



Poplar Baths reopened July 2016

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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 and Diane Kendall, David Behr, and Sigrid Werner.



Subscriptions for 2016/17

Subscriptions are due if you find a subscription form inside your newsletter. If you don't have a form, there is no need to pay.

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

The newly refurbished Poplar Baths on the East India Dock Road. The grade 2 listed baths had been closed since 1988, but reopened this July. The front page of our Newsletter 2-13 of Summer 2005 showed the appalling state of the former main baths and mentioned the consultations just starting to decide its future. The alternatives seemed to be: demolish the whole complex and replace with flats (Council preference) or to bring them back into public use (local residents preference). Eleven years later there is some new housing at the rear of the site but the old baths are now a brand new leisure centre and a new public swimming pool has been installed on the east side of the site. Richard Green's statue remains in place on the main road directly in front. The statue is very green (appropriately?) but I think it would look better restored back to bronze.

See back page for more pictures.

East London History Society Lecture Programme

Thursday September 29

Behind the wire: P.O.W. camps on Wanstead Flats

A talk by Peter Williams and Mark Gorman

Thursday October 27

London's East End 1900-1930

A film presented by Ray Newton

Preceded by short AGM at 7.15.

Thursday November 17

The Boss of Bethnal Green; Joseph Mercer on the godfather of Regency London

A talk by Julian Woodford

Thursday December 8

Jews in the Fire Service in the Second World War.

A talk by Stephanie Maltman and Martin Sugarman.

David is still working on the 2017 section the programme and we will let you have details in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Unless otherwise advised the lectures are held on Thursday evenings at 7.30 pm in the Latimer Congregational Church Hall, Ernest Street, E1. Ernest Street is between Harford Street and Whitehorse Lane, off Mile End Road (Opposite Queen Mary and Westfield College). The nearest Underground Stations are Mile End and Stepney Green. Buses No. 25, 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

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.

Poplars rates rebellion mural, Hale Street, Poplar.

Sue Kenton emailed us to express her concern at its condition. "I have been in touch with the London Mural Preservation Society about the above mural and they have suggested that I contact local history groups to see if there is any interest in supporting the preservation of this mural which is suffering some damage". <http://www.londonmuralpreservationsociety.com/murals/poplar-rates-rebellion-mural/>

What's On and Where

**Friends of St. George's German
Lutheran Church
Helping the Historic Chapels Trust to
maintain St George's**

Updated 2016 Events

Heritage Open Days

Friday 9th September 2pm - 5pm
Saturday 10th/Sunday 11th September
9.30am - 4pm

London Open House

Saturday 17th September 9.30am - 4pm
The Church will be open for free visits
for both events and there will be an
exhibition about the history of the
church.

Luther and the Reformation

Tuesday 11th October – 6.30pm -
a talk by Pastor Christoph Helmich
about the tumultuous events of 1517
and the build up to the 500th
anniversary. Tickets - £5 on the door.

Rediscovered archives

Wednesday 9th November – 6.30pm -
a talk by Anette Jäger about a newly
discovered archive of 1930's refugees
correspondence with St George's.
Tickets - £5 on the door.

Christmas Carols

Wednesday 7th December – 7.00pm -
a carol concert with the London
Gallery Quire -
Tickets - £6 on the door.

**Please check the Historic Chapels
Trust website www.hct.org.uk and
Friends of St George's website for
further details
www.stgeorgesgermanchurch.org.uk**

**Also St George's on Facebook
<http://www.facebook.com/> & St
Georges on Twitter Welcome to
Twitter - Login or Sign
up @GermanChurchE1**

St George's German Lutheran Church

**55 Alie Street, London E1 8EB
(Located at the junction of Alie St
and Leman St – 2 mins walk from
Aldgate East tube)
Tel: 020 7481 0533 e-mail:
chapels@hct.org.uk**

The William Shipley Group
FOR RSA HISTORY

SEWERAGE AND HEALTH

**Symposium to mark the 125th anniversary
of death of
Sir Joseph Bazalgette**

Thursday 22nd September 2016
at The Gallery, 77 Cowcross Street, London
EC1M 6EJ

10.30am

Introduction by Susan Bennett

10.45am

History of public conveniences by Rachel Erickson

11.05am

Sir Joseph Bazalgette and sewers by Dr Stephen Halliday

11.25am

Q&A

11.40am

Coffee/tea break

12.00pm

Sewage treatment by Dr Nicholas Cambridge

12.20pm

From Cholera to clean water by Howard Bengé

12.40pm

Sir John Hawkshaw (awaiting title) by Mike Chrimes

1.00pm

Q&A

1.30pm

End

Notes on speakers:

Howard Bengé

Howard Bengé first encountered the history of clean drinking water in cities when he ran a Heritage Lottery Funded project in 2011. Based on Victorian filtration beds at Seething Wells in Surbiton, the project provided a comprehensive study of the locality, people, engineering, the impact on public health in London and early epidemiology. He has since developed public programmes around clean water and the 19th century metropolis at the

London Metropolitan Archives and Guildhall Library, where he presently works.

Nicholas Cambridge

Nicholas Cambridge is an Honorary Research Fellow at The University of Buckingham in Humanities and Medical History. After completing his training as an electrical engineer he decided to become a doctor qualifying from The Middlesex Hospital Medical School in 1977. In 2002 he graduated with an MD in medical history from the University of London whilst still running a busy family GP practice in Surrey, where he worked for 25yrs until his retirement. In 2009 he launched the Samuel Johnson Tercentenary celebrations by walking 167 miles from Lichfield to London, dressed as David Garrick, with his friend Professor Peter Martin, dressed as Dr Samuel Johnson. Nicholas is Honorary Chairman of the William Shipley Group for RSA History, Vice President of the Johnson Society of London, Chairman of the Erasmus Darwin Foundation, Chairman of the Charles Bell Group (which aims to preserve the legacy of The Middlesex Hospital) and a Liveryman of The Worshipful Society of Apothecaries. He is a past President of the History of Medicine Section of the Royal Society of Medicine, Medical Society of London and the Hunterian Society. His interests include public health, electricity and the medical histories of Charles Dickens, Benjamin Franklin and Dr Samuel Johnson.

Rachel Erickson

Rachel Erickson is a freelance educator and the creator of London Loo Tours, the capital's first walking tour of public conveniences. Her research has covered the history and modern politics of lavatories, and her work has led to collaborations with such diverse organizations as WaterAid, the International Society of Neglected Tropical Diseases, and Thomas Crapper & Company. She holds an MA in Applied Theatre from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. She currently resides in California, where she teaches drama,

morris dances, and continues her research in public sanitation.

Stephen Halliday

Stephen Halliday was educated at Brentwood School, Essex and Pembroke College, Cambridge from where he graduated in history in 1964. He then worked in industry where he made his main contribution to human welfare by introducing Hellmann's Mayonnaise to Great Britain. In 1998 he completed a Ph.D. thesis on Sir Joseph Bazalgette, the Victorian engineer who built much of London including the sewers which today protect the city's water supply. He has written seventeen books, many of them on London. He lives in Cambridge with his wife Jane who is a midwife at the Rosie Maternity Hospital. He is the father of Faye who works as a nurse at the Accident and Emergency department of Addenbrookes Hospital and Simon who works at the Cambridge University Library.

To register for a place look us up on Eventbrite. For further details please email the WSG Honorary Secretary:
Susan Bennett susan@bennett.as
Tel: 0790 5273293

Revival of the Rag Fair

Architect John Bell and his neighbours in Whitechapel's Wellclose Square have the go-ahead for a Saturday market from next month behind Wilton's historic music-hall.

This is where the old Rag Fair traded for three centuries along Royal Mint Street—known then as Rosemary Lane—winding its way from Tower Hill to Cable Street and Wellclose Square.

It sold cheap clothes where poor families could be decked out for a few shillings and has its origins, believe it or not, with a real-life character nearly four centuries ago called Bawdrick. First records show a grant in 1631

to William Bawdrick and Roger Hunt for certain tenements in Rosemary Lane, Middlesex, on His Majesty's behalf. Rosemary Lane, or Hog Lane as it was originally, was renamed Royal Mint Street in 1850 when Petticoat Lane became Middlesex Street.

The Rag Fair was well established by the 18th century, trading every day along Rosemary Lane except Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. Many of its traders were immigrant Spanish and Portuguese Jews. It was the centre of the second-hand clothing trade, which ended by the 1860s after the Royal Mint was built.

The Rag Fair was mentioned in 1854 in George Godwin's *London Shadows*: "A man and his wife might be clothed head to foot from 10/- [shillings] (50p) to 15/- (75p). The mother may go to Rag-fair with her family and for a very few shillings deck them out from top to toe."

The chronicler Henry Mayhew wrote in 1861: "Rosemary-lane has some cheap lodging-houses, to which the poor Irish flock; they are frequent street sellers on busy days.

"The chief business is in the vending of articles which have often been thrown aside as refuse, but from which numbers in London wring an existence.

"One side is covered with old boots and shoes, men's, women's and children's clothes, new lace for edgings and cheap prints and muslins, hats and bonnets. Some wares are spread on the ground on wrappers or matting or carpet, occasionally straw.

"Cotton prints are heaped on the ground with boots and shoes, piles of old clothes or hats and umbrellas. Amidst all this motley display, the buyers and sellers smoke, shout, bargain, wrangle."

Typical prices haggled over in old money were: flannel petticoat 4d, white cotton stockings 1d,

cotton gown 10d, single-soled slippers with spring heels 2d, double-dyed bonnet and cap 2d, cotton gloves 1d, lady's silk paletot (overcoat) lined with crimson silk 10d—total 2s/6d or half-a-crown (12½p).

But Mayhew also observed: “This district is infested with young thieves and vagrants from the lodging-houses, running about, often bare footed, bare-necked and shirtless, but ‘larking’ one with another and what may be best understood as ‘full of fun’.”

Today's neighbourhood activists in Wellclose Square hope to bring back some of that street market ‘fun’ to this corner of Whitechapel—but not the thievery that went with it that Mayhew recorded in 1861.

The ‘Rag Fair’ tag may have lent its name to the Rag Trade clothing industry that dominated London's East End in the 19th and most of the 20th centuries.

“We want to restart a market in Wellclose Square which in its day rivalled Petticoat Lane,” said John Bell, “But this will be a 21st century market to attract tourists who come to Wilton's, to encourage them a little further east than the Tower of London on the edge of the City and into the heart of the East End.” A Wellclose Square steering committee is now looking for traders and community groups to join, after agreement with East End Homes to set up stalls in a car-park and a community café in the pedestrian area behind Hatton House tower block off Cable Street.

The first four Saturday market days are planned for August 20 and 27 and September 3 and 10.

(With grateful thanks to the East London Advertiser).

Another Armagh Road Photographer



Our Spring/Summer 2013 Newsletter included David Webb's article on Arthur Griffiths, the thirteenth in his series on East London photographers. The Griffiths family had their studio at 98 Armagh Road, Bow from 1894 to 1974, with a break around the time of World War I. However, for a short period in the 1920s and 1930s however, they had competition. This photographic postcard of a young lady in a fashionable cloche hat and fox fur stole was taken at Ernest Casson's studio at number 4 Armagh Road. The front of the card is impressed with a formal ‘Callow, Photographer’, while the back has a less formal ‘Ernie's Studio’! Ernest Casson is recorded in trade directories at number 4 between 1924 and 1932. I don't know anything about him or his family but somebody more skilled in family research might be able to find him.

Philip Mernick

(Another in our series of East End women who fought for women's rights 100 years ago)

JANE SAVOY (MRS. HUGHES), SUFFRAGETTE

As a young girl, I grew up hearing stories about my maternal grandmother's great aunt, Mrs. Jane Savoy (known in the family as Aunt Jinny). A suffragette, she chained herself to the railings, but managed to avoid prison. With an interest in family history, my curiosity has deepened concerning this lady, and it is only in recent years that I have become aware of the important part Jane played in turning around the Government's attitude towards women and their suffrage.

The East End was the birthplace of my grandmother, Connie Hargrave (née Wakefield), great grandmother, Hannah Wakefield (née Major), and Hannah's sister, Jane Savoy (née Major). They lived in the Old Ford Road, Roman Road, Sutherland Road and St. Stephen's Road, Bow – Connie was always proud to say that she was a true cockney what with being born within the sound of Bow Bells.

As a child and on a Sunday afternoon, Connie, b: 1911, often used to accompany her Aunt 'Jinny' to have tea with Sylvia Pankhurst, who was a close family friend and neighbour. Another close family friend and neighbour was the East End M.P., George Lansbury, who supported women's suffrage, and it was his granddaughter, actress Angela Lansbury, whom Jane and her nieces often used to wheel out in her pram around the streets of the East End.

Jane Major was born on 14th January, 1861 at 14, Wilkes Street, Spitalfields, Whitechapel, being the eldest of six children born to shoemakers, Jane Hughes and John Major. Her father later had a shop towards the top end of Romford Marketplace where he made surgical

boots for Old Church Hospital. She also had a half-brother, Benjamin, who lived with his mother, Charlotte.

In 1871, Jane was still living with her parents and younger brother, John, at 7e Virginia Row, Bethnal Green. She appears to be missing from the 1881 Census, which may be the period when her interest with the Suffragettes was ignited. (Many suffragettes walked the streets on census night, or later defaced 1911 census returns, in support of the fight for votes for women).

On the 1911 Census, which has only just been released regarding members of the Suffragettes, it states that Jane and Alfred Savoy (a brush finisher) had been married for 30 years, although a marriage doesn't appear to have been registered until 25th February, 1924 at Poplar Register Office. Living in four rooms, they were recorded as having two children, one of which died. The surviving child, Thomas, b: 17th August, 1885, was recorded on the 1901 Census aged 15 as a stonemason's apprentice. He later moved to Wales, living in Cross Keys, Rhondda Valley, Mid Glamorgan. He married, but it is believed there were no children. Thomas was baptised in 1885 with Jane and Alfred as parents, though the family always thought him to have been adopted by Jane.

It was when Jane became an active member of the Suffragettes that she went under the pseudonym of 'Mrs. Hughes', being her mother's maiden name, as Alfred wasn't keen on Jane's suffragette involvement and did not take kindly to his name appearing in the papers.

As a young lady, I remember a television programme being aired about the Suffragettes in the early 1970s and my family saying that Jane was depicted in this ('Shoulder to Shoulder' episode 6, actress Maggie Flint). This historical moment evolved from Jane being elected as one of the six women who formed a deputation to Prime Minister Herbert

Asquith in June 1914. She was a short and stout woman with a very good heart, but as she reached into a bag to take out a specimen brush she had worked on so as to explain to P.M. Asquith the process of what her work involved, it sent him and others running for the door, as they apparently believed Jane was reaching for a bomb!



Mrs Hughes (Jane Savoy) in centre, framed by the doorway.

Coming across Sarah Jackson and Rosemary Taylor's book 'East London Suffragettes' in 2015 allowed me, for the first time, to see a picture of Jane, as my family do not have one – Sarah and Rosemary's book is a fantastic, informative and most enjoyable read.

The Woman's Dreadnought records Jane's speech to Asquith:

"I am a brush maker, and I work from eight in the morning till six at night making brushes ten hours a day, and while I work I have to cut my hands with wire, as the bristles are very soft to get in. I have brought brushes to show to you. This is a brush I have to make for 2d, and it is worth 10s 6d.

As I have to work so hard to support myself I think it is very wrong that I cannot have a voice in the making of the laws that I have to uphold. I do not like having to work 14 hours a day without having a voice on it, and I think when a woman works 14 hours a day she has a

right to a vote, as her husband has. We want votes for women."

Herbert Asquith, PM, was moved by the stories of the deputation; it was reported by the press as below

"Listening to the women's speeches, Asquith appeared to be genuinely shocked by the appalling living and working conditions they endured. He delivered an uncharacteristically sympathetic response, which was hailed as a turning point by the press:

"I will take all these things into careful consideration... On one point I am glad to say I am in complete agreement with you... if you are going to give the franchise to women, you must give it to them upon the same terms that you do to men. That is, make it a democratic measure... If the change has to come, we must face it boldly and make it thorough going and democratic in its basis."

When the first women were finally awarded the vote four years later he was no longer Prime Minister, and the franchise was restricted to women over 30 with some property, excluding most of the working women of east London."

I am told by my 1st cousins once removed that the whole of our East End family were involved in the Suffragette Movement and attended many rallies. All the buildings in the Old Ford Road/St. Stephen's Road area were of three storeys, and Hannah and Connie lived above their shop with the family. A short distance away from Hannah's shop was where Sylvia Pankhurst opened her Suffragette Headquarters at 400, Old Ford Road and, what I am told, was known as Elizabeth's House. At the time, there was a pub located opposite to Hannah's shop at 460, Old Ford Road which she apparently swapped positions with, known as The Eleanor Arms, and a building away was where Sylvia Pankhurst opened a mother and baby clinic in an old pub called the Gunmaker's Arms, renamed The Mother's

Arms located on the corner of Old Ford Road and St. Stephen's Road. Hannah's shop was on the corner of Ranwell Close and Old Ford Road, although what with bombing, place names have changed.

Jane and Hannah adopted children left both on the doorsteps of the Suffragette House and Hannah's shop by unmarried mothers. They were also both the local midwives and helped many people in need. Hannah allowed quite a number of customer tabs at her delicatessen/sweet/general store shop in an effort to assist the poor community.

In Rosemary Taylor's book 'A Century of the East End', it shows a 1919 Peace Party in Norman Road, Bow that was organised by Mrs. Savoy to mark the Armistice and the end of the Great War, as below.



Unfortunately, Jane did not enjoy good health as she suffered from dropsy and palpitations and died on Friday, 13th January, 1928 aged 67 (a day before her 68th birthday) from acute kidney disease. My only sorrow is that she never got to see the passing of the Government's bill in June 1928 allowing all women over 21 to vote. It was also later 1928 that Emmeline Pankhurst died.

Jane's funeral procession passed through the streets of the East End with many an onlooker and as seen in the picture below, George Lansbury led the way.



George Lansbury on his way to the funeral of Mrs Jane Savoy, accompanied by one of his daughters.

Sarah Jackson (co-author of "East London Suffragettes") kindly forwarded me the following quote that George Lansbury wrote on the passing of Jane.

"One day the women of England will lead us out of the misery and degradation of slumdom and poverty, and will do so because millions of Mrs. Savoy's have shown by their lives that it can and will be done."

My daughter and I have never been so proud to learn that we are related to such a kind, strong willed and determined woman as Jane Savoy, who has become such a prominent part in changing English history.

I am told by my family that Jane's mother's family were descended from the Rhondda Valley, Wales. This is probably why there are quite a few references to Wales.

Michelle Ballard (née Girling),
mother Jean Hargrave, grandmother Constance Wakefield, great grandmother Hannah Major, sister to Jane Savoy.

**The Parish and Ward Church of St
Botolph-without-Bishopsgate Bishopsgate,
EC2M 3TL**

**POST-EVENT PRESS RELEASE 4
August 2016**

LEST WE FORGET

**The Centenary of the WW1 Memorial
Cross at St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate
(the first memorial to the Great War to be
erected in London) dedicated by the Lord
Mayor and the Bishop of Stepney, 4 August
1916**

In the Churchyard at St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate we are proud to have the first freestanding memorial of the Great War in London - a cross erected in response to the great upsurge of public feeling after the Battle of Jutland (31 May-1 June 1916) and the loss of Lord Kitchener and the men of HMS Hampshire off Orkney a few days later, followed by Jack Cornwell's very public burial with full naval honours in late July. The cross was unveiled by the Lord Mayor, and the Bishop of Stepney preached at the dedication ceremony.

The four inscriptions read:

KITCHENER JUNE 5 1916 LEST WE
FORGET
JOHN TRAVERS CORNWELL VC OF HMS
CHESTER THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND
JUNE 1916 HERO OF 16 YEARS
IN MEMORIAM OFFICERS AND MEN OF
THE HONOURABLE ARTILLERY
COMPANY WHO DIED IN THE GREAT
WAR AUGUST 4 1916
IN MEMORY OF OUR BRAVE DEAD OF
BISHOPSGATE 1914-1916

The cross was recently Listed by Historic England, among other memorials of the Battle of Jutland, as part of the commemorations of the centenary of that battle. Today, 4 August 2016 - the day of the memorial's actual centenary (and the 102nd anniversary of the

outbreak of WW1) - was marked with a solemn service of thanksgiving and commemoration, based on the format of the 1916 service.

A large congregation gathered in church, representing all those commemorated on the memorial - the City of London both civic and commercial, the Honourable Artillery Company, organisations associated with Lord Kitchener and Jack Cornwell, and heritage and war memorial charities. The proceedings began with a short act of worship in church at 1.10pm, then the commemoration and re-dedication at the cross itself. The service was conducted by The Revd Canon David Reindorp, Padre emeritus, The Honourable Artillery Company, who led moving prayers at the ceremonies both inside the church and outside by the memorial. The Rt Revd Adrian Newman, Bishop of Stepney, took the part of his predecessor in giving the address and re-dedicating the cross.

In his sermon he reminded the congregation of the words of the Lord Mayor, unveiling the cross 100 years ago today - that it drew together the statesman-warrior (Kitchener), citizen soldiers (the Honourable Artillery Company and the 'brave dead of Bishopsgate') - and a brave, young, innocent, humble-originated sailor lad (Jack Cornwell) – cutting across all divisions of class and educational background in a common cause, the self-sacrifice that ennobles the human condition. He went on to emphasise the importance 100 years on of making connections across the bridges of memory and tradition, especially at a time when we are struggling with questions of national identity, sovereignty and international security.

His address concluded: “To remember in silence is an act of creation, of re-creation. We call forth our memories, face them, and allow ourselves to be created anew, to be healed. Such silences are being crowded out in our over-busy world. But if we are to honour our dead and pay homage to our future, we will

take opportunities like today's anniversary to look back in silence and connect with our deepest memories, so that we can re-imagine the future and walk towards it in faith and hope and love." Music was provided by the Choir of St Botolph's under the direction of Iestyn Evans, and the singing outside was supported by members of the Heroes Band, led by their Chairman, John Seabrook. Following the service and re-dedication, the congregation mingled over refreshments, and many took time to view the Pathé footage of the 1916 unveiling and other events relevant to the commemoration which was shown on a screen in the church, as well as the exhibition 'Exploring London's First World War memorials', produced by the Greater London Authority to mark the centenary of the Great War, which has been lent to St Botolph's to coincide with the centenary commemoration *.

There are photographs of today's ceremonies both inside and outside the church, and a copy of the order of service, on the church's website at <http://www.botolph.org.uk/2016/08/04/lest-we-forget/>

Press enquiries or requests for further information, including guest lists, to Mhairi Ellis at church@botolph.org.uk or 020 7588 3388.

St Botolph's is showing throughout August and into September the exhibition entitled 'Exploring London's First World War memorials', produced by the Greater London Authority to mark the centenary of the Great War. Among other London memorials it includes two memorials at the church – the churchyard cross re-dedicated today, and the memorial mosaic inside the church. The church is open every weekday from 7.00am to 5.30pm and all are welcome to view the exhibition during these times (although entry may be restricted during service times on Wednesday and Thursday lunchtimes).

St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate t: 020 7588 3388 e: church@botolph.org.uk

Interim Priest-in-Charge: The Venerable Luke Miller, Archdeacon of London
Churchwardens: John Parker & Chris Watkins
Administrator: Mhairi Ellis
The Parish and Ward Church of St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate Bishopsgate, EC2M 3TL

I attended this event on behalf of East London History Society. Philip

Book Shelf

Forman's Games, Lance Forman, Biteback Publishing, 2016, ISBN 978-1-78590-115-7, hardback £20

The legacy of the 2012 Olympic games is all around us to see, or is it?

The wonderful Queen Elizabeth Park, vastly improved access to The River Lea, the views from the Orbit Tower but what about the downside? The scandal of the Leyton Food Market, the promised trickle down effect to local traders that never happened and the destruction of a thriving business community.

Lance Forman's book blows the cover on the oft repeated story of a wasteland rescued for the public's benefit. Through his lively history of Britain's oldest surviving salmon smoker, he details its recent downs and current ups and how he had to fight the Olympic Delivery Authority's "dark side" for his firm's very survival. Imaginatively written and an exciting read.

In the end win – win for Formans and London 2012 but a very close run thing. In twenty chapters Lance Forman takes us through the challenging times for the company founded by his grandfather in 1905. Through fire and flood it survived only to be threatened by that most implacable of enemies - bureaucratic intransigence (and a lot of dodgy dealing). The BBC's spoof documentary *Twenty Twelve* suggested what might have been going on inside but Lance Forman gave us the view from the outside. Recommended. **Philip**

Save The Algha Spectacle Works!

Between Victoria Park and the Olympic Park, lies Fish Island, a narrow stretch of land filled with a crowded array of dignified old brick industrial buildings. Most are turned over to artists' studios now, but standing amongst them at the corner of Smeed Rd is the world famous Algha Works, home to Britain's last metal spectacle frame manufacturer, operating from here for the past century.

In this early steel frame building of 1907, the gold National Health Service spectacles that once corrected the sight of the population were made by Max Wiseman & Co, founded in 1898. Think of any of the famous gold rimmed glasses of the twentieth century, from Mahatma Gandhi to John Lennon, to every bank manager and headmaster, and this is where they were manufactured. The heart-shaped sunglasses for Stanley Kubrick's "Lolita" and Harry Potter's geeky specs were also made here.

You might say that Max Wiseman was a visionary in the world of spectacles. "As a young man of nineteen, I was inspired and tremendously enthusiastic at the possibility of 'goldfilled' being the future of spectacles." he wrote breathlessly in the fiftieth anniversary edition of "The Optician" in 1941, and the rest was history. "Goldfilling" means coating the frame with a sleeve of gold which extends the life of the spectacles by preventing corrosion. Cheaper and lighter than solid gold, resistant to corrosion and longer lasting than gold plating, fourteen carat goldfilled spectacles from the Algha Works were universally available on the NHS in this country for forty years.

"They manufactured two and a half million frames a year here, when two hundred people worked in this building," Peter Viner, the current managing director told me, "they lived next door and the building opposite was a school." And he gestured back in time, and

towards the window of his office on the top floor with views back across the East End in one direction and to the Olympic stadium in the other. When Peter came here in 1996, there were over fifty employees and today there are just fifteen, yet the ghosts of the past workforce linger in this light and spacious utilitarian building with its magnificent tiled stairwells and toilets.

Before 1932, Max Wiseman imported his frames from Germany, but the disruption of the First World War and inflation of the nineteen thirties led him to buy a complete factory in Rathnau, Germany and transport it to Hackney Wick along with ten optical technicians. When the Second World War broke out, these technicians found themselves interned in Scotland, but the machinery they set up remains in use after all this time. Efficient, serviceable and sturdy, the complete German plant for manufacturing metal spectacles from the nineteen thirties is used to make all the frames at the Algha Works today – one place where you can truly say, they still make them like they used to. In other words, where the purpose of the manufacture is to create something of the highest quality that will last as long as possible, without built-in obsolescence.

"The black art," as Peter terms it, describing the swaging, pressing, bending, notching, crimping, burnishing and other means of folding, that comprise the one hundred and thirty operations which go into making a pair of metal frames – including seventeen bends for the bridge alone. Protective of his unrivalled spectacle works, Peter restricted what might be photographed lest his Chinese competitors should garner trade secrets, yet he could not resist taking me to the manufacturing floor and showing off the heart of his operation, which gave me the opportunity to meet some of his proud spectacle makers.

Nirmal Chadha, who had been there twenty-four years, showed me the device that creates

the “Hockey” end, bending the “temples” – as the arms of the spectacles are known in the trade. She put in the straight temple, pulled a lever and out came the temple crooked like a Hockey stick, as you would recognise it. Indi Singh, who had been there twenty-two years, demonstrated an elegant machine that spins different wires together to create the tensile arms for spectacles much in demand by sportmen – and curled into a “Fishhook” so they can be secured around the ear.

Meanwhile Matt Havercroft, who had been working there just six months, was screwing temples to frames at the other end of the production line. He told me he was completely absorbed in all the processes and devices that are involved in the art of spectacle making. And after doing casual work in a bar and telephone sales, he was delighted to have found an occupation so engaging. Finally, I was proud to shake hands with Raymond Miller who had worked there thirty years and whose mother also worked there before him.

The shared endeavour at the Algha Works is a unique cultural phenomenon that has miraculously survived here in the East End, in spite of the withdrawal of free National Health Service glasses and the flood of cheap imports sold under designer labels which dominate chains of opticians today. So, if you want a pair of handmade classic spectacles that will last the rest of your life, you know where to go.

Courtesy of The Gentle Author

(This article first appeared in Spitalfields Life)

Letters and Emails

Old Royal Naval College appeal to save magnificent gilded arch in ‘UK’s Sistine Chapel’

I am emailing to ask if you can help the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich spread the word about our upcoming crowdfunding campaign. I think East London History Society members will find it really interesting. This month (11 August until 9 September) we’re crowdfunding to raise £21,250 – in partnership with the Art Fund - to conserve the proscenium arch in our Painted Hall. Could you possibly mention the appeal in your newsletter or on your social media channels? If you think you can help I can provide more information and images.

Many thanks indeed,

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Conserve the Painted Hall - be part of the Big Picture

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From Richard Gordon:

I came across this newsletter online (Volume 3, issue 20, Winter 2014-15 Ed.) and was pleased by the account of the fire in Dixie Street. All the time I was growing up my Nan talked of this but her details were sketchy. All I knew is that it was family and that they were buried together. We spent many years trying to find the grave for my Nan. She passed away in 2007 and in 2009 my father and I finally tracked down the grave in Plaistow... too late to take Nan.

I decided at that point to find out more about the incident and was pleased to find a wealth of information online. I discovered that Thomas Jarvis was the brother of my great great grandmother, so my 3x great uncle.

My great grandmother, the daughter of Annie Jarvis, was a bit of a local celebrity in her own right in later life. She was Mary Ann Davies and she used to clean the shops in Hoxton. When Hayes and English did her funeral in 1974, the market traders asked that her funeral procession traverse the market. It did and, apparently, the whole market stopped out of respect.

My Nan grew up in Hoxton. She was born in Gifford Street and lived later in Barton Court, down the side of Hayes and English, the undertakers. She worked around Hoxton until she finally retired at the age of 88! She was a tiny woman, known to everyone as Sis, though I don't know why.

I have other family from Hoxton also. My mum's mum (Ethel Winslow) came from Wilmer Gardens. Her Uncle was the local Bobby... or so I was told. He was known as Ginger (I don't know any more). Apparently, legend has it, that when the coppers would only go into Wilmer Gardens in pairs, he would go on his own. Apparently, instead of arresting people straight away, he would challenge them to a fist fight. If they won they

could go. If he won they were nicked. He didn't lose many.

Back to the other side of my family, the Gregory's, also spent time in Wilmer Gardens. My great granddad, Vernon Ernest, was a market trader. During the war they lived at 23 Drysdale Street and got killed during the blitz, when the flats were bombed. My granddad's brother (Ernest Vernon John Albert) was also killed that night, as he was at home. I am surprised he was home as he was an air raid warden.

Appeal for help

I am writing to you from School 21, Stratford. A colleague of mine is delivering a drama/history project on WW2 next term and is very keen to include stories from the local community.

I wondered whether you might be able to suggest how I can get in touch with either WW2 survivors or perhaps family members who can share their stories with our students. We want students to hear authentic stories and genuine experiences first hand which we believe will deepen their learning.

Many thanks in advance, I look forward to hearing from you.

Hannah Barnett, **Senior Programme Officer**
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