

CONTENTS

Editorial Page	2	“Emmigrated” children	8
Cover Picture	2	Emails and Letters	9
Programme 2018	3	Bookshelf	12
Gunmakers of the East End	4	To pastures new	14
A family link with Poplarism	7		

Editorial Note:

Philip Mernick, Chairman, Doreen Kendall, Secretary, Harold Mernick, Membership, David Behr, Programme, Diane Kendall, 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 and David Behr.



The Booth Notebooks

Jess and Mike Stone are working on the East London section of the Booth Notebooks, they published the South East section back in 1996. ELHS will be funding the publication which is hoped to be available in 2018. They will be speaking to ELHS on the subject in March (see programme)

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

Post card image from about 1910 showing ships moored in the London Docks. They are all powered by both steam and wind, although their funnels are not easy to see. Nowadays the only sailing ships in the London Docks are the pseudo pirate ships at Tobacco Dock. The post card was published by C.A. Fielding of 86 Watney Street. Fielding is listed as a Newsagent in Post Office Directories and published at least 20 post cards of local views, including one showing his own shop. Ray Newton is hoping to publish them as a book.

If you have any Fielding cards, we would like to have details in case they are new to Ray.

**East London History Society
Lecture Programme 2017**

Thursday 18th January

Ethnic Cleansing? The End of “Little Germany” in Tower Hamlets

Sigrid Werner

Thursday 8th February

Forest Gate, the Development of a Victorian Suburb

Preceded by short AGM at 7.15

Peter Williams & Mark Gorman

Thursday 15th March

The Streets of Booth’s East London.

Jess & Mike Stone

Thursday 19th April

Meet the Authors: Whitechapel in 50 Buildings

Rachel Kolsky & Louis Berk

Thursday 17th May

The V & A Museum of Childhood and Bethnal Green. An exploration of its history and collections

Gary Haines

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 can not be searched. If you have any Newsletters from the 1950s or 1960s please let us know, I am sure we are missing some issues.



“Missing” Diana statue; see letter from Eric Pemberton on page 9

Gun Makers of the East End

Gun making is long established in East London although the traditional home of the trade in England is Birmingham. Manufacture of guns (using this term indiscriminately to cover smooth-bore and rifled firearms) in England was been centred in Birmingham for centuries. From 1725 Birmingham probably produced more than 85% of all the gun parts made in England and more than 75% of the guns. Between 1794 and 1830/40 virtually all the gun parts and many of the complete guns sold in the USA were made in Birmingham – Samuel Colt did not begin American manufacture on any serious scale until about 1848. The Birmingham system was however rather haphazard, relying on highly skilled out-workers specialising in particular parts of the finished weapon which they would supply to numerous buyers. By 1750 specialisation had reached the point where making a gun could involve as many 20 people, and by 1800 it could involve 40 to 50 people.

Birmingham's dominance related to all types of guns, and a major category was 'trade' weapons of modest standard – one authority calls them 'of indescribably vile quality ... for the African market ... sold ... for about seven shillings and sixpence' – originally for bartering with traders in other countries, especially with African chiefs for surplus slaves. The slave trade consumed up to 150,000 weapons per year until 1807. Government practice up to the end of the eighteenth century was to buy weapons from the private sector – demand fluctuated wildly with the amount of war going on, and it avoided maintaining a large establishment – but irregularity of supply during the Napoleonic wars and the piratical habits of the suppliers forced the first major change which shaped the market: the government in 1807 set up its own small arms factory at Armory Mill Greenwich (the site is now Silver Mill in what we would think

of as Lewisham). It was never very efficient, because the River Ravensbourn provided insufficient power, and after Waterloo in 1815 demand for muskets evaporated. The factory was run down from 1811 and closed in 1819. Most of its workers had migrated from the Midlands and Black Country. Some of the men laid off transferred to a new facility at Enfield, later to be the Royal Small Arms Factory, but others headed into East London drawn by two magnets. First there remained skilled gun makers in the area. They were in exactly the area later made infamous by Jack the Ripper. An example is the Squires' gun-making works. Thomas Squire had been acting proof-master of the Gunmakers' Company in 1807, and was established as a gun-maker in Castle Alley in 1808 and at various neighbouring streets up to about 1834. His successor John Squire was in the same area up to the late 1850's, and John's son Henry ended up working as a gun-maker in Soho at the same period.

Guns and gun-making were not new to the area: Henry VIII's Royal Artillery Company practised in the area of Artillery Lane, Street and Passage and Gun Street, a short distance to the West. On a 1572 map buildings North-West of St Botolph Aldgate is marked with a cannon and "Ye Goounefowuders hs." Artillery Lane and Gun Street are now on the site, although for obvious reasons the gun-founders then did their work at the edge of the city.

The Squires family and their associates were clearly top quality craftsmen. Thomas Squire was a maker of gun barrels and a marksman as well: targets of his are illustrated in Beaufoy's *Scloppetaria* (1808), describing him as 'a rifler of barrels and barrel-maker, and who is acknowledged to be a very intelligent man in his line' ['intelligent' here means knowledgeable, not clever].

The second attraction was the Proof House which had stood since 1757 at 46-50 Commercial Road: this is where Commercial Road and Gower's Walk intersect. The Office

of Ordnance (based near the Minories) regulated the supply of arms and gunpowder to the Army, and ran its own foundry. The Blacksmiths' and Carpenters' Companies both tried to dominate the trade, but in 1638 the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers was given a charter, naming 125 local gun-makers. Although a city livery company, it was banished from the City because of its hazardous work. The original proof house, for testing shotguns, was near Tower Hill but relocated to its present site in 1675, where it was rebuilt after damage caused by explosions in 1757.

The Proof House remains a working institution. Gun-making had long been a major local trade, centred in the area east of the Tower and in Saltpetre Bank (now Dock Street), with many specialist workshops throughout the area. Its attraction was so powerful that by 1851 over 50% of London gunsmiths were to be found living in this area.

By a piece of remarkable good fortune, we have the most detailed picture of the area in which the gunmakers working at the Proof House lived, more exhaustively detailed than almost any other space in the Kingdom.

There was published by the Statistical Society of London (now the Royal Statistical Society) in its *Quarterly Journal* for August 1848 a *Report [of] an Investigation into the State of the Poorer Classes in St. George's in the East*.

The Committee chose to sample the part of the St Mary sub-district north of Cable Street: the north side was Commercial Road, the south Cable Street, the west Church Lane [now Back Church Lane] and the east Cannon Street Road. The population was found to be 7711 in 1954 families. The data was collected in summer 1845. St George in the East was selected as 'an example of the average condition of the poorer classes of the

metropolis'. The district sampled was described as 'one of those composed of dingy streets, of houses of small dimensions and moderate elevation, very closely packed in ill-ventilated streets and courts, such as are commonly inhabited by the working classes of the east end; and indeed, it may be said, of all parts of London beyond the limits of that congested band round its centre, where overcrowding is carried to the greatest excess'.

The investigators' object was certainly not to find the worst slum in London. The tables in the Report descend to the minutest detail which is difficult to digest, so let us will assume an 'average' gunsmith family. About 6% of families in the area were headed by a gunsmith or similar. Average weekly wage of heads of families was 20s. 2d. (£1.01 in decimal coinage), but gunsmiths were by a considerable margin the highest earners in the area at 41s. 9d per week (£2.09) – lowest were sailors on 11s. 10d. (59p.)

Despite the high earnings of the gun trade, the Report says 'Those whose homes are most comfortable, in proportion to their earnings, are undoubtedly the German sugar-bakers, and the mates of vessels, with only a part of the gunsmiths; others throwing away all the advantages of their superior earnings by thriftless habits.'

Gunsmith families would pay on average about 3s to 4s. (15-20p) per week in rent, and the average for the whole area was 3s. 7d. They would probably occupy one or two rooms containing not more than 3 beds shared by 2.0 to 2.4 people (printers went up to 4.0 per bed). This is over-crowding which we would find intolerable, but the Report comments 'This is a population entirely above the wretched system of sub-letting corners of the same room, which occasions such an accumulation of wretchedness, barbarism, and disease, in the few localities to which the rudest and most unsettled of the population resort.' It does, however, add that 'Everyone can conceive how unfavourable it is to

domestic quiet to have only one room for every purpose of repose and the ménage. Indeed, the possession of only one room, indicates a depression of habits and of health, which, if every grosser feature of misery were removed, would well deserve the solicitude of the philanthropist; the provision of a second room in town-life being as marked a step as the advancement from a hovel to a proper cottage in the country.'

The area was overwhelmingly (96%) Christian; around 10% of these Roman Catholic and nearly 20% of the Protestants non-Church of England; only 35 Jews; 'one or two Mahommedans', a situation now reversed as the area is strongly Muslim.

American exhibitors at the 1851 Exhibition showed that they were a long way ahead with interchangeable parts and mass production. As a result the new factory was built at Enfield in 1854/5 and production began in July 1855 (meanwhile the private trade yet again failed to complete delivery in the middle of a war, in Crimea). In 1854 Enfield became a major manufacturer. Woolwich was the originally favoured site but the private manufacturers impeded this as an accessible factory would be a more formidable competitor. The Royal Small Arms Factory attracted many of the skilled gunmakers who had been working in East London.

John Causer

Further reading

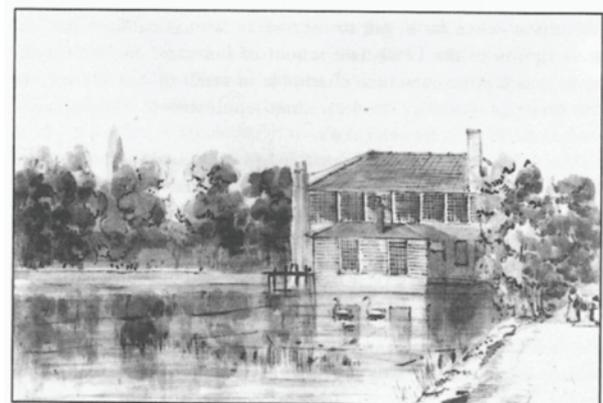
- On the Birmingham gun trade: *The Birmingham Gun Trade*, by David Williams (The History Press 2004, 2009)
- On Armory Mill Greenwich: *The Lewisham Silk Mills and the History of an Ancient Site, The Story of Armour, Small Arms, Silk and Gold & Silver Wire Drawing*, by Sylvia Macartney and John West (Lewisham Local History Society 1979, 2nd Edn 1998)
- On gunmakers in London: *A Dictionary of London Gunmakers 1350-1850* by Howard L.

Blackmore (Phaidon/Christies Oxford, 1986) ISBN 0-7148-8021-3 with Supplement (Museum Restoration Service) [This is very hard to obtain, and then only at a high price. There is a copy in the Guildhall Library]

- On the Gunmakers' Company and Proof House: *The Worshipful Company of Gunmakers A History* Ed. Derek Stimpson (The Worshipful Company of Gunmakers, 2008). [This comes about as close to breach of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 as a book can: it is not a history at all, but a rag-bag of oddments culled from the records carelessly edited and strung together in no particular order, and is so old fashioned that it has unnumbered 'plates' pages].
- On the RSAF Enfield: *The Royal Small Arms Factory Enfield & Its Workers* by David Pam (published by the author, 1998)



The Proof House 1904



Armoury Mill 1841

A Family Link with Poplarism

Wallace Hancock grew up in Tredegar Road, Bow, the youngest of twelve children in a family of modest means. A clever boy, he won a coveted place at George Green School and was fortunate to stay at the school until he was nearly sixteen years old. In February 1909 he was appointed a Junior Clerk working for the Poplar Board of Guardians (PBG) who had responsibility for workhouses, schools and asylums and the general provision of support for the poor and unemployed in the Borough. Poplar's financial resources were totally inadequate and its councillors were arguing for equalisation of the burden of Poor Relief amongst the other wealthier London Boroughs. Will Crooks and George Lansbury became Guardians in 1892 as Labour minority representatives and were determined to tackle the desperate plight of the poor in Poplar.

At the outbreak of the Great War, Wallace joined the army in November 1914 as a Kitchener volunteer: he served on the Western Front and was wounded in 1915. He was sent back to England in June 1916 to be commissioned as an officer and thus was spared the slaughter of the Battle of the Somme. Returning to the front as an officer in the Machine Gun Corps he survived the horrors of Passchendaele and in April 1918 was captured in the fierce fighting of the Battle of the Lys. He ended the war as a POW in Silesia and was repatriated in December 1918. Wallace was highly regarded by the Guardians for his work before the war and they requested his early demobilisation from the army to meet their urgent needs: permission was granted and he was demobilised in January 1919. He returned to work with the Guardians as Third Assistant Clerk.

There were significant political changes in Poplar at that time. After the Great War the Labour Party emerged as a serious political force and at the elections in March 1919 won all four LCC seats in Poplar. The Board of Guardians also went Labour. In November

George Lansbury became the first Labour Mayor of Poplar. The new councillors and Guardians were determined that there should be changes, especially in providing assistance for the poor. Certain bodies provided services across London, such as the LCC itself, the Metropolitan Police and the Asylums Board and the funding of these bodies was met by a precept (or supplementary tax) which was levied on local boroughs. Funding of Poor Relief, however, remained the responsibility of local boroughs. Lansbury and his Labour colleagues were determined to make their point about equalisation of this burden across all boroughs and to do so they refused to levy the precept for the LCC and other bodies. This provoked legal action against Poplar Council in the summer of 1921 and the High Court ordered it to make payment, which the councillors refused to do.

National interest was aroused and amid scenes of great public excitement and vigorous protests, 30 or 31 of Poplar's 49 councillors were sent to prison in September. The Minister for Health, Sir Alfred Mond, sought a compromise: none was found and the government gave in, release of the imprisoned councillors was ordered by the High Court and legislation was hastily passed to put the main cost of Poor Relief onto a pooled Metropolitan Common Poor Fund. The equalisation of the burden of Poor Relief became law in an Act of that year. It was a very significant step towards the eventual emergence of the country's social welfare system.

The drama of the councillors' imprisonment was played out publicly on the national stage. Without any publicity, a small team of administrators at the PBG worked desperately to maintain proper financial records, to deal with the mounting debts incurred (the unpaid precept alone amounted to £300,000) and to adhere to the provisions of the law. A heavy burden fell upon Wallace Hancock. His superior in the accounts team, Mr Burdett, suffering from the effects of war wounds, went on prolonged sick leave at the height of the

crisis in September 1921. PBG minutes record a request that the Clerk 'do inform Mr Hancock that the question of extra duties involved during the absence of Mr Burdett through illness will be considered on the latter's return to duty.' Sadly, in April 1922 Mr Burdett died: Wallace was formally appointed Accountant to the PBG. In June 1922 the Guardians awarded Wallace a gratuity of £25 in recognition of his performance of extra duties.

The pressures upon Wallace did not lessen. After the end of the precept crisis, the Guardians, led by George Lansbury, persisted in paying above the scale of relief to be charged to the Common Poor Fund. An inspector was appointed to conduct an inquiry into the Poplar expenditures and it fell to Wallace to provide the data to be considered by the inspector. The inspector's report was highly critical of many aspects of the Guardians' conduct, judging them to be irresponsibly free with public money. But his report made no criticism of the accounting and administrative procedures at the PBG.

Wallace Hancock was my uncle. For the rest of his life he remained proud what was achieved in the 'Councillors' Revolt': it was a high point in what became known as 'Poplarism'. The Guardians' published a riposte to the inspector's report; a rather tattered copy of '*Guilty and proud of it*' is a treasured family memento of Wallace's unsung participation in this event of national importance. George Lansbury remained a good friend. Wallace became a pacifist, and dedication in this field provided another bond between the two men. Wallace continued to serve the PBG and then the LCC by devoting his professional life to the provision of assistance for the underprivileged and the poor in Poplar during the deprivation and challenges of the 1920s and 1930s. He became an acknowledged expert in this work and at the outbreak of war in 1939 he was one of the most senior officers in the social welfare department of the LCC. I am proud of his unsung but important role in

those momentous events that took place nearly 100 years ago.

Clive Wright

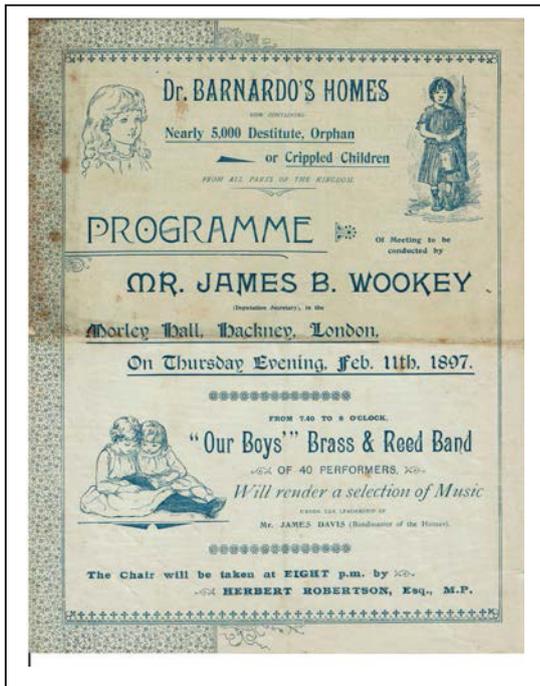
“Emigrated” Children

The request of Phil Mernick for copy for the Newsletter brought to mind a rather poignant item in my Hackney Collection. I have scanned the front and back pages of an entertainment programme from 1897. It was held at Morley Hall, The Triangle Mare Street. Morley Hall was used as a venue for popular music, a cinema, a place of Christian worship, and an education centre. It suffered severe damage during the Second World War.

I wonder how close the sketches on the back page come to reality? Of the fourteen “homeless lads received on a Single Day” one has an above the knee amputation of the left leg and all but three have cloth caps. I have always been fascinated by the list of desired donations printed in descending order. Third in line is one for £10 that will pay for “the complete outfit and passage-money of any little one Emigrated for prudential reasons to our Branch Homes in the Colonies”.

In their book published in 1989 “Lost Children of the Empire” Philip Bean and Joy Melville relate stories of some of the 130,000 children who had been shipped off to distant parts of the Empire. The last as recently as 1967. Some tales of success and some of tragedy. Of children given love and warm homes pitifully not found by them in the slums of London and tales of abuse (physical, sexual and psychological) after they had arrived in the Colonies of the British Empire. Sometimes very little, if any, follow up was provided. It was another time with different values. We must be thankful that we too were not “emigrated”.

Melvyn Brooks



Emails and Letters

From: J Waterhouse

Subject: Uncle Berts - ELHS Newsletter Summer 2012

There's me looking for anything on Uncle Bert and your newsletter pops up out of the web!

"Opposite The Connaught on the corner of Hind Grove is 'Bert Moffats' pawn shop. Exactly who 'Bert Moffat' was; or had been, I never did find out, but it was a useful place for locals to 'pop' something to tide them over until pay day."

He was Herbert George Moffatt 1881-1953 and married my Grandmother's Aunt Lil (Lillian) Gower. According to my Grandmother Uncle Bert was quite a famous person in the East End of London. He owned a large pawnbrokers shop and when the sailors entered port they made their way to Uncle Bert's to trade. For a time Bert's family lived over the shop and then they moved to Whipps Cross. They had three daughters; Edith, Marjorie and Dorothy.

Might be of interest for your research. I do have all the family details with dates etc.

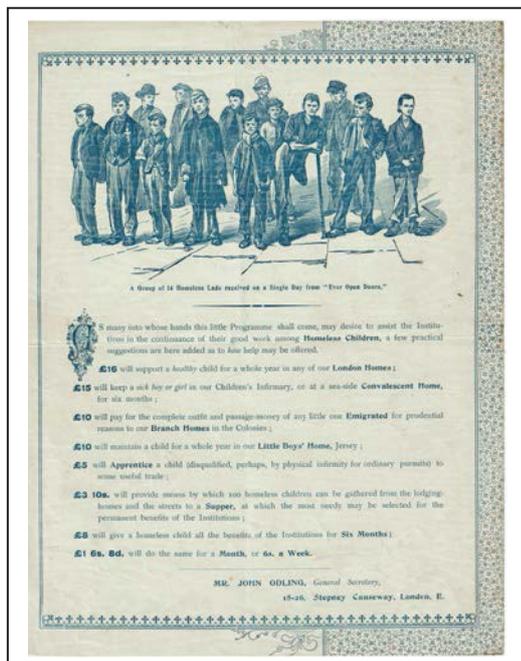
Kind regards,
Jonathan Waterhouse

Philip Mernick responded:

Dear Jonathan, I am so glad that our newsletter was useful. If you don't mind I will add your comment to one of our future issues.

From: Eric Pemberton
Hon President
Friends of Island Gardens

May I please refer your Newsletter Volume 1 Issue 15 Summer 1998 (see Attached) concerning "Where is Diana" a statue missing from Island Gardens.



The Friends are trying to locate the statue and have it returned as it is part of the Island Heritage, I attach a photo of same and wonder if any of your members can help in locating same?

Kind Regards
Eric

Funeral Zone's Famous Graves Finder is a 'Who's Where' of inspirational figures from UK history

Where was King Arthur buried and nurse Florence Nightingale laid to rest? Did you know that Lord Nelson's coffin was made from a ship – and where does it lie? Now, you can discover where someone who made history is sleeping for all eternity – and it could be in a town or place near you.

The graves of 50 famous people who made helped Britain great have been pinpointed on a fascinating new interactive map to explore. The UK's Famous Graves Finder is a voyage of discovery around the nation's hidden churchyards and famous burial sites, which celebrates the late, the great and local heroes who made history.

The Famous Graves Finder (www.funeralzone.co.uk/famous-graves) includes 50 musicians, artists, poets, military heroes and inventors, who are just the first to feature on the map. You can search by famous name or simply click on the map to discover who's where and begin a journey of discovery.

With the help of fans, history buffs and literature-lovers, the Famous Graves Finder is set to grow and grow, as cemetery tourism becomes an increasingly popular pastime in the UK.

Whether it's a famous footballer who led your local team to national victory, or a local hero who proudly called your city, town or village home, anyone who helped make the nation

what it is today can be nominated to feature on the UK's Famous Graves Finder. It could even be an opportunity to mark the lives of forgotten heroes, or glorious eccentrics from the past.

It's also a chance to keep many fascinating stories and legends alive, as well as inspire you to get out and explore. There are hundreds of historic graves to be found among the UK's wealth of curious cemeteries, bucolic burial grounds and majestic national monuments.

The Famous Graves Finder has been launched by Funeral Zone, the UK's online resource for the bereaved.

Funeral Zone's Jessica Hanson said: "We want to celebrate the great, the good and local heroes who deserve wider recognition, from the distant and recent past. We're hoping people will explore the Famous Graves Finder and be inspired to discover these famous graves for themselves.

"We're also asking, who have we missed? We're hoping people will let us know about the graves of important figures and where to find them in their local area. However long ago they died, their stories are part of the nation's living legacy. We want to put their final resting places on the map."

ENDS

For more information, please contact Catherine Barnes or Jessica Hanson at Funeral Zone on 01392 409764

Email: catherine.barnes@funeralzone.co.uk

Email: jessica.hanson@funeralzone.co.uk

Funeral Zone is the UK's online funeral resource. www.funeralzone.co.uk. Find our Famous Graves Finder at www.funeralzone.co.uk/famous-graves.

Rosina Howard at 100 - Stan Newens

Edward Howard was born in Homerton in 1891 and worked as a painter for the North London Railway. He married Rosina Florence

Sheen of 37 Quilter Street, Bethnal Green on 2nd August, 1914. Their daughter, Rosina Florence Howard, was born three years later on their anniversary, 2nd August, 1917. By this time, Edward was serving in the Army in the Middle East and, on 15th December, 1917, he was killed without having seen his daughter. Rosina's mother's brother also died in the First World War, and her only step-brother in 1940, in World War II.

Rosina, after being educated at Columbia Road and Mansford Street Schools, volunteered for the Land Army and worked in the Lea Valley, where she still lives.

On 6th August, 2017, a party was held in the garden of her home at Cuffley to celebrate her 100th birthday. Fifty guests, including friends and relatives – including some from Bethnal Green – attended. Former Labour MP Stan Newens, her second cousin, proposed a toast to Rosina, and all agreed on the need to avoid future wars and congratulated Rosina on having survived a troubled century.

From: Chris Povey

Wanted information regarding the Bank of Friendship (Tavern)

The Bank of Friendship Public House used to stand at 22 Harford Street Mile End in the East End of London from around 1860 until it was closed in 1940 due to sustaining extensive damage during the blitz. The Pub was on the corner of Ely Terrace (which no longer exists) and Harford Street, opposite Solebay Street and to the north of Ernest Street. The area is now known as the Ocean Estate and forms part of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets

My interest in the pub stems from the fact that my Great Grandmother, Theresa Harriett Chipchase, was the last landlady of the pub in 1940. Although she was the landlady she was not the licensee as she had served a 3 day prison sentence for non-payment of rates some time before. The Licensee was her fancy man (late daughter in laws term) "Dodger" Harris

(Thomas Henry Harris)

The records for this pub date back to the 1860's but it is not known when it was originally built. It seems that it was badly damaged on the first night of the blitz. My Great Grandmother and her daughter Irene were rescued from the bombed out building by her eldest son George (Howell). She went back to live in Lady Somerset Road, Tufnell Park, only to be blitzed again. All the people living in the downstairs flat killed. George searched for three days before finding her in Highgate Hospital where she died on 9th April, 1941 aged 57. She is buried with her first husband (Walter George Howell) in Highgate Cemetery.

There seem to be very few photographs of the pub before it was destroyed. The Barclay Perkins advertising board on the roof of the building can be seen in a picture of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee procession in 1897. The picture is taken from the front of the People's Palace on Mile End Road looking down Harford Street. It is published in "In living Memory, Photographs of Tower Hamlets" by Stephen Beckett. The only other photograph shows the pub in its derelict state in 1947 prior to the redevelopment of the area into the Ocean Estate.

<https://collage.cityoflondon.gov.uk/view-item?i=120665&WINID=1501923326934> The pub is the building to the extreme left of the picture.

If anyone has or knows where further pictures of information about this pub can be found please contact the site webmaster at the e-mail below.

There is some history that shows that the pub was used for court hearings, a meeting house for the Freemasons, a music hall venue and for boxing. There was an upstairs function room with a raised viewing platform around the walls

The above is taken from the website I set up relating to the Bank of Friendship:

www.bankoffriendship.co.uk

Philip Mernick sent out this appeal in July:

Dear member, we usually issue a newsletter at the end of August, in time to advise those that can attend, the dates of our new series of lectures. The problem is we have NO content. If you have something of interest, from one paragraph to ten pages please get your name in print by sending it to me, either by post or by email.

I look forward to receiving so much material that we have to hold some over for Christmas!

Philip received this response:

Hello Philip. I'm sorry to hear that! And surprised! As I'm down here in Queensland, Australia I can't really do anything but maybe ask if a little request could be inserted into August or December's issue?

Might I ask if anyone might have a photo of The King's Head Pub, outside or inside?! This was my great grandfather's pub for over 10 years and I gather from an officer in the East End Library (I know that's not the correct title) that he had once imbibed there sometime in the early 70's before the pub was demolished. The pub was located handsomely so on the corner of British Street and Bow Road. It was one of a small no of shops facing onto Bow Road up to the next Merchant Street.

Thanks to you, some years ago, you either sent me or referred me to a site that had some lovely streetscape photos of Bow Road, which showed in middle and far distance the birthplace of my English grandfather, The King's Head. He became a law clerk and left England for Melbourne, Australia in 1912. I think he was rueful about leaving England. Just in case the above might suit your publishing of next issue here is a little text re the above:

"The King's Head Public House: 8 Bow Road, Bromley-by-Bow. Would anyone have any photos of it before it was demolished in the mid 1970's? I'll be glad of any shots even if they are interiors. If you are able to oblige then please email me:

jk2211@bigpond.com Thanks, Julie Kemp, Queensland, Australia."

Book Shelf

The Match Girl and the Heiress by Seth Koven. Princeton University Press, January 2015 **ISBN-13:** 978-0691158501, hard or soft cover, 464 pages, about £15 from Amazon

This book describes the relationship between Nellie Dowell, a worker in Bell's match factory in Bow, and Muriel Lester, the well-known pacifist and East End philanthropist, co-founder, with her sister Doris, of Kingsley Hall. The author, an American academic historian, discovered in the Muriel Lester archive a package of letters from Nellie to Muriel covering their relationship from the years before the Great War, through their joint participation in the work of Kingsley Hall until Nellie's death in 1923.

Koven's book provides an absorbing panorama of early twentieth century life in Bow where Nellie lived (apart from a period when she worked for Bell's in New Zealand and Sweden). He also gives a fascinating account of the role of 'match girls' – that is, girl workers in match factories – in the campaign to address social inequality and bad working conditions. We are given a picture of life in the early days of the Kingsley Hall experiment in communal living. The book handles a number of themes from women's suffrage, Christian mysticism and the early days of trade unions to pacifism and radical politics within the context of East London and the desperate poverty and social exclusion of so many who lived there in the opening decades of the last century. The hard life of Nellie Dowell and the poignancy of her loving letters to Muriel provide a moving story and give an uplifting glimpse of her resilience in the face of great hardship and poor health. For anyone interested in the history of East End life, this book offers riches indeed.

Clive Wright

A Dictionary of Lost East London, Mick Lemmerman, 2017, 287 pages, ISBN978-1-547105007. Self published? £12.95 from Amazon.

The rear cover reads “An absolute must for anyone interested in the history of East London or who is exploring their East London ancestry - a comprehensive dictionary of the lost streets, roads, alleys, lanes, public houses, blocks of flats, places of worship, schools, hospitals, docks, wharves and other places of note. Find out where it was and/or how it was renamed, with more than seven thousand entries covering centuries of East London's past” As the author, who presumably wrote that text himself, says it references a lot of places and it will be very useful to quickly locate places mentioned in census reports or other historical data. Many streets and public houses have vanished over the last hundred years and researching them does take time. This book, at a modest price for its size can be used as a look up or just for browsing; **however**, it only gives one date for when each location has been recorded. Many researchers want to know when the place first appeared and when it disappeared. I realise that would have involved an enormous amount of additional work but it has already been done by others. There is already a comprehensive topographical database of Tower Hamlets. I have used it, Bancroft Road uses it, and no doubt others, but it has not been made available to the general public. This seems a shame but it is the compiler's decision to take. Philip Mernick

East End Vernacular, The Gentle Author (editor), 2017, 160 pages, casebound. ISBN978-0-9957401-1-2. Spitalfields Life Books, £25

I bought this from the author when he spoke about it at ELHS's November meeting and find it such an impressive book. With its beautifully printed covers, its gold fly leaves and its elegantly laid out images, this would make a great present for yourself, family or

friends.

The subtitle is ‘Artists who painted London's East End streets in the 20th century’ but prologue and epilogue take it back to the 19th and forward to the 21st centuries. Many of the thirty artists featured came/come from East London but all were influenced by it. They each have a page of biographical information and from one to seven pages of images, both paintings and engravings. If a picture needs a double page it gets it rather than being shrunk to fit onto a single page. As you might guess from the above, I like it!

Philip Mernick

The East End – My Birthright, by Albert Turpin, 2017, 217 pages, ISBN978-1-547105007. Francis Boutle Publishers, £20, card covers.

I bought my copy at the Nunnery Gallery, Bow Road after viewing their exhibition *The Working Artist: The East London Group*, curated by Michael Rosen and Emma-Louise Williams 29th September to 17th December. The show included works by a number of artists featured in *The Gentle Author's* book, reviewed above, but I was particularly struck by those painted by Albert Turpin. Known to his friends as “Dick”, I suppose in the way that all Whites were “Chalky” Albert Turpin remained an East Ender (specifically a Bethnal Greener). The book is completely different to *East End Vernacular* as, although it is beautifully illustrated with colour pictures and sketch book drawings, its core is his previously unpublished autobiography written in the 1940s. Born in 1900, he describes vividly his early life, his enlisting in 1914, at the age of 15, in the army and after two years being discharged as under age and re-enlisting in the Royal Marines. He took up painting while serving in the Marines and continued painting until his death in 1964. After the first war he became a socialist, an anti-fascist campaigner and a borough councillor. After service in the Fire Brigade during World War II he was elected Mayor of Bethnal Green in 1946. All of this is described in a very readable way. Philip Mernick

To Pastures New

How life changed for one East End family, 1901-1939.

In recounting the events of my grandparents' life in the years 1901 to 1939, I have endeavoured to show how they represented so many aspects of life for the working classes. In the early years of the century there are examples of poor housing conditions, infant mortality and premature death. The slaughter in France during the Great War had its effect on this family, as did the subsequent rise in fascism. Despite adversity, their lives show remarkable resilience and a constant endeavour to improve their lot. The period closed with the benefits of slum clearance, re-housing and a general improvement in all their lives.

My grandfather, Frederick Davis, was born in 1883 in Bethnal Green. He was the fourth child in a large family. His father had moved to London from Tring in Hertfordshire whilst his mother had come with her brother and sisters from Somerset. They had come to London to look for work and like so many migrants before them, they had settled in the East End. Frederick, following his father's occupation, became a Carman and worked with horses for most of his life. He married my grandmother Amy, the daughter of a dock labourer in 1906. Four children were born before Amy's death at the age of 32 in 1915 in the Poplar Sick Asylum. Frederick now found himself a widower with a young family, the baby only a year old and all living with his late wife's family in Limehouse. Two years later he married Clara, the fiancée of his younger brother who had been killed in France in 1914.

Soon after their marriage they moved from Limehouse to Gillman Street, Bethnal Green where Clara's father, brother and sisters already lived. Here they raised a second family although by now a boy born to Amy had died and the children numbered seven, my Mother being the second eldest.

Gillman Street, previously known as Wolverley Street, had been included in a survey of Bethnal Green in 1846 by Hector Gavin, a leading figure in Public Health. Although paved, the street was described as a muddy cul-de-sac adjoining a brickfield. The houses were built as narrow terraces with the front door opening straight from the pavement into the main living room. Beyond was a small kitchen and a back yard with an outside lavatory. A tap in the yard provided the only running water for the house. Upstairs was one bedroom shared by all the children except the eldest boy, Freddie, who had to sleep at an aunt's house nearby. The parents had a bed downstairs in the living room and it was here that the children were born, a blanket being hung across the room to give some privacy during confinements. The family was tormented by the constant presence of bed bugs despite repeated attempts to kill them by painting the bedsteads with paraffin. Frederick continued to work as a Carman, driving for MacNamara's who had one of the largest stables in London. When the opportunity arose, he would come home at midday for something to eat and any child at home would be instructed to hold the reins and watch over the horse and van. If lucky, they were rewarded by a ride with all their friends to the end of the road. He took considerable pride in the horse's appearance, so much so, that on one occasion he won the much-coveted prize for the best turnout in his class at the Regents Park Horse Show.

Money was always short and a great deal of ingenuity was used to try and make ends meet. Clara worked at home, making artificial flowers which had been her trade before she married. Her sister who lived nearby made matchboxes at home and some of the family still remember the awful smell of the glue that filled the little house. It was often necessary for one of the boys to fetch a jug of Porter from the local pub to help the boxmaker to carry on! Regular trips were made to the Pawnbrokers to pledge the week's freshly

washed laundry, along with Frederick's one and only suit. These would be redeemed on the Friday pay day. The children's clothes were either handed down, home-made or bought on tick from "Aunt Harriet", the second-hand clothes lady at the corner of the street. However hard the times, the girls always had a new ribbon in their hair and a new pinafore for Bank Holidays.

Shopping was done at the corner shop, mostly on a daily basis with frequent visits for the staple items including a pennyworth of jam fetched in your own basin. Clara was a good plain cook and very skilled in feeding a large family on cheap cuts of meat and substantial puddings to keep hunger at bay. Late night shopping on Saturdays at Broadway market would provide meat sold cheaply as the stalls closed and left-over fruit and vegetables were often sold at bargain prices, all of which helped provide a tasty Sunday dinner for all the family.

It is not surprising that the cramped living conditions often resulted in bouts of ill health. Apart from the more common childhood illnesses, Scarletina, Rheumatic fever and Tuberculosis often occurred. Minor injuries necessitated a visit to the much loved Queen Elizabeth's Children's Hospital in Hackney Road and if the little patients were not too poorly, they would be cheered up by being given a bun and a ride on a large rocking horse. My Aunt told me that, as a girl, she always volunteered to accompany a young casualty to the hospital in the hope that she, too, would receive a treat.

Despite all the hardships, family life held many pleasures for young and old. In the scant space available in the back yard, Frederick grew geraniums and found room to keep his racing pigeons. Street games and pastimes were always popular with the children and the men would often turn a long rope across the street so that all the children could enjoy the traditional skipping games and rhymes.

Sundays meant regular attendance at Sunday School with the chance of an outing to Epping Forest in the summer. The Toy Museum at Bethnal Green was a favourite with the children. Parties were held on the slightest pretext, often in the street itself with a piano wheeled out to provide the music. A small cinema, formerly the Seabright Music Hall where Marie Lloyd had once performed, provided the occasional treat for the children while a rare visit to the Hackney Empire was a great delight. Weddings often took place at Christmas or on other special holidays so that the celebrations could go on a little longer. Soon this way of life was to change forever. The London County Council had, since its formation in 1890, carried out a continuing policy of slum clearance. They had begun in the East End with the area known as "The Old Nichol" which lay behind Shoreditch Church. This warren of narrow courts and alleys had been thinly disguised as "The Jago" in Arthur Morrison's famous novel "Child of the Jago" published in 1896. At the time, this book drew considerable attention to the appalling living conditions in this area.

By 1930, Gillman Street was scheduled for demolition and the family moved to The White Hart Lane Estate in Tottenham. Although only a few miles to the north of Bethnal Green, the change in their lives was dramatic. Tree-lined avenues replaced the narrow East End streets. Neat little cottages with good sanitation, including a bath and toilet replaced the old houses with their tap and a privy in the yard. Gardens at front and back completed the rural picture of the family's new surroundings. No wonder my Mother always said she thought they had moved to paradise.

Land for the White Hart Lane Estate had been purchased by the L.C.C. in 1901 at the cost of £400 per acre. The site covered 226 acres and was developed over several years. The estate was modelled on the Garden City concept and included an estate office, doctor's surgery and shops. In addition, there were allotments and public gardens complete with croquet and

tennis courts. The L.C.C. architects took great pride in these new estates and by using an informal layout of street and crescents, enhanced by decorative tile and brickwork, they avoided the depressing appearance of some of the earlier estates.

It should be noted that the building of the estate was not welcomed by all the residents of Tottenham. Letters appeared in the local press expressing concern over the influx of people displaced by the slum clearances in the East End.

The cottages were built in a variety of styles and sizes and each had in its living room, a kitchen with open and closed fire, a dresser and a plate rack. The scullery contained a sink, copper and gas oven. Each bedroom had a wardrobe cupboard and many cottages enjoyed the luxury of a bathroom. They had cost between £150 and £366 to construct and the rents were between 6/6d and 13/6d a week, including all rates.

For all the family, life was now very different. Frederick travelled to Shoreditch by tram to start his days work and made use of the cheap early morning workman's ticket. His eldest son, Freddie, had chosen to remain in the East End. At a time of high unemployment, Freddie became caught up in politics, joining Mosley's Blackshirts, only to be forcibly removed by his father. Back in Tottenham, the elder children were at work and contributing to the household budget. This helped furnish the little house with the small comforts they had never known in Bethnal Green.

The long "country" garden was an endless source of delight to my Grandfather – he spent all his spare time growing vegetables and cultivating his favourite flowers. Vases of his blooms always decorated the front room. Clara was able, for the first time, to hang the washing out to dry in the cleaner air of Tottenham.

The younger children enjoyed the estate's public gardens where sports days and other activities were often held. Nearby parks provided endless amusements with variety shows and concerts on the bandstand. The 1930s saw the building of an open air swimming pool nearby which soon became very popular with the estate residents. With more money coming in, the elder children enjoyed the occasional visit to the West End theatre, usually the Palladium and days out at Southend were great favourites with all the family.

The benefits of the move to Tottenham were evident in the improved health and well being of all the family. Better living conditions, good sanitation and clean air combined to make life much more comfortable for all of them. The sons and daughters grew up, married and moved away (though never very far). Frederick and Clara continued to live on the Estate and the little house was the scene of many happy family gatherings over the years.

Joyce Groen

Sources Consulted

1. Family recollections
2. Tower Hamlets' Archives, Bancroft Library, Mile End, E1
3. Haringey Council Archives, Bruce Castle Museum, N17
4. Sanitary Ramblings, Hector Gavin, publ. 1848 reprinted 1971
5. A Child of the Jago, Arthur Morrison, publ. 1896
6. The Building News, No. 3292, 6th February 1918
7. Marie Lloyd, Anthony Baker, publ. 1990
8. Public Housing, Alan Cox, publ. 1993