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## Editorial Note:

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

## Cover Picture

The cover picture shows the premises of M & P Moyles at 124 East India Dock Road. It was photographed by A.S. Upson of Poplar and made into a post card. Michael Moyles is listed in the Post Office Directory as a cycle manufacturer at this address from 1893 to 1899. From 1900 to 1909 he is joined by Percy (son? brother?). There is no listing after that date anywhere else in London and 124 remains unlisted for many years after. The shop was on the south side of East India Dock Road between Lower North Street and Wade Street. The cars' registration plates start LC which was first used in 1904, does anyone know the make?

I was unable to trace the photographer in the directories. There were Upsons listed in Stepney but not Poplar. I will have to try the 1901 census.

Philip

## 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](mailto: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.

## Hidden Histories

Family History Drop in Day - First World War

27<sup>th</sup> February 2016, 11am -4pm  
The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park invite you to the launch of their World War One project researching the 204 names on the War Memorial in the Cemetery Park all of whom are buried in the cemetery.

Ideal for people of all ages who have an interest in local history, those with family members buried in Tower Hamlets (Bow) Cemetery or anyone wishing to investigate the Great War connections in their family.

Guest speakers will share their expertise to help newcomers make the best start at finding their past and experienced volunteers will be on hand for those that are unsure of where to look next. Displays by local History Societies will be on show.

**East London History Society  
Lecture Programme 2016**

**Thurs. 14th January**

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

**Thurs. 18th February**

A Tour of Tower Hamlets in the 18th Century,  
*Jane Cox*

**Thurs. 17th March**

The Gentle Author's Cries of London,  
*The Gentle Author*

**Thurs. 14th April**

East London Disasters,  
*John Withington*

**Thurs. 19th May**

Daneford School, Teaching in Bethnal Green 1977-1991,  
*Tony Stevens*

*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 or 205*

Suggestions and ideas for future topics and/or speakers for our Lecture Programme are always welcomed. If you can suggest someone or indeed if you would like to give a talk yourself, please get in touch with David Behr, our Programme co-ordinator, either at one of our lectures or, alternatively, email our Chairman Philip Mernick with your comments and suggestions. **Email: [phil@mernicks.com](mailto:phil@mernicks.com)**

**ELHS Record and Newsletters.** You can now download from our web site (no charge) PDFs of all issues of East London Record and the last three series of Newsletter (1992 to 2013). 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.

**We are experimenting with the use of colour, please let us know if you think this is a good (or bad) idea.**

## NOTES AND NEWS

### ***Foundrydata: a heritage project using digital technology.***

Foundries used to be almost everywhere. The metal work that they produced filled the streets factories and homes of Britain (and much of the rest of the world) and is rapidly disappearing. The firms have mostly closed. Everyday stuff is being melted down, often leaving no trace and certainly no written or photographic record.

Eddie Birch and I have decided to try and capture this information before it's too late. Collecting all this is a huge task and will only happen if the project is democratic and engages many interested people. It is envisaged, if you like, as a sort of wiki-foundry-pedia. The web-site is [www.foundrydata.org](http://www.foundrydata.org) and anyone can access the saved data without password or registration.

Just now there is a limited amount of test data posted (a few hundred foundries, castings etc.), but you can see the intended scope of the project. There is probably no well-defined end to this job, but we expect to turn it into a useful research tool within a year or two. Within a few months we expect to have a viable "digitised heritage" resource.

The database divides into four main sections:

- Artefacts (castings, their locations, descriptions and photos)
- Foundries (the manufacturing process and its physical location)
- Firms and People (the history of who, what, when and where)
- References (printed and digital sources to test or validate the above)

and these sections are interlinked so that (for example) the record of a lamp post is linked to the foundry that made it. (But the range of interesting castings is vast ranging from huge engine parts, bridges and ordnance to miniscule brass "toys".)

This note is an invitation to join in. The sorts of activity involved include:

- Posting your existing images and information
- Combing the streets and taking pictures of castings (and the foundry marks on them)
- Locating and researching the foundries
- Tracking the people and firms who did this work, building a history
- Working out what technology was used and how it was propagated.

If you wish to add material you will need a password.

If you're curious about this please give me a ring on 01435 830155 or email me: [jonathan@foundrydata.org](mailto:jonathan@foundrydata.org)

## **Jonathan Prus**

### **A development without tall towers**

After all the controversy over developments at Norton Folgate and Bishopsgate Goods Depot, I was pleased to view the sympathetic proposals for the redevelopment of the Royal Mint site. After the Mint moved to Wales in 1980 most of the buildings were demolished and the site rebuilt for office use, only the iconic grade 2\* Johnson & Smirke building of 1809 remaining. The office buildings are now outdated and empty. The plans are to strip them and re-equip them for modern business use but also to greatly improve public access through the area. As part of the scheme the remains of the medieval Abbey of St Mary Graces will be made publicly viewable through glass covers in a similar way to what has been done at Spitalfields. The site owners Delancey & LRC Group have instructed architects Sheppard Robson and Morrow + Lorraine to put forward these proposals. More information is available from the consultation web site at [www.royalcourt.info](http://www.royalcourt.info)

## **Philip Mernick**

## **Stepney Children's Pageant, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 4th-20th May 1909 – The first of its kind.**

In 1905, playwright and musician Louis N Parker staged at Sherborne in Dorset a historical pageant to celebrate the 12<sup>th</sup> centenary of the See of Sherborne. This was a new kind of pageant in which the history of the locality was replayed in dramatic episodes by a cast of largely local people, in the atmospheric ruins of Sherborne Castle. The novelty of the event was the catalyst for a craze for historical pageants, dubbed 'pageantitis', which swept the land. Historic towns and cities up and down the country eagerly organised and staged their own pageants with casts of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of mostly local people. By 1909, the craze led to such a proliferation of similar events that it had become fashionable to disparage them and Parker 'the inventor of the modern pageant', announced his intention to withdraw from large-scale pageant making after his York Historical Pageant in July. He admitted that pageantry had been overdone but said he was proud to have found a vehicle for the 'right kind of patriotism' that 'had brought all classes together to work and to play in perfect harmony and goodwill without distinction of creed, politics or position'. Furthermore, Parker, formerly a schoolmaster at Sherborne School, believed that pageants could be 'a great educational force, teaching the young by living example.' It was this idea that provided a new direction for historical pageants – children were not just going to be spectators or play the parts of children from the past, they were to perform the adult roles in a move that created 'children's pageants', the first of which was staged in May 1909 at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in the East End of London.

The educational potential of historical pageants had caught the attention of social reformer Canon Samuel Barnett who championed initiatives to provide educational opportunities for all. His involvement in non-denominational projects in Whitechapel included the founding of the university settlement, Toynbee Hall in 1884, and the opening in 1901 of Whitechapel Art Gallery, a venue for free public art exhibitions. In 1908, it was proposed that a series of historical tableaux

illustrating important events in the story of London be staged in the art gallery. Louis Parker's advice was sought and it was consequently decided to dispense with static tableaux in favour of dramatic episodes. Such a pageant would have greater appeal for spectators but had the disadvantage or requiring rather more space. This gave rise to the suggestion that because adults 'would have occupied too much room on the necessarily small stage of the Art Gallery,' children could be used as the actors in a novel and more educationally beneficial form of pageant – the children would be given the opportunity of "living" the lives of characters they had read about.

At the beginning of the autumn term of 1908, Parker addressed an audience at Toynbee Hall on the subject of historical pageants and Barnett announced that with Parker's assistance, it was hoped to stage a pageant involving East-end schools at the Whitechapel Art Gallery the following spring. The East End News later reported Barnett's view that: 'The object of the Children's Pageant is to give the people of East London an interest in the past in which the present has its roots. Such interest is likely to enlarge their minds, to give a better understanding of citizenship, and a more stable basis of patriotism'.

Head teachers of Stepney and Whitechapel schools were among the eighty citizens who attended a meeting in November at which the various committees required to stage the pageant were formed. Barnett regarded teachers as key members of the local community, so largely for their benefit, in preparation for the pageant, an explanatory course of five lectures was arranged at Toynbee Hall by the University of London Extension Board. The teaching of history in schools although promoted by Board of Education guidance, was not then compulsory. Teaching methods were not prescribed so teachers were free to adopt approaches most suited to the local circumstances. The proposed pageant clearly appealed as the lectures drew large audiences. Chairing the first lecture, the newspaper proprietor Harry Lawson, Mayor of Stepney, himself a history graduate, declared that 'the East-end was giving an important lead to the rest of London in organizing such a pageant' and that 'it would be the means of imparting instruction in history in a most attractive manner, and would bring home to the young a

sense of the magnificence of their heritage'. Chairing the second lecture, Reverend George Hanks, Rector of Whitechapel, said of the study of history, that: 'It was nowhere more valuable than in the East-end, where its proper teaching might make the children proud not only of being English and Londoners, but of being also East-enders'.

The pageant was able to draw on the influential and talented group of individuals who supported the educational objectives of Toynbee Hall and Whitechapel Art Gallery. Parker provided assistance and advice to the project, and personally supervised the final fortnight of rehearsals though declined his usual title of 'Master of the Pageant'. Canon Barnett chaired the Pageant Committee whilst Charles Aitken, director of the gallery, took responsibility for much of the general organisation as pageant director. Writer and publisher of children's literature, Frederick J. Harvey Darton took on the role of stage manager. Various authors contributed to the pageant's libretto, Darton amongst them. The other writers were: 'Cockney school' novelist, William Pett Ridge; Kenneth Vickers, an Oxford graduate, lecturer in London history for London County Council and tutor to the University of London joint committee for adult education tutorial classes; George K. Menzies of the Royal Society of Arts, a contributor to Punch, and Charles Harrison Townsend, architect of the Whitechapel Art Gallery. The music committee was chaired by professional musician and suffragist Rosabel Watson; a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music, whose philanthropic work included organising concerts at Toynbee Hall. Watson provided her all-female professional "Aeolian Orchestra" to perform the incidental music which was composed especially by Gustav von Holst.

In 1909, Holst, who was yet to achieve the recognition that followed the success of his orchestral suite *The Planets*, earned his living as a teacher. Holding teaching positions at St Paul's Girls' School, Hammersmith and Morley College for Working Men and Women, Southwark, he taught both adults and children. He undertook the Stepney pageant project on the condition that he composed the score in its entirety. His incidental music comprised the Overture, the Opening Chorus, the Choral Ode and an interlude entitled 'The Blind Beggar's Daughter of Bethnal Green',

the latter being based on the legend told in the old English ballad of the same name. Government education policy at that time, encouraged the teaching of traditional song and dance in schools; a topic embraced by Holst who had an interest in the English folk song movement through his friendship with Ralph Vaughan Williams. Since the pageant also included morris dancing, the 'Stepney Children's Pageant Book of Words' acknowledged that 'certain songs and dances are founded on English traditional melodies' and were used by permission of the song collectors and publishers.

The pageant portrayed a mix of local and national events, written with the usual artistic licence. The episodes were presented by the character 'Old Stow', played by the only adult in the cast. His role was to show two Cockney children that, contrary to their preconceptions, the history of London was not as dull as it seemed. The choice of narrator and the design of his costume drew on the familiarity of some of the children at least with the surviving monument to the London chronicler John Stow in the nearby City of London Church of St Andrew Undershaft.

Six hundred children from twenty one local schools took part in the pageant. It was performed in its entirety on two afternoons at 3.30pm and eleven weekday evenings at 7.00pm, in a schedule that at request of the office of the Chief Rabbi avoided the Jewish Sabbath and therefore enabled members of the Jewish community to participate. The children were organised in two alternating shifts, (a) and (b):

*Opening Chorus (sung by Dempsey Street School)*

*Episode 1. AD 61 The death of Boadicea (a) Deal Street School and (b) Settles Street School*

*Episode 2. AD 1066 William the Conqueror's Charter (a) Old Castle Street School and (b) The Davenant School*

*Episode 3. AD 1141 The rejection of Empress Maud (a) Broad Street School and (b) Lower Chapman Street School*

*Morris Dance (a) Berner Street School (b) Brewhouse Lane School*

*Episode 4. AD 1191. The Granting of the*

*Commune (a) Commercial Street School (boys) and Hanbury Street School (girls)  
(b) Chicksand Street School (boys and girls)*

*Interlude: The Blind Beggar's Daughter of Bethnal Green – performed by children of Jews' Free School*

*Episode 5. AD 1381 The King's meeting with Wat Tyler at Mile End (a) Stepney Jewish School and (b) Stepney Play Centre*

*Interlude: Canterbury Pilgrims (a) Red Coat School and Green Coat School and (b) St Paul's National School and St Thomas's Colet School.*

*Episode 6: AD 1588 The Departure of the Stepney Men to fight the Armada (a) Stepney Central Girls' School and Old Montague Street School (boys)*

*Choral Ode sung by Dempsey Street School as the performers made a March Past.*

Two complete casts and one set of understudies were chosen in order to involve as many schools as possible, but since only one set of costumes could be afforded, performers in both shifts and their understudies had to be the same size. The Toynbee Record reported that female roles were under-represented because 'history in the period covered did not allow much scope for the movements of women', so the organisers attempted to address the imbalance 'by allotting the dances to girls and allowing them to take ecclesiastical and similar parts in which long robes were worn'.

Parker's ideas on pageantry included a belief in the educational value and potential economic advantage of making costumes, armour and props locally. This view coincided with the Gallery's aim to promote local handicrafts. Members of the Dress Committee produced historically correct costume designs and the children spent the winter sewing their costumes. Stepney Jewish School made weapons whilst the Sir John Cass Institute and the Craft School at Stepney Green, made spears, crowns and other props.

One difficulty facing the pageant organisers was funding. Whilst the Book of Words recorded the generosity of donors such as that of the West End

theatrical costumiers Clarkson's, supplier of the principal wigs, and of other firms who provided various materials and services, there were still expenses to be covered. Although the trustees of the gallery guaranteed the expenses of the pageant up to a certain amount, the constitution of the Gallery prohibited making of a charge for tickets to the pageant to address the shortfall. On May 11th 1909, an appeal by Barnett and Lawson appeared in The Times seeking donations to help defray the costs of the event. The gallery accounts show that the pageant cost just over £400 to stage, £196 of which was covered by special donations, £38 was made on the sale of "books of words" (scripts), programmes and photographs, and £9 was received in collecting boxes, leaving a shortfall of £157 which was not an unexpected result.

Ticketing the pageant was necessary due to the limitations of the space available. The twenty-five foot wide stage took up part of the ground floor of the main gallery with small adjacent rooms being used as the wings. The upper floor was reserved for the performers and the basement used for dressing and waiting rooms. Up to 600 spectators could be accommodated with the front rows reserved for children, and reports indicate that gallery was filled to capacity.

In its review of the first performance, The Times described the large audience, chiefly of performers' families, who filling the gallery 'were carried in the twinkling of an eye from the drab and complex commonplaces of the twentieth century to the picturesque simplicity of the first.' The newspaper noted that whilst it couldn't be determined whether the pageant would succeed in making the children feel a proper pride in being citizens of London, they certainly entered into the spirit of the thing and that 'the whole effect, particularly when the children marched in procession past Queen Elizabeth and her Court, was a glowing and moving spectacle'. The East London Observer commented: 'It is not a show, it is real life, and the children live it with the overwhelming realism of childhood. From the first note of the rousing opening chorus to the last march, rang the music of the glory of duty to the city and duty to the state'.

The Jewish Chronicle celebrated the significant

contribution of the Jewish community to the event: 'The Jewish children played several leading parts in the various episodes. They came from Deal Street, Settles Street, Old Castle Street and Berner Street (Morris Dances), Myrdle Street, Old Montague Street and Stepney Jewish. We had too, a Jewish Queen Elizabeth – a live Jewish Queen, beshrew me! The greater number of costumes and properties have, I learn, been "evolved" at the Stepney Jewish School, much ingenuity having been shown in their manufacture. One of the most energetic workers in the property department has been Mr. Arthur Harris (also of Stepney School), who has fashioned such trifles as swords, sandals and ancient armour from the most commonplace materials – and fashioned them excellently, too. Other Jewish schools were responsible for the making of the dresses, while the Jewish element was well represented on the various Committees of the Pageant.'

The report also described the pageant as challenging the prevailing view of East End children:

'The scene on the opening night was one of animation and colour, and surely the brightest spot of colour was the scarlet-robed Mayor of Stepney, who seemed to become a child in spirit once again as the story of the Pageant unfolded itself. Visitors from the other end of town were obviously astounded. Could these be the children from sordid Whitechapel, the home of "cramped sunless lives"? They fairly gasped at the brightness, the vivacity, and the manifest artistic sense of the participators'.

The reputation of Barnett and the Whitechapel Art Gallery was such that the pageant succeeded in gaining royal patronage. On 14th May, the royal children, 12 year-old Princess Mary and 9 year-old Prince Henry of Wales, accompanied by some of their friends, a governess and a tutor attended a special royal matinee. Prince Henry was presented with 'a pair of splendid swords, of Roman model, with scabbards of hammered copper and hilts of bright steel' and a belt that 'boasted a buckle that bore in enamel a picture of an ancient ship in full sail, with the Red Cross of St. George emblazoned on the canvas' that had been worked by the pupils of the Sir John Cass Technical Institute and by the boys of Stepney Jewish School. Gifts for Princess

Mary included a Book of Words in an especially embroidered cover worked by girls of Myrdle Street School and an album of photographs of the event.



John Stow & London children

The Mayor of Stepney, Harry Lawson said that the pageant had been great delight to the East End and if "the art of pageantry was to become a permanent institution it must rest on the shoulders of the children. It would be impossible for the cities and boroughs of England to reproduce the pageants which had been seen in the last few years, but it would always be possible for the children. For them, a pageant would provide a background to English history and there could be no better means of inculcating patriotism.' Canon Barnett joined Lawson's words of appreciation for all who had helped with the pageant, 'emphasizing in particular the labour of the teachers, who, behind the scenes, were keeping kings and queens quiet, mending their dresses, and putting on their paint.'

To capitalise on the success of the pageant and the interest it had generated, the trustees of art gallery decided to follow the Stepney Children's Pageant with a Historical and Pageant Exhibition of pictorial and applied art to further stimulate the interest of local people in both local and national history.

The organisers were able to draw on distinguished individuals for expertise and the loan of items. Original portraits and paintings of historical subjects, and examples of genuine Tudor and Stuart costumes, weapons and armour were exhibited along with banners, chariots, costumes, weapons and other props loaned by pageant towns and cities from Glasgow to Dover, including Boadicea's chariot from Louis Parker's Colchester

### Pageant of June 1909.

To maximize the educational benefits of the exhibition, large numbers of local school children were taken round the exhibition by the Director, teachers and voluntary guides, before the gallery opened to the public each morning. For adults, a series of five Saturday evening lectures on the history of London were given by Kenneth Vickers as part of the University Extension Scheme of the London University. The exhibition ran from 20th October- 5th December 1909, a week longer than originally planned – the extended date causing one Colchester resident Miss Ord to write and ask when she might get her ‘carved sword’ back.

The Stepney Children’s pageant was a notable in the story of historical pageants as Samuel Barnett, Louis Parker, members of the local community and a host of influential supporters created a novel form of pageant to fulfil their educational aims. Others saw the potential and more children’s pageants followed.

Little more than a month after Stepney Children’s Pageant, a ‘Children’s Pageant of the history of Kent and Tonbridge Castle’ was held during the week of Tonbridge’s Fire Brigades’ tournament. On 2nd July, the Kent & Sussex Courier reported on the ‘Gargantuan task which Mr. J.F. Ash, the registrar and librarian at Tonbridge School, set himself when about five weeks ago, he introduced the idea of a children’s pageant’. The pageant was to be ‘on the lines of the great pageants which have been produced under the direct of Mr Louis Parker and others.’ The Courier was unstinting in its praise of the event, stating that ‘one might have been excused for imagining that the magic wand of some fairy had been wafted over the spot, and an enchantment made in its place.’ However, the precedent of the Stepney children’s pageant was seemingly unacknowledged as the report declared: ‘Parenthetically, it is interesting to note that this is the first Children’s pageant of any consequence to be performed in England, and Mr Ash may be warmly congratulated upon the splendid success of his unique enterprise.’



William the Conqueror & soldiers (episode 2)

## Letters and Emails

**From: Eric Hearn**

**Subject: Holy Trinity, Minories**

Dear Mr Mernick,

Further to my telephone call here's an outline of the research objective that I spoke about.

I'm currently researching the history of the font that is now installed in St Lawrence Jewry, (SLJ), church in the City of London. The research is part of a project being run by the National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies, (NADFAS), who are compiling detailed records of City churches.

According to all the SLJ guide books the font came from the church of Holy Trinity, Minories, (HTM), and was installed in 1957. HTM ceased to be used for divine worship in 1898 when its parish was merged that of St Botolph's, Aldgate. Thereafter HTM was used as a church hall by St Botolph's, e.g for mother's meetings. HTM then suffered extensive damage in 1940 but presumably the font survived the damage as was placed in storage somewhere. I've been unable to find out any details about this 'storage' from the Diocese of London.

My hope is that one of your Societies members may remember HTM prior to its destruction and maybe can confirm that the font was still in situ'. So, I'd be most grateful if you could put something in your next newsletter about this. In the meantime I'll check at the Bishopsgate Institute to see if they have any useful information.

If any of this summary is unclear do please get back to me

**Re: Teresa 'Tess' McEvoy**

My Auntie Tess was born in Cardiff in 1920, one of six siblings. Her father died in 1932, leaving my grandmother to bring up 6 children under the age of 16. Her link to East London and specifically Bethnal Green is Oxford House. At some point during World War 2 she was in the ATS as I have this photo of her in uniform.



However, I know from my late mother that she was also working in Oxford House during the Blitz. Sadly, she died in 1960 so I have no memories of her, as I was born in 1958. At the time of her death her address was given as Oxford House. I have a letter in which she refers to being in Manchester and Leeds in the 1950s but I wonder if this could also have been connected to Oxford House. I've tried contacting them regarding staff records but to no avail. Does anybody remember her? You may have worked there yourself or be one of the young people Auntie Tess worked with. Or you may have more knowledge of the work carried out in Oxford House which may help me with my research. Auntie Tess never married, there is no-one of her generation left in my family and I would love to know more about her. Many thanks.

**Pat Davey,  
Cardiff**

**From Jack Leach**  
jack.leach@live.co.uk

I am writing to ask if you have any more information about a Butcher shop on the Mile End Road. Named John Herterich, we know it was vandalised by the locals due to its German heritage. We are wondering if you have any other photos of it than the one attached to this email and is there local historian who knew of it or have any other information about the Herterich family within the East End. As we know they have had various Businesses within the area.



**From Mr W Langworth, Sidcup, Kent.**

I was interest to read Pat Francis' article in the current Newsletter about local words and dialects. Her reference to the word 'toot' referring to rubbish being unknown in other areas came as a surprise, because growing up in the East End, the word was commonly used, and someone keeping their old toot in the cellar would have been normal.

Another word that seems to have disappeared is the word 'Ta' for 'thank you'. Although I frequently use it myself, I very seldom hear it in the suburbs. Yet in the East End it was commonly used, and I clearly remember a neighbour always saying: 'Ta very much.' I am told on good authority, that it dates back to the Nordic word 'Tam' (thanks) and apparently arrived with the Vikings of long ago.

It wasn't until I joined the RAF in 1952 that I realised how colloquial we are in dialects.

As an 18 year old, bundled into a billet with other lads from all corners of Britain, it took a week or two for us to come to terms with the variety of accents and dialects.

I remember, for instance, the other lads staring at me in puzzlement when I remarked that: 'I have one of those 'indoors'.' the word 'indoors' was apparently gobble-de-gook to them!

I met with similar puzzlement when I remarked that I had fallen over 'and nigh on' broken my leg. No-one it seemed, had heard the phrase 'nigh-on' before!

Perhaps the blanket coverage of television entertainment will eventually eliminate all such dialects and anomalies?

### **Temporary closure of Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives Reading Room**

**Please be advised that due to an issue with the ceiling of our reading room it is not safe for anyone to access this room at present. We are working to get this situation resolved as soon as possible but unfortunately we need to close our Local History Library & Archives service as there is no means by which we can provide safe access on site to our collections. As a safety precaution, our reading room will be closed until further notice.**

**We apologise for any inconvenience caused during this emergency closure period and will provide further updates regarding the situation. During the closure period staff will continue to provide remote access to information about our collections and services by means of our website and through our remote email and phone enquiry service.**

Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, 277 Bancroft Road, London E1 4DQ

Phone: 020 7364 1290

Email: [localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## From Victorian Gap Year to Community Hub – Oxford House, Bethnal Green



In September, 1894, the Keble College, part of the Oxford University, established Oxford House in Bethnal Green as one of the first High Anglican Church of England settlements of the University. Arising out of the philanthropic and social movement of the mid-Victorian age which had found support at the University and from the members of the High Anglican Church, the settlement movement sprang up primarily from the work of the Barnetts whose pioneering view saw the first steps to establishing the still well-known Toynbee Hall.

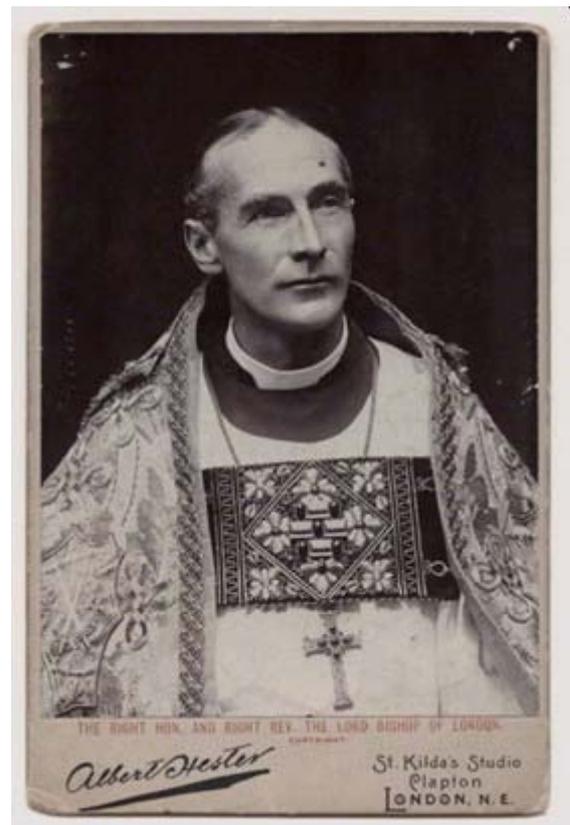
Toynbee was considered by some at Oxford, led by the Warden of Keble College, Edward Talbot '*not sufficiently religious enough*' and he looked to provide a more ascetic, denominationally religious, settlement in the East End of London. The first premises used under the Oxford House name was the National Day School of the parish church of St Andrew at Bethnal Green, which provided lodgings for three or four graduates to reside and work in the local neighbourhood, providing help and assistance to the poor and dispossessed of the surrounding area through a variety of activities including boys' and men's clubs and lectures.

*'Oxford House is ...intended to supply a headquarters for those University men who are anxious to understand the real conditions of the artisans and labouring classes in East London ....*

*and who are prepared to take part in the furtherance of Christianity and education, and the bettering of the moral and sanitary conditions of the various neighbourhoods.'*

(Oxford House Annual Report 1888)

The appointment of Arthur Winnington-Ingram as head of the Oxford House in 1889 and the expansion of education and social activities run by the Oxford House necessitated a move to more substantial property.



Arthur Winnington-Ingram, National Portrait Gallery

Winnington-Ingram, along with several Oxford luminaries, led a substantial fundraising effort, with the cry '*come and be squires of East London*' together with his plea to Oxford men that '*if they would not come and live in Bethnal Green, they must at least supply a house for those who would.*' The appeal raised enough capital to purchase the land on which Oxford House now stands and construct a solid red-brick five-storey building between 1891-1892.

The new building (designated a Grade II listed building in 2011), was designed by Sir Arthur

Blomfield and opened by the Duke of Connaught in 1892. From the beginning, Oxford House provided a hub for the community of Bethnal Green and began to purchase other properties in the area to run various clubs and activities.

The advent of the First World War curtailed much of the House's activities, with many Oxford graduates entering the army, leaving a shortage of resident volunteers. The building was temporarily used as a shelter from Zeppelin air raids between 1915-1917. The names of the fallen in the war are commemorated in the Oxford House chapel. After the war, the House struggled to return to the pre-1914 levels of residents and volunteers, although it kept a number of Boys Clubs and societies for working men going. Relations with the local clergy were fraught at times as it was '*felt that the boys clubs were a counter attraction to their parochial ventures.*' Throughout the 1920s and the depression years of 1930s, Oxford House, despite severe financial constraints, continued to work to provide charitable support to the local community (Bethnal Green had one of the highest unemployment rates in London.)

With the outbreak of the Second World War many of the buildings associated with Oxford House were requisitioned by the War Office for use by the army. In 1940, the new Head of Oxford House was appointed, brimming with new ideas for the challenges of the war years. Guy Clutton-Brock and his wife Molly set about a programme of opening up the house to the local people and ran several clubs for women and girls alongside the boys ventures. The Victorian building itself was used as an air raid shelter during the blitz, housing upwards of 600 people.

Post-war, many social barriers were swept away, and Oxford House saw itself more as a mainstay of the community, than an outside settlement dropped into the local area. Increasingly the direction of the House passed to non-Oxfbridge people and the laity and the links between the University, Church of England and the House became less pronounced. There were no longer the numbers of University graduates coming to reside and learn by gaining experience of working in the community and financially the House continued to struggle. Eventually this resulted in a three-month period of

closure in 1972.

But Oxford House survived throughout the difficult 1970s and 1980s to emerge with a new sense of purpose. In 1984, through a succession of innovative Heads and Chairs, Oxford House was able to celebrate the centenary of its founding with HRH The Princess Royal acting as patron. Oxford House is now home to many third sector and social enterprise groups who are active in providing a range of programmes for young people, families, adults, and older people, each of which aim to meet the needs of local people, and enable communities to fulfil their potential.

Oxford House is now embarking on a major project with significant support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project will repair and replace the roof but also refurbish and expand the cafe with a new entrance. Oxford House will be delving into its own rich history, revealing stories and properly archiving its past and using this research to inspire local people to learn more.

Oxford House would love to learn from any members of the East London History society who may be interested in supporting the project through volunteering or whose past relatives were connected with Oxford House and have stories to pass on. Please contact John Ryan, Chief Executive on 020 7739 9001 or [john.ryan@oxfordhouse.org.uk](mailto:john.ryan@oxfordhouse.org.uk) <http://www.oxfordhouse.org.uk>

## Book Shelf

### **In Quest of a Fairer Society, My Life in Politics** **Arthur Stanley Newens** **The Memoirs Club**

As every day seems to bring another salacious story about various politicians and their seeming inability to lead decent lives. It is heartening to read the autobiography of an old school politician who, while not being a household name, played a significant backbench role in a number of globally important events during the Cold War era.

In his detailed and highly informative autobiography, Stan Newens details the significant

political events from 1950 to 1999. Newens was a teacher, a miner in the Midlands (to avoid being drafted into military service in the war in Korea which he opposed), an active member of the NUT and the NUM, an MP (Epping and Harlow), an MEP (Central London), a founder member of the Tribune Group of MPs, a tireless Parliamentary Committee member, a backbencher in Westminster and the European Parliament as well as a regular and widely respected speaker and author.

In among the details of the speeches he gave and the world leaders he met (Yasser Arafat of the PLO, Fidel Castro of Cuba) Newens comes across as a man of great integrity and a politician who could see the personal and human consequences of government decisions or inaction. Newens campaigned for numerous causes: he opposed NATO expansion, protested against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, visited Belfast during the worst of the troubles, and supported the stateless Kurds whose language and culture were outlawed by Saddam Hussein in the aftermath of the 1991 'Operation Desert Storm' invasion.

Despite being very active at home and abroad, Newens was a committed family man. During his wife's extended illness he visited her daily at the hospital close to Westminster and commuted regularly to Bognor Regis when she was moved there to convalesce. Newens' political career a setback when he lost his seat to Conservative Norman Tebbit in 1970. Due to Parliamentary electoral rules, Newens was not paid for the three week election campaign and as his salary was his family's only source of income, this led to financial hardship. (This was in the days before MPs could put in an expenses claim for his duck-pond!) Newens accepted an initial payment from the Parliamentary Labour Party's Benevolent Fund, but declined any further help. Instead he returned to his original trade and took up a teaching post.

The most interesting sections of the book, from a political view point, details the ferment in the Left following the Hungary Uprising in 1956 and during the Labour government of the 1960s-70s. Newens and other like-minded Labour stalwarts had the difficult task of balancing their criticism of the right-wing Labour government with ensuring that the Tories didn't return to power.

Newens is stunningly honest in his recounting of events. He acknowledges it was a mistake not to support Tony Benn as Deputy Leader along with supporting the Falklands War as a war against fascism. At no point does he gloss over these errors, rather he highlights them. He is equally honest about criticism he levels against fellow Labour MPs, including James Callaghan PM, over his failure to respond to the PLO/Israeli conflict and Merlyn Rees Home Secretary, over the deportation of two US journalists following their story revealing the existence of Britain's GCHQ establishment. Newens comes across as a man of high political and personal integrity. He refused to stand for election in the Blaenau Gwent constituency following Michael Foot's resignation as his friend and colleague Llew Smith intended to seek selection. He also stood up for Clare Short when Blair/Brown turned on her for suggesting the rich pay more taxes during the New Labour years in office. Newens sums up to his view of his political career quite succinctly: 'I never modified my views or sought patronage in the hope of self-advancement. I am still a democratic socialist and internationalist.'

Among all the high powered politics, hobnobbing with the international great and good, dining with royalty and campaigning for various good causes, one of the most memorable events in the autobiography relates when Newens was (wrongly!) identified as the mystery lover of American Shirley Maclaine. 'The unlikely scenario of me taking time off from my political work and my family to sit on some tropical beach rubbing suntan lotion onto the back of a Hollywood beauty was light relief, but I had more serious matters to attend to.'

Stan Newens was not a modern style career politician but he was committed to the general improvement of life in Britain – and beyond – for the benefit of all. A staunch Labour politician in an age before New Labour. Newens stood up for what he believed even if that meant going against the official party line. His autobiography is an honest and enlightening window into the political world.

**Diane Kendall**

## East End photographers No.21 Timothy Le Beau and James Bond

There really ought to be a plaque on the site, somewhere at the far end of the Hackney Road, just before it reaches Cambridge Heath, to commemorate the opening of the East End's first photographic studio in the New Year of 1846. The exact location has been lost in subsequent redevelopment of the area, but this pioneer effort deserves its recording.

The studio was the enterprise of a local ironmonger Timothy Le Beau, who had premises in Market Place of the Hackney Road, and was proclaimed by an advertisement in *The Times* of February 12 1846 as open for business, probably on the top floor of Le Beau's shop. Le Beau had gone about his business in the correct manner and obtained a licence from the patent holder Richard Beard – in fact he was Beard's second licensee. It is not known what prices were charged, nor what sort of response the studio generated – sadly, no specimens of Le Beau's work are known to exist. A further advertisement on May 7 1846 is probably an attempt to drum up business, but nothing further seems to be known of this pioneer studio.

In 1847, Le Beau tried again, this time in the West End, in the Edgware road. An advertisement in *The*

*Times* of July 17 1847 drew attention to the recent opening of a new studio at Simmons Library, but again this sank without trace almost immediately. Le Beau's third attempt at a studio saw him back in his old stamping ground, this time in London Terrace off the Hackney Road in 1848. An advertisement in Caleb Turner's Hackney directory of 1849 promised 'coloured daguerrotype portraits, with all the latest improvements'. They must have been prohibitively expensive, perhaps up to £2.50 each with box and lining extra, and would have represented several weeks' wages to the average labourer. Le Beau struggled on for a few years no doubt at the expense of his ironmonger's business, an advertisement in the *Illustrated London News* of April 3 1852 indicates the studio was still functioning. Nothing further is heard and it has to be assumed that the enterprise ultimately failed. Le Beau made one final effort with a studio a decade

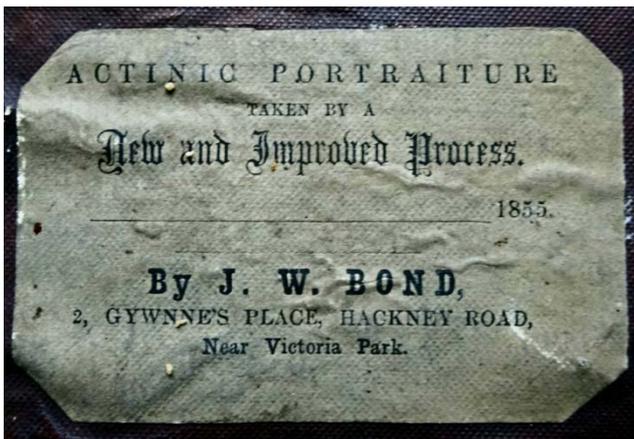
later, in the high noon of the carte; in partnership with Thomas Rust, he ran a couple of studios in Westbourne Grove, Paddington in the mid-1860s, until Rust decided to dissolve the partnership and seek his photographic fortunes in India.

Le Beau died in Hackney in 1868 at the age of 70 – like so many pioneers, it had been a rollercoaster ride with the new science. Perhaps the stress of his work led to domestic problems Le Beau was married no less than four times in 25 years, though it has to be admitted that his second wife died of Asiatic cholera. Towards the end of his life, Le Beau swapped the ironmonger's shop for a coal merchants, moving over the border into Hackney.

Le Beau's mantle was taken on by East End photography's very own James Bond – James William Bond, who seems to have rarely moved far from the Hackney Road all his life. Bond established an optician's business off Prichard's Road in the 1830s, and ran it for almost 50 years. It was in 1855, a few years after Le Beau's last studio in Hackney Road had petered out, that Bond established a studio on the first floor above the opticians. He initially moved to a small terrace block named Gwynne's Terrace; in June 1862, the council abolished the terrace which was then numbered into the Hackney Road. Bond's business became 501 Hackney Road.

No doubt the arrival of the carte de visite in the early 1860s helped to boost the profits of the opticians business. Bond continued the photographic studios to 1874, by which time he was in his 70s. Bond retired from business altogether not long after the death of his wife in 1880. Curiously the two businesses are recorded differently in contemporary sources – Bond is uniformly recorded as a photographer in the pages of Kelly's Directory, whereas in the census he is always an optician. Perhaps he had a large sign on the first floor advertising the studio – equally, he may have regarded his work as an optician as his primary source of income. Bond's studio lasted almost 20 years – a remarkable feat in such an area. After his death the shop became a private house and was not in commercial use again for a century – by this time as a garage.

The possibilities of the Hackney Road seem to have been exhausted by Le Beau and Bond as a suitable location for a photographic studio – Bond had a rival from further down the street for a year in the late 1860s – but thereafter there is no trace of any further studios in the street. The trade migrated further south into the hinterland of Whitechapel, Mile End and Bow.



### DAVID WEBB

#### Note from the editors

The pictures above are labelled James Piper of Beccles and Mary Piper, nee Shardelow, of Beccles. It would be interesting to check the family history web sites to see what they were doing in East London in 1855.

David's article with its detailed research also demonstrates the problems that can be encountered when a person is not listed in a trade directory, it wasn't compulsory after all. Although the 1855 Gwynne's Place address is the first listed in the Post Office Directory, other images have come to light, dated 1853 from another address, 1 Emma

Street, Ann's Place, Hackney Road. Neither Emma Street nor Ann's Place actually joined Hackney Road, they eventually became part of Pritchards Road - information from Mike Elliston's Topography of Tower Hamlets (unpublished) – but possibly Hackney Road was considered a better address. This may be the same location as Bond's early optician's business.



1853 dated ambrotype photograph

