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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.

## Lecture Programme

**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. Unfortunately, the continuing crisis means that there is no current prospect of restarting. We will use the Newsletter to keep you up to date.**

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**

## The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park

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

If you have information or memorabilia you would like to share or allow the FTHCP to copy, please contact [friendsthcp@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:friendsthcp@yahoo.co.uk) or contact Diane Kendall c/o The Soanes Centre Southern Grove London E3 4PX. Join Doreen and Diane Kendall and assist in recording monumental inscriptions in Tower Hamlets Cemetery on the second Sunday of each month, from 2-4 pm.

### **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>

**ELHS Record and Newsletters.** You can now download from our web site (no charge) PDFs of all issues of East London Record and all issues of ELHS Newsletter from 1992 until issue 4-17. 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.

## Cover Picture

This magnificent silver depiction of the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215 was presented to Joseph D'Aguilar Samuda in 1880 after he resigned as MP for Tower Hamlets and will be auctioned by Hansons of Etwall, Derbyshire in their Fine Arts sale of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of December. The following information is taken, with their knowledge, from the sale catalogue.

Designed and modelled by George A. Carter and hallmarked in 1880 by Hunt and Roskell. It depicts King John seated at a table signing the Magna Carta in front of three Barons, the Archbishop of Canterbury and two Pages, one page holding the Crown, the other a shield; the Baron's realistically cast in chain mail with robes and cloaks, the Archbishop with crozier - all raised on a "wooden" plinth with the King's bloodhound to the front all above an egg-and-dart border. The top section weighs approximately 11.50kg.

The sculptural group sits on an oblong shaped ebonised plinth with canted corners mounted with silver plaques and figures: one cast plaque depicts the boat El Mahrousa on the river Thames in front of the Tower of London above the Samuda Coat-of-Arms; the other cast plaque depicts the Houses of Parliament, each end with cast symbolic figures above a band of stylised C-Scrolls. The central presentation plaque reads:

*PRESENTED TO JOSEPH D'AGUILAR SAMUDA BY A LARGE NUMBER OF HIS FRIENDS AND FORMER CONSTITUENTS IN THE TOWER HAMLETS. IN RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANT SERVICES HE HAS RENDERED TO THE BOROUGH AND AS A RECORD OF THEIR HIGH APPRECIATION OF THE INDEPENDENT AND PATRIOTIC SPIRIT WHICH HE EVINCED THROUGHOUT THE LONG PERIOD DURING WHICH HE REPRESENTED THE CONSTITUENCY IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS 16 JULY 1880*

The piece is mounted on a commissioned burr

walnut heavily carved stand, the central section carved with the Samuda Coat-of-Arms

Together with illuminated manuscript presentation document, 8 leaves embellished with gilt and watercolour depiction of exotic birds and flowers and script, dated 17th July 1880, signed by the Chairman and Hon Sec together with all the names of contributing subscribers - square folio, bound in purple velvet with gilt brass ornate clasps with plaques depicting Samuda Coat-of-Arms and Monogram

Provenance: Joseph d'Aguilar Samuda 16th July 1880 and thence by descent

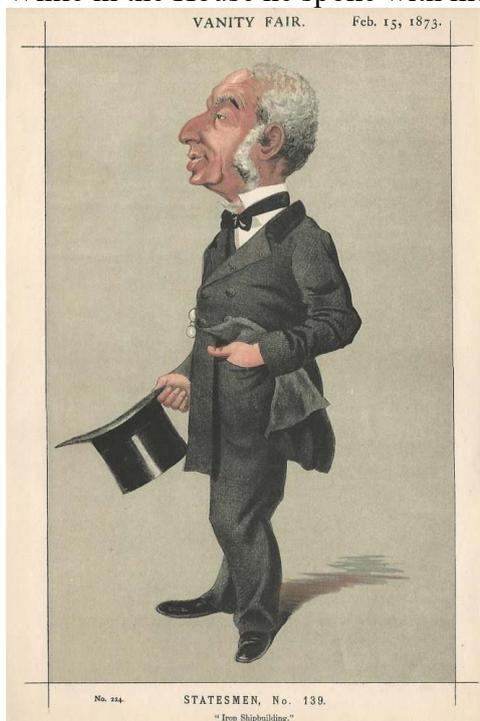
In case you think this would make a nice Christmas gift, I must warn you that it has an opening price of £18,000 with an estimate of £30-50,000.

Joseph d'Aguillar Samuda (1813-1885) was born in London, the younger son of Abraham Samuda, and brother of Jacob Samuda. He started out in his father's counting-house, but in 1832 he joined his elder brother to set up Samuda Brothers. They initially leased premises on the Goodluck Hope peninsula, Leamouth, in 1843, by the mouth of Bow Creek. However, disaster struck with one of their first ships, the *Gipsy Queen* which exploded on its test trip in November 1844. Jacob was killed with nine of the firm's employees. There was a further explosion at their shipyard in 1845 and another three workers were killed. The firm moved to Cubitt Town in 1852, having outgrown a site that was hemmed in by other industrial premises. The Cubitt Town yard specialised in iron and steel warships and steam packets and by 1863 was said to be producing double the output of the other London shipyards combined. Orders from Germany, Russia and Japan enabled the firm to survive the 1866 financial crisis, which affected many other London yards.

Following the death of Joseph in 1885

attempts were made to sell the firm as a going concern. This was unsuccessful, resulting in closure in the 1890s, leaving Yarrows and Thames Ironworks as the last significant London shipbuilders.

Joseph Samuda also had an important parliamentary career. He was a member of the Metropolitan Board of Works from 1860 to 1865, whereupon he entered Parliament as the Liberal MP for Tavistock. He sat for that constituency until 1868, when he was returned for the Tower Hamlets, which he represented until 1880. Then he lost his seat owing to his support for Benjamin Disraeli's foreign policy. While in the House he spoke with much



### Joseph Samuda, Vanity Fair, 1873

authority on all matters connected with his profession. Some of his speeches are described as "treasure-houses of technical and political knowledge." He abandoned Judaism and was interred in Kensal Green Cemetery London. In 1837 he married Louisa Ballin (1817-1900), daughter of Samuel Ballin of Holloway.

The Samuda Estate, on the site of his shipyard, in Cubitt Town, is named after him and his brother, and includes Ballin Court, named after his wife.

He was one of the original officers of the 2nd Tower Hamlets Rifle Volunteer Corps raised in April 1861, when he was commissioned as a captain.

Information largely from Wikipedia.

P.S. The "boat El Mahrousa", mentioned above in the description of the silver presentation piece, still survives and has been described as the world's oldest active super yacht. It was built as the Khedive of Egypt's royal yacht in 1863 and at 4,561 gross tonnes was nearly twice the size as the British Royal Yacht of the time, Victoria and Albert. Over the years it has been much modified: length extended (twice) converted from paddle to screw and re-engined and now operates, occasionally, as Presidential Yacht.

### Book Review

Hidden Histories: uncovering the stories of the First World War servicemen laid to rest in Tower Hamlets Cemetery, 2020  
ISBN 9780956477934

### Lesley Iles (Chairman Western Front Association Southend-on Sea Branch)

During the centenary years of World War 1, many books were written commemorating the fallen on various war memorials around the country: I even co-wrote one myself and collaborated on two others, but this is the biggest and best of all that I have seen! At A4 and with over 240 pages including colour photos and documents, it is thorough, factual and whilst respectful avoids sentimentality. To provide context, the beginning of the book gives an excellent summary of the war itself and also life in East London at the time. At the end is a section I've not seen anywhere else, 'What Killed our Great War Soldiers?' This adds a very different perspective to the story of

casualties commemorated on war memorials - and you might find the statistics quite surprising. Everyone is familiar with the graves in France for those who died quickly, but for the complete story, it is necessary to understand deaths on the Home Front too. The 204 casualties buried in the park are arranged by Navy, Army then RAF, each with family as well as military history. Frequently, relevant photographs are included both from the time and the present day to help commemorate each person for the individual they were. Congratulations Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park on a book which genuinely adds to the understanding of the war in general, as well as recognising the role played by those who lie in this lovely park.



## **Bomber crash kills Navigator from East Ham**

Richard van de Velde, The Netherlands

In February 3, 1943 at 6:21 pm Stirling AA-W took off with serial no. R9250 of the 75th Squadron "Royal New Zealand Air Force." from Newmarket base in Suffolk, with the aim of bombing Hamburg. 263 bombers took part in this operation, of which 84x Halifax, 6x Stirling, 62x Lancaster and 51x Wellington. Bad icy weather conditions quickly forced many planes to return. The other bombers and the so-called pathfinders could not do their job properly due to the weather, with the result that the main bombings were too far apart. The results of this 'raid' were disappointing: 45 major fires, one of which was an oil depot and the other a warehouse. A total of 53 civilians were killed in these actions and 40 others were injured. The losses on the Allied side were 16 aircraft with 90 crew members and a further 28 were made prisoner of war.

The Stirling had an altitude of 3500 meters and was near Ingen, when it was intercepted and shot down at around 7.45 pm by a German fighter with Reinhold Knacke at the control stick, who himself died that evening near the village of Achterveld, near Amersfoort.

The Stirling crashed into the floodplains, halfway between the ferry boats Eck and Wiel-Amerongen and Ingen-Elst, at the former water pumping station.

Several crew members tried to leave the burning aircraft. Two or three of them landed by parachute over the Rhine on Rhenen's territory: second pilot Dougal Scott landed in the floodplain near Elst and died instantly; flight engineer Desmond Hayward ended up at the Over Betuwe brick factory in Remmerden and later died in a hospital in Amersfoort.

Two or three other crew members who had jumped off ended up on the Betuwe side: the body of air gunner Desmond Clearwater was found without a parachute in the floodplains near the brick factory in Ingen. Just like the parachuted body of Canadian air gunner Edward McDermott.

It is still unclear where exactly the body of navigator Frank Boese ended up. One source mentions that he was close to the crashed plane, another source says that he ended up in

the village of Elst, on the other side of the river Rhine.



Frank Boese  
(Source: Kevin King)  
Frank was the son of Arthur Boese and Carrie Potts from East Ham, Essex. They were married in the spring of 1920 in

Wandsworth.

Rene in 1946 (Source: J. Middleton)

Frank married Irene "Rene" Emily Middleton (1921-2001) in the summer of 1942 and lived at 47 Bedford Road in East Ham.

John Middleton, a brother of René, said the following in 2020: "My sister, the brightest academically in the family, immediately got an administrative job after high school in the government and later at East Ham City Hall. Here she met Frank, who lived a stone's throw from his work.

After Frank and Rene got married, I remember Frank visiting our house every time he was on leave. I still had a teddy bear at the age of eleven. I was a little embarrassed about that, so I tried to keep him out of sight. When Frank saw that he said: "I have such a bear at home". I was amazed that a pilot flying in a bomber still had a teddy bear! On his next visit, he brought his teddy bear so that I could take care of him while he was away.

A while later, Frank and I had a minor disagreement. I grumbled and told him I wouldn't take care of his bear anymore. He looked at me and said that when the "owners" drop out, their Teddies shouldn't be forced to drop out too. He was that kind of guy. Frank was very impressed with life there during his education in Canada and I remember that he told us about rolling naked in the snow. At a US Air Force base, he loved the food and luxury. A few times when he came home for a short break, he brought me a

can of pure orange juice, something that was not available in England during the war. I think his time in Canada was possibly the best time of his life.

My father, who had served in the army during World War I, was not happy about the marriage between Rene and Frank. He foresaw the grave danger Frank faced every time he boarded his



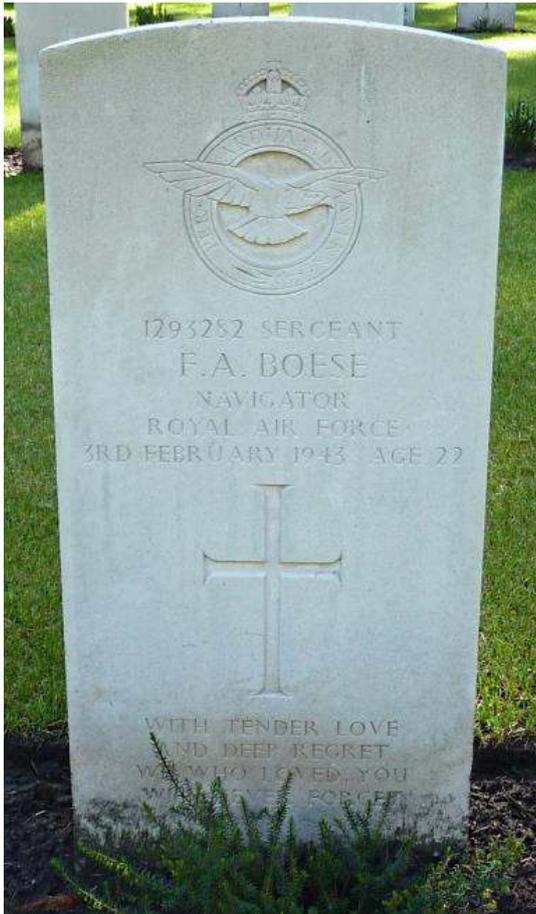
plane as a navigator. Rene in 1946 (Source: J.Middleton) It was so sad to see his concerns come true so soon after their wedding.

Oddly enough, Frank visited us on the afternoon of his fateful plane trip and he rolled out his maps of Europe on the dining table and showed us where he would fly that night. It was to Hamburg and he said he didn't like that trip because the anti-aircraft guns were so intense there. She was never able to cope with the tragedy that befell Rene at a young age."

Rene remarried in 1950 to Francis Tweedie Hall (1923-2009) and had a son Robert ("Bob") with him.

The Germans transferred the five sets of remains to the Rusthof collective cemetery in Amersfoort, where the killed flight crews have been relocated for several years.

In August 1949 the remains of the last three crewmembers were recovered while the remains of this crashed aircraft were recovered: Kenneth Blincoe, George Cook and Harold Lowe.



Picture of grave: R. v.d. Velde

On Frank's tombstone, his family had the following text included:

'With tender love  
And deep regret  
We who loved you  
Will never forget "

The funeral of these three crew members took place in Amersfoort and was attended by Mrs. Lowe, several hundred Dutch interested parties, three military units, a military chapel and finally a few high-ranking persons. The coffins were donated by the Dutch and were draped in the English flag and covered with hundreds of flowers, the carriers consisted of four officers and six sergeants in each group. The national anthem was played and music of "The Holy City" and "Abide with me" was heard. The pastor was a Dutch pastor who spoke in English. The ceremony ended with "The last post" and "Reveille".

Several residents of Ingen stated that until at least 1960 a wooden cross stood at the pumping station in the Ingense Waarden with the inscription '3 February 1943 8 a.m.' and that every year English-speaking relatives of the killed crew deposited flowers near the cross.

One of the neighbors remembered that English family members came over after the war and took aluminum wreckage as a souvenir. Unfortunately, there are no pictures of this memorial available.

The Sky of Hope Museum in Vuren, which I work with, wants to unveil a Memory Board near the crash site in 2021 or a year later. It will be part of a memorial route through our riverine area where many bombers crashed in WWII.

If residents of East London still have memories of Frank Boese, they can contact Richard van de Velde: [r.velde@hetnet.nl](mailto:r.velde@hetnet.nl)

## **The Vicar on the Bicycle – the story of a hero of the Blitz**

While creating a data-base of the Poplar Civilian War Dead buried at Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, one thing struck me – one name reappeared time and time again as the Minister who performed the burial service for countless members of the local Tower Hamlets community. While he undoubtedly saw this as a key role in his vocation as a man of the cloth, it must have been deeply upsetting to bury a dozen or more victims of enemy bombing raids a day. On one day alone (10<sup>th</sup> September 1940) he performed the burial services for 27 individuals, from Sutherland Road and Vernon Road, many of them unidentifiable.

I decided it would be an interesting side-project to find out more about this vicar, and the more I researched, the more remarkable his story turned out to be.



Revd. J. Newton  
Sykes  
Daily Herald  
1943

A document survives dated 31<sup>st</sup> January 1942 titled, '*Report on Activities of the Rev. J. Newton Sykes*' which sound like a mixture of a police report and something produced by the Secret Service! At the time, 56 year old Reverend John Newton Sykes was living at the Vicarage, Coburn Road, off Tredegar Square. He was also a part-time Warden and Senior Fire Guard, a role carried out by men who were unable to enlist for active service. The report was produced as part of the recommendation process which resulted in Rev. Sykes attending St James' Palace in January 1943 when the King was 'graciously pleased' to award him the Order of the British Empire.

John Newton was the eldest son of Rev. William and Anne Jane, nee Dodgson, Sykes who had been married in 1885 in Bootle. John Newton was born on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1886 in Bewcastle, near Carlisle in Cumbria. He appears in a census in 1891 when his mother was visiting her parents with her two boys, John Newton aged 4 and William aged 2. Between 1895 and 1919 John Newton's father was the Vicar of Hillsborough and Wadsley Bridge, and he also served as the Police Chaplain for the same District and on the

Sheffield Board of Education. At the time of the 1911 census the family were living at Hillsborough Vicarage, Sheffield. The family has grown to 8 children, 5 boys and 3 girls and two of the older daughters Annie and Dorothy were working as teachers in a private school while John Newton was an assistant schoolmaster at St Winifred's School in Kenley, near Croydon, Surrey. St Winifred's trained young men for the ministry. John Newton's mother died in 1916, and two years later his father remarried, to Emily Bartlett Knocker.

As well as dealing with the everyday spiritual needs of his parish, William Sykes was also:

A prominent Free Mason, joining the 'Motherland' Lodge which met at Freemasons' Hall, Queen Street in London,

Senior Deputy Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of England.

A member Grand Orange Order of England which declared itself to be a 'Protestant fraternity which exists for the establishment and preservation of Civil and Religious Liberty and the Protestant Religion'

The first President (1913-1930) of the re-formed Sovereign Grace Union, a Calvinist organisation with a mission to preach an evangelistic message.

Ill health led to William Sykes retiring in 1927 and he died in January 1934. Three of his sons, John, William and David, officiated at their father's funeral service in Sheffield before his burial in St Peter's churchyard, Southborough, Kent.

In June 1907 the Sheffield Daily Telegraph informed the people of the city that John Newton had been awarded a £35 scholarship towards his studies at Queen's College, Cambridge. He had previously been educated at Christ's Hospital, Horsham which was a

charitable school initially founded in 1552 by Henry VIII. The majority of the co-ed pupils received a bursary to enable them to study. After leaving Christ' Hospital John had been studying Theological Tripos (Biblical Studies, Christian Doctrine and Church History) since the October 1906. He had gained an 1<sup>st</sup> Class result in his exams in May.

Having graduated from University, John Newton returned to the north of England, where in the September quarter of 1912 he married Daisy Wilson in Wortley, a civil parish of Barnsley District, Yorkshire. Daisy had been baptised in Wadsley, Ecclesfield on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1887 and in the 1911 census she was living at 93 Town Street, Farsley, working as a confectioner/baker.

Sometime after 1912 John Newton and Daisy emigrated to Vancouver, Canada where he became the Headmaster at Chesterfield boys boarding school. The school had originally been built up on the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> and Lonsdale but moved to a larger premise further along Lonsdale in 1913. The school had two large buildings; the main house with dormitories, a dining room and office and the school house with classrooms and a science lab. There was also a gymnasium, a swimming pool and a stable for 6 horses. The aim of the school was to prepare the boys for university, Royal Navy or Military College of business. They had a Boy Scout programme and the 20 boys often helped fight local forest fires.

While they were abroad Europe became embroiled in World War 1 and at least one brother, David, enlisted to serve for King and Country. On 8<sup>th</sup> December 1915 David Thomas Sykes enlisted in Sheffield in the 26<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. The Battalion was raised among the bankers, clerks and accountants of the business sector. In October he completed a Lewis Gun Operator course at Le Touquet, Pas-de-Calais. The gas operated weapon was issued to the British Army's infantry battalions on the Western

Front in early 1916 as a replacement for the heavier and less mobile Vickers machine gun. It was operated by a team of seven, the First Lewis Gunner who carried the gun and a revolver, while the Second Gunner carried a bag containing spare parts, and the remaining five members of the team carried loaded pans of ammunition. It was possibly while using this gun at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle of Arras that he was wounded.

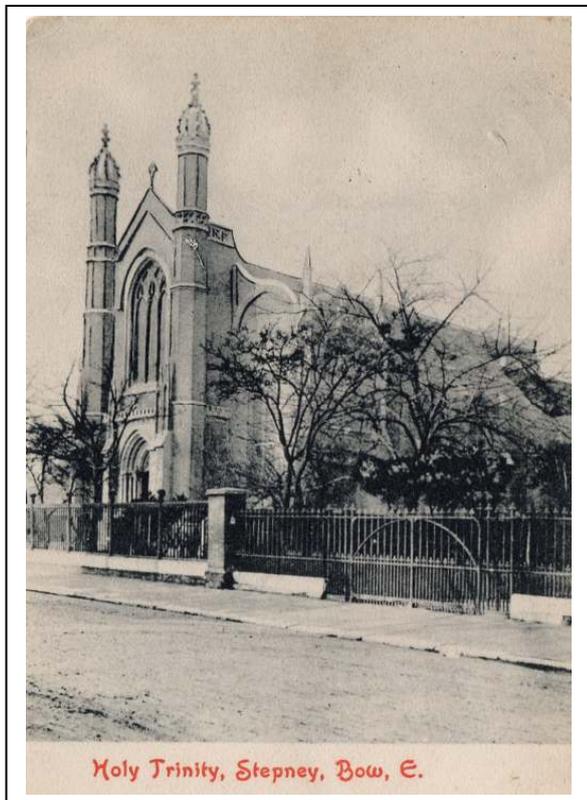
David's Battalion fought at the Battle of Bullecourt (3-7<sup>th</sup> May 1917), part of the fierce German resistance to the British/Australian attempt to break through the Hindenburg Line. The Allies suffered heavy casualties, approx. 150,000 but gained little ground.

On 12<sup>th</sup> May David was treated at the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian General Hospital, Étaples, south of Boulogne. The site was a combined training base, supply depot, prison detention camp and was nicknamed 'Hospital City'. It has the largest CWGC cemetery in France with over 10,000 burials. Having been treated for his wounds, including the amputation of his badly crushed thumb, David was shipped back to England on 16<sup>th</sup> May aboard the Hospital Ship 'Stad Antwerpen'. He was eventually discharged on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1917 and given a pension of 27/6 for four weeks followed by 11/- to be reviewed after 34 weeks. He was also awarded the British Medal and the Victory Medal. David was 23 years old when he was discharged.

John Newton returned to England on board the 'Winifredian' on the 25<sup>th</sup> July 1927, sailing from Boston to Liverpool. He travelled with his wife Daisy and their 3 children, Hannah aged 11, John David aged 7 and Patrick aged 2.

Reverend Newton took up an appointment at Holy Trinity Church, Morgan Street near Tredegar Square, Stepney. The Church had been built between 1836 and 1839 to accommodate the ever-growing population of the local community. It was damaged during

the Blitz, but survived due to efforts of the Reverend and other and was finally closed in 1984. The Church was adjacent to the Coopers Company Boys School where at least one of the Sykes boys was educated.



As with the other members of his family, John Newton threw himself into the full life of the local community. One of the roles he took up was as the President of the 13<sup>th</sup> District London Diocesan Boy Scout Association, Group Chaplain and Rover Scout (the adult section of the Scout Association). The Group met at his own church, Holy Trinity, and as with Scout Groups everywhere it helps develop a sense of community spirit and responsibility among the local boys. The Scout Association awarded John Newton the Silver Cross in February 19421 for ‘his great gallantry and devotion to duty in the face of great danger during air raids in London 1940-41.’

The lives of John Newton, Daisy and their children would have been unremarkable and pleasantly middle class. It was only with the devastating bombing raids on London that John Newton proved to be such a local hero to his parishioners in Stepney, many of whom happily gave interviews to the press following the Reverend’s award for bravery. The stories they told showed what a remarkable man he was. Dressed in a battered black tin hat with a white cross on it, a clerical collar and an old raincoat, he would cycle around his parish helping where-ever he could. One parishioner, a local boxer called Eddie Phillips stated that Rev. Newton had an ‘uncanny sense of where a bomb would fall’. He built himself a shack in the graveyard (possibly Bow Cemetery) ‘so as to waste no time’ when the raids began. Ever a practical man he installed ladders on the walls of the church and his house and sand buckets on the roof. Because of these precautions he was able to save the church twice, the parish hall three times and his own house once by climbing up and extinguishing the flames caused by incendiary bombs landing on the roof.

Being an older gentleman, aged about 53 when war broke out, Reverend Sykes was too old to join the Armed Forces so he took up Home Front duties as a Fire Watcher. The Fire Watcher Service was formed in September 1940 in anticipation of the fearsome bombing raids. It was a compulsory scheme to provide 24-hour fire watch cover and enlisted men between 16-30 and women between 20-45. It was also possible for men up to 70 and women up to 60 to volunteer. The hours were long and tedious so not surprisingly it was a highly unpopular job, without even taking into consideration the constant danger! No official uniform was provided but the Watcher were issued with a helmet, torch, an identification arm-band, a stirrup-pump to put out small fires, something to scoop up incendiary bombs and a bucket of sand to put the bombs out. The men and women of the Fire Watchers Service provided invaluable first response civil

defence support and their contribution to the war effort is justifiable commemorated on the Fire Fighters Memorial near St Paul's Cathedral, one of the buildings they helped to save during the Blitz.

The details of the work Reverend Sykes did around Stepney make his clear that he was a very worthy recipient of the OBE.

On 10<sup>th</sup> May 1940 the Reverend was standing opposite Bow Cemetery with a local police officer when a number of cars were set alight by an incendiary bomb. The men tried to move some of the cars away from the houses but their attempts failed when a second bomb landed in the same spot.

On 24<sup>th</sup> September 1940, Reverend Sykes was visiting people in their shelters when a bomb fell on a row of houses next to Coburn Road Station. The Reverend was blown off his bike by the force of the explosion but he picked himself up and helped in the search through the debris. He helped recover an injured man, the body of his wife and then, miraculously, their injured son. Rev. Sykes took the injured boy to his own house at the Vicarage, Holy Trinity where he was looked after for 7 days. On 10<sup>th</sup> October 1940 Rev. Sykes 'prompt and devoted attention' saved the life of 16 years old Fred Cole who had been severely injured by an explosion, losing his leg and suffering from severe blood loss.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1940, a bomb fell on the 'Royal' public house on the corner of Burdett Street and the Mile End Road. The building was on fire and in danger of collapsing but the Reverend knew that three people usually took shelter in the basement so he and Warden A.W. Easter crawled through the burning debris, not leaving until they were sure no-one was left in the building. Shortly after they came out, the building collapsed.

On 20<sup>th</sup> November 1940, a local gas works was hit, igniting a huge fire. Rev. Sykes went

into Nu. 93 Harford Street, which was right next to the burning gas works, while the bombs were still falling to check that no-one was still inside.

Reverend Sykes also saved the life of a fireman while they were dealing with a fire on a roof. The fireman lost his footing and would probably have fallen to his death if Sykes had not grabbed hold of him and pulled him to safety.

While Reverend Sykes was cycling around Stepney, rescuing people, saving buildings from fire and tending to his parishioners' spiritual needs, his eldest son, John David Wilson, had joined the RAF as the pilot of a Wellington bomber.

John David had been born in Vancouver while his father was Headmaster of Chesterfield School. When the family returned to Stepney, he attended Cooper's Company School in Tredegar Square and then King's College London. As a second year Theology student he was exempt from military service but he volunteered anyway and was stationed with Squadron 150 Volunteer Reserves.

In July 1942 he was based at Snaith Station, Goole, Yorkshire and it was from here that he and his 5 crewmembers took off on 13<sup>th</sup> July for a night-raid on Duisburg, a key industrial German city at the confluence of the Rhine and the Ruhr Rivers. The Squadron flew Vickers Wellington III, a twin-engined long-range medium bomber which usually flew with a crew of five.

The rest of the plane's crew were;  
Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Sergeant John William Calvert aged 32 of Catford. Buried Hither Green Cemetery Section C.G. Grave 145

Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Sergeant Lionel Frederick Perry aged 30 of Selsey, Sussex. Buried Ipswich Old Cemetery Section C Division 31 Grave 37. (Two of his brothers also died during the War).

Navigator Sergeant F Mellins injured  
Sergeant J Moffat injured  
Pilot Officer Hayes injured

The weather was very bad, with severe icing, cloud and thunderstorms. The icing became so bad that Sykes made the decision to abandon the raid, jettison the bomb load and attempt a landing at RAF Martlesham Heath, Suffolk. At 03.30 the plane crashed at Tannington, 10 miles from Diss.

John was brought back to London and buried in Manor Park Cemetery (Plot 18, Grave Number 110355). His coffin was carried by members of the Australian RAF with whom he had served in Yorkshire.

Reverend John Newton Sykes led an unremarkable life after the War, becoming the vicar of the small rural parish of Colne Engaine, near Colchester. The village itself dates back to Domesday when it had 2 mills, 3 beehives and 13 goats. The church, dedicated to St Andrew, stands in the centre of the village. It has a Norman nave, the base of the tower dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> century and, like many other medieval churches, it was 'restored' in the late Victorian period. The village was a small rural Essex community; the population was only just over 1000 in the 2011 census.

As well as the parish church, another focal point in the village was 'The Five Bells' pub. It was here on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1952 that John Newton died suddenly while apparently watching his younger son, Patrick, playing scrum-half for the England rugby team on the television. Locals said he always enjoyed sitting in the bar, watching the little television that sat on top of the piano. He was 66 years old.

In the very simple will he had drawn up in January 1929, John Newton left £751 7s 10d to his widow Daisy or, if she had predeceased him, in trust for their children. Daisy was named his executrix or, in the event of her

death, her brother-in-law, the renowned Cornish painter, Montague Hart of the Lizard. I can't help wonder whether many of his parishioners in the quiet, little Essex village knew the details of their vicar's exploits in the dark days of the London Blitz.

### **Penny Williams**

### **Ethel Waldock – an East End Childhood**

Ethel's father Waldock's Jeffrey, was born in Ashwell, Hertfordshire, in 1863. Her mother, Harriet Catherine Sheppard was born in Odsey in Cambridgeshire. They were married in 1884, and moved to Abingdon Piggotts. Jeffrey was a farm labourer, but work was hard to find, so in 1891 the couple upped sticks and moved to London, where he got a job as a horse keeper, working on the drays. Their address was 33, White Lion Street.

According to Charles Booth's poverty map of 1898/9, this was an area shown in the "pink" band – fairly comfortable. Jeffrey made reasonable money. (In 1912 White Lion Street was renamed Folgate Street).

In 1901 Jeffrey and Harriet were living at 37 Lamb Street, with their four children: Harry, aged 9, Lilly, aged 5, Ethel aged 2 and Nora, six months (and later, in 1905, a fourth daughter, Elsie).

In 1917 Ethel married Frederick Thomas Bradford at Holy Saviour Church in Hitchin, Hertfordshire. Fred was a 27-year-old farm labourer from Walsworth, then a village on the outskirts of Hitchin. They set up home at 2, Highover Cottages, a tied property to Highover Farm, where Fred worked. They had five daughters, and a son who died.

As a child growing up in the 1950s, I spent many happy times with my grandparents, and their unmarried daughter, Lilly.

I remember Ethel talking about Spitalfields, and living across from the market. When she was old enough to do so, she would go to the market; she'd wear an apron to protect her clothes. For some reason the stallholders called her Annie, and gave her fruit, which she'd put in her apron, the bottom part of which turned up as a big pocket.

The family lived above a restaurant, and on one occasion, as Ethel came down an internal staircase, her shoe came off and dropped into a container of soup. What the outcome was she didn't say, but I know she had to confess to her mother, who was reputedly quite strict!

I recall Ethel telling me about being out with her mother, and seeing an elderly lady, selling matches – Ethel felt very sorry for her.

After a while the family moved again, this time to Lamb Street. I remember Ethel telling me that the school she attended had an underground playground. This has always intrigued me – I wonder if anyone knows more about this?

As I mentioned previously, Ethel had three sisters and a brother, Harry. Ethel came upon him on a street corner, surrounded by onlookers, as he'd collapsed and was having a fit. The doctor who attended him said that he wasn't suited to city life, and recommended the family relocate to the country.

We've now come full circle; the family moved back to Abingdon Piggots, where Ethel's father Jeffrey took up where he left off, working on the land.

Jeffrey died in 1945 and Harriet in 1956. They are buried in St Michael and All Angels churchyard, Abingdon Piggots.

Ethel died in 1989 at 2 Highover Cottages, where I had been born some years before (I'm not saying how many).

**Janet Walker**

## Correspondence

Dear Phil,

I trust the following will be of interest to the next *Newsletter*, hopefully with Philip Cunningham's reply

### **The Lost Breweries of Whitechapel.**

In the *ELHS Newsletter*, vol. 4, 17, Summer 2020 Philip Cunningham wrote that “In 1757, John Charrington moved his brewing business from Bethnal Green to the Mile End Rd. This was the Blue Anchor Brewery ...”.

Cunningham does not give a reference to support this statement but I think he is misquoting L. A. G. Strong who wrote in *A brewer's progress, 1757-1957, A survey of Charrington's brewery, 1957*, that Waistfield and Moss, the firm in which Charrington wished to invest, had in 1757 moved from Bethnal Green to a new brewery in Mile End Road.

Strong did not provide any reference to support this statement.

I investigated this claim in Chapter 6 of my *Mile End Old Town, 1740-1780* book and could find no evidence to support it.

Indeed, I could trace the Blue Anchor brewery in Mile End back to at least 1700 and Robert Waistfield was involved with the Blue Anchor from as earlier as 1736.

I believe Charrington invested in the brewery that was already established in Mile End.

Equally, I could find no evidence that William Baston was a brewer in Bethnal Green in 1728, but it is some 20 years since I looked at the records, so am happy to be corrected.

With best wishes,

**Derek Morris**

**Email from: John Bundock , October 3, 2020 1:01 PM**

Hello

My father was the Vicar of Highwood, Essex, from 1945 – 1953. An exhausted homing pigeon landed in the vicarage garden towards the end of September 1949. My father put it in a small chicken coop, with water and grain, to recover and released it the following day. I can remember him doing this. On 29th September 1949 he received a letter from the pigeon fancier, Mr W Phillips, thanking him and enclosing a two shillings Postal Order.

The address was 34 Single Street, Bow, London E3. I have been unable to locate the road, so I assume the area has subsequently been redeveloped. Is this so?

Would you like the letter for your archives?

Kind regards

John Bundock

(Canon John Bundock, Loxwood, West Sussex)

**On Sat, 3 Oct 2020 at 15:02, Phil Mernick wrote:**

Dear John, thank you for that story, can I publish it in our next members newsletter? Single Street Bow, which ran south from Solebay Street to Bow Common Lane, was closed in 1975 as part of an extension to King George's Field recreation ground.

very best regards

**Philip Mernick, Chairman, East London History Society.**

P.S. I would very much like the letter as it will make an important part of the story.

**Letter to the Revd. Bundock dated 29/9/49, from W. Phillips, 34 Single Street, Bow (unedited)**

Dear Sir,

I was very pleased my bird homed on the 28<sup>th</sup> September. I lost in a race from Chatteris on the 2th Sept. I was surprised because at the beginning of the Season it won a race from the same Race point against 404 Birds in the Club. But still the Bird His Home: and? thank you ever so much for what you did for the Bird. Has I can see Have Been very Tired when it whent down to you. If they all did the same Has you did, I am shew we would get quite a lott of Hour Birds Return Home. I am Enclosing 2/- Postal Order for the Feeding and Care of the Bird. So Thanking you once again and Good Luck.

I am yours Truly,

**Mr W. Phillips**

**Email from Iain Flett, October 31st**

Evening all

Attached is a camera shot of a glass slide I have of Bethnal Green - I imagine you could get a more focused view if you had the right kit.



It comes from two boxes of a mix of things including a definite series that appears to have been a lecture about missionary activity of the Church of Scotland around Calcutta/Kolkata and the Hooghly and a commercial set of Edinburgh views of the Aberdeen publisher George Washington Wilson. I've offered the Bethnal Green slide to Tower

Hamlets archives, but they think it should be kept with the rest. I disagree as I think it's one of its kind and will be of far more interest to your community than being hidden in a missionary collection in Edinburgh University. Do you want it (for free)? When my daughter lived in a tiny studio flat in Hackney Road, I used to walk to her from the Travelodge in Bethnal Green. I've probably walked over this blitzed street...  
Regards Iain Flett

Philip replied  
Dear Iain, I don't recognise the street but there must have been many like that at the end of the 19th century. I would like to have it and publish it in our newsletter to hopefully locate it. The missionary activities of The Church of Scotland in East London might also provide a clue. I would be happy to pay any postage costs.  
Does any member recognise the street?

### **Some History enquiries**

**Bobby Syme**

Hi,

I found your contact details while trying to look up the history of the property I moved into recently. No information was given to me about the year the house was built and I can't find anything on other houses in the street. I can see the right opposite my house was hit by a bomb in the second world war and is now missing several of the terraces, which have been replaced with flats. You can even see bomb damage on the back walls of my house.

I wonder if you have any information on when the houses at Braemar Road, Canning town were built or possibly know where I can obtain this info?

Many thanks  
**Bobby**

### **Philip replied:**

Dear Bobby, I am afraid that I only currently have access to significant information on Tower Hamlets. I can tell you that Braemar Road is mentioned in the 1902 Post Office Directory of Suburban London, but I have none earlier. For more information you will need Newham Archives in Stratford, which will be closed at present. They should be able to tell you when Braemar Road was opened and when land tax was first levied on the houses in it. They will also have access to more PO Directories.

### **Enquiry from Ken Phillips**

Sirs,  
I hope you may be able to help find an image of the anchor in Poplar Recreation Ground. The anchor is off the second HMY 'Victoria & Albert' and presented by Elijah Moore in 1911. It was also be interesting to know if it still there, or whatever happened to it if not.

Thank you so much for your attention in these difficult times,

### **Philip:**

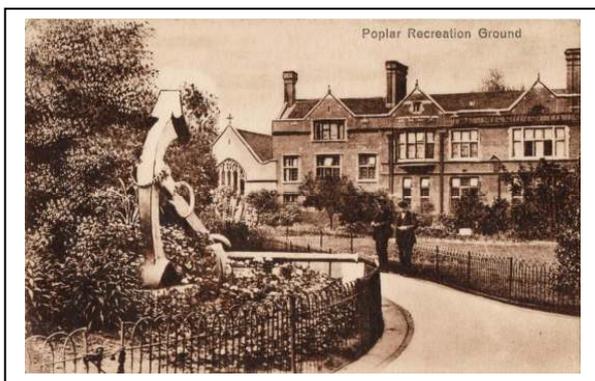
I sent Mr Phillips a copy of a post card image and forwarded the enquiry to Robert Jones of Tower Hamlets Archives provided the following information which I passed on to Mr Phillips.

“According to a note on the back of a William Whiffin photograph (WW/708) the anchor from the Victoria and Albert yacht “went for salvage” in 1943, presumably meaning for the war effort.

I could find no evidence to substantiate this claim in the British Newspaper Archive however, and another account in our information index actually contradicts it. According to the Docklands History Group

Minutes of 5 October 1994 (pasted on verso of the index card): "Tom Stothard recalled that the anchor had been presented to Poplar Borough Council and had also been sited in Poplar Recreation Ground - what had happened to it? Chris Ellmers said that it now resided at the National Maritime Museum, just inside the Romney Road foot entrance". An item found on the National Maritime Museum's catalogue (object ID EQS0013) appears to support Ellmers's account: <https://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/18190.html>

**This does pose the question are the Poplar and Greenwich anchors the same anchor. The ship may have originally had more than one!**



Post card showing the anchor in Poplar recreation ground. The church in the background is St. Matthias.

## **Newham New Deal Partnership**

### **Heritage for a digital future: Online workshops for volunteers - December 2020**

Get ready to improve your skills in recording past and current history in the making! Participate in one of our online workshops which will help you to understand recording contemporary and past history a little better and upgrade your digital skills in the process.

To book your place, please contact Asia Wieloch at [heritage@newhamndp.co.uk](mailto:heritage@newhamndp.co.uk). Or for more information, please call: 0207 366 6343. (We will re-run some of the workshops again in January 2020, dates to be confirmed.)

### **Workshop 1: History in the Making** *Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 3pm -4.15 pm*

How is history made? It is made by us and historical events we live through. COVID-19 has brought unprecedented changes and challenges to our lives: we are witnessing history in the making. How do you record the history of a pandemic while you're busy living through it? How can you document your/your family experience of the pandemic?

Museums and archives have already begun to source items that will help them interpret in years to come what it was like to live through COVID-19. **In this workshop you will have an opportunity to explore different ways of creating a personal narrative to document your own story the way museums or archives do.**

### **Workshop 2: Pictures, Objects and Stories** *Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December, 3pm -4.15 pm*

In this session we will look into how museums work with everyday objects, photographs and stories to create an exhibition. You will have a chance to explore how to create your own story based on your family history, stories that happened in your community or something you want to pass on to the future generations, as well as understand how to take appropriate visual documentation.

### **Workshop 3: Getting Started with Oral History** *Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 3pm -4.15 pm*

This session will give you an opportunity to add more voices to the story you've created so far. We will cover the key steps in the process of collecting oral histories, from planning, to

interview skills, options for recording, and organising your material and transcription.

**Workshop 4: Accessing archives and online resources**

*Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December, 3pm -4.15 pm*

How can you provide a wider context to the research you have done so far? We will explore how to use online archives to find what we are interested in. This workshop will use examples from a local history project to enable you to carry on your own historical project from home.

**Format and access**

All workshops will take place on Zoom. Preferably, you should join on your laptop, tablet or PC. If you haven't used Zoom before and need help setting it up, we can support you. Information supplied by Fiona Baird

**This project is funded by: National Lottery Heritage Fund**

**Royal Mint Square**

In ELHS newsletter V4/3, Winter 2015/16, we mentioned proposals for redeveloping Royal Mint Court, the complex that housed the Royal Mint which officially moved to Llantrisant in 1967 although the last coin (a gold sovereign) wasn't struck there until 1975. Planning permission was granted in July 2016 and the site was redeveloped with a new office and residential block added to the complex alongside the two remaining Grade II listed buildings. However, in May 2018 the site was sold to the People's Republic of China to be used for their new London embassy and they have just sent me this information.

9th November 2020

Proposals to deliver a new London Embassy for the People's Republic of China at Royal Mint Court, Tower Hamlets

As you will be aware, Royal Mint Court is located just off East Smithfield Street, overlooking the River Thames and opposite the Tower of London. It is a historically significant, 5.4-acre site which has largely been left vacant since early 2013.

The People's Republic of China announced that it had purchased the site in 2018 for its new London Embassy, with the intention to relocate from the current headquarters at Portland Place in Marylebone. Prior to this, the site was owned by developer Delancey who you may recall secured planning permission for an office-led mixed-use redevelopment which was never brought forward.

Royal Mint Court was identified as an ideal site for a new London Embassy, given its rich historical heritage, location in London, and size. The proposals would see it become the workplace of the Embassy's staff and the hub of all the day-to-day matters you typically associate with a modern Embassy, including offering travel assistance and passport or visa services.

Over the past few months, we have been assembling a professional team to draw up designs for the site and wanted to reach out now to our closest neighbours to ensure that they were aware of the proposals and to provide further information, the opportunity to ask any questions and to give us feedback.

The initial designs:

We have employed David Chipperfield Architects (DCA) to lead on the design process for the Royal Mint Court site. DCA are an award-winning practice that has received more than 100 international awards and citations for design excellence, including the RIBA Stirling Prize. The practice has a particular expertise in working on historically sensitive sites such as this one.

From the outset, ours and their approach has been to bring to life this site in a way which is both sensitive to its past and embracing of its future, all whilst meeting the needs of a modern diplomatic agency. This means carefully refurbishing the Grade II\* Listed Johnson

Smirke Building, while retaining and redeveloping the surrounding buildings and parts of their landscaping.

At the centre of the site (see the site plan and image enclosed) would be the retained and re-stored Johnson Smirke Building, which could host formal events, while the former Seaman's Registry building to the north would be renovated and turned into office space.

The 1980s office building along the eastern edge of the site would be adapted to house learning resources and staff accommodation, and the building sitting along the site's southern perimeter would be partially reused and transformed to house the more public elements of the Embassy, including the visa application centre. Most significantly, we are also proposing that this building would house a new cultural centre to provide a forum for public events, exhibitions, and cultural exchange.

Across the Royal Mint Court estate, we would look to retain the existing buildings as far as possible to be eco-friendly and to ensure the historic continuity of the site, and would restore, adapt and reuse the existing building fabric to create a unified looking family of buildings, that together define the new Embassy site and respond to the character of the surrounding area.

### **Jewish women of the East End Forwarded by David Walker of Jewish East End**

The celebrated author Rachel Lichtenstein (Rodinsky's Room [with Iain Sinclair], Rodinsky's Whitechapel and On Brick Lane} is working on a new project celebrating the lives of Jewish women of the East End and hopes JEECS people can help.

She writes: Dear Members, I am a writer who is currently working on a book of Jewish Women of East London. I am looking for female members of this group who grew up or still live in East London who might be willing to be interviewed on Zoom about their lives for this project. Or gentlemen, if you have stories about your grandmothers, mothers,

wives or sisters you would be willing to share please do let me know. Aside from Miriam Moses can anyone think of famous Jewish women from East London? Please help me find the best stories for this important missing volume on women of the East End.

I will happily pass on any thoughts you might have to Rachel.

You can email me at [dvdwalker50@gmail.com](mailto:dvdwalker50@gmail.com).

### **Poplar rates Dispute Appeal by Chris Sumner**

Next year is the one hundredth anniversary of the Poplar Council Rates Dispute which culminated in thirty councillors being sent to prison for six weeks. They had defied a court order in their campaign for equalisation of rates for the benefit of poor London boroughs. Various events are being planned and I would like to contact descendants of the councillors who have handed-down stories or memories of the dispute.

If you can help in this, please call me on 07831 595700

Many thanks, Chris Sumner

### **Maryland Station**

I see on the news that some Newham councillors have asked Transport for London to rename Maryland Station because some people might be upset having to get off at a station that shares its name with an American Slave State. The station was called Maryland Point until 1940 as was the area, in fact I always knew it as Maryland Point. Local tradition has it named after a Robert Lee who returned to England from Maryland in the 18<sup>th</sup> century although the earliest map reference predates his birth and Mr. Lee may have lived in Virginia rather than Maryland. Retired Professor Ged Martin has written a very detailed survey of the origins of "our" Maryland suggesting that the US connection is

an 19<sup>th</sup> century invention and proposing a medieval origin to the name if not the location. His study can be found online by Googling "Ged Martin +Maryland"

## Stebbing Family Graves

On the October 9<sup>th</sup> Annie Daley emailed from Queensland, Australia: I was composing a letter to your History Group and had only half finished it when I touched the indent button and it went flying off into the atmosphere so I hope this all makes sense.

I was enquiring about burials for Rachel Ellen COLVILL married on 4th December, 1859 in Poplar and the subsequent children I found born to her. She died of T.B. as did all but one of her children.

She was my Grandfather's first wife and first family. His name was Charles James STEBBING baptised on 9th November, 1834.

Children I have found are:

Charles James Birth approx. 1860  
 Emily Louisa Birth 6th January 1862  
 Emily Rachel Birth March 1864  
 Alice Birth 21st August, 1865. Death 1867

Charles Joseph Birth 26th April, 1868

Rachel Ellen Birth 1870

. Death 1871

and I think there should be a 7th child. All of these children except one, died of T.B. whilst my Grandfather Charles James STEBBING was a ship's carpenter, sailing three times to Australia. On his last voyage, during which he was taking the remaining child to Australia to live, he became ill and eventually gave this child away to a childless couple who looked after him during this voyage which took my Grandfather to New Zealand and Australia. I'm not sure which came first, but he married a widow in New Zealand and they made their life in Australia where my father was born.

Most of these births and deaths were in Poplar, Shoreditch, Limehouse, Mile End Old Town,

etc. These of course, could all be the same to you but I have done all this research on the internet and only have the details I could find, and my Grandfather died in Australia before I was born. If this first family had lived, it's certain I wouldn't have been born.

I've tried searching for burial places but haven't had any luck. I'd really appreciate it if you can help me. The closest I've been to England was sending food parcels to England during the Second World War. I realize that your group may be closed because of the pandemic, but I have a lot of patience.

On October 10<sup>th</sup> Diane emailed I've looked at the registers for THC and also Deceased on line and can't find them which is a shame as it's such an interesting story.

On October 11<sup>th</sup> Annie emailed Dear Phil, thank you so much for trying to fulfil my request and please thank Diane Kendall. So their burial places are still a mystery. A Mother and so many children.

I saw a documentary on T.V. some time back which said that what was regarded as TB could have been caused by the build of the old chimneys which didn't draw properly, and which allowed particles back into the houses, but we've always been told they died of TB. It was certainly a sad time.

My grandfather made a completely new home for himself out here and married a widow who had come from Guernsey Island, so my paternal grandparents both had interesting lives. I thank them for mine. I was one of seven children. We are a strong family and growing all the time, I have four great grandchildren, and all of our families have, until this pandemic, had family reunions each year for over 70 years.

October 12<sup>th</sup> Philip emailed

Dear Annie, I am sorry that we couldn't help you but can we publish the story in our next

members' newsletter?

October 13<sup>th</sup> Annie emailed

Dear Phil, yes, certainly publish the story. I'm happy that you can use it.

To add to it my Grandfather lived until 1914 and had 9 more children, of whom my father Albert, D.O.B. 1885, was one. Five of these children lived, with the first three babies being born in New Zealand, the rest in Australia, (Sydney and Melbourne). They sure got around in those days.

My father often wondered where his half-brother, given away on the ship, finished up living. Family history tells, that the couple he was given to, wrote to my Grandfather asking for help to buy the boy a coat as they had fallen on hard times, so Grandfather never contacted them again. Tough.

I'm so pleased I emailed you on the spur of the moment, and was really happy to receive such a prompt reply.

Regards,  
Annie, a.k.a. Nancy née STEBBING

## Planning Applications

There are many contentious planning applications still in progress illustrating that Development Profits trump (no pun intended, well maybe it was) Public Benefit. The future of familiar structures such as Whitechapel Bell Foundry, Bethnal Green gasometers, Bishopsgate Goods Depot and the Victoria Park Hospital Mulberry tree are still being debated. Others, like the site of the former Bromley Gas Works, may have been cleared but the impact of their development on local neighbourhoods (in this case Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park) are yet to be determined.

## Doreen Fletcher's new exhibition

Doreen's new exhibition "Still Standing" opens at Town House, Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December and runs to 20<sup>th</sup> December. Town House gallery and antiques shop is at 5 Fournier Street E1 6QE, just around the corner from Spitalfields Church.

Doreen has allowed us to use this image from the exhibition together with her comment.



**Rinkoff's, Vallance Rd**

About half way down Vallance Rd is this well-known East End Jewish bakery adjoining a news-agents which was, until recently, a precarious structure. It was in this guise that I was attracted to paint the subject, especially by comparison with the stern expression of the founder of the bakery depicted on the end wall, forever overlooking the comings and goings of the street. In the three years since I began studies for this painting, refurbishment has happened, replacing the original patina with a new flat surface. However, I was relieved to see that the building was not destroyed.

I realise that I have painted a kind of a memory. When a feeling is realised, it can quickly be dissipated. I suppose that I have always painted from memory, from the thoughts and feelings I am able to take away from a subject, and I hope that contributes to the power an image can hold.