranged a sale. It was an international event. Before the building was open to the public, it was open for collectors and dealers who flew in from Israel, America and Europe.

At the time, I was a young, impecunious university student, just beginning a lifetime's collecting obsession with Judaica and I knew that by the time the building opened to the public, the best books would be gone – not that I imagined that I would be able to afford any of the rarities, but I wanted the experience of seeing them! So I made my way to the East End and offered to work at the sale, carrying books in return for access to the warehouse. Asher Cailingold agreed and I enjoyed a magical couple of days roaming the warehouse in Old Montague St. I was assigned to individual buyers as they went through the stock and they gave me piles of books to carry down to the bookseller's son to assess and price.

On the ground floor of the warehouse was a lean-to outhouse which no-one had paid any attention to until the last day of the private sale,

when a well-known collector from Manchester asked if anyone knew what was inside it. The contents were a mystery and I was dispatched to find a crowbar to prise open the padlocked door. When we opened the lean-to, it was stacked with books. The collector from Manchester reached inside and snatched one book at random. He opened it, turned to Asher and said, "*I'll buy the whole contents.*" The book he held in his hand was a rare antiquarian Hebrew tome printed in Venice and it turned out that the outhouse contained the stock from Moshe's father's bookshop in Warsaw, untouched for decades. Although, I could afford to buy only a few ephemeral pamphlets and books, it was a great experience for me.

Osborn St was home to another well-known bookseller and general Judaica store, R. Golub, and across from there was Wentworth St contain the small shopfront of 'Shapiro, Vallentine'. Shapiro, Vallentine was a publisher and bookseller with roots that went back into the nineteenth century. Originally owned by the Nirenstein family, in 1940 their daughter, Miriam, married a young Russian émigré, Chimen Abramsky, and he took over the store. Chimen, who passed away in 2010 at the age of ninety-three, was an astonishing, if diminutive, personality. He was the son of Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky (1866-1976), one of the great Talmudical scholars and Jewish legal authorities of the twentieth century, and in the thirties the rabbi of the great 'Machzike Hadass' ("Upholders of the Faith") synagogue on the corner of Brick Lane and Fournier St – which, famously, had been built as a Huguenot Chapel, became a synagogue and is now a mosque.

Although Chimen greatly respected his father, he did not share his beliefs and was a dedicated Communist until after 1956. His life story and his twin bibliophilic obsessions of Marxism and Judaica have become the subject of a recent biography written by his grandson, Sasha Abramsky, entitled 'The House of Twenty Thousand Books.'

Shapiro, Vallentine was a trove of scholarly, academic and rare Judaica and rare, left-wing and radical literature and ephemera. Chimen knew his subject and served for years as Sotheby's consultant and expert on Judaica and Hebraica, and later as adviser to Jack Lunzer who created the Valmadonna Trust collection. Eventually, Chimen closed the shop in the late sixties when he was appointed to the faculty of University College, London, later becoming Professor of Jewish Studies. As a leading theoretician of the London Left, an expert on Marx and Marxism, and on Jewish history, Chimen had a brilliant, polymathic mind, and an encyclopedic knowledge of books, printing, and manuscripts. He and his wife Miriam had two children – Jack, a mathematician and their daughter, the distinguished cultural figure, Dame Jenny Abramsky, formerly of the BBC.

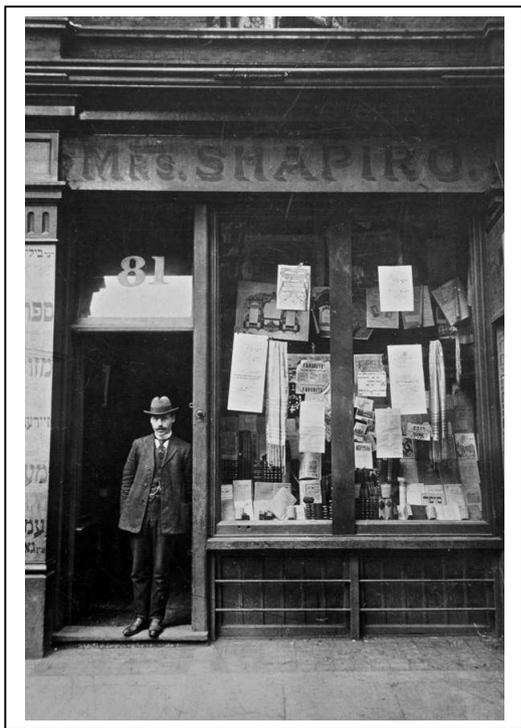


Photo courtesy **Abramsky Family Archive**

Let me conclude by acknowledging my own East End roots – my late father grew up between the wars, in poverty, in the tenements of Thrawl St in Spitalfields. When I was a child, he used to take me occasionally on a sentimental excursion “*down the Lane*” on

Sunday mornings and show me where he had been brought up, and the Machzike Hadass synagogue where his family attended. We always stopped at Marks delicatessen or Barnett's, for kosher delights or pickled cucumbers, and to shake hands with ‘Prince Monolulu’. My father belonged to a vanished East End. He died young, at only forty-nine years old, in 1968. Just a week or so ago was the forty-seventh anniversary of his passing – as they say, “*May his memory be for a blessing.*”

PAUL SHAVIV

Letters and Emails

Sheila Jelley ordered a copy of Sailortown and asked if 13 Swaton Road, Bow was still there as her ancestors lived there. I sent her this picture.



From: Philip Mernick

Dear Sheila, the yellow van, in the attached photograph, is parked outside (what was) 13 Swaton Road! Rounton Road runs left to right and Swaton Road front to back with Campbell Road in the background. Numbers 1 (junction with Campbell Road) to 13 (junction with Rounton Road), were built in 1866 so 13 must have been new when your ancestor lived there. Rounton Park which you see in the photograph was created in the 1970s. It is possible that some 19th century houses survive at the far end of Swaton Road. I will pop down there some time soon.

I did take a walk to the far end and found these 1870s buildings, built on former market gardens.



Very few such buildings have survived the construction of the Lincoln Estate.

Sheila replied:

Thank you so much – it was such a chance to ask you. Jesse Watkiss was an Oilman at that address. He was a Ship’s Engineer and travelled the world which he gave up when the children arrived. They lived there from at least 1868 thru 1871 & 1881 census. Glad to see you have some green place with play area for the children. Interesting to learn it was newly built – I suppose he earned good money as a qualified Engineer.

The book arrived yesterday – does not mention my Swinyard Tobacco Pipe Makers but will find it interesting to learn more about the area where they worked and lived in the mid 1700’s.

From Catherin Ritter

Dear Philip, thank you very much for sending the book (The Poplars) so promptly which I have safely received today. I felt that I must write to tell you how thrilled I am to find a picture of my ancestor, Pte Boreham on page 164, on plate 27 (although I think this should read plate 28). If you are in contact with the author of the book he may be interested to know that there is a memorial stone to Henry Boreham on a private grave in Tower Hamlets Cemetery.

Yours sincerely Cathy Ritter

East London Dialects

The dialects of East London have changed since I was born in 1931, but I still hear snatches of the way of speaking I remember from my schooldays. Recently, I heard two voices on television, and I instantly thought 'they must be from West Ham, or thereabouts', and visualised two women of my own age whose speech had not changed. Sure enough, they were from Walthamstow, but, to my surprise, looked quite young.

When I was a child, the word my family invariably used for rubbish was 'toot', so I assumed that was common everywhere. But sometime in my teens I found that my oldest friend, who came from Plaistow but whose mother was from Birmingham, only knew of the word from me. I went home and looked for it in the dictionary, and was surprised not to find it. Then I thought I had an inspiration. It must be derived from the French. So now, still confident, I searched for 'tout'. Not there. Despite this lack of support from Oxford University, I continued to use the word regularly until the day I shouted at my children in the traditional way, 'and clear up all that old

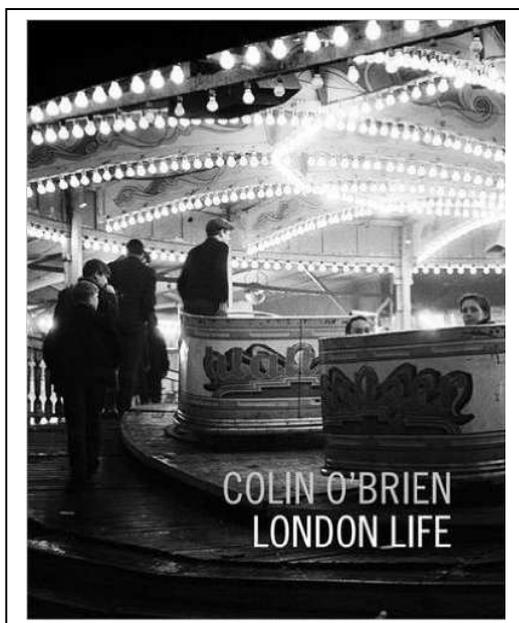
toot in your bedrooms!' They, both at school in Twickenham, sniggered 'she said toot.' Since the bedrooms stayed in their usual mess, it seemed wise to learn to say rubbish.

Another word identified by my school-friend as peculiar to me, was 'sawney' or 'sawny'. My mother (from Bethnal Green) used it frequently to describe someone who today we might call dozy. She usually accompanied it with a mime of a vacant stare, mouth hanging open. I believe this may not have been a London word originally. The dictionary associates it with Scotland, suggesting a derivation from 'Alexander', but I have somewhere seen or heard it described as a Norfolk word. I suspect it is a non-London word which travelled to London with one of my ancestors, and stuck with us as an adjective that amused us.

I would be very interested to hear about words that may be peculiar to London or to even smaller localities within East London, and to see any comments other readers may have about the changes in speech they hear.

PAT FRANCIS

Book Shelf



London Life, Hardcover, published – 18 Jun 2015, by Colin O'Brien (Author), The Gentle Author (Editor). £18.

Since 1948, Colin O'Brien has been photographing the life of Londoners, capturing dramatic and affectionate images which speak eloquently of change and continuity in the daily existence of the city and its people. Arranged chronologically and selected from seven decades of work in the capital, LONDON LIFE is a social record of breathtaking expanse and Colin O'Brien's superlative photography distinguished by its human sympathy and aesthetic flair stands comparison with any of the masters of twentieth century British photography.

Memories of Bethnal Green

BY FRANCIS LE MAY

These reminiscences of life in Bethnal Green in the last quarter of the 19th century were written around 1951 and deposited in Bethnal Green Library shortly before the author, who was of Huguenot descent, died in 1955. The article first appeared in the East London Record No.4 in 1981.

I was born in a house in Old Ford Road and lived there for the first 10 years of my life, and here are some of my recollections.

At first there were no Board Schools, so I went to St James the Less Infant School and then to the boys' school there. Scholars had to buy their books, pay 4d per week and had to carry satchels, and also had to parade before the Headmaster every morning, and woe betide a boy if he was dirty or his books were not clean. In 1881 Cranbrook Board School opened, and I became a scholar there. My chief playground was Victoria Park. I found a lot to interest me there, including fishing with thread, bent pin and bread paste. This had to be done in the absence of the park keepers, and I had more than one unpleasant interview with them, which made me uneasy and very cautious. Kite-making and flying them was also a hobby of mine.

The workhouse and Infirmary were in Bishops Road and on Sundays out poured the unfortunate inmates, all clad in unmistakable workhouse clothing, and I recollect the sight at the Relieving Office of long rows of benches filled with those waiting for tickets for food. Then the children from the Charity Schools, boys in green corduroy suits and peaked caps, girls in green coats and white aprons and bonnets, coming home from the bread distribution at St. Matthews School with the loaves in clean white pillow slips. I remember seeing women and girls carrying great bundles of match boxes, often tied up in patchwork bed covers, to Bryant and May's factory. (These Bryant and May's matchboxes were the large size and the price paid for them was 2 1/4d or 2 1/2d a gross, workers providing their own paste. Little children worked with their mothers many hours into the night, all to earn around about a 1/- a day. Men with big baskets of boot uppers going to the boot factories. Men with long rollers of silk cloth on their shoulders off to the warehouses. Boys and men with suitings, and clothes in a black cloth cover going to the tailors. Barrows laden with goods made at home such as furniture, tinware, brushes etc. Most homes were also workshops and the outworkers collected their materials from the warehouse and worked for the scantiest of wages. They were entirely at the mercy of their employers, who were saved the expense of providing factory space etc., and were free from all responsibility to their workers.

Think of those hard evil days, no out of work pay, no health insurance, no holidays and no security whatever. Workers often trudged to the warehouse and shops in the City, to be met on their arrival 'no work given out today' or 'we are full up with yur stuff.' Little wonder that pawnbrokers signs were seen in all the main roads, and all these kind 'uncles' made a fine living with quick turnover. How did the people live?

Well I should think nine out of every ten

dwellings consisted of a small cottage of at most 5 rooms, and there was no law against overcrowding. One never heard of so many cubic feet for each person. More often than not two families shared one cottage, and I assure you there were more inconveniences than conveniences, and most of these homes were workshops too. Sometimes both families would be outworkers, in some cases the children worked too.

If the mother had time to cook a dinner she probably could only have something boiled on the hob, or toasted in the Dutch Oven or on a grid iron. There might be an old-fashioned range in the landlady's kitchen downstairs, but that could only be used in cold weather and more likely than not, it was not available to those upstairs.

Gas cookers were unknown, so most of the food was bought already cooked. Every eating house supplied hot meals, vegetables, puddings etc. to anybody. All the food could be seen from the street, the meats in a row of tin dishes kept hot by steam just by the windows. One could purchase according to their means, an order for two pennyworth of beef, mutton or pork with hot gravy, one pennyworth of vegetables and another of plum duff or jamroll. Small requests for a penny fruit or meat pie, or even a ha'penorth of potatoes was cheerfully met and supplied. There were Cook Shops, Pie Shops and Coffee Shops everywhere, and people you passed carrying basins with a saucer for cover, or a beer can with soup, or a covered plate could be counted by the score. In addition to all this every pub retailed to all and sundry boiled bacon and ham, cheese and pickles. Every pork butcher sold boiled beef and pork, pease pudding and saveloys at midday, and at night from six till ten o'clock.

Tripe dressers sold cooked sheep's heads, brawn, black puddings and faggots. There were also fried fish shops and supper bars and finally stalls outside many pubs with sheep and pigs' trotters, nicely laid out on white

sheets with a garnish of parsley.

Hawkers paraded the street everyday beginning with bakers' boys calling hot rolls from 7 o'clock to 8 o'clock, then a procession of men with fish, vegetables and fruits, chair menders, scissor grinders, sweeps, ragmen, women with watercress and lavender, and in the evenings up to about 10 pm vendors of hot pies and baked potatoes. On Sunday afternoon you heard the bells of the muffin men and the cries of fresh winkles, Gravesend shrimps, etc. In fact, as far as food was concerned one could get almost all they wanted on their own doorstep.

I can recollect cows being driven down the streets and milked into one's own jug all at 2d a pint. There were several cow keepers then, and in Cambridge Road was the Royal Dairy where from the street one could see a long row of cows in beautifully clean white stalls. In those days there were no refrigerators, or cold storage plants, or meat from abroad. All perishable foods like meat and fish and eggs had, especially in the summer, to be sold quickly, and people who wanted a cheap joint for Sunday put off their visit to the butcher on Saturday until about 11 o'clock at night, when the butcher would stand outside his windowless shop and job-off his remaining stock at well below the rates charged earlier in the day. How well I recollect our Sunday dinners. By half-past ten in the morning, there appeared the large brown earthenware divided dish, with potatoes in one half, batter pudding in the other half, crowned with a joint mounted on a wire grid. This was covered with a white cloth, and then father, on his way to chapel, complete in swallow tail coat and top hat, very carefully carried it to the baker, for which received his tin tally. He called for the dinner on his homeward journey, handed in his tally and 2d and very gingerly, for fear of upsetting any gravy over his Sunday best, marched home with it all hot and steaming, and done to a turn.

There were far more pubs and beer houses

then than now, and on Sundays, customers would queue up outside from about 12.30 for opening time at 1 o'clock, each person with one or more jugs, beer cans, half-gallon jars, etc. prompt to time, the doors opened and after slaking their own long standing thirst, they started off home with the dinner beer. Pubs kept open on Sundays from 1 to 3 pm and then 6 to 10 or 11 o'clock at night, but on weekdays were open from very early morning until about 11 pm, and 12 pm on Saturdays. The drunkenness was appalling. Beer and ale cost 2d per pint to drink on the premises, and the drink had a strength in it those days. Reeling men and women singing one minute, fighting and cursing the next, were everywhere. I've seen men frog-marched by three or four policemen to the station, and women strapped on wheeled stretchers off to the same destination. The Blue Ribbon Army and the Salvation Army together with the Bands of Hope, and Adult Temperance societies, did a grand work in their campaign against intemperance in and around Bethnal Green, but the improved social conditions including education, better facilities for recreation and enjoyment have played a large part.

We have to bear in mind that at that time no employers thought of paying wages until leaving off time on Saturdays. Hours of work in factories were generally from 8 am to 8 pm. After payment most men visited the nearest pub, paid their debts and subscriptions to the loan club and other clubs, often arriving home late. Consequently the wife had all the shopping to do after tea, including perhaps a visit to 'uncles' to get the husband's Sunday suit out. While she was doing this the man would slip out, as there was nothing to amuse or interest him in the one or two rooms called home, go to his favourite pub and drink too freely in a warm bar brightly lit with gas jets, and amongst his own crowd of cronies. Many men made Monday a holiday, and started work on Tuesday, working like slaves for the rest of the week to make up for lost time.

One thing must be mentioned, and that is the

inherent love of gardening and keeping of pets, both of which seemed common to all Bethnal Green-ites. Birds in cages on window sills and hanging on walls everywhere, Pigeon lofts, hen houses and rabbit hutches, took up all the back yards. Flowers were everywhere. Most front windows displayed such plants as fuchsias, trained on a wood frame, geraniums, India rubber plants etc.

One of my favourite haunts was the garden at the back of the Old George in Bethnal Green Road. Here there was a public right of way, through the bar from the road to the gardens. Here could be found little two roomed cottages with plenty of land attached and flowers everywhere, as well as pumpkins and grapes. Harts Lane, now called Barnet Grove, was on Sunday morning the haunt of buyers of plants. The occupiers all grew plants and seedlings in their humble cold frames and greenhouses, and a brisk business went on for a few hours. When these growers' houses were pulled down the market was transferred to Columbia Road near the Birdcage Public House, where the displaced growers had barrows stocked with plants from other growers in the suburbs. I enjoyed prowling around, wishing it was not Sunday, the day I was not allowed to spend money.

What a change has taken place over the 60 to 70 years. The sturdy independent and industrious still cling to the old homes and neighbourhood, but gone are the trades for which the place was noted. No more little workshops, often as not in the backyard, with access through the house. No more sounds of shuttles thrown to and fro. Mass production and machinery have taken their place and the worker now 'clocks in' at the factories. Some of the finest furniture, such as bedroom, dining and drawing room suites, handsome chairs, tables and overmantles was made here, and purchased by dealers from Curtain Road and the famous West End furnishers.

Silk weaving, once the greatest industry, was already declining. It could not compete with

the cheap imported material from India and the East, and fashions were changing. Up to King Edward the Seventh's time, most of the material for the coronation robes were woven here, and it's worth noting how rare were clever workers in silk some 70 years ago. I learn that in 1870 Pope Pius the Ninth was in need of a certain vestment. The only person with sufficient skill to weave the material was an old Bethnal Green weaver, whose ancestors, being protestant, had sought refuge there from Catholic persecution in France.

East End Photographers No 20 William and John Covell

The credit for the first carte from an East End studio has yet to be officially established, but there is no doubt that William Covell must rank fairly high in the list of candidates. Covell's studios straddled the period from the fading away of daguerreotypes to the full head-on carte mania. It is certainly a pity that, as far as is known, no carte by Covell has been traced to date.

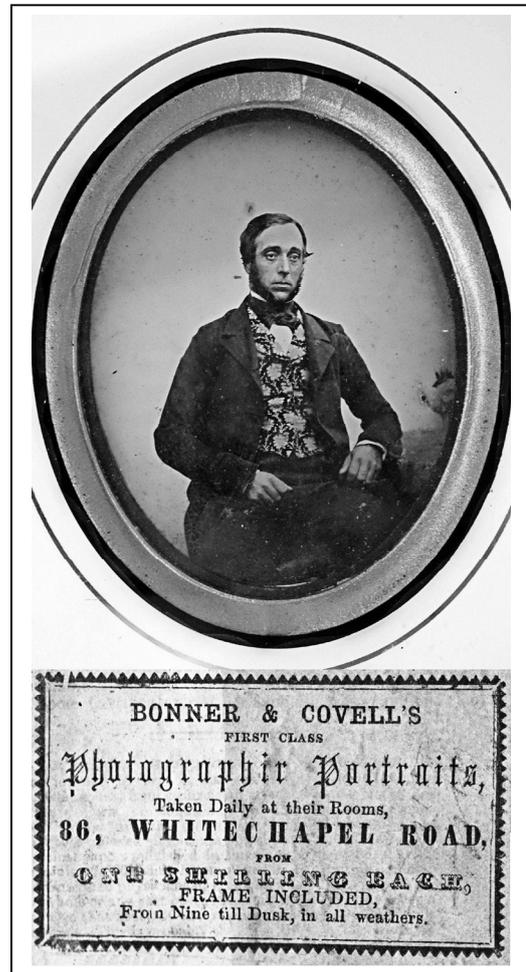
William Covell seems to have spent most of his career primarily as a baker, from his beginnings close to his birthplace in Lambeth in 1801, to the heady days of multiple studios in the Whitechapel Road in the 1860s. The census never records him as other than a baker, so it has to be assumed that photography was simply a side-line. Covell, in fact, started his artistic career back in the pre-photographic times, as a wood engraver. One of his best works was a panoramic engraving of the Coronation procession of Queen Victoria from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey, on June 28, 1838. It was engraved in sections and then pasted together to form a continuous strip – an interesting little souvenir, very reasonably priced at 2/6d. The engraving had an unusual echo – a century later, in 1937, at the time of the Coronation of George V I, Alice Maude Covell, William Covell's granddaughter, sent a copy to Buckingham Palace & was please to discover from the keeper of the Royal

Archives that the collection had not previously owned a copy of the panorama.

William Covell had moved from South London to the East End in the early 1840s, and a decade later had become a partner in his first photographic studio in High Holborn, with George Frederick Bonner (1823 – 1896), a wood engraver and printer. The studio was established right in the cusp of the freeing of photography from the total control of Richard Beard in 1854. It lasted a little over a year, but Covell took the opportunity to open a second studio in New Street, Covent Garden, in the following year. By 1855, he was ready for a move out of the west End to Whitechapel, and opened his first East End studio at 81 Whitechapel High Street. Bonner rejoined Covell in 1857 at the brand-new studio of 86 Whitechapel Road. Never satisfied with location Covell made several moves up and down Whitechapel Road, going to 47 in 1861 and 113 in the following year. The death of his wife Eliza, in the autumn of 1864, was a severe blow, and Covell himself followed her in the New Year of 1865. In the space of barely 10 years he had been involved in no less than half a dozen studios.

Covell and his partner George Bonner also managed to run the Britannia saloon in Ratcliff Highway during their peak period 1856 to 1860. A glutton for work, Covell also took part in a three-way partnership into studios in the West End and another in Paddington during the same period - it has to be assumed that the partners hired a series of camera operators for each branch. Covell's third partner was the exhausting Robert Winter Thompson (1830 to 1918), who between 1858 and 1873 opened (and often rapidly closed) no less than 15 studios all over the West End, usually taking full advantage of ends of leases. Thompson's flagship studio was in Oxford Street, and ran for some 14 years; most of the others were quickly disposed of once the sales potential began to slide. Thompson was a somewhat controversial character rather quick-tempered, a trait demonstrated by a court case in 1862 concerning an alleged assault on an army

major. Thompson was acquitted. According to the diary of Arthur Munby, Thompson was one of the photographers contacted in Munby's everlasting search for photos of working girls during the 1860s. Thompson was unable to oblige.



There remains an oddity over William Covell. When the partnership between him, Bonner and Thompson, was formally dissolved in January 1859, Covell signed the dissolution with an x – which could lead to the possibility of his being literate. In this pre-Education Act period, this sounds just possible for a baker but surely not for a photographer, unless it was Covell's wife who kept the records and accounts.

The studio at 113 Whitechapel Road passed to Covell's son John on his father's death in 1865. John Covell, born in 1840, had been helping out in his father's many studios since he left school. Despite the studio's prime location,

opposite the London hospital, within barely 2 years, Covell had closed it, and spent the rest of his life as an “itinerant” - hiring himself out to any studio which needed the camera operator. He was continually on the move including a brief period in the 1870s as a cigar maker in Black Lion Yard. By the end of the 1870s, he was back to plying his trade as a photographer and holed up in Thrall Street, Spitalfields.

Thrawl Street was one of the most depressing streets in East London in the 1870s, wall-to-wall lodging houses on both sides of the road, cheek-by-jowl with its equally disreputable neighbours of Flower & Dean Street and Dorset Street, Charles Booth’s so-called ‘worse Street in London’. Covell Jr was listed at 22 ½ Thrawl Street - the odd number indicating an annex to the original building. It must be assumed that his prospects did not materially improve, since Covell spent the best part of a decade in the Thrawl Street lodging house. His final move took him to Bath Place, still apparently a photographer, where he died prematurely in his late 40s at the beginning of 1890. It would seem likely that his health had been ruined by his institutionalisation in a lodging house, and his widow, Elizabeth, took the earliest opportunity to move to Hackney where she continued to work as a laundress and charwoman. She survived him by over 30 years.

By the time of Covell’s death, Whitechapel Road had begun to be dominated by Jewish photographic studios such as Perkoff and Suss at one end, and Pacifico at the other. As pioneers the Covell’s deserve their own special niche. And somewhere out there, it may still be possible to find those elusive cartes.

DAVID WEBB

Early photographs.

The Daguerrotype, named after its inventor Louis Daguerre (1787 to 1851) and announced in 1839, was the first commercially successful system of photography. The image was produced directly on a sensitised silvered copper sheet. If you wanted two copies you had to have two photographs taken. The process was free to use in France and the U.S.A. but patented in the UK. In 1841 the patent was bought by Richard Beard who opened a studio in London. He then licenced other studios. Scott Archer’s collodion process of 1848, published 1851, was free to use and led to an exponential growth in photographic studios. Photographs using his process are known as Ambrotypes. They are also direct positive images but on glass. The image is backed with black paper or paint and like the daguerrotype, is viewed by reflected light.

It was still an expensive process and the introduction of the carte de visite photograph, an paper print on a visiting card sized piece of cardboard, in the late 1850s, brought the cost down to something payable by a working man or woman.

PHILIP MERNICK

Spiegelhalter’s saved

Written by Elizabeth Hopkirk and first published by (Building Design) bdonline.co.uk 21st July 2015.

Victory for the campaign to save ‘London’s best visual joke’

Buckley Gray Yeoman has scrapped its plans to demolish what Ian Nairn described as “the best visual joke in London”. Following public pressure, it submitted a new proposal that retains the facade of Spiegelhalter’s, a tiny jewellery shop embedded in the facade of a neo-classical former department store on the Mile End Road.

Buckley Gray Yeoman (BGY) founding partner Matt Yeoman said they had listened and reflected and he was “super-proud” of the result. The result is the best visual joke in London, a perennial triumph for the little man, the blokes who won’t conform

The architect came under fire at the beginning of the year when images emerged of its proposal to replace Spiegelhalters with a glass and Corten atrium for the neo-classical building it divides. The Save Spiegelhalter’s campaign led by the Twentieth Century Society attracted more than 2,800 signatures and attention from the national press.

The Gentle Author, creator of the influential Spitalfields Life blog, accused the developer of “erasing the extraordinary story it tells and sacrificing a unique architectural wonder for the sake of a glass atrium”.

It was a classic story of hold-out and came to represent the indomitable spirit of the East End. When the Wickhams began building what they hoped would be the Harrods of the East End in the 1920s, they assumed they would be able to assemble all the necessary land. But the Spiegelhalter family refused to sell, forcing the Wickhams to build around them. Both establishments have long since closed and the fabric deteriorated. All that remains of Spiegelhalter’s is a piece of the facade. BGY, on behalf of Resolution Properties, planned to flatten that as part of a scheme to convert Wickham’s into offices. But the Twentieth Century Society described the proposal as “entirely out of character with the surrounding conservation area”. Historic England and the Victorian Society, who also opposed the plans, have now withdrawn their objections. Yeoman said BGY “thoroughly respected” the Spiegelhalter’s story and had persuaded the client to keep the gap in the Wickham’s facade.

“All that was up for debate was how we interpreted that story. We’ve listened and reflected and design changes have been made. I’m super-proud of it now. “It’s a great piece

of communal work between us, the client and people who have a real interest in the building.”

He contrasted the case with that of another contentious scheme the practice is involved with – No1 Poultry. With James Stirling’s landmark, it was the “elite of architecture” who were trying to block changes that the building’s users were clamouring for, he said. But the campaign to save Spiegelhalter’s had grown from the local community. “Very little of the architectural profession knew about it or even cared about it,” he said. “The difference there was it was the public who did know about it and loved it and wanted us to work with the building.”

Huguenot Museum is now open

‘The Huguenot Museum is the first and only museum of Huguenot history in Britain. Our main collection is the **French Hospital Collection**. The objects, which include oil paintings, silver, documents, silk samples and personal items tell the important story of Britain’s first refugees, the crafts, trades and skills they brought with them and the impact their contribution has had on the development of our country.’

Huguenot Museum,, 95 High Street
Rochester, Kent, ME1 1LX

Opening Times

Wednesday – Saturday: 10am – 5pm
Bank Holiday Mondays: 10am – 4pm
Last entrance is 4.30pm
Closed Sunday – Tuesday

Prices:

Adults: £4

Concessions: £3

Family Ticket: £10

Gift Aid your entry and get a 12 month ticket