



Bow Common Gas Works

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

Coping with Covid

We are still debating how East London History Society can continue to engage its members while unable to hold meetings. We also need to discuss if our current lecture programme running from September to May should be changed to something like March to October.

We could try some Zoom talks if someone was confident how it could be done. The most efficient method of communicating with our members would be by email via the Mailchimp application and for that reason any member for whom we have no email address will receive an a request to let us have it. Of course, if you do not have an email address you won't be able to supply it!

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.

Currently cancelled due to Covid-19.

Cover Picture Bow Common Gas Works

The Great Central Gas Consumers' Company works were built, in 1850, next to Tower Hamlets cemetery, on Bow Common Lane, Bow Common at a cost of £106,000. A noticeable feature was the process, devised by Croll, of employing waste heat from one set of retorts to fire another. The gasworks soon fell into disrepair and an act of embezzlement by an employee finally compelled the company to sell to the Gas Light & Coke Company in 1870. The works were almost entirely rebuilt in 1926 but gas production stopped about 1960. The site was then used for gas storage with the last of the holders only removed in 2017. The site is due for redevelopment by St. William, a joint venture between The Berkeley Group and National Grid. The planning application with its large number of tall blocks has met with much opposition, as it is feared the tall blocks will overshadow the park and seriously impact on its wild-life and environment.

East London History Society Lecture Programme 2020

Because of the current Covid-19 emergency we postponed the last two lectures of our 2019/20 season and provisionally allocated them to September and October of the 2020/21 season.

September 2020

Hackney, Portrait of a Community

Laurie Elks

November 2020

The Precinct of St Katherine's by the Tower in the 18th century

Derek Morris

However, it now seems unlikely that restrictions on indoor meetings will be lifted before the end of the year. We expect to have another newsletter before then to advise you of the up to date position.

Suggestions and ideas for future topics and/or speakers for our 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 all issues of ELHS Newsletter from 1992 until issue 4-15. 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.

Requests for help

Returning member John Burden writes

I was born in the German Hospital Dalston in 1947 & lived in Graham Road, Dalston until I was 10^{1/2}. I have fond memories of Hackney and have been researching my family history on and off for 40 years.

I have become increasingly interested in the history of the area, its buildings, churches schools, hospitals and other features such as Ridley Road Market, railways etc., many of which have changed considerably since I left the area with my parents, for Hertfordshire.

If you or any other members can suggest sources, contacts, publications etc. I would be very grateful.

John can be contacted at
burdjohn@hotmail.com

Kenneth Greenway, Manager of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park appeals for donations.

All the events and activities at the cemetery park are cancelled for the foreseeable future because of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the friends depend on these events for income

Help the Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park get through the COVID-19 outbreak and continue protecting local nature and heritage.

See a video of Ken's appeal and read more information at

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/friends-of-tower-hamlets-cemetery-park-survival-appeal>

THE POSTCARD AGE

A hundred years ago, the sending of postcards, which joined word and image, were just as up to-date as the inter-net is today. Postcards were fast and post cards were new. In 1869 the Austro-Hungarian post office issued the first prepaid postal cards - letters without envelopes. Those first cards were very simple, with one side reserved for the message, the other for the address. They were an instant success. Customers sent them by the millions, earning the post office a tidy profit. Very soon almost every postal service in Europe, the Americas, and Asia followed suit. The cards filled a clear practical need, a cheap and efficient way to send a note. They quickly came to embody the concept of the rapid message at a time when telephones were rare. Instant communication technology - in some cities, cards mailed in the morning reached their destination later the same day.

By the 1890s, postcards had become an essential part of everyday life. They were the very cheapest thing to mail, at half the price of a letter and people did so with an enthusiasm verging on mania. They offered an inexpensive way to communicate with loved ones who were far away. The medium also spread the latest news, photographers using film specially made to print directly on postcard stock could capture a key moment, print it right away, and immediately begin distributing the cards. They offered a pictorial record of the latest newsworthy events, whether global or local to spread quickly and over long distances. At a time when telephones were used only on special occasions, movies were still a novelty, and newspapers were typically illustrated with line drawings rather than halftone photographs, postcards were a new media. They allowed the current events and burning issues of the day to spread quickly and over long distances.

A postcard craze swept the World as billions of cards were bought and mailed. Many of these

cards were thrown away after they had served their purpose, but not all as the craze for buying and sending was married to a craze for collecting them. Collections of postcards from this age record the technological, social, political and artistic developments of a time when rapid and broad transformations shook the world.

During the first six months of 1898 Germans mailed over twelve million postcards; four years later they were sending almost that number in a single week. Tourists spent their time on vacation seeking out the best postcards of local attractions rather than actually visiting them themselves. The humourist Jerome K. Jerome remarked that the typical German tourist did not even know where he had been until he returned home and examined the postcards he had sent to family!

Just as today's electronic means of communication, especially text messages, are seen as a threat to the proper use of language and social propriety, so too were postcards. "The biggest gift to human laziness". For one thing, the short messages that fit on the cards could hardly convey the erudition of a traditional letter, a long-time sign of refinement. Some felt that the postcard's open nature promoted the circulation (and in effect endorsement) of potentially libellous statements. The lack of an envelope also exposed one's personal affairs in an unprecedentedly public manner, not only to postal workers but also perhaps more threateningly to the servants who brought the mail to the final recipient! Some believed that sending an unsolicited postcard was an unmannerly violation of the recipient's privacy.

Nearly every role the postcard played in the decades around 1900 has an analogue in today's electronic technology. They too conveyed quick messages, made appointments, invitations, shared images and made contact with loved ones far away. With pictures of

goods and services on their fronts, quick notes about costs and orders on the back, whole businesses ran on postcards. They were part and parcel of a busy, rushing time-saving age - today it is the internet!

LYNDA KISS

BRENDA’S FAMILY

Correspondence received in response to my request for content.

Dear Philip

My grandfather Stafford Argyle Campbell ran a black cab business under the railway arches off Burdett Road, they lived at 264 (?) Burdett Road. My father Archibald Clapcott Campbell b 1907 went to Thomas St school and won a scholarship to St Olave's grammar school. I haven't found where his brother Stafford Frederick b 1912 went to school, in 1939 he was 2nd Lieutenant in the Inns of Court Regiment then Territorial in Royal Artillery, on his Service Record he declares that he was educated privately, which seems a bit strange. My father joined the TA in 1939 was called up and eventually joined the REME when it was first formed and was Sergeant by the end of the war. His brother became a regular and was Brigadier by the time he retired. I don't know if the fact that their father joined the Masons in 1916 would have any connection with the differing careers.

Brenda Bryant

**The Captain Cook Tavern,
Stepney, 1817-1921**

(First published in the July issue of The Captain Cook Society Newsletter)

It has always been a surprise to me that, although Captain Cook's home from his marriage in 1762 until his death in 1779, was in Stepney, there were so few signs of him having any connection with the area. Stepney is an ancient East London parish with strong maritime connections going back hundreds of years, with a parish church that still flies the Red Duster every day to celebrate its connections with the merchant navy. There are just two well-known wall plaques celebrating Cook. One is on the side of a block of flats near his first home in Shadwell,¹ and the other is on the wall on the site of his home in Mile End Old Town.²

The local council has linked some of the names of its estates to maritime themes, for example the Ocean estate. Daniel Solander is still remembered in Well Close Square, and the council named the Solander Gardens Estate after him.³ However, there are no names for Cook.

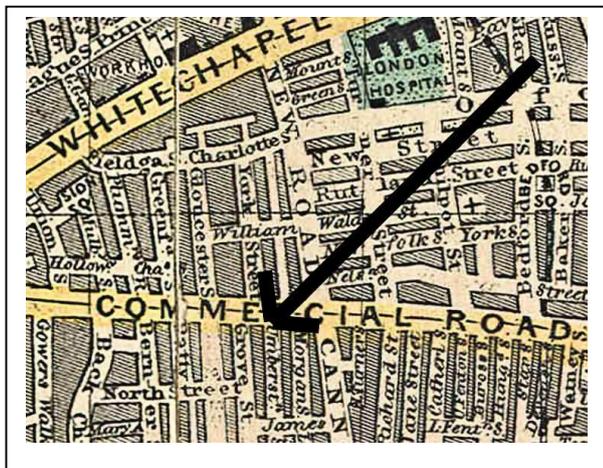
Recently, I discovered the existence of a tavern in London called "Captain Cook" that can be traced from 1817 to 1921. I wonder if this is the first tavern named after Cook?

In 1817, and again in 1826, records show that a Samuel Canham ran the Captain Cook tavern at 25 Marman Street, Commercial Road, in the parish of St George-in-the-East.⁴ This parish was carved out of the larger Stepney parish in 1729. What is now Commercial Road was created between 1802 and 1806 to open up a major route from the City of London running roughly south east towards the West India Docks. These docks were opened in August 1802 on the Isle of Dogs, better known today as Canary Wharf. Marman Street lay on

the south side of the Commercial Road. In 1867, due to changes in the roads in the nearby area, it was renumbered into 45 UMBERSTON Street, London E1.

In 1841, the victualler at the Captain Cook tavern was a Richard Pettit.⁵ In 1851, the London Post Office Directory lists the victualler at the "Captain Cook P.M., 27 Marman Street", as William Webster.⁶ One pub history website lists many other victuallers over the years.⁷ The last reference on this website to the Captain Cook is in 1921, when the building became the Plotsker synagogue.

Derek Morris



References

1. "Captain Cook in Shadwell" in *Cook's Log*. 1992. Vol. 15, no. 1. Pages 812-814.
2. Morris, Derek. "Mile End Old Town Walk, 2018" in *Cook's Log*. 2018. Vol.41,no. 4. Pages 18-19
3. Morris, Derek. "Daniel Solander in East London" in *Cook's Log*. 2017. Vol. 40, no. 3. Pages 8-10.
4. Sun Fire Office, Ms 11936, 472/933821. 21/8/1817; Sun 507/1045899, 23/5/1826; Sun 505/1047783, 19/7/1826. All held at the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA).
5. Sun Ms 11936, 582/1379180, 1/4/1841.
6. *Post Office London Directory, 1851*. Pages 371 and 1053.
7. <https://pubwiki.co.uk/LondonPubs/StGeorgeEast/CaptainCook.shtml>

Derek added, in a later communication.

I have now looked at the LondonPub web site and discovered several other Captain Cook pubs in Barking (now demolished), Acton, Stoke Newington and Fulham, some quite recent, so he is not entirely forgotten.

Grand Palais, Stepney

Stepney Culture and Entertainment.



I surveyed the Grand Palais Yiddish Theatre premises on the corner of Commercial Road and Adler Street, presumably named after the Yiddish Actor Jacob Pavlovich Adler, a Russian Jewish immigrant, long after it had closed as a Theatre which had catered for the large Jewish population in the area which

included surrounding businesses and shops plus the Kosher market opposite in Hessel Street named after the amazing ‘Amazon of Stepney’, Phoebe Hessel nee Smith who served as a private soldier allegedly masquerading as a man.

The Grand Palais was then in multi tenure but had changed little in appearance, the former Theatre was a Bangladesh cinema, reflecting the changing East End community and culture, epitomised by religious buildings, built as Protestant churches becoming Synagogues and Mosques.

The cinema did not exactly live up to the description Grand Palais, it was here that I experienced the ultimate in DIY ‘central heating’, a series of electric heaters tape jointed together down the aisles of the cinema, which as a Risk Control Fire Surveyor left me somewhat concerned.

Also, their Archives included some very old films on the highly flammable Cellulose Nitrate (Celluloid) which, although reassuringly was stored apart from the less hazardous Cellulose Acetate, in a fire resisting compartment on the roof, I was less assured as to how it was taken and used in the antiquated Projection Room.

At one stage, surprise, surprise, it was also used as a Bingo Hall.

There were other small independent cinemas in Stepney including ‘The Popular’ at the other end of Commercial Road, and ‘The Ben Hur’ In White Horse Street, backing on to St. Dunstan’s Churchyard. They were scurrilously referred to by the locals as ‘Flea pits’. but vied with the grand Picture Palaces of the day, Gaumont and ABC, i.e. the Troxy also in Commercial Road and The Empire, Mile End, squeezed in between Charrington’s Brewery and Wickham’s Department Store not forgetting Spiegalthalers Jewellery shop.

Although I was a regular of Saturday Morning Pictures at the Troxy where we sang virtually patriotic verses e.g., “As members of the GB Club we all intend to be good citizens when we grow up and champions of the free”, I also less frequently went to the equivalent at The Empire, where paradoxically the singalong had less commitment, e.g., “What a happy crowd are we, we’re all pals together we’re minors of the ABC”

Admission to both was I believe 6d. six old pennies, 2 and a half p (can’t do fractions) and we must have been the Dentists despair, feasting on sweet crumbs, i.e. the dregs of the confectioners sweet jars when a penny or I think even a halfpenny bought a colourful mix in a small bag.

As part of the changing entertainment scene many, if not most, cinemas became Bingo Clubs, whence they were more likely to get a ‘Full House’

John Clark.
Former Stepney boy.

Correspondence received from David Walker of the Jewish East End Celebration Society

Where would be the appropriate site for the planned memorial bust to Isaac Rosenberg, the great World War One poet and artist?

The son of Jewish Lithuanian immigrants, Rosenberg grew up in deprived circumstances in the East End, leaving school at 14 but continuing his studies at night. In 1915 he enlisted, and was killed near Arras on April 1, 1918, in the great German spring offensive. His remains are unidentified to this day and his only real memorial is a gravestone in France recording his name and his profession, ‘Artist and Poet’.

He is regarded as one of the greatest of the poets of that war and, very unusually, wrote from the perspective of the ordinary soldier rather than officer.

JEECS's campaign for a permanent memorial has now achieved the necessary funding. But where should it be situated? The only stipulation is that it needs to be indoors.

Ideas would be welcomed by JEECS chairman Clive Bettington, at clivebettington18@gmail.com. The hope is for an unveiling ceremony on November 24, Rosenberg's birthday.

Separately, JEECS has been approached by east London historian Siri Christiansen, whose self-explanatory email follows. Can you help her? Let me or Clive now and we will pass on your suggestions.

Dear Mr Bettington,

My name is Siri Christiansen and I am currently working on a series of articles for [Roman Road LDN](#) about the local Jewish history in Mile End, Globe Town, Bow, Bethnal Green and Hackney Wick. My previous articles cover the Novo and Velho cemeteries and can be found [here](#). In the coming weeks, I am cooking up three pieces on the Mile End Pogrom, Daniel Mendoza and Samuel Falk, the Baal Shem of London.

According to my internet research findings, the Jewish history in our part of the East End is not as well-documented online as in Aldgate, Whitechapel and more central locations. Therefore, I thought it would be best to reach out to a professional to see if I can dig up something perhaps a little less known. Given your role as chairman of the Jewish East End Celebration Society, you seem like someone who might be able to help me.

Do you happen to know of any interesting characters who lived in/wrote about/are buried in our area, or any event that took place in our area, or anything else that might be of interest?

Any information you could provide would be of huge help and very appreciated.

Best regards and stay safe,
Siri Christiansen.

Stapleton's Horse & Carriage Repository

The former Stapleton's Horse & Carriage Repository has been granted Grade II listed status by Historic England. Your first reaction will probably be What? Where? because, like many other commercial buildings of the past we don't even see it when we walk past. A glimpse at the inserted picture might cause some members to explain "Oh, that red building, I always wondered what it was". Located at 106 and 106a Commercial Street facing the eastern end of Old Spitalfields Market, it was under the threat of development (I did hear a story about yet another food court) until the intervention of The Victorian Society.

Stapleton's Horse and Carriage Repository was established, according to a plaque above the entrance on Commercial Street, in 1842 by Robert Stapleton. They appear to have dealt mainly in draught horses, often acquired from railway or horse tram companies. The original premises seem to have been at 62 Bishopsgate Street Without but the business moved to 106 Commercial Street in 1890. This section of Commercial Street was developed between 1860 and 1870 and number 106 had previously been occupied as a depot by Tingle, Jacobs and Co who were carmen (hauliers or carters) with headquarters at 4 Billiter Street in the City. 106 Commercial Street is shown on the 1875 Ordnance Survey map as a courtyard



with long ranges on three sides, probably stabling, and possibly a roof over part of the courtyard but the exact details are unclear. The site as occupied by Stapleton's in 1890 is shown in detail on the Goad insurance plan of that year with a frontage building onto Commercial Street, a new or rebuilt office block to the north of the covered courtyard and new or rebuilt stable/carriage ranges on two sides (south and east). By 1915 however, street directories indicate that Stapleton's had vacated the site, possibly as a result of the effects of the First World War on the horse trade, along with the general increase of motor vehicles. By 1953 the Goad plan shows the site as a garage, by 1959 it was a government

surplus warehouse and in 1965 it was the Coathanger kitchen furniture warehouse. At some point in the mid-C20 the originally cast-iron framed glazed courtyard roof was replaced with a steel-framed corrugated metal covered roof. In the late-C20 the arch to the entrance building was remodelled. In the early-C21 the office building was extensively altered with the removal and replacement of original floors. Lesser alterations were made to the carriage/stable ranges.

The above description suggests that not much original is left but the Reason for Listing gives these principal reasons:

Architectural interest:

- * as a rare surviving example of a multi-storey repository for the sale of horses and carriages;
- * for the architectural pretension of its frontage building with its high quality decorative brickwork;
- * for the survival of the horse ramp, colonnaded balcony and evidence of the removed horse stalls.

Historical interest:

- * for the light it sheds on the history and importance of horses and horse-drawn transport in late-C19 cities;
- * as the only surviving example of a horse repository in London, which was pre-eminent in the horse trade until the start of the Second World.

Philip Mernick

THE SHOCKING STORY OF ALLAN TEMPLETON AND HIS WIFE FRANCES

When we family historians start researching a new branch we never know where that research will lead. Although very often we find routine or even uninteresting information, there are times when our efforts are rewarded with something unusual, surprising, or even disturbing that we would not have found elsewhere by accident.

One such example came to light when I was researching the story of a Victorian soldier, Private Allan Greenwood Cameron Templeton, who served in the Yorkshire Regiment in the Tirah campaign 1897-98. My first resort was to the WO 97 series at The National Archives (TNA), now probably more usually found through FindMyPast (FMP). This document ^[1] contained the usual information about his career, and consisted of seven pages, including a comprehensive medical record. Considering the dates of Templeton's service (1886-1898), I did not expect him to have had any World War I service, but I checked just to be sure. I was extremely surprised to find that there was a record for him, via FMP, in TNA class WO 363. The record in that file consisted of the same pages that I had found in the WO 97 series, but were clearly a different version or a copy.

However, this record contained one page which was completely baffling ^[2]. This document (see reproduction courtesy of TNA) was headed "1948 A G C Templeton". It is dated January 7, 1914, and records the receipt of a letter from Mrs F Templeton, 4 Hornsey Cottages Alley, Stoke Newington, London, seeking "whereabouts of man". The clerk dealing with the case applied to Chelsea Hospital for Templeton's pension papers on January 9; the Secretary at Chelsea forwarded the requested documents, copies were made on January 13, and the originals were returned to Chelsea on January 14. There is no indication

that anything was reported to Mrs Templeton, or that the search for Templeton had been successful, or had even been made.

First, though, the early career of Allan Greenwood Cameron Templeton needs to be recounted. He was baptised on January 10, 1869, at St Thomas' Church, Calcutta; he was said to have been born in that town on November 1, 1868. He was the son of Allan Edward Daniel Templeton, a pilot, and his wife Catherine. He attested in London on February 27, 1886. He stated that he was born in Calcutta, that he was eighteen years old, a printer by profession, and his next of kin was his father, Allan Templeton, at 49 Welsey Street (*recte* Wellesley Street), Calcutta. He was five feet seven and three quarters inches tall, weighed 138 pounds (considerably taller and heavier than the average of that period), with a fair complexion, hazel eyes and brown hair. He was posted to 2nd Battalion Yorkshire Regiment on July 8, 1886.

The next official record for him was when, on October 28, 1889, he married Frances Amelia Kent, a twenty year old spinster of 2 Frederick Place, Hackney, at St Michael and All Angels, Stoke Newington Common; he was described as a twenty-year old soldier of the same address. How long he had been having a relationship with Frances Amelia Kent is not recorded, but what is extremely difficult to understand is why he entered into a marriage two months before his battalion was posted to India. Clearly this was not a 'sanctioned' marriage. The website *The Social Historian* explains the situation cogently ^[3]:

"Because of the restrictions on marriage, many soldiers were forced to marry secretly and without consent. Their wives and children were said to be 'off the strength' and were considered to be of a lower class than the families who were sanctioned. They were not allowed to live in the barracks and if the soldier was transferred to a new station, they had to find their own transportation. When

soldiers were sent abroad on foreign service...their families were forced to remain at home and were dependent on the parish or the poor union for their very survival."

Templeton sailed with the battalion on December 31, 1889. He appears to have had a fairly routine military career, and was discharged on February 2, 1898 with permission to remain in India. On discharge he was characterised as being "*good regular temperate*", which somehow is just not borne out by his medical record, as he suffered from syphilis in March 1892, and in June and November 1895.

Bearing in mind that he had left his wife in England, the next time he appeared in the public record was on April 23, 1898, when he entered into a bigamous marriage with Florence Maria Lynch, a spinster of full age, in the Old (Mission) Church, Fort William, Bengal. He was described as a *widower* of full age, working as a foreman in the Calcutta Tramway Company. This marriage seemed to work; a son, Clarence Melville, was baptised at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Dhurrumtollah ^[4] (Dharmatala in modern form), on December 11, 1898, having been born on November 26. Unfortunately, the child died of diarrhoea on April 4, 1899, aged four months [according to the record], and was buried the same day in Allahabad.

There is not much more on record about Allan Templeton until his death on July 29, 1924, of capillary bronchitis; at that time he was described as a fifty-six year old time-keeper with the Bengal Telephone Company. He was buried the next day at the Lower Circular Road Cemetery, Calcutta. What, then, of that extremely odd document in his service record referred to above? For a partial explanation of that we have to look at the experience of Frances Amelia Templeton (née Kent) after her wedding in 1889.

By 1914 Frances had had a lot of unhappiness in her life, apart from having been effectively deserted by her husband after only two months of marriage. In 1891 she was living with her aunt and uncle at 28 Northumberland Road, Hackney, when she was described as a twenty-one year old laundress.

On December 6, 1894, she was admitted to the Hackney Union work-house; she was pregnant, and was transferred to the Infirmary where she gave birth. Unhappily the child died after a few months.

She gave birth again in December 1896, and this child, named Daniel Frederick George Templeton, also died very young, at four months. Clearly the authorities were unhappy about the circumstances of the death, and an inquest was held in March at the Elim Hall, Church Road, Tottenham. The *Middlesex Gazette* reported the inquest, with the heading: *A Shocking Case* ^[5]. The doctor said that the child was terribly emaciated; in his opinion he died of blood poisoning from an abscess on his back as large as the doctor's hand, which could have been caused by a fall or a blow. He added that the child would have survived if he had been properly cared for. Frances Templeton stated that her husband was a soldier in 2/Yorkshire Regiment and had been in India for seven years. The deceased was a child by another man.

The Coroner commented that this was a shocking case, about "*the illegitimate child of a married woman.*" The jury returned an open verdict, but Frances Templeton was censured for her neglect, the jury recommending that the case be brought to the attention of the police.

On February 11, 1901, Frances married (bigamously, of course) James Swan in St Faith's Church, Stoke Newington. Ironically this was less than three years after her husband had done the same thing in India. Whether she knew this or not is impossible to judge, but she was clearly not in direct contact with her 'first'

husband. There is no indication in the record as to what had occurred in 1914 to prompt her to attempt to find Templeton after twenty-five years, and after thirteen years of bigamous marriage to a different man. She died on May 18, 1916, in the Hackney Infirmary (probably the same place where she had had her first child) of broncho-pneumonia following bronchitis. Her address at the time was 4 Hornsey Cottages, Bull Alley, West Hackney (probably the same address as the one she gave in 1914); she was described as the wife of James Swan, a general labourer. She was forty-six years old.

John Sly

Notes

TNA WO 97/4002

TNA (via FMP) WO 363

<https://www.thesocialhistorian.com/women-and-the-victorian-regiment/>

<https://puronokolkata.com/2018/05/08/dhurru-mtollaha-bazars/>

The Middlesex Gazette, 13 March 1897

The Guildhall Needs You

This was written before the Covid-19 shutdown

Recently I started to volunteer at the Guildhall Library as one of the people working on the Newall Dunn Collection, which contains photographs from the 1880s right through to the 21st century.

The collection was the work of two men, firstly Laurence Dunn (1910-2006) who was born at Llandaff. He had a lifelong interest in ships and the sea, as well as being a talented artist. The Newell part of the collection is Peter Newell (1945 – 2018) the writer and

shipping historian.

I have been at the Guildhall for a couple of weeks now cataloguing onto an excel spreadsheet the large photos in this collection as well as noting shipping information in the extensive collection of newspaper cuttings, notes, letters, postcards, sketches etc. contained in the folders along with the photos. The collection has all sorts of photos of boats including cruise ships, cargo vessels, tankers, tug boats, war ships etc. and related ephemera.

Just one of the ship photos in the collection is the SS Homeric which was originally built as the luxury liner Mariposa in 1931. The ship became a troop carrier for the USA during the Second World War, was mothballed for 6 years from 1947 and then reconstructed to take 1243 passengers as the SS Homeric in 1955. She sailed between ports in the North Atlantic, then had the route between New York and Nassau, Bahamas and before finally undertaking intra-Caribbean cruises.



1950s / 60s menu so evocative of the time from the SS Homeric, photo from the Newell Dunn collection at the Guildhall Library, City of London

There is so much more in the collection and once it is fully catalogued it will be of great interest to all sorts of people like: Historians, Family history buffs like myself, boat enthusiasts, interior designers, writers, photographers and deltiologists to name but a few.

However, there are an awful lot of folders still to be catalogued, so more volunteers are required. If you have a couple of hours to spare each or every other week then why not join me as a volunteer.

The library is open Monday to Saturday, so if you are available then please email guildhall.library@cityoflondon.gov.uk and one of the library team will get back to you.

Annette Kilbourn

The Lost Breweries of Whitechapel. Pictures and text by Philip Cunningham

First published in Spitalfields Life, March 2020. My grandfather was a train driver until the day he was discovered to be colour blind, when he was sacked on the spot. He then became a drayman and – apart from two world wars – spent the rest of his working life at the Albion Brewery in Whitechapel. He was one of the first draymen to drive a motorised vehicle, a skill which saved his life in WWI.

The brewery started trading in 1808 and although by 1819 it was under the control of Blake & Mann, by 1826 it was in the exclusive ownership of James Mann. In 1846, Crossman and Paulin became partners to form Mann, Crossman & Paulin Ltd. The brewery was rebuilt in 1863, becoming the most advanced

brewery of that time, producing 250,000 barrels a year.

Stables were built on the east side of Cambridge Heath Rd with a nosebag room containing in excess of one hundred and fifty nosebags, each filled by a metal tube from the store above. The former Whitechapel workhouse in Whitechapel Rd was used for the bottling plant, but when this proved to be too small it was moved to a site on Raven Row, two hundred yards south.

In 1958, the company merged with Watney Combe & Reid to become Watney Mann Ltd. In 1978, a spokesperson for Grand Metropolitan the corporate owner who acquired Watney declared, *'The bottling plant has a very strong future as a distribution and bottling centre for the GLC area and parts of Southern England.'* Yet the plant was closed in 1980 with a loss of two hundred jobs after the building was declared unsafe and too costly to repair. Keg filling transferred to Mortlake, the bottling plant became a distribution centre and the brewery was shut down in 1979. The buildings on the Whitechapel Rd were converted to flats and the rest of the site is now occupied by Sainsbury's.

In 1757, John Charrington moved his brewing business from Bethnal Green to the Mile End Rd. This was the Blue Anchor Brewery, and John Charrington's brother Harry lived next to the brewery in Malplaquet House from about 1790 until his death in 1833.

The brewery was built on Charrington Park, extending for sixteen acres behind the malt stores. Some land was sold off for building and a section was given to St. Peter's Church, while the remainder was used for cooperages and for stables housing one hundred horses and a blacksmith's forge. There were also coppersmiths, tinsmiths, gasfitters, millwrights, coopers, engineers, and carpenters with a timber store and saw pit. The hop store was a spacious darkened chamber one hundred feet long, filled from floor to ceiling with hops, and the odour was overpowering.

The Blue Anchor brewery became the second largest in London producing 20,252 barrels of beer a year. In the nineteenth century, steam engines were installed which ran until 1927, when they were replaced by electric power. During the Second World War, half the lorry fleet was commandeered for the army.

Yet in 1967, the company merged with Bass to become Charrington Bass and later Bass Ltd – the largest brewing company in the country. The last brew at Charringtons was in 1975 and distribution was then moved to Canning Town. A new administration block was built at a cost of three and a half million, only to be demolished for a retail park.



Albion Brewery, Whitechapel Road



Anchor Brewery, Mile End Road



Demolition of the Anchor Brewery, 1976



The author, 1976

Vicky Park Markers

Carolyn Clark

We thought we knew Victoria Park pretty well after visiting it over decades. My husband remembers the lido and the Moorish Alcove. I remember Rock Against Racism and when you could get a Sunday roast in the café by the lake. But in lockdown, a bright green parakeet feather, the carp and little grebe, caterpillars and finally discovering the unusual tree is a Chinese Privet all added novelty to the hour's constitutional.

But then we passed the small metal marker stuck in the ground between the bandstand and Burdett Coutts. Having seen it dozens of times, we finally got round to having a good look and saw it was dated 1831. We asked the Parkie about it, but he wasn't aware of it. So we took a photo (figure 1)



and sent to the Victoria Park oracles, Phil and Harry. Bingo, it is a parish boundary marker. Phil checked the maps and the 19th century Hackney – Tower Hamlets parliamentary boundary runs to the north of the lake and then

south past the Burdette Coutts fountain, so past the current bandstand. The parliamentary boundary may well have followed the parish boundaries so the markers are probably to delineate the boundary between the parishes of St Augustine's (south Hackney) and St Mark's (Bow).

Phil sent the photo (Figure 2)



of a stone parish boundary marker dated 1880 a stone's throw (it's a big stone!) to the east, which we'd missed. An inscription above the dates reads a word of seven or eight letters ending in H GARDENS. I got absurdly excited (it was during lockdown!) that it might be a remnant from The Three Colts Tea Garden which graced the area around Old Ford Road where Gunmakers Bridge and Lane now stand.

The London Small Arms factory was probably built on the same site – from the sound of music and tea cups clinking in the tea gardens to the ring of the forge and bank of gun proofing in the early C19th – but the H doesn't compute. Other ideas welcome.

Curious and curiouser, the stone has a further inscription on the south east side dated 1893. An inscription of HP above the date probably stands for Hackney Parish or Parliamentary constituency. Phil confirmed that the old parliamentary constituencies of Hackney and Tower Hamlets were abolished in 1885. The southern part of Hackney became Hackney South Parliamentary constituency and the northern part of Tower Hamlets became the single member constituencies of Bow & Bromley.

So, the hunt began for more. On the southwest corner of the fishing lake, directly in line with the other two, we found two more iron markers right by each other. Figure 3.



Sadly, the lettering is no longer legible, but

very likely marking the same boundary between Hackney and what would become Tower Hamlets.

We then got waylaid by the stone – inscription disappeared – near the north eastern end of the park by a line of limes trees. Phil confirmed that this marks the location of the high altar of St Augustine's Church, destroyed in the blitz.



About three weeks later, we found the brace – possibly trio: an iron and stone marker side by side with a stone stump a yard away. Figure 4.



They stand the park side of the fence along Gore Road in the heel of the park. Very likely Parish markers, the stone one looks like 1830 too. There could be an HP inscription which could have been the Hackney parliamentary constituency, but this wasn't created until 1867 so it can't be that. It may well therefore stand for Hackney Parish which would have been St. Johns at that time.

We think we've peaked, but would love to know if we've missed any...

The Curse upon Mitre Square: Penny Dreadful or Catholic Tract?

By Benjamin S. Dunham

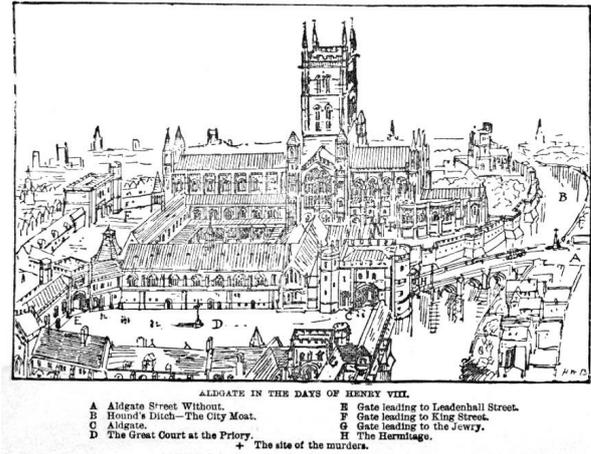
According to one reviewer at the time of its publication, John Francis Brewer's *The Curse upon Mitre Square, A.D. 1530-1888*, the first of many books speculating about the Jack the Ripper murders, "boasts some literary qualities above its supreme sensationalism."

Since then, however, it has been characterized as a "penny dreadful," an "insignificant curiosity," and worse, a "shameless bit of exploitation fiction." Its fanciful imaginings of an earlier homicidal event at the site of Mitre Square, where Catherine Eddowes was murdered in September 1888, have been dismissed as "farfetched" and a "piece of nonsense."

True enough, perhaps. But recent critics may not have understood Brewer's purpose in writing the book.

A reviewer in *The Graphic* of January 29, 1889, seems to have it right. He wrote: "...*The Curse upon Mitre Square*, while avoiding recent incidents, puts forth the notion that the district has labored under a curse ever since 1530, owing to the destruction of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Aldgate, which will never be removed till the church is restored."

Brewer was a brilliant young organist who was appointed to the prominent post at the Jesuit Church of the Immaculate Conception in London at the astonishing age of 18. He dashed off this text in a matter of weeks at the age of 23 and published it in October 1888, even before the last of the acknowledged murders had taken place. The greater part of the book has nothing to do with linking the Eddowes murder to the other recent atrocities (which were in any case not at the same site) but rather with events that began in 1530. At that time, the existence of the Holy Trinity



Aldgate by J.F. Brewer's father H.W.B.

Priory, situated on the site of today's Mitre Square, was threatened by Sir Thomas Audley, the anticlerical Speaker of the House of Commons who became Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor in 1533. Once Sir Thomas got possession of the Priory in the Dissolution of the Monasteries and began tearing it down to make space for his own building plans, the area began to change drastically in appearance.

Brewer, however, had a special insight into this area. A reviewer noted that Brewer had "obtained possession of some very recondite and curious information about the precedents of Mitre Square." Brewer's grandfather, John Sherren Brewer, Jr., was the celebrated editor of the correspondence of Henry VIII. But more directly, the plot of Brewer's book was informed by the architectural scenes of ancient London drawn by his father Henry W. Brewer, a prominent Catholic convert whose detailed views regularly appeared in issues of *The Builder* magazine. A panorama of "London in the Time of Henry VIII," including a view from the east showing the area of the Holy Trinity Priory, was published in 1887. From his father's reconstructions, young Brewer could have had a clear picture of the area as his characters retraced their steps in and around the Priory and its surroundings, including Aldgate, the Houndsditch, Leadenhall Street, Bishop's Gate, and, south of the Priory, the Church of St. Catherine Cree.

There is every indication that Brewer was guided by his father's drawings. Book I of the text recounts the cause of the curse: the murder and disemboweling of a young woman by her own infatuated brother, a monk at the Priory, which the nefarious Audley had plotted to disgrace. In one scene, Audley and the woman climb the tower of the Church of St. Catherine Cree to observe the comings and goings of the monks in the Priory cloisters. But this could not have been so, as subsequent excavations proved. In the preface to *Old London Illustrated*, the editors of *The Builder* noted that Brewer's father "shows the cloisters on the south, but they were on the north." The cloisters would not have been visible from the Catherine Cree tower. The mistake was depicted in the frontispiece his father supplied for *The Curse upon Mitre Square* (a sketch initialed "H.W.B") and was built into young Brewer's plot.

No matter. Brewer's real object was the perfidy of Sir Thomas Audley and the outcome of his plots against the Catholic Church. Book II of Brewer's novel relates how the curse revisits the site in the early 18th century, when an old wall of the original Priory near the Mitre Tavern collapses in a storm. And Book III brings us up to the time of the murder of Catherine Eddowes, when a gulf had been created between London's wealthy West, where Brewer lived and worked, and its impoverished East, where people "of good natural character ... had sunk into a deep despair."

In this sense *The Curse upon Mitre Square* can be regarded less as a work of sensationalism than as a piece of political revisionism. When the Eddowes murder occurred in Mitre Square, Brewer immediately saw an opportunity to associate the horrific events of 1888 with the original sin perpetrated by Henry VIII's avaricious henchmen. To Brewer, suggesting a phantasmagorical cause for the murders was not the point, but rather exposing the evil cupidity of Audley. It was this lesson Brewer wanted his readers to learn. Wrapping it in a

popular "penny dreadful" was not his literary end but rather the means to a wider public understanding of England's problematic religious and social history.

Copyright © 2020 Benjamin S. Dunham. The author (dunhamb@post.harvard.edu) is a retired arts administrator and journalist with family connections both to John Francis Brewer and to an East End cigarmaker who emigrated to the US in 1857. For more information about John Francis Brewer, visit www.jalphegebrewer.info/john-francis-brewer.

Note:

1. "The Curse upon Mitre Square" published by Simkin, Marshall & Co., 1888 (London) and John W. Lovell Co., 1889 (New York). On-line at <https://archive.org/details/cur-seuponmitresq00brew/page/n9/mode/2up>

London's earliest playhouse?

From Current Archaeology, issue 366 (current issue)

Excavations in Whitechapel may have uncovered the remains of the first purpose-built Elizabethan playhouse, The Red Lion.

The Red Lion playhouse is believed to have been built around 1567 by John Brayne, who later built The Theatre in Shoreditch. It is thought to be the first structure built in the Elizabethan era specifically for the performance of plays. What we know of The Red Lion comes from two lawsuits between Brayne and the carpenters who constructed it: one record details the large 'scaffolds' or seating galleries around the stage, while the other includes a description of the stage's dimensions (12.2m north to south, 9.1m east to west, and 1.5m above the ground). However, the exact location of the theatre remained unknown until these excavations.

The discovery was first made by Archaeology South-East in early 2019, during archaeological work in Stepney Way. The excavations revealed a rectangular wooden structure made of

144 timbers with post-holes around it. The measurements of the structure (12.27m north-south and 9.27m east-west) closely resemble those detailed in the historical documents regarding The Red Lion, and the post-holes may relate to the galleried seating around the stage, suggesting that this structure is likely to represent the remains of the theatre.

Excavations in the north-east corner of the site also unearthed the remains of 15th- or 16th-century buildings, which became part of a larger complex in the 17th century. These buildings may represent the Red Lion Inn itself, which began as a farmstead that served beer but, by the late 16th century, had become established enough to have a prototype theatre built on its land. Two of the buildings uncovered have been identified as beer cellars, and the vast quantity of drinking vessels found on the site further support its interpretation as the inn.

It is hoped that post excavation work will be able to further improve understanding of the discovery, but it appears likely that this is indeed The Red Lion an important piece in the story of Elizabethan Theatre

200th Anniversary of the Regent's Canal

In the last edition, we reported on the celebrations planned for the 200th anniversary of the canal. The main event, the East End Canal Festival, had to be postponed but we're pleased to announce a new date of July 17th and 18th 2021 at the Art Pavilion and canalside in Mile End Park. This film of the 2016 festival gives a flavour of what to expect: www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KJkf9tvF3g&t=7s



Heritage event at 2016 Canal Festival

In the meantime, there have been several lockdown events to mark the bi-centenary. Regent's Canal Heritage created an audio trail of mini podcasts from the oral histories they have gathered. Listen to local residents talking about the Regent's Canal in its heyday - canal horses, treasure in the mud, fire in a timber yard, working in the Haggerston ice well and more: <https://izi.travel/en/a7de-regent-s-canal-heritage-audio-walk/en>

Regent's Canal Heritage's new website <http://www.regentscanalheritage.org.uk/> will be ready at the end of August. As well as giving details about the Festival, it will feature a learning pack and links to resources available including a host of films and books about the canal. With support from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Regent's Canal Heritage has commissioned a short film, 'Canal Connections', which shows the Cut in 2020 and the place it has in local peoples' lives across the diverse communities and brings people together with a shared heritage. The link will be on the website.

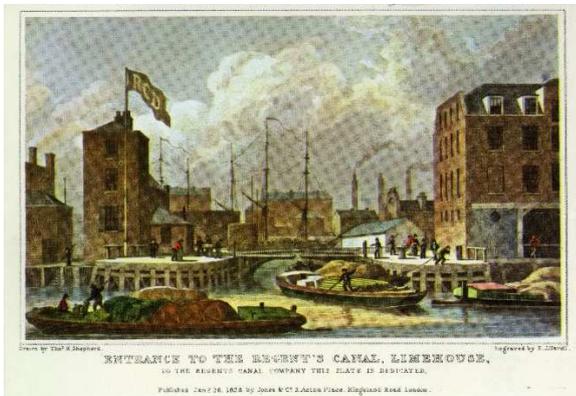
At the beginning of the year, London Canal Museum adapted Regent's Canal Heritage's 2019 Islington Canal Industries Exhibition for display in the Museum at Kings Cross. The exhibition can be seen at the museum, now open three days a week, as well as on their website. During lockdown, the museum held a series of on-line interviews, including 'Meet the Author' with Carolyn Clark about *The East*

End Canal Tales:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Bu4HHXa1Ok>. On 3rd December, Jeremy Batch will be giving an illustrated talk at the museum on 'Limehouse and its Basin'. Up to October 31st, the Museum is running a Photography Competition to capture images of the Regent's Canal in its 200th year. Entries will be the basis of the museum's winter exhibition. Two hundred years hence, the photos will provide a fascinating look at the canal in 2020. Will this era of ubiquitous tall blocks be looked upon with fondness or fury?

Details on: <https://www.canalmuseum.org.uk/>.

Finally, Bethnal Green author and playwright Linda Wilkinson was commissioned to write a play about the canal for Regent's Canal Heritage and the Young Actors Theatre Islington. Following extensive work with schools, the play was adapted for a film, *The Canal Tales*, which will be ready by September 1st. The link will be available on Regent's Canal Heritage website and social media.



Entrance to the Regent's Canal Dock 1828



Regent's Canal Company Directors 1911



Cast of the canal play when performed at Young Actors Theatre Islington

Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park campaign against Bow Common Gasworks overdevelopment



<https://fothcp.org/gasworks-campaign/>