

The East London History Society

PROGRAMME 1981/82

1981

23 Sept. Wed.	"Dick Tanner, Detective". The investigation of two Victorian murders in East London Bernard J. Barrell	Queen Mary College	7.30 pm
21 Oct. Wed.	Annual General Meeting Followed by Members' Evening	Queen Mary College	7.30 pm
24 Nov. Tues.	Tower Hamlets Joint Annual Lecture Dr. Elizabeth Vallance "Women in Politics"	Central Library, Bancroft Road	7.30 pm
15 Dec. Tues.	Blackwall frigates A. W. H. Pearsall (Nat. Maritime Museum)	Queen Mary College	7.30 pm
1982			
20 Jan. Wed.	The East India Company A. H. French	Queen Mary College	7.30 pm
17 Feb. Wed.	Fairgrounds Seamus Duggan	Queen Mary College	7.30 pm
24 Mar. Wed.	The relationship of Queen Mary College and the local community Professor R. F. Leslie	Queen Mary College	7.15 pm
22 Apr. Thurs.	Hackney Evening Subject to be announced	Rose Lipman Library De Beauvoir Road, Hackney	7.30 pm
20 May Thurs.	Thames Paddle Steamers & Pleasure Steamers Alan Peake	Queen Mary College	7.15 pm
17 June Thurs.	Bow and Old Ford Walk led by A. H. French	Meet Bow Road Station	6.30 pm

The East London History Society exists to further interest in the history of East London, namely the London Boroughs of Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets.

Information about the Society can be obtained from:

The Membership Secretary, 39 Harbinger Road, London, E.14.



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EAST LONDON RECORD

Editor: Colm Kerrigan

The East London History Society (founded 1952) publishes the *East London Record* once a year. We welcome articles, which should be between 1,000 and 4,000 words, on any aspect of the history of Hackney, Newham or Tower Hamlets. Articles may be based on personal reminiscences or on research. The editor will be happy to discuss plans for projected articles and work in progress. Contributions may be handed in at the Local History Library, Tower Hamlets Central Library, Bancroft Road, London E1 4DQ or sent by post to the editor at 38 Ridgale Street, London E3 2TW.

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Cover illustration: Backyard blacksmith, probably in Bethnal Green, around the turn of the century (Galt Collection, Museum of London).

THE MILE END 'AIR ELECTION' OF 1916

H. David Behr

DURING the Blitz on the Docks more people died in a single night than were killed in all the London air raids in the First World War¹. Yet Air Marshal Sir John Slessor who served in both World Wars has contrasted the stoicism of East Enders in the Second War to a scene 'not very far removed from panic' in the Mile End Road the day after a Zeppelin raid in 1915.

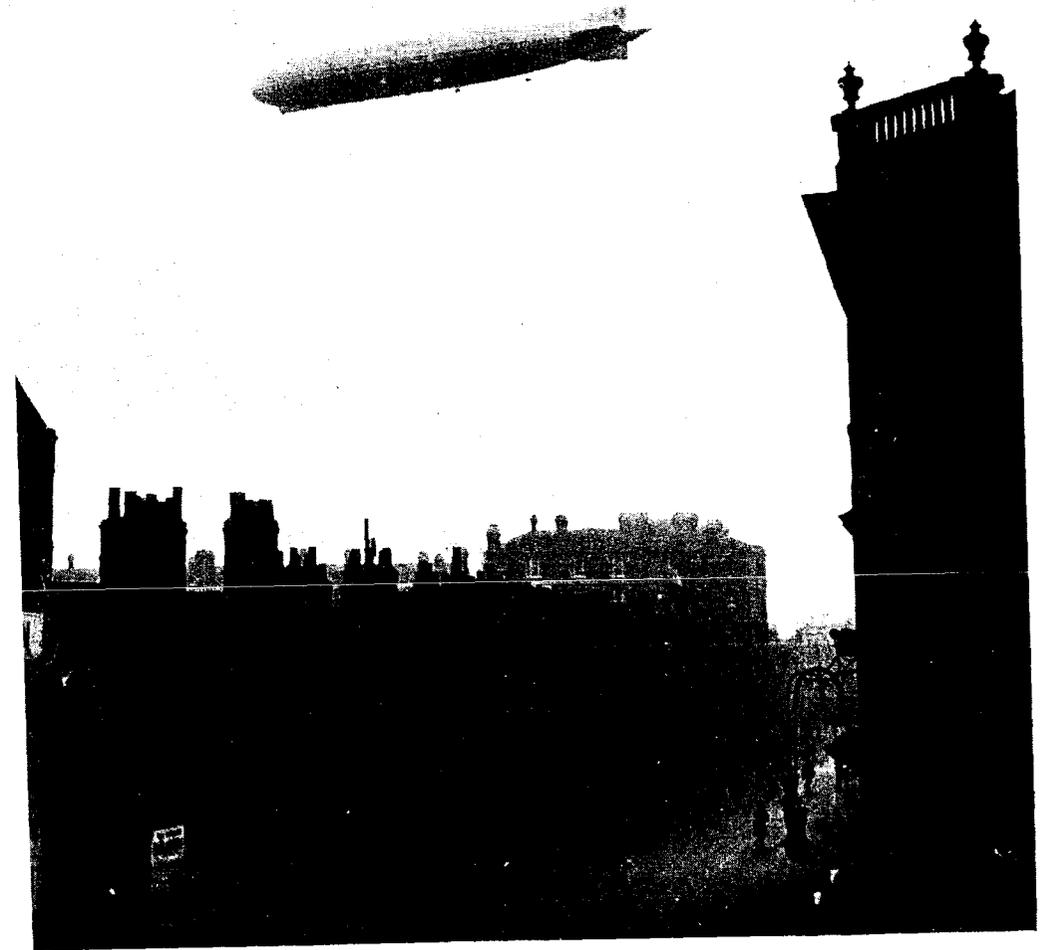
Following the first airship raid on Britain there had been tales of vehicles racing round the countryside and guiding the Zeppelins with their headlights. So, only military vehicles were allowed to use them. Slessor was in a vehicle towing a trailer of aeroplane parts. Its headlights had been switched on but the vehicle displayed a blue lamp to show it was a military one. In addition, Slessor and his companions were in the (unfamiliar) uniform of the Royal Flying Corps. Even so, a suspicious crowd stopped the vehicle and two policemen were needed to clear a path for it². Such incidents were rare. The late Mr. Stafford, a veteran Stepney resident, discussed the raids with his contemporaries. They could not recall panic nor do the official reports record any.

It was on 31st May 1915 that two Zeppelins set out for London from their Belgian base³. One turned back but the other commanded by Hauptmann Linnarz reached north-east London. So when at about 11.20 p.m. the first bomb was dropped on London it fell on a house in Alkham Road near Stoke Newington Station. No one was hurt although two bedrooms were destroyed. However, six people were killed and thirty-five injured by bombs and grenades dropped as the Zeppelin flew south over Dalston, Hoxton and Shoreditch to Whitechapel and Commercial Road and then eastwards to Stratford and Leytonstone. Yet except for a fresh outbreak of attacks on suspected Germans in Shoreditch people stayed calm⁴.

It was London's own defences that caused concern. Only one aircraft had tried to intercept Linnarz as he came and went. It had failed and crashed on landing, killing the pilot and injuring the navigator. Moreover, no one had seen or heard the Zeppelin as it flew over London itself at 10,000 feet. So not one gun was fired.

Besides the need to keep news of these failures from Londoners, future raids would be more effective if the Germans could learn where the bombs had fallen. Therefore, for the first time the newspapers were told that all they should print was the official announcement summarizing the 'Zeppelin raid in the Metropolitan area'⁵. Because it was the first time, in practice, the ban was not complete. Some newspapers, which included *The Times*, were rebuked for printing reports of the Shoreditch attacks near the announcement about the air raid and thereby showing which district had been hit⁶. An East End Yiddish daily *The Jewish Times* was suspended for revealing the airship's route before it was aware of the censorship⁷.

Rather surprisingly, it was the Admiralty which should have acted to give London the protection it clearly lacked. At the beginning of the war the Army's Royal Flying Corps did not have enough aircraft to handle British air defences on its own, while the Royal Naval Air Service had aircraft to spare.



Zeppelin passing over Cotton Street, Poplar, c. 1916. Whiffin

So, the Admiralty had become responsible. However, after the raid the Admiralty asked the War Office to take over. It wanted to, but the Army was still short of aircraft. As a result London's defences were not transferred until 16th February 1916, and those of the rest of the country a little later still⁸.

With the change-over so imminent, the Admiralty naturally did little for London, especially as other parts of the country suffered much worse raids. The story of the next two raids is, therefore, similar to the first one. The defence stayed ineffective. The chief targets were again east of the city. On 17th August – Walthamstow, Leyton and Leytonstone and on 7th September – Millwall, Deptford, Southwark and New Cross. But fortunately the number of people killed also remained small: ten in the August and eighteen in the September raid.

The next one was different. On 8th September Mathy, perhaps the most able Zeppelin commander, made central London from Euston to Liverpool Street Station his target. In particular, he set fire to the textile warehouses north of St. Paul's. Half-a-million pounds worth of damage was caused, the most in any raid of the whole war. In East London twelve people were killed when two buses near Liverpool Street Station were hit. As for the guns, an eye-witness in Bethnal Green wrote: 'the Zeppelin was clearly visible . . . and every gun in London was being let off, apparently without any aim at all, though a collection was made for the local gunner who "thought he was nearest" '9. Clearly changes had to be made and the Navy's gunnery expert Sir Percy Scott was given the job of making them.

He found that none of the guns could destroy a Zeppelin. Some were even dangerous to Londoners. In the last raid shell fragments had slightly injured four East Londoners. In the midst of an armaments shortage, Scott therefore had to acquire (and in some cases get designed) suitable guns and ammunition. In addition, as the north-east was especially vulnerable a mobile gun squadron was formed to protect that area¹⁰.

Scott thought that more aircraft were required as well. The War Office agreed and independently began to establish more airfields round London. However, a report showed that Paris was being successfully defended, mainly by guns. This led the Admiralty to claim that aeroplanes were 'ineffective' against aircraft. It had a case. Because of the aircrafts' short flying time and the ability of the Zeppelins to fly higher, no pilot had yet intercepted one over England¹¹.

The next attack was on 13th October. To Londoners it must have seemed that little had improved. For despite some guns being on target and an aeroplane piloted by Slessor sighting an airship, bombs from three airships killed thirty-eight people in London and nine in Croydon. In the worst incident seventeen people were killed outside the Lyceum.

Public confidence in London's defences was shaken. The next day Slessor's vehicle was stopped. At the Cannon Street Hotel, Joynson-Hicks, a member of Parliament, addressed a meeting which demanded reprisal raids on Germany. Arthur Conan Doyle wrote to *The Times* supporting the idea¹². In the next fortnight similar meetings were held in Croydon and Leytonstone but the newspapers were not allowed to report them¹³. However, in January 1916 Lord Burnham the proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph* died. The title passed to

his son Colonel Harry Lawson, the Member of Parliament for Mile End. There would have to be a by-election and Noel Pemberton Billing announced that he would fight it on the need to have a strong air policy to stop the Zeppelins¹⁴.

Billing, then in his mid-thirties, had already led an eventful life. At thirteen he had run away to sea. This had led to a variety of jobs at sea and in Africa, including serving in the Boer War. Besides being adventurous and enterprising, Billing was a natural inventor and made the first long-playing record. These qualities combined in a life-long interest in aviation. In 1908 he had been one of the first Englishmen to build an aircraft. He had written about the military use of aircraft, and already during the war he had been the non-flying Commander of a raid on the Zeppelin workshops at Friedrichshafen. By now, he was so concerned about air policy that he left the Navy to try to enter Parliament and press for changes. Moreover, 'tall, athletic, with sharp, clean-shaven features and a monocle', Billing fitted the image of a war hero and had the flair of a man who had been an actor¹⁵. In short, he was just the candidate to exploit the attention a by-election provides.

There was only one other candidate. For by this time Asquith led a coalition government and a political 'truce' had been declared¹⁶. Because the Conservatives held the seat they chose the candidate. There were twenty applicants including Billing. The man chosen was another outsider who was in many ways Billing's opposite. Warwick Brookes was a successful businessman – an ironfounder and managing director of the Junior Army and Navy Stores. Too old to fight, during the war, he concentrated mainly on the production of munitions and supplies¹⁷.

Brookes was also an experienced politician. He had twice stood for Parliament at West Newington and had greatly reduced the Liberal majority. He realized that one way to stop an opponent campaigning on a single issue was to adopt the same policy. His election address urged that 'no effort or expense should be spared to make London impregnable from aircraft attack' and even advocated a separate Air Ministry. (The Royal Air Force would not be formed until 1918). By nature he seemed fully as belligerent as Billing, favouring conscription and a fully effective naval blockade of Germany¹⁸.

His other advantage was that he had kept the 'truce' and not stood in the recent by-election at West Newington. He was thus just the man to get the support of the local Liberals and their former Member of Parliament, Bertram Straus. This aid was vital. The constituency was a notoriously marginal one. Straus had lost to the Conservatives in the previous election by a mere six votes¹⁹.

It was not only the two major parties who supported Brookes. Today Frederick Charrington is remembered locally as a temperance campaigner. He was also a prominent radical. (He had been the dockers' treasurer in their great strike). The war showed him to be a staunch patriot as well. He had even tried to stop professional football for the duration because of the poor response to recruitment drives at matches. He had talked of standing as a 'Patriotic Independent' candidate. Instead, he nominated Brookes. With such widespread support demonstrated at his meetings, Brookes himself concentrated on canvassing²⁰.

By contrast Billing used his showmanship to make the voters come to him. A white aeroplane was transported round the constituency. Sometimes he used it as a platform for his open-air meetings. He held indoor ones every night. The week-end meetings took place at the Mile End Palladium in the Mile End Road opposite Bancroft Road. Here there was an orchestra and a film showing Billing learning to fly. The gimmicks worked. At the height of the campaign people were turned away from some of the Palladium meetings even though there were three a day²¹.

By thus emphasising that he was the 'airman candidate' Billing at the same time gave added weight to his warnings that London faced 'an early renewal on a much larger scale... of bomb raids'. He stated that he was 'absolutely certain' that London would be attacked by a hundred aeroplanes claiming that the Germans had 'hundreds nay thousands' of them²².

'To hell with politics' was the answer and put the defence of London into 'the hands of practical airmen'. Billing, therefore, offered the 'Government the benefit of... (his) expert knowledge'. For example, he could be a civilian member of the military-dominated committee that should be set up to advise Parliament²³.

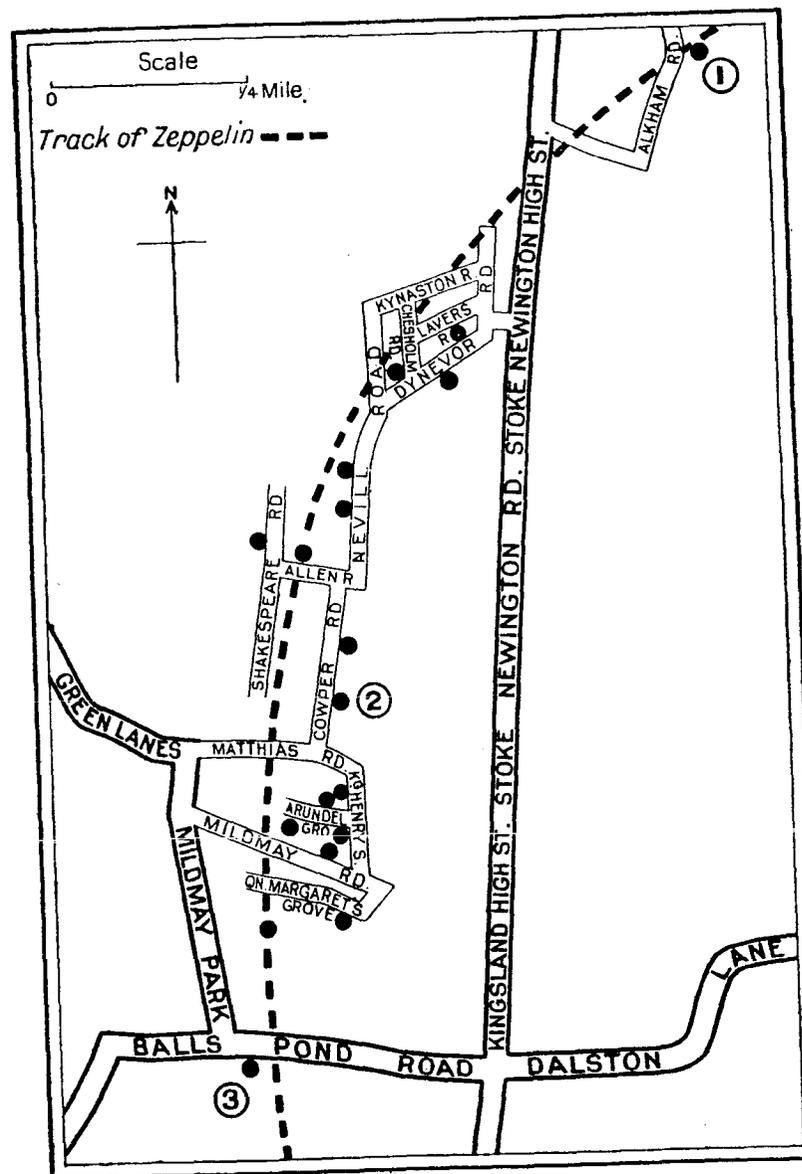
Britain would then be able to attack the airships before they reached England and chase them back home. In fact she would stop the 'air danger at its source' by introducing regular bombing raids on Germany itself. However, Britain did not then have aircraft capable of such missions²⁴.

Nevertheless Billing attracted some notable support. Horatio Bottomley was at the height of his fame. He seemed to express the views of many patriotic Britons every week in his *John Bull* magazine and *Sunday Pictorial* articles. He was so popular that the Government had (unofficially) asked him to intervene in labour disputes. He did so with success. (It was only after the war that the public learnt that he had been pocketing much of the money collected at the patriotic meetings he addressed). So, clearly Billing was greatly helped by having Bottomley to speak at many of his meetings, and campaigning the whole of polling day on his behalf²⁵.

Bottomley seems to have especially agreed with Billing's attacks on politicians. On the eve of the poll there was distributed a letter from him which advocated that experts rather than politicians should enter Parliament. Moreover, he was rewarded for his support. Billing gave him a hundred pounds to write an election address. (Though the one Bottomley dictated was not used. Instead a new one was written by Billing and Hannen Swaffer the editor of *the Daily Mail* who had lent Billing the money)²⁶.

There was little doubt why Lord Northcliffe supported him. Even before the war Northcliffe had encouraged the improvement of aircraft. In 1909 it was his thousand pound prize that had prompted Bleriot to become the first man to fly the Channel. By January 1916 his *Daily Mail* was advocating the use of 'aircraft on a vast scale' as the swiftest and most certain way to win the war. Among the articles it printed on the theme was one by Billing about air attacks on London. So of course, the paper fully reported Billing's campaign. Such sympathetic coverage in Britain's most popular newspaper was especially helpful when the local ones supported his rival. Finally, on polling day Northcliffe demonstrated his support by lending Billing a car²⁷.

The problem with such backing was that it underlined that Billing was being supported mainly by outsiders. It was, therefore, especially important that he had one prominent local supporter - Ben Tillett, the great dockers' leader. He too was fully supporting the war effort by patriotic speeches and



Map showing the progress of the raid over Stoke Newington and Dalston. (1) shows the location of the first house hit; (2) and (3) show where the first people were killed

giving advice to the authorities on transport. Yet he chose Billing as a 'fighting man' and a representative of the air service who had 'come absolutely on his own to make a scrap of it'.²⁸

With Tillett frequently speaking on his behalf Billing was able to get a 'representative of each of the trade unions in the division to nominate him'. It was not enough. The Labour party had yet to contest an election in the constituency. So, Billing also took up the cause of 'all those trades' suffering because of 'panic legislation'.²⁹

The first of these was the drink trade. The government alarmed by the absenteeism caused by heavy drinking had reduced opening hours and ordered that spirits were to be diluted. Moreover, each customer had to buy his own drinks; 'rounds' were banned. The measures had such an effect that publicans had put up their own candidate in the recent West Newington by-election. He did poorly. So despite talk of a local publican, Councillor George Lardner, standing, in the end the candidates addressed a meeting of the publicans' association. Both of them were sympathetic but Billing was chosen partly because he had the whole-hearted support of the Labour party. Lardner was convinced that only the Labour party would help them and so the publicans would have to affiliate to it. Although only five of those present could vote in the by-election, the decision led to several publicans including Lardner nominating Billing. Also publicans were prominent in his support on polling day.³⁰

Another grievance was what the *East London Advertiser* termed 'the inane official policy of lights down after sunset'. During the by-election it reported inquests on two people killed in accidents in the darkened streets.³¹

Moreover, the franchise was restricted even for men who alone had the vote. There were hardly six thousand voters in the whole constituency. In particular, lodgers entitled to vote had to register every year. Many did not and so it seems likely that a large percentage of the electors were the very shopkeepers and stall-holders whose trade was suffering. Certainly Billing came out strongly for their support. He argued that there was no need for any lowering of lights as it 'depresses people and is helpful rather than puzzling to Zeppelin pilots'.³²

Finally, there was one minority to which both candidates had to appeal. A third of the voters were Jews. The polling day itself was on a Tuesday to avoid the Jewish Sabbath. Here Brookes especially relied on Straus, who was particularly popular with his fellow Jews. Similarly, a Princess Lowenstein supported Billing and both candidates used Yiddish speakers. However, Billing's main effort seems to have been a full page advertisement in the *Jewish Chronicle* calling for 'the absolute supremacy of Britain in the Air'. He concluded that 'Jewish people... are among his very best friends... More to the point was Billing's claim that with proper defences 'the lights of London could be put up tomorrow'. For many of the Jewish voters were shopkeepers. Again he was successful. 'Several Jewish electors' signed his nomination papers and the size of his poll was to show that many must have voted for him.³³

As Billing's challenge thus grew stronger, his opponents used increasingly robust methods to make his claim to be an aviation expert



Noel Pemberton Billing (Associated Newspapers)

rebound on him. Frederick Charrington made the point most plainly. He told a meeting how 'almost within a few hours' of Lord Burnham's death, Billing's agent had sought his support, implying that the electors were in an 'awful state of alarm' because of the air raids. However, Charrington concluded that the cowardice was Billing's as a man 'who in the crisis of the war left his post of duty in order to seek a soft job in the House of Commons.' Although Brookes himself did not make them, the attacks became so persistent that Billing had to reply. He did so by showing the press the letter in which the Admiralty accepted his resignation 'with regret' and promoted him to Squadron Commander for his services.³⁴

Even so, the attacks continued. An aeroplane raided Kent and unharmed 'made off seawards.' Naturally Billing and Bottomley made much of the incident. The next day hundreds of posters were put up stating: 'Pity Billing wasn't in Kent; not in Mile End!!!'³⁵

Finally, Arthur Balfour, who as First Lord of the Admiralty, was responsible for London's defences, intervened. The day before the poll the newspapers printed a letter he had written to Brookes: 'You ask me whether I have observations to make on a statement which, you inform me, has been made by Mr. Billing in a recent speech at Mile End. The statement runs as follows:-

You know the history of the Zeppelin raids. There was one raid over the East End, but the papers under Government orders said nothing. There was another raid over the East End, and part of it was blown sky-high; but again nothing was said. But when a Zeppelin went across the West End of London the Government woke up, and then England went mad. Why should you discriminate between men and women blown up in the East End and the West End?

'If Mr. Billing is correctly reported the only interpretation I can put upon his words is that he is endeavouring to persuade persons living in the East of London that their interests are neglected because they are poor; and that only because the wealthier quarters of the town were attacked was trouble taken to meet the Zeppelin raids.

'The statement is untrue; but its untruth is the least of its criminality. A man who endeavours at a time like this to make political capital by suggesting that the military arrangements of the government are due to class selfishness and not to a single-hearted desire for the general good is playing a most unpatriotic part. Thus would Berlin desire that all our political controversies should be conducted; and only if they are thus conducted can we fail to win the war.'³⁶

Yet Billing did not apologise. He told a *Daily Mail* reporter that he had already repeated the charge and did so again. What he denied was that he had accused the Government of 'distinguishing between class and class.' The trouble was that London's inefficient defences were 'equally dangerous to rich and poor... alike'; nor would there be any improvement while politicians were in charge.³⁷

However exaggerated his language, Billing's accusations were clearly attracting attention. While Balfour's letter had given no alternative explanation for the failures, its timing was such as to give this 'official view' to each voter (who was sent a copy) while giving Billing the least opportunity to reply. *The Times* did not print his comments on it, although *The Daily Mail* and *The Morning Post* did.³⁸

This final sensation, and Brookes' better organisation enabled him to win. But only just; he had a majority of 376. (Brookes got 1,991 votes and Billing 1,615). The turn-out of 60% of the male voters in war-time shows the interest Billing had aroused. He had so dominated the campaign that both *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* referred to the by-election as the 'air election.'

Billing had made his point. Thus the day after the election Balfour and Lord Kitchener, the 'Minister of Defence, met the London members of Parliament to discuss air defence.'³⁹

Moreover, two months later Billing won the East Hertfordshire by-election. In the words of A. J. P. Taylor, he then became able to 'claim the credit for initiating the modern doctrine that war should be directed indiscriminately against civilians, not against the armed forces of the enemy. The Royal Air Force was created before the war ended, specifically to practice what Pemberton Billing preached.'⁴⁰

By the time that happened in 1918 Billing was giving other reasons why Germany had not been defeated - the influence of aliens living here and Britain's own moral degeneracy. Most relevant to the Mile End campaign, he also blamed Jewish influence. (Even in that by-election one of his supporters was Arnold White, who had been a leading advocate of the 1905 Aliens Act which restricted Jewish immigration).⁴¹

Finally, he conducted his own defence in the Maud Allan libel case. He used the occasion to publicize his claim that German agents had compiled a Black Book recording the names of 47,000 prominent people who had lain themselves open to blackmail. The book itself was never produced but a witness stated that among those listed in it were Asquith, his wife and the judge trying the case. Billing won but with the Germans defeated, his popularity began to fade. He left Parliament in 1921 never to return.⁴²

NOTES

I am especially grateful for the help of the staff at the Public Record Office, Imperial War Museum and local history libraries of The London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Hackney.

1. 670 people were killed. Captain Joseph Morris *The German Air Raids on Great Britain 1914-1918* (1969) p.v.
2. Kenneth Poolman *Zeppelins Over England* (1975) pp. 10, 108.
3. *Aeroplane and Seaplane Raids 1914-1916* compiled by the Intelligence Section, General Headquarters, Home Forces (June 1917) Imperial War Museum and AIR 1/2319/223/30/1 Public Record Office (P.R.O.).
4. *The Times* (T.) 2 June 1915.
5. Douglas H. Robinson *The Zeppelins in Combat - a history of the German Naval Airship Division. 1912-1918* (1971) p.74; T. *ibid*.
6. 'D' notice 220 H 0 139/43 (P.R.O.).
7. T. 3 June 1915.
8. Morris p. 90; Poolman pp. 75/76, 116.
9. *The Oxford House in Bethnal Green 1884-1948* p.60 (L.B. Tower Hamlets local history library), quotation found by Bernard Nurse.
10. A. Rawlinson *The Defence of London 1915-1918* (November 1923 edition) pp. 33-43, 83-84.
11. Poolman pp. 73, 77, 78, 19, 42-3; Admiralty letter 12 November 1915 Air 1/504/16/3/24 (P.R.O.)
12. T. 15 October 1915.
13. 'D' Notices 301 and 296 HO 139/44 (P.R.O.).
14. T. 13 January 1916; *The Herald* 15 January 1916.
15. T. *ibid* and 13 November 1948 (obituary); *East London Advertiser (E.L.A.)* 15 January 1916; Michael Kettle *Salome's Last Veil: the libel case of the century* (1977) p. 3; Michael MacDonagh *In London during the Great War - the diary of a journalist* (1935) pp. 206-7 (quotation).
16. T. 11 January 1916.
17. *East London Observer (E.L.O.)* 15 and 22 January 1916; *E.L.A.* 29 January 1916.

18. E.L.A. 22 January 1916; *Morning Post (M.P.)* 15 January 1916 (quotation); *T.* 14 and 18 January 1916.
19. *T.* 11 and 14 January 1916.
20. E.L.A. 15 January 1916; *T.* 10 January 1916; *M.P.* 20 January 1916; *Daily Mail (D.M.)* 19 January 1916; William J. Fishman *The Streets of East London* (1979) pp. 63-67.
21. *T.* 19, 20, 21, 24 January 1916; E.L.O. 22 January 1916; *D.M.* 24 January 1916.
22. *T.* 15 and 21 January 1916; *D.M.* 17 January 1916; *M.P.* 17 January 1916.
23. E.L.A. 22 January 1916; *T.* 13 and 15 January 1916; E.L.O. 22 January 1916.
24. *D.M.* 17 January 1916; *T.* 18 and 19 January 1916; *M.P.* 17 January 1916; E.L.A. 15 January 1916; Poolman p. 108.
25. Alan Hyman *The Rise and Fall of Horatio Bottomley* (1972) pp. 162-4; A. J. P. Taylor *English History 1914-1945* (Pelican edition 1970) p. 48 (footnote); *M.P.* 20 and 26 January 1916.
26. E.L.A. 29 January 1916; *T.* Driberg *SWAFF* p. 77 quotation found by Alan Searle.
27. *D.M.* 1 (editorial) and 12 January 1916; E.L.A. 22 January 1916 (editorial); E.L.O. 15 January 1916 (editorial); *M.P.* 26 January 1916.
28. *Dictionary of National Biography 1941-1950* ed. L. G. Wickham and E. T. Williams (1959) p. 885 entry by J. J. Taylor; Ben Tillett *Memories and Reflections* (1913) pp. 263-266; E.L.O. 22 January 1916 (quotations).
29. *M.P.* 15 and 20 January 1916; E.L.A. 22 January 1916.
30. *T.* 14, 25 September, 30 November 1915, and 22 January 1916; *M.P.* 20 and 26 January 1916; E.L.A. 22 January 1916.
31. E.L.A. 14 (quotation) and 22 January 1916.
32. There were 5,988 electors. Paul Thompson *Socialists, Liberals and Labour: the struggle for London* (1967) p. 69 and passim; *T.* 14 January 1916 (quoted).
33. *T.* 18 January 1916; *D.M.* 19 January 1916; *M.P.* 25 January 1916; *Jewish Chronicle (J.C.)* 14 January 1916; E.L.O. 22 January 1916.
34. E.L.A. 22 January 1916 (quoted); *D.M.* 21 January 1916; *T.* 22 January 1916.
35. *T.* 24 and 25 January 1916; *M.P.* 25 January 1916.
36. *T.* 24 January 1916.
37. *D.M.* 24 January 1916.
38. *T.* 25 January 1916; *M.P.* 24 January 1916.
39. *T.* 14 January 1916; *D.M.* 14 January 1916; E.L.A. 29 January 1916.
40. Taylor pp. 75/76.
41. Kettle p. 3 and passim. His book is an account of the Maud Allan case; *J.C.* 23 January 1981 letter from M. Domnitz; *M.P.* January 1916.
42. *T.* 13 November 1948 (Billing's obituary).

THE ROAD TO TRANSPORTATION

Ralph Bodle

This article is part of a longer work by Mr. Bodle, from Kaukapakapa, New Zealand, who became interested in the subject through work he was doing on the author of the first French version of The Swiss Family Robinson, Mme. Isabella de Montolieu. In a play which she added to the second French version of the story, published in 1816, she created a character based on a newspaper report she had read about George Bruce, whose real name was Joseph Druce...

The registers of St. Paul's, Shadwell show that the twins Joseph and Josiah Druce were born on 14th May and christened on 6th July 1777¹. The illiterate Joseph was transported to New South Wales in 1792, became a bushranger in 1800, was pardoned about 1801 and in April 1806 deserted from a Colonial naval vessel on the New Zealand coast, changing his name to George Bruce and marrying one of the daughters of a Maori chief. Towards the end of 1807 they were aboard a ship that was storm-driven from New Zealand and in 1809 they turned up in Calcutta.

Druce and his wife with their newly born daughter reached Sydney early in 1810. The Maori 'princess' died there of dysentery a few days before her father was wrongly accused of having led the killing of a British ship's crew. The Shadwell man, denied a passage to New Zealand, placed his baby daughter in an orphanage and joined H.M.S. *Porpoise* for the voyage to England. Once there he tried again and again to get out to Australia or New Zealand, but in vain, and cannot have known that while he was struggling with poverty, sickness and the Colonel Office, he was living happily ever after in French literature, for Montolieu in her play sent him back to New Zealand with his wife to 'civilise' the 'Indians' with the help of the famous Swiss Robinson family.

In 1815 Druce was in Shadwell Workhouse till helped by the Church Missionary Society, whose minutes show that he was improving himself in writing². He may have begun to do so in 1812 or 1813 when he was befriended by Joseph Lancaster of the Borough Road School. Soon after being admitted to Greenwich Hospital in 1817 he produced a 19,000 word manuscript known as *The Life of a Greenwich Pensioner*. This was presented to John Dyer, secretary of the Hospital, possibly before Druce's death in February 1819.³

Most of it has been written by a barely literate person, probably Druce himself. Sometimes the spelling is nearer the sound of a word than it is in the dictionary, but it is variable, in one sentence being correct, in the next, incorrect. In places it reflects its writer's pronunciation; *Shadvell* for Shadwell, *cuk* for took, *fro* for throw and *nothink*, for nothing, but his *Woolige* for Woolwich was correct speech, though not spelling, for centuries. The clumsy old possessive *X his house* has been changed to X's house, and the account has

been punctuated and broken up into sentences and paragraphs with some capitals added and occasionally removed. As the story of Druce's childhood which follows comes at the beginning of *The Life of a Greenwich Pensioner* the spelling and writing are at their worst.

* * * * *

The most Wonderful Advents of . . . (a man?) ho was born in Sant Pols Shadvell London.

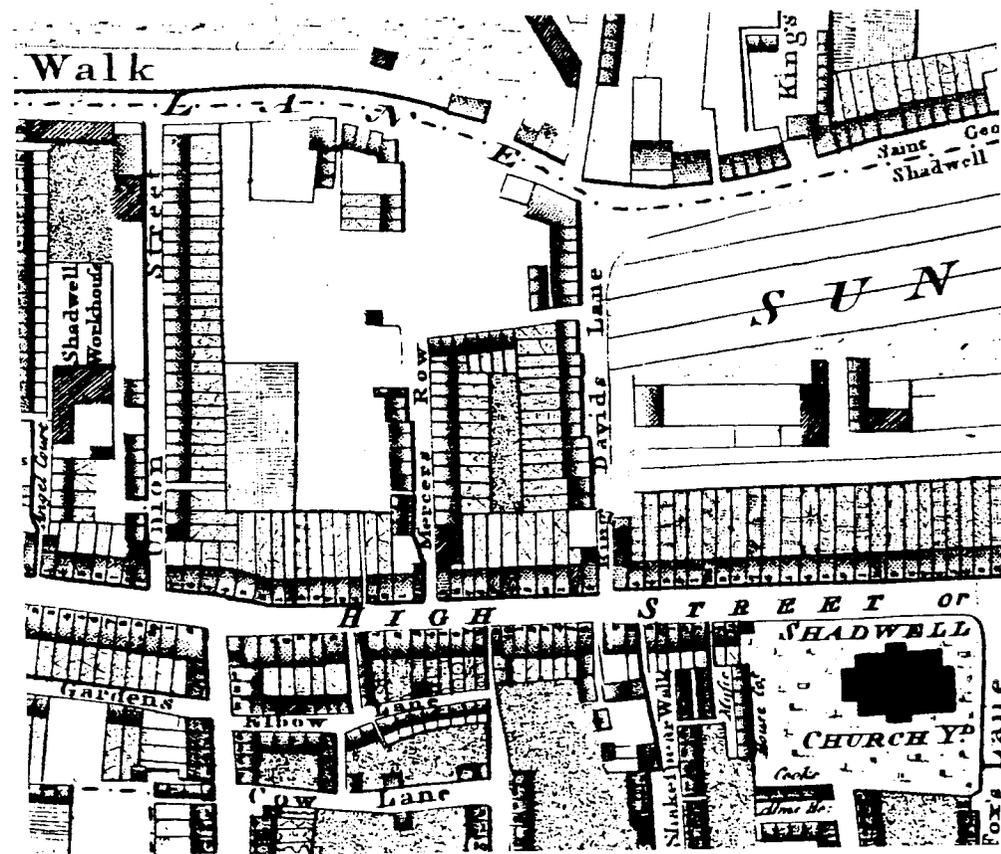
The frist of my rememberence was that my father hilt a satwation under mrster woodhum a disteeler at Limhous. I was one of thirteen Children wich God was Pleased to Bless my father and mother with. All so I was the greatest favouright of that famely by an icstronory (extraordinary) ad vent at my birth. That was I slept for twlve months on my face taking No refouge but the suck from my mother's brast and returning to my sleep. This wondrful avent caused my mother many time to sigh and say I was born to A most hored and dredfill Life or A Good Fortun. At the age of A laven yars my father fald in bisnesa and Dath Entred our famely when boryin ten out of thirteen Children. This Propety (loss of property?) drove the famely in the utmost distrees.

I then went to mrster ballmny's Rope Ground to turn the wecil for a woman Who was spinning of twin. Hear I was Clasehly hadcakted with the most noterast gaan of thieefs and murdres that ever existeed on the face of the Earth. Hear the sirpent cuk (took) hold of my hart charing me up in every wickednss. So I went on for two years, my poor Broken Harted father and mother by this time came A Quanted with my horred Life and strove thire utmost pwor to stop me but it was in vien. Meny A time I curst my dearest mother to hir face.

One day when shee was chastisin me for my wickedness She Pronenced on me A fow words as foollars; "you wicked wrich for your disobedince to God you will wonder in the wildrness Like a Pilgrim seeking for Reefouge and will find Non."

Shortly after I shold have murdred my poor father with A bree candelstick wich I froo at him but he puting his hand prevented it. I was put into the workhous whar from hance I was bound A prantes to Joseph frogely at Barking. I went saverl voyges to hool (Hull?) with my master deling in fish. My master treated me with Every Kiness but A Las this hapiness was but for A short time for one day at Limehous whar my master lived my mrstes (mistress?) made me put my Clothes with my fellow printes when taking them on bord. I found them Covred with vammont. This Curs shourelly was sent by God on me for my wicked deeds.

I Reen from my master. My younge master brought me back the foulling Night. I was put down in the cabin in charge of a old man. He told me that my master whold floge me for runing away. That same night when the old man was asleep I went to the Companin, then putin my head to the top part I forced it opin and seet of for London whar I resided for a few weks. One day



Part of Shadwell, from Horwood's map of 1799

my mother met me on twor hil (Tower Hill) and compled me to go with hir to the North cuntery pink Limshous whar I was left with mester weety who was in partnership with my master.

I was treated with the moste tenderest yougige (usage?) that ever a child was delt with. My imploy was to go out with bear. One Night I went to a widers house to carry bear when I see on hir tabel lay a selver watch. I had in my Company one of merster Wetely's sons so that I could not accomplish my wicked thought I had in my head at that time but soon after we both arived at his father's house I left him and mad my way for the poor wider's house with that wicked intent that I had the first moment I see the wach lay on hir table.

At my Return to the Widder's house she was at that minet Goin out. She lockt the door and suoved tuo (shoved to) the windo sheetter. As soon as she was gon som distince from the hous I puled the winder suatter opin and gumpim in the winder I run to (the) tabel withan. I caught up the wach and put it in my bosom then jumpin out of the winder with my buty I Run to mister wetley's house. The wach was goin and I was fritned that som persson wold hear it tick. I imeditly went out of the house and hed the wach amonge some Loogs whar it reamaned tell the next morning.

I was very resselles during the night for fear that the wider Should Com to my master and inquir for the wach. The next morning when I went down stars to my great supprise I see som men moving the logs whar the watch was hide. I then cook in my hand two Stones and began to play with them teel I fro one of them on the spot whar the watch lay. I cuk up my buty and went to London whar I met with one of my old companions. He conduckted me to his father to home I give the watch. He Rescived it and tolde me I was a Good boy, askinge me at the same time to com and live with him. I told him yas.

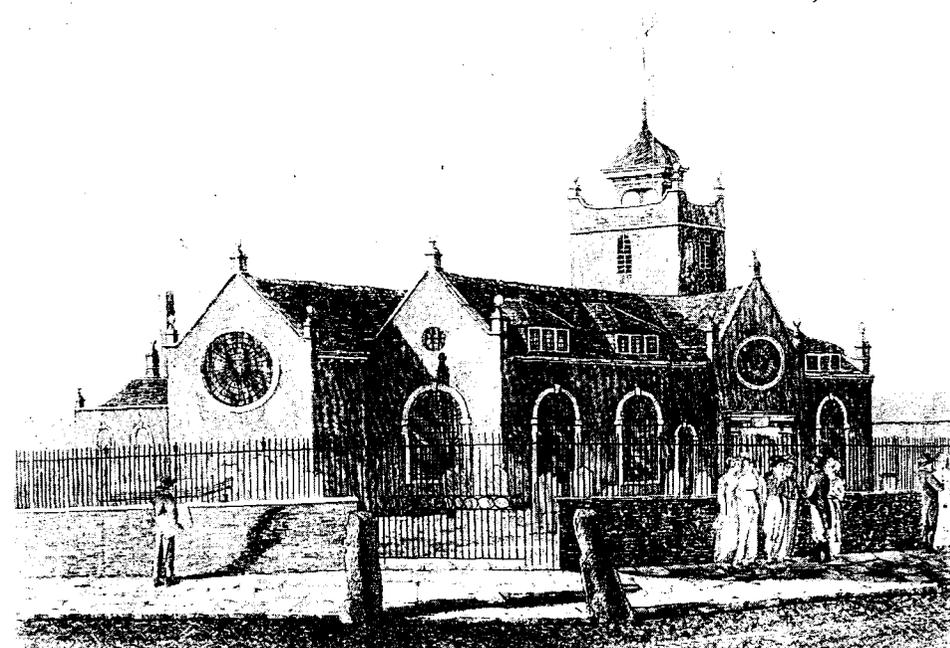
I reamaned with this man for a few weeks. My imployment with his son day and night (was) in thifing all we could catch. His father and mother resived all the stoling propoty. One morning pasin a cookshop I went in and finding on the Counter a very large Plumpuding witch cuk my atteenchin at that time, but through the . . . barking of a litel dog who was in charge of the shope prevented me for som time but finding no assestence to the litel dog I jumpnt on the counter when dragin a very large dish of chitlines to the eadge of the counter and throw some of them to the little dog this stopt his noies and was his death for as soon as he came to the edg of the counter to fill his beely, that moment I turned the dish upon the poor little doge witch Complitley smothred him.

I finding every thing quiart I Got down of the counter and carrng with me the Plumpuding on my head I went in to Sant Gorges fieelds with the pudng whar in a little time I had so many companions that I did not no wat to dow, but in a short time the buding was davird and I returned to the poor old siner who incoriged mo to thifng with his own son.

My reean was but for a short time for soon after my eldest brother mat me in the street pickin pockts on the sabath night. I then stopt with my brother for som time. I was soon over taken by justices. Many (a) time I was cot thifng but I was so small that the Ladies and Gentlmen all pitteed me and lat me go from time to time but at . . . I was caught in the fact and cast for death at the age of twlve. It was for brakng a winder and taking out two pices of hankshif. I remained in Newgate for some time and from thence (was sent) to the houlsk at Woollige whar I reamaned tell the year ninty one. Then I went put on bord the royal hadmarl (Royal Admiral) east indiaman to go to portjacksen.

* * * * *

According to Lysons' 1796 *Environs of London* Shadwell was only 910 yards long and 760 yards from the river to its northern boundary, that is, it was less than a kilometre each way. In this area were some 1,300 closely packed houses, the lower part of the parish, beside the Thames being inhabited by



St. Paul's, Shadwell, where Joseph Druce was baptised

tradesmen and manufacturers connected with the shipping industry; Mr. Newell Connop had a large distillery in this parish.

The street given as his birthplace, Ye Malin Walk, does not appear on maps of the period, but it may have been an earlier name for Mercers Row, which ran parallel to King David's Lane. On the west side of King David's Lane was Sun Tavern Fields, in which Lysons says there were several ropewalks 400 yards in length, where cables were made, from six to twenty-three inches in girth. In 1791 according to the *Universal British Directory* one of these was owned by William Bellamy. The year before, the same directory listed Woodham and Connop, distillers, at 68 Shadwell Dock, which is towards the Limehouse end of the parish. As in 1796 Lysons mentions only Connop, Woodham may have left the business by that time.

The next street to Mercers Row on the west, some thirteen houses along the High Street, was Union Street. Here was situated Shadwell workhouse, in which young Druce was placed after falling into evil ways at Mr. Bellamy's

rope works. Perhaps if he had remained long here he would have been taught to read and write, for his mother did not see to this. There was a charity school, founded in 1712 in which 45 boys and 35 girls were clothed and educated in 1796, and another for the children of Dissenters, where there were 50 boys and 20 girls, and there may have been private schools in the parish too. His father spent so much on alcohol that he could not afford to pay for Joseph's schooling, Druce claimed in New South Wales. His mother was a Methodist, there being both a Calvinist chapel and one belonging to the Wesleyan Methodists in Shadwell, and she told the boy that 'if I minded what them good men said it would be better then all the reading and writing on earth.'⁴

From the workhouse Joseph was apprenticed to Joseph Frogley who was one of a well known Barking family. One person of that name wrote an unpublished history of Barking early in the nineteenth century mentioning his 'respected parent' Joseph Frogley a retired fisherman who 'was for 34 years Captain for Messers Hewetts.' This was a firm founded by a Scot in the later years of the 18th century, their *Short Blue Fleet* becoming synonymous with the Barking fishing industry for several generations. The author mentions another Joseph Frogley, 'ancestor of the writer' who was landlord of the *Blue Anchor* public house in Heath or Hythe Street, Barking in 1814.⁵

Druce's ship-master may not have been a publican also, but the lad was put in the care of his partner, who must have been Thomas Wheatley, victualler of St. Anne, Limehouse. He lived there from at least 1786 till some time after 1811, his public house being, as Bruce wrote, *The North Country Pink* in Risbie's Rope Walk and Shoulder of Mutton Alley. A pink was a sea-going vessel, usually with a narrow stern, sometimes a fishing boat, and as the house had earlier been called *The West Country Galley*⁶ it is possible that Wheatley came from the north of England where his name is not uncommon.

When Druce ran from the fishing vessel at Limehouse and again when he fled from the public house he talked of setting out for London as though he had been another Dick Whittington for, close though the Tower Hamlets were to the city, they were self-sufficient, independent centres. The life of a retail thief, however, is not so rewarding as that of a merchant like the great Lord Mayor. In his robbing the boy must have ranged widely. When he tempted the little dog with fried intestines of pig or other animal, his chitterlings, and then killed it in order to steal the plum pudding, he was south of the Thames near St. George's Fields.

The Old Bailey Sessions Papers for 1791⁷ show that William Druce was tried by the second Middlesex jury before Mr. Baron Hotham. He was indicted for 'burglariously and feloniously breaking and entering the dwelling house of William Dresser, about the hour of eight at night, on 7th March, and burglariously stealing nine silk handkerchieves, value 40s. his property.'

Dresser lived and had a linen-draper's shop at East Smithfield. He said that 'on Thursday we were violently alarmed by a breaking of the window, we went to the door and it was tied; I went out as soon as the string was broke, and saw the boy; he was caught before I came up to him; we found a glove inside the window, and he had his hand cut above the glove, and was bloody; there was two pieces taken out, but only one found on the prisoner.'

Then George Atkinson was sworn. 'I was on the opposite side of the way talking to an acquaintance, I heard the alarm of breaking the window, and taking out something, but could not tell what; it was dark, but there was a very great light in Mr. Dresser's shop, by which I distinguished him, I pursued him, and he threw the handkerchieves under my feet, and I picked them up: I saw him throw them down myself.'

The handkerchieves were produced and deposed to, then James Crisp stated, 'I was passing on my business, and heard the alarm of the window breaking, and saw the prisoner run away, and this gentleman after him, and then I pursued him, and took the prisoner directly, within a few yards; I was not making any observations.'

Then Druce was asked for his defence and told the court that 'last Thursday night I went to Crown Court, Wapping, and a short man ran by me; I am prentice to a fishing smack, and that very night she sailed, and was going to it as I came up to see my aunt.' Druce was already a burglar sufficiently knowing to block the shop door and to try to protect his hand from broken glass. His yarn was not believed, so on April 12th 1791 he was found guilty and sentenced to death, with a recommendation of mercy from the jury, as his age was said to be twelve.

Druce was almost fourteen, but says he was small for his age. If he knew how old he was it was sensible to pretend to be younger, for boys over twelve were at times executed if found guilty of stealing goods valued at more than one shilling.

After the trial came a long wait in Newgate while the jury's recommendation was considered. Then, on 14th September, Joseph Druce, to use his correct first name, had his sentence commuted to transportation for life.

NOTES

1. I am most grateful to Rev. Julian Scharf of St. Paul's, Shadwell, for searching the registers.
2. I am most grateful to the Church Missionary Society and the archivist Rosemary Keen for information from the C.M.S. minutes.
3. The manuscript was later acquired by the Mitchell Library and I greatly appreciate permission to publish it granted by the Trustees of the State Library of New South Wales and the Mitchell Librarian.
4. This quotation appears later on in the manuscript.
5. Letter from the Curator-Archivist, London Borough of Barking.
6. Letter from the Librarian, London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
7. Case No. 150.

Mile End - June 18 1804

Mile End June 18th 1804

My dear John,

I eagerly embrace the opportunity which now offers of writing to you - the last I received from you was dated the 18th of Feby 1803 - Rio January - I acquainted you in my last that I was confined with a very fine Boy - which continued so till the Age of Eleven months - and then was taken off with the Hooping Cough - Edward caught it - he is now very hearty - & promises to be as clever as your self - I sincerely wish my Dr. John, I could communicate something that would give you pleasure, but alas! I cannot - I have had a great deal of trouble since we parted - it is impossible to express what I feel at being obliged to tell you, the melancholy fate of your friend, Lord C. He was shot the 7 of last March by Capt Best in a duel at the back of Holland House, he lived 3 days after he was shot in the greatest, tortures - I believe my Dr. John, I need not say any thing more on the subject - for I suppose by this time you have received all the particulars

The letter from Frances Borlindor: there is a transcription on the page opposite

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Yours sincere Wife F. Borlindor

P.S. my Sister begs her kind love to you and Alfred - she is very well
Captain John Borlindor
Ship Willding
Southern Whaler

by favour
Capt. Barnett

JOHN BORLINDOR (1761-1812?)

Arthur Robinson

When Mr. Robinson was shown an early 19th century letter from a Mile End housewife he bought it for its human interest and its connection with the East End. It was not until he discovered the identity of 'Lord C.', whose sudden death the writer reports, that he realised that the recipient, John Borlindor, had played a small part in the life of one of the most colourful members of the English aristocracy...

Borlindor was born in Rotherhithe, probably in 1761.⁴ He went to sea, and we know from his widow's petition to Trinity House⁵ that he commanded several merchant ships. One of these was the *Royal Edward*, originally the French privateer *Alexander* which he sailed from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to the West Indies and London during the years 1796-7.⁶

'Lord C' - Thomas Pitt, 2nd Lord Camelford - must have been his patron by February 1800, since a son born in that month was christened Thomas Pitt Borlindor.⁷

Camelford (1775-1804)⁸ was the son of the nephew of William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham. In 1797-8, during an eventful naval career, he had served in the West Indies, where an excess of zeal led him to kill a British seaman, shoot one of his fellow officers and bombard a British port.

Camelford owned estates in Cornwall, Dorset and Switzerland, not to mention the Rotten Boroughs of Bodmin and Old Sarum. No doubt influenced by Borlindor's knowledge of the West Indies, he made him his steward, and their financial transactions from 1801-2 are on record in Hoare's Bank, Fleet Street. When Camelford travelled incognito in France, possibly intending to assassinate Napoleon, it was Borlindor who was sent by Lord Grenville, Camelford's brother-in-law, to find him. His reports from Calais and Paris are preserved in the British Library.⁹

In 1802 Camelford gave money to his friend William Nicholson¹⁰ to invest in two ships. One of these, the *Wilding*¹¹ was commanded by John Borlindor, who registered her at the Port of London with himself as master and owner. During Borlindor's absence in the South Pacific, Camelford, whose quarrels had been reported in the press on more than one occasion, took exception to a remark made by his friend Captain Best about Camelford's mistress Fanny Simmonds. There was a duel in the grounds of Holland House and Camelford was shot. After three days of agony he died.

On the night before the duel he added a codicil to his will.¹² After bequests to Grenville, Nicholson and his friend Robert Barrie, he continued,

'... Having now mentioned all those to whom I am bound by sentiments of regard and esteem, I will say a word of perhaps one of the worst men that ever disgraced humanity. I mean my former steward Borlindor. He has got the command of a ship of mine called the *Weldon* (sic) the particulars of which are in the hands of Wm. Nicholson. Part of her is his own as I allowed

him to vest somewhere about £500 in her, the precise sum is mentioned in the papers of Mr. Nicholson. As there can be no doubt but that he will use every artifice in his power to defraud my heirs I hereby declare that except that I have in the Vessel I do not owe him the favour a single farthing and I advise them to take the earliest opportunity of recovering their own...'

In 1805 the *Wilding* returned and was intercepted in the English Channel by Robert Barrie, who commanded *H.M.S. Brilliant*. Barrie was, of course, familiar with Camelford's will, and was sure that Borlindor had swindled his employer. In a letter¹³ to Lord Grenville, to whom Camelford had left the ships, he wrote:

'... on the morning of 2nd April (1805) at day light I fell in with a Ship which I soon discovered to be the *Wilding* of which Bollinder (sic) is Master. As I was well acquainted with poor Lord Camelford's opinion of Bollinder I sent for him on board *Brilliant* when he came aboard he said he was ignorant of Lord Camelford's death... he said he was bound to London and when first hailed declared he was the owner of the ship and by all the ship's papers she certainly appears to belong solely to himself. However as he knew I was acquainted with most of the circumstances of the case he did not deny that the ship was Lord Camelford's but added he had contain'd in her all he had - 1000£ he said Lord C lent him besides - he said he was much distress'd at the opinion Lord C entertained of him that his true character had been very much misrepresented as he had ever been a faithful servant to Lord Camelford and as such on his arrival at London he should immediately wait on your Lordship and he added he hoped you would fit the ship out again he told me that prior to his leaving England he had in a legal manner made everything he possessed over to Lord Camelford. If he did so I do not think Camelford knew that there was such an instrument in being at least if he did he did not think it efficient as he often lamented to me he had no hold on Bollinder...'

Barrie put six of his own crew aboard the *Wilding* to 'assist in navigating him to London' and took five of Borlindor's men in return. The arrival of the *Wilding* in the Thames was reported in the *Times*, April 10th 1805. It is clear from Barrie's report that Borlindor never received his wife's letter, which survived, presumably, among the papers of the Captain who had been entrusted with its delivery.

After his voyage in the *Royal Edward* in 1796-7, Borlindor had bought a house at No. 12 Redman's Row, Mile End Old Town, and his name appears on the Land Tax Registers from 1798-1813.¹⁴ The house lay on the south side of the Row, almost opposite Assembly Passage. Later, Redman's and other Rows were renamed Redman's Road.

Three years after the return of the *Wilding*, Borlindor became a founder-shareholder in the Atlas Assurance Company¹⁵ and he left the income from his ten shares to be applied to the education of his son George Alfred (1806-1873).¹⁶ A French secret service dossier on Camelford describes Borlindor in 1803 as 40 years old, 5' 5" in height, with a full face much marked with small-pox, and very fat.¹⁷ Obviously he was a competent seaman, equally obviously a shrewd business man and administrator. Why should Camelford have mistrusted him? Why, on that fateful night before

the duel, should he have singled out his former steward for such abuse? There is, after all, no evidence that Borlindor ever cheated him.

Barrie's report and his wife's letter suggest an answer. Borlindor had scraped together every penny he had to invest in the *Wilding*. Instead of confiding in his wife, he left her without money, told her that Camelford owed him some, and let her fend for herself.

Borlindor's widow, Frances, lived on in Redman's Row, moving after his death to No. 26. In 1815, at the age of 46, she petitioned Trinity House for a pension.¹⁸ She was nearly blind, and relied on her eldest son John Samuel (1794-1869) for the support of herself and her youngest son George. Quite forgetting the Atlas shares she declared that she possessed no relief from any other source.

Of her six children, only two reached maturity and these, John Samuel and George Alfred, ended their days in Islington. The only grandson emigrated to Australia and one of the girls married Charles Millington, a Derby teacher. The most interesting of the grand-daughters was Hester Maria Borlindor (1835-1903), daughter of John Samuel – the young John of the letter. From 1869 to 1889 she was Head of St. John's Girls' School, Waterloo Road, and her log book, which is preserved in the Greater London Record Office, gives a fascinating insight into Victorian education.

Hester's great-nephew, Arthur Borlindor, died in Brighton in 1952; so far no surviving members of the family have been traced.

NOTES

- 1 William Wyndham, Lord Grenville (1759-1834) married Camelford's sister Anne.
- 2 According to the Law Society, Andrew Burt was practising at Gould Square at this time.
- 3 Borlindor's sister Agnes married Samuel Flower and their son Henry Truffitt's baptism is recorded at East Greenwich, 20th February 1803.
- 4 Baptismal records for St. Mary's Rotherhithe contain entries for John Lowry Borlindo, August 1760, and John Burlando, Nov. 1761. The latter is probably a misspelling of Borlindor; they were both children of John & Elizabeth.
- 5 Society of Genealogists.
- 6 Port of London Registers, Public Record Office BT 107-11.
- 7 Registers of St. Dunstan, Stepney.
- 8 Tolstoy (Nikolai) *The Half-mad Lord*. 1978.
- 9 Add. Mss. 59493 f 165, dated 18th February 1802, was written from Paris.
- 10 William Nicholson (1753-1815) schoolmaster and editor of *Journal of Natural Philosophy*.
- 11 Registered at the Port of London. PRO BT 107-15. Built at Liverpool, 1788. 282 tons. Square-sterned two-decker with 3 masts, named after Richard Wilding, High Sherrif Co. Denbigh (Stewart-Brown. *Liverpool ships in the 18th cent.* 1932).
- 12 PRO PROB 10 – 3674.
- 13 BL Add Mss. 59004 f 179.
- 14 Guildhall Library.
- 15 Share registers at Guildhall, Ms. 16166; Guardian Royal Exchange Assurance.
- 16 John Borlindor's will: PRO PROB 11 – 1556 f 273.
- 17 Count Tolstoy tells me this is from Archives Nationales, Paris. file F7 6307, doss BP 6386.
- 18 Society of Genealogists.

A TEMPERANCE EXPERIMENT AT WELLCLOSE SQUARE

Colm Kerrigan

East London, so often the location for educational and social experiments in the 19th century, was involved at a very early stage in the activities of the temperance movement. In fact in 1829, more than twenty years before F. N. Charrington¹ was born, the first temperance pamphlet to be circulated in England came from the Mariners' Church in Wellclose Square. This had originally been the Danish Church and was later to become one of the homes of the St. George's Mission², but at this time was the headquarters of the British and Foreign Seamen's and Sailors' Friendly Society, the Secretary of which was George 'Bosun' Smith. He had received temperance tracts from a similar society in New York and was anxious to spread the message in England.³ No organisation or society was established as a result of Smith's original efforts, however, and the first temperance society in England was in fact set up in Bradford through the energies of Henry Forbes, who was also responsible for founding the Preston Temperance Society.⁴ It was in Preston that the idea of total abstinence from alcoholic drink took hold, as opposed to the 'moderation' policies of the original temperance societies, where wine and beer, taken in moderation, were permitted.

It was largely through the efforts of the 'temperance missionaries' from Preston that the total abstainers, or teetotalers, made such rapid progress in spreading their message throughout most of the country. Temperance advocates in London, however, were generally unreceptive to the new doctrine, and when Joseph Livesey, one of the Preston missionaries, came to London in 1834 to lecture on the benefits of teetotalism, he was given no encouragement by the London-based British and Foreign Temperance Society. This society had been founded in 1831 following temperance work in London by William Collins, a native of Scotland and founder of the publishing house. Cornelius Hanbury, of Allen and Hanbury's, the pharmaceutical business that was to move to Bethnal Green later in the century, was its first treasurer. William Allen, of the same firm, and, like Hanbury, a Quaker, was among the society's early supporters, as was Dr. Pye Smith, a distinguished scholar from Homerton College.⁵

Although only a handful of people listened to Livesey's lecture in Finsbury Square in 1834, teetotalism was soon to become a force in the temperance movement in London. In August 1835 a meeting was held in the Regent Street home of a master tailor named Grosjean, where the London Total Abstinence Society was founded, shortly to be renamed the British Teetotalers' Temperance Society.⁶ Among the founder-members were 'Bosun' Smith, Mr. Pasco, who was to publish the society's tracts, and John Giles of Cambridge Road, Mile End, who was in fact said to have taken a pledge of total abstinence more than two years before the meeting.⁷ Although a Quaker, Giles went on to do successful temperance work among the

Catholic population of London, eventually founding the Metropolitan Roman Catholic Total Abstinence Association in 1840.⁸ He was probably the first to advocate total abstinence in London, although James Silk Buckingham was to make that claim for himself in connection with the meeting described below. Buckingham, who was in fact made president of the British Teetotallers' Temperance Society, was at this time M.P. for Sheffield, and had been chairman of the Select Committee on Drunkenness which reported in 1834.

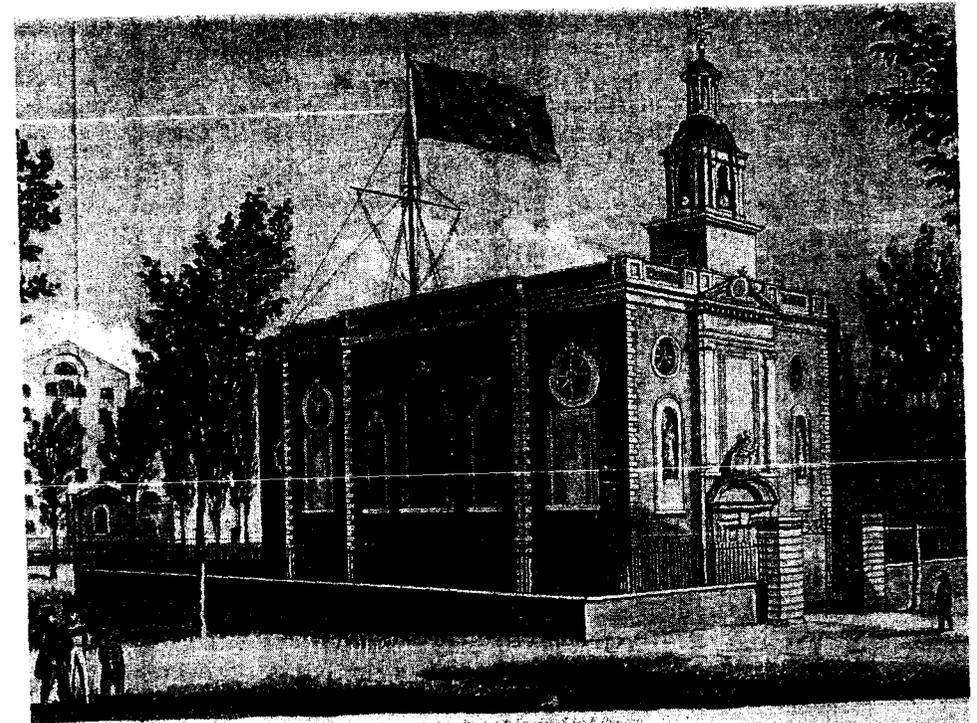
The new society invited speakers from Preston to help promote the teetotal cause in London, and despite his cool reception the previous year, Livesey was one of those who responded. Meetings were held in Holborn, Spitalfields and Waterloo, but it was the fourth meeting, at the Mariners' Church, that was of particular interest, for the events that occurred there and at a follow up meeting in the same place a month later. Livesey, who was present at the first of these two meetings, makes no mention in his autobiography⁹ of the experiment that was suggested there, and an account of what happened has to be based on that given by Buckingham, who was in the chair for both meetings.¹⁰

Under the Beer Act of 1830 a householder who could find two other householders who would stand surety for £10 each, or one for £20, could, for two guineas, obtain an excise licence to sell beer. This led to an increase in the number of beerhouses and, in turn, an increase in gin palaces to compete with them. The area around Wellclose Square abounded in both, and Buckingham estimated that at the first crowded meeting in the Mariners' Church, three quarters were 'distillers, brewers, wine and spirit dealers and their allies', who understandably, gave the temperance leader a cool reception. Following Buckingham's speech, a spokesman for some men present 'in their ordinary artizan's apparel' said that he was convinced that Buckingham had 'none but friendly feelings towards the labouring classes', but that his advice to stop drinking even beer, if working men followed it, would prevent them being able to get through 'such heavy labours as they had daily to perform'.

Buckingham replied that it was indeed possible to manage without beer, as had been confirmed by the testimonies of coal-heavers, furnace men, steel smelters and stokers, who had substituted 'soup, oatmeal porridge, milk, coffee, tea, and even simple water,' for beer. He asked the spokesman if he had ever tried doing without beer and was told that both he and his fellow workers had not. Buckingham suggested that in that case they might like to try an experiment. They might abstain from all alcoholic drink, including beer, for a month, and report to a further meeting at the same venue, in a month's time. They agreed to try.

Wellclose Square was so crowded on the evening of the second meeting a month later that Buckingham claimed it took him half an hour to get into the hall. This he attributed to the fact that 'heavy bets, it was said, had been laid, first as to whether the workmen would appear or not, and next, what would be their answer if they did'. Inside, the workmen had indeed appeared, and their spokesman reported that they had not taken any alcoholic drink. They had found water 'flat and insipid' at first, but they found themselves to be less exhausted on their rest day. By the second week, water seemed less insipid and

'our appetites were stronger, our digestion better, our tempers less liable to irritation, and our vigour and cheerfulness greatly increased'. They were also better off, saving between thirty and forty shillings each per month, as they had no deductions for lost time, and the spokesman concluded that 'we mean to persevere as we have begun, and recommend all working men to follow our example'.



THE MARINERS' CHURCH, WELLCLOSE SQUARE.

Scene of the meetings: the Mariners' Church

We do not know if any substantial improvements in local drinking habits followed this empirical demonstration of the possibility of teetotalism for hard-working men. When Buckingham wrote his book nearly twenty years later he noted that the Wellclose Square area was still filled 'with gin palaces and beer shops at every corner', although it should be remembered that here, as in other maritime parts of East London, drinking establishments were often aimed at seamen rather than at locals.¹¹ Some seeds of teetotalism were no doubt sown, however, for 'Bosun' Smith has described the excitement that prevailed in the area eight years later on the announcement that Father Matthew, the Irish advocate of total abstinence, was about to visit East London.¹² Smith assisted him on his London mission, and Buckingham was also a supporter, addressing one of Father Matthew's meetings in Britannia Fields, Islington, and his son speaking at another at Maryland Point, Stratford.¹³

By this time Buckingham had become the advocate of many other unpopular but worthwhile causes, like the provision of public parks from the rates.¹⁴ 'Bosun' Smith was later to gain some notoriety for the leading part he played in the 'anti-popery' riots at St. George's-in-the-East and St. Saviours (as the Mariners' Church had then become) in 1859.¹⁵

The spokesman for the workmen at the meetings in the Mariners' Church was Thomas A. Smith, no relation to the 'Bosun'. Already involved in the temperance movement at the time of the first meeting, he went on to become a public advocate of teetotalism, illustrating his talks about the harmful effects of alcohol from the knowledge of chemistry he had acquired in his spare time. As the experiment turned out almost too good to be true from the point of view of the teetotal campaigners, could it have been possible that T. A. Smith was 'planted' in the meeting with his group of workmen already committed to teetotalism, and the whole experiment have been a hoax? 'Bosun' Smith's reputation for eccentricity suggests he might have been capable of being a party to such deception in his church. With Buckingham and T. A. Smith there are no grounds for any such suggestion, although, as zealots, they might have thought that the end could justify the means. And could Livesey's omitting to mention the incident in his autobiography be seen as evidence against the authenticity of the experiment? He may simply have forgotten it, or, more likely, having been present only for the first part of it, thought it not worth mentioning. But the suspicion remains that he might have omitted it because he disapproved of the way it was done.

We shall never know. But the fact that locals were willing to place bets on the likely outcome of the experiment suggests that they were convinced it was a genuine experiment, with everything above board and a fair chance for the punters. Unless, of course, they knew it was a hoax, and were taking bets from those outsiders who didn't.

NOTES

1. A very readable account of the activities of this local temperance leader's life can be found in William Fishman *The Streets of East London* (1979) pp. 63-67.
2. Millicent Rose. *The East End of London* (1951) pp. 20-22; Madge Darby *The First Hundred Years at St. Peter's Church* (1966) p. 5.
3. Dawson Burns. *Temperance History* (n.d., but c. 1881) Vol 1, p. 40.
4. Norman Longmate. *The Waterdrinkers* (1968) pp. 35 and 43.
5. Burns, p. 53.
6. *ibid.* pp. 94/95.
7. P. J. Windskill. *Temperance Standard Bearers in the Nineteenth Century* (1897) p. 406.
8. *The Tablet*, 12 August 1843.
9. John Pearce (Ed.) *The Autobiography of Joseph Livesey* (1887).
10. James Silk Buckingham. 'History and Progress of the Temperance Reformation in Great Britain and other countries of the globe' in *A new Series of Tracts for the Times* (1854) Vol. 4 pp. 439-447. All quotations describing the meeting come from these pages. Buckingham wrongly gives 1834 as the date of the meeting.
11. The conflicting versions of the kind of area Wellclose Square was in the eighteen thirties and forties are examined by Carolyn Merion in *ELAM* (East London Arts Magazine) Spring 1976.
12. Quoted in F. Sherlock *Illustrious Abstainers* (1879) p. 140.
13. *The Morning Herald*, 15 August 1843; *The Tablet*, 2 September 1843.
14. J. L. and B. Hammond *The Age of the Chartists* (1930) p. 344.
15. Longmate, p. 213; Michael Reynolds. *Martyr of Ritualism: Father MacKonochie of St. Alban's, Holborn* (1965) pp. 54/5.

MEMORIES OF BETHNAL GREEN

Francis Le May

These reminiscences of life in Bethnal Green in the last quarter of the 19th century were written around 1951 and deposited in Bethnal Green Library shortly before the author, who was of Huguenot descent, died in 1955.

I was born in a house in Old Ford Road and lived there for the first 10 years of my life, and here are some of my recollections.

At first there were no Board Schools, so I went to St. James the Less Infant School and then to the boys' school there. Scholars had to buy their books, pay 4d per week and had to carry satchels, and also had to parade before the Headmaster every morning, and woe betide a boy if he was dirty or his books were not clean. In 1881 Cranbrook Road Board School opened, and I became a scholar there. My chief playground was Victoria Park. I found a lot to interest me there, including fishing with thread, bent pin and breadpaste. This had to be done in the absence of the park keepers, and I had more than one unpleasant interview with them, which made me uneasy and very cautious. Kite making and flying them was also a hobby of mine.

The Workhouse and Infirmary were in Bishops Road and on Sundays out poured the unfortunate inmates, all clad in unmistakable workhouse clothing, and I recollect the sight at the Relieving Office of long rows of benches filled with those waiting for tickets for food. Then the children from the Charity Schools, boys in green corduroy suits and peaked caps, girls in green coats and white aprons and bonnets, coming home from the bread distribution at St. Matthews School with the loafs in clean white pillow slips.

I remember seeing women and girls carrying great bundles of match boxes, often tied up in patchwork bed covers, to Bryant and May's factory. (These Bryant and May's match boxes were the large size and the price paid for them was 2½d or 2¼d a gross, workers providing their own paste. Little children worked with their mothers many hours into the night, all to earn around about 1/- a day). Men with big baskets of boot uppers going to the boot factories. Men with long rollers of silk cloth on their shoulders off to the warehouses. Boys and men with suitings, and clothes in a black cloth cover going to the tailors. Barrows laden with goods made at home such as furniture, tinware, brushes etc. Most homes were also workshops and the outworkers collected their materials from the warehouse and worked for the scantiest of wages. They were entirely at the mercy of their employers, who were saved the expense of providing factory space etc., and were free from all responsibility to their workers.

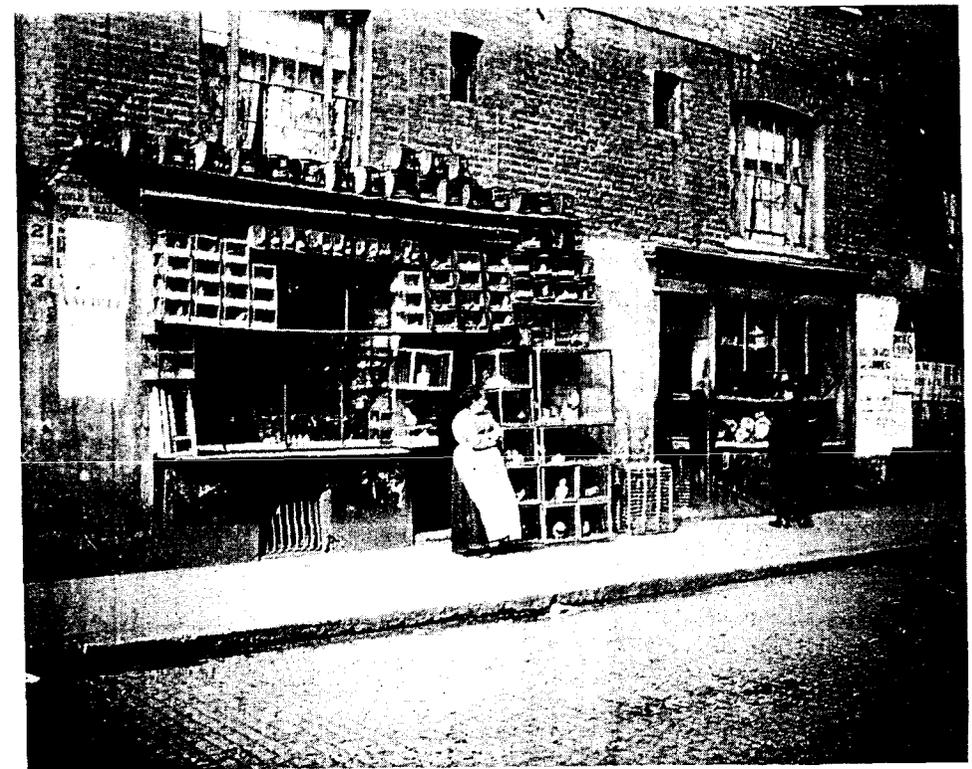
Think of those hard evil days, no out-of-work pay, no health insurance, no holidays, and no security whatever. Workers often trudged to the warehouse and shops in the City, to be met on their arrival 'no work given

out today' or 'we are full up with your stuff'. Little wonder that pawnbrokers signs were seen in all the main roads, and all these kind 'uncles' made a fine living with a quick turnover. How did the people live?

Well I should think nine out of every ten dwellings consisted of a small cottage of at most 5 rooms, and there was no law against overcrowding. One never heard of so many cubic feet for each person. More often than not two families shared one cottage, and I assure you there were more inconveniences than conveniences, and most of these homes were workshops too. Sometimes both families would be outworkers, in some cases the children worked too.

If the mother had time to cook a dinner she probably could only have something boiled on the hob, or toasted in the Dutch Oven or on a grid-iron. There might have been an old-fashioned range in the landlady's kitchen downstairs, but that could only be used in cold weather and more likely than not, it was not available to those upstairs.

Gas cookers were unknown, so most of the food was bought already cooked. Every eating house supplied hot meals, vegetables, puddings etc., to anybody. All the food could be seen from the street, the meats in a row of tin



Sc Slater Street. This, and the photographs of Bethnal Green that follow, were taken around the turn of the century, and come from the Galt Collection, Museum of London

dishes kept hot by steam just by the windows. One could purchase, according to their means, an order for two pennyworth of beef, mutton or pork with hot gravy, one pennyworth of vegetables and another of plum duff or jamroll. Small requests for a penny fruit or meat pie, or even a ha'penorth of potatoes was cheerfully met and supplied. There were Cook Shops, Pie Shops and Coffee Shops everywhere, and people you passed carrying basins with a saucer for cover, or a beer can with soup, or a covered plate could be counted by the score. In addition to all this every pub retailed to all and sundry boiled bacon and ham, cheese and pickles. Every pork butcher sold boiled beef and pork, pease pudding and saveloys at midday, and at night from six till ten o'clock.



Mrs. Robinson, stuffing mattresses

Tripe dressers sold cooked sheep's heads, brawn, black puddings and faggots. There were also fried fish shops and supper bars and finally stalls outside many pubs with sheep and pigs' trotters, nicely laid out on white sheets with a garnish of parsley.

Hawkers paraded the streets everyday beginning with bakers' boys calling hot rolls from 7 o'clock to 8 o'clock, then a procession of men with fish, vegetables and fruits, chair menders, scissor grinders, sweeps, ragmen, women with watercress and lavender, and in the evenings up to about 10 p.m. vendors of hot pies and baked potatoes.

On Sunday afternoon you heard the bells of the muffin men and the cries of fresh winkles, Gravesend shrimps, etc. In fact, as far as food was concerned one could get almost all they wanted on their own doorstep.

I can recollect cows being driven down the streets and milked into one's own jug all at 2d per pint. There were several cow keepers then, and in Cambridge Road was the Royal Dairy where from the street one could see a long row of cows in beautifully clean white stalls. In those days there were no refrigerators, or cold storage plants, or meat from abroad. All perishable foods like meat and fish and eggs had, especially in the summer, to be sold quickly, and people who wanted a cheap joint for Sunday put off their visit to the butcher on Saturday until about 11 o'clock at night, when the butcher would stand outside his windowless shop and job-off his remaining stock at well below the rates charged earlier in the day. How well I recollect our Sunday dinners. By half past ten in the morning, there appeared the large brown earthenware divided dish, with potatoes in one half, batter pudding in the other half, crowned with a joint mounted on a wire grid. This was covered with a white cloth, and then father, on his way to chapel, complete in swallow tail coat and top hat, very carefully carried it to the baker, for which he received a tin tally. He called for the dinner on his homeward journey, handed in his tally and 2d and very gingerly, for fear of upsetting any gravy over his Sunday best, marched home with it all hot and steaming, and done to a turn.

There were far more pubs and beer houses then than now, and on Sundays, customers would queue up outside from about 12.30 for opening time at 1 o'clock, each person with one or more jugs, beer cans, half-gallon jars, etc. Prompt to time, the doors opened and after slaking their own long standing thirst, they started off home with the dinner beer.

Pubs kept open on Sundays from 1 to 3 p.m. and then 6 to 10 or 11 o'clock at night, but on weekdays were open from very early morning until about 11 p.m., and 12 p.m. on Saturdays. The drunkenness was appalling. Beer and ale cost 2d per pint to drink on the premises, and the drink had a strength in it those days. Reeling men and women singing one minute, fighting and cursing the next, were everywhere. I've seen men frogmarched by three or four policemen to the station, and women strapped on wheeled stretchers off to the same destination. The Blue Ribbon Army and the Salvation Army together with the Bands of Hope, and Adult Temperance Societies, did a grand work in their campaign against intemperance in and around Bethnal Green, but the improved social conditions including education, better facilities for recreation and enjoyment have played a large part.



Pigeon loft and workers' housing

We have to bear in mind that at that time no employers thought of paying wages until leaving off time on Saturdays. Hours of work in factories were generally from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. After payment most men visited the nearest pub, paid their debts and subscriptions to the loan club and other clubs and often arrived home late. Consequently the wife had all the shopping to do after tea, including perhaps a visit to 'uncles' to get the husband's Sunday suit out. While she was doing this the man would slip out, as there was nothing to amuse or interest him in the one or two rooms called home, go to his favourite pub and drink too freely in a warm bar brightly lit with gas jets, and amongst his own crowd of cronies. Many men made every Monday a holiday and started work on Tuesday, working like slaves for the rest of the week to make up for the lost time.

One thing must be mentioned, and that is the inherent love of gardening and keeping of pets, both of which seemed common to all Bethnal Green-ites. Birds in cages on window sills and hanging on walls everywhere. Pigeon lofts, hen houses and rabbit hutches, took up all the back yards. Flowers were everywhere. Most front windows displayed such plants as fuchsias, trained on a wood frame, geraniums, india rubber plants, etc. One of my favourite haunts was the gardens at the back of the Old George in Bethnal Green Road. Here there was a public right of way, through the bar from the road to the gardens. Here could be found little 2 roomed cottages with plenty of land attached and flowers everywhere, as well as pumpkins and grapes. Harts Lane, now called Barnet Grove, was on Sunday morning the haunt of buyers of plants. The occupiers all grew plants and seedlings in their humble cold frames and greenhouses, and a brisk business went on for a few hours. When these growers' houses were pulled down the market was transferred to Columbia Road near the Birdcage Public House, where the displaced growers had barrows stocked with plants from other growers in the suburbs. I enjoyed prowling around, wishing it was not Sunday, the day I was not allowed to spend money. What a change has taken place over the 60 to 70 years. The sturdy independent and industrious still cling to the old homes and neighbourhood, but gone are the trades for which the place was noted. No more little workshops, often as not in the backyard, with access through the house. No more sounds of shuttles thrown to and fro. Mass production and machinery have taken their place and the worker now 'clocks in' at the factories. Some of the finest furniture, such as bedroom, dining and drawing room suites, handsome chairs, tables and overmantles was made here, and purchased by dealers from Curtain Road and the famous West End furnishers.

Silk weaving, once the greatest industry, was already declining. It could not compete with the cheap imported material from India and the East, and fashions were changing. Up to King Edward the Seventh's time, most of the material for the coronation robes were woven here, and it's worth noting how rare were clever workers in silk some 70 years ago. I learn that in 1870 Pope Pius the Ninth was in need of a certain vestment. The only person with sufficient skill to weave the material was an old Bethnal Green weaver, whose ancestors, being Protestants, had sought refuge there from Catholic persecution in France.

POPULAR BELIEFS ABOUT WITCHES: THE EVIDENCE FROM EAST LONDON, 1645-1660

Robert McR. Higgins

Witchcraft has a romantic appeal; Macbeth and burnings at the stake spring to mind at once, and it is also a subject where fact may seem stranger than fiction. On closer examination, however, accusations and prosecutions against witches were made in a more structured manner than might at first be thought. Moreover, such actions often stemmed from personal conflicts rather than occult activities. Whether or not witches did in fact perform the deeds of which they were accused is outside the scope of this article, which deals with beliefs about witches from the point of view of their victims.¹

In the middle of the seventeenth century, the area that is now Tower Hamlets presented a picture mostly of fields and market gardens, with rapidly growing streets of squalid tenements along the riverside east of the City. During the Commonwealth, the courts dealt with a steady stream of prosecutions for attending Catholic Mass, making 'scandalous speeches' and cock fighting, but such happenings were not more frequent in the east than elsewhere in London.

Between 1560 and 1645 the number of indictments against witches in East London brought to the Middlesex Quarter Sessions was comparable to that for the remainder of the county.² Between 1645 and 1660, however, the number for East London was not only more than in the preceding period, but was several times greater than that for the rest of Middlesex during the fifteen years under consideration.³ Such an apparent concentration of cases during the Civil War and Commonwealth in East London is not easy to explain. Although he never seems to have visited East London, the activities of Matthew Hopkins, 'The Witch Finder General', in neighbouring Essex were probably well known. At the famous Summer Assizes at Chelmsford in 1645, no less than 50 witches were indicted. On the other hand, there was growing debate amongst many Puritans as to whether witches actually possessed any powers. Unfortunately, the views of the Vicar of St. Dunstan's, William Greenhill, are not known.

Witchcraft was made a capital offence in England in 1563, and the Act was strengthened in 1604 (partly due to the interest of James I in the subject). This was repealed in 1736, and it has been estimated that up to 1,000 people were executed under these Acts in England, Wales and Scotland.⁴

Under the 1604 Act, a witch could be convicted for 'Invocation of evill and wicked Spirites, to or for any Intent or Purpose', or for using 'Witchcraft Enchantment Charme or Sorcerie, whereby any person shall happen to bee killed or destroyed'. Witches were also thought to have other characteristics, not mentioned in the Acts. They were expected to be 'outwardly deformed, as these kind of creatures usually are'⁵, but in particular to have marks on their bodies from which the devil, appearing in the form of animal 'Familiars',

sucked blood. The Familiars of Joan Peterson were described in detail at her trial:

... a maidservant to the aforesaid Peterson, witnessed that one night lying with her Mistresse, being in bed she told her that a Squirrel would come to her... and accordingly about midnight there came a Squirrel (or a Familiar in that likeness) and went over the wench to Peterson, which so affrighted her that she lay as if in a trance; and she further affirmeth, that her Mistresse and it talkt together a great part of the night... Moreover it was affirmed by a man that lived by her, that sitting by the fireside late one evening talking to her, on a sudden Peterson shrieked and cried out, who asking her what she ailed, she said do you see nothing? not I replied the other, look where it comes saith she, then he perceived as it were a black dog, who went directly to Peterson, and put its head under her armpits.⁶

After her execution many people came to look at the teat the devil was supposed to have sucked. But Marks and Familiars were not always sought, there being no mention of either, for example, in the detailed descriptions of the only other prosecution that led to a conviction, namely that of Elizabeth Newman.

An examination of the indictments shows that, where the status of the accused is recorded, we have two spinsters, two widows and the wives of two labourers, a yeoman and a weaver. Where the status of the victim is given as well, they all appear to be of equal or higher status than the witch. This may offset the nature of the social conflict that led to witchcraft prosecution being made.

All the indictments relate to human illnesses, and 17 victims are named - 7 women, 5 men and 5 children, in 3 cases the illness proving fatal.

The illnesses are described in two main ways; either the victim 'languished' (6 cases), or was 'wasted consumed pyned and lamed' (6 cases) and in one case speechless as well. Whether these terms really differentiate between two types of disease is not clear, especially as the duration of the illness is not related to whether it 'languished' or 'consumed', and varies from being quite short (16 days) to chronic (2 years 8 weeks from its appearance to the time of trial). The two ways of describing the illnesses are only mixed when the four victims of Elizabeth Newman are described. The Gale children were 'languishing and had become deaf and dumb', while John Holland was

'languishing...consumed pyned'. Newspaper accounts give a slightly different impression 'A Witch...bewitched a woman and her children, the children blind and lame by it; and the mother pained in her side, and back, and bound in her body' and '(she) bewicht the man's wife...and 3 children, some lame and blind; others bound in their bodies, that they had not bent downwards.'⁷ The rather sparse accounts of the illnesses on the indictments makes it difficult to judge whether any particular diseases were always thought to be caused by witchcraft, or if the social context in which an illness happened to occur determined whether witchcraft was blamed.

The exact circumstances surrounding the presentation of each indictment are not mentioned in the legal text. Only six prosecutions were made at the Quarter Sessions immediately following the onset of the illness, and two of the victims of Grace Boxe had been ill for over two years before legal action was taken. Her other two victims, Richard Cooke and Adam Isagare, became ill in April and May 1654, and died nine months later, but she was not indicted until July 1656. The indictments offer no explanation for this delay. Likewise, we do not know why Elizabeth Newman was indicted four times for the same two offences, although she was found guilty eventually.

Against this background, there are two important questions we can try to answer; first, were these the only witches believed to be practising at the time, or were there others not brought to trial? And, why were witches only blamed for some misfortunes in society, and not others?

It seems that witchcraft prosecutions represent the tip of an iceberg of gossip and suspicion. Four of the witches are described in their indictments as a 'common witch and Inchantrix', as if they had a well founded reputation for witchcraft.

The details from newspapers and pamphlets surrounding the case of Joan Peterson show how many pieces of suspicion were not mentioned in the indictments. It was said that she bewitched the young child of a neighbour, which was very strangely tormented, having such strange fits that the like was never known and had continued certain days in that condition to the great greif of the Parents...and the Parents were forced to procure one or other every night to watch with it, whereupon two women that were neighbours, desired that they might watch with it...; about midnight, they espied (to their thinking) a great black cat come to the cradles side, and rock the cradle, whereupon one of the women took up the fire-fork to strike at it, and it immediately vanished.⁸

Commenting on her case, the lampoon 'Mercurius Democritus' probably reflected as well as parodied a section of public opinion when it said:

... they say that this witch had carnal copulation with a land Diuel before she entered league with him, and hath brought forth millions, and that never an Alley about this city is without two or three of them; the Witch-finder hath oft been with her to take the names, and next week intends to ferrit out the suburbs.⁹



Matthew Hopkins. Note the 'familiars' in the foreground

A case described in a pamphlet, but not brought to trial concerns Lydia Rogers, the wife of a house carpenter living in Wapping. Having got into debt through paying for astrologers, she made a contract with the devil for money, after her church had refused to lend her any.

He appeared to her at night in the form of a man, and the contract was written in blood taken from the back of her hand.¹⁰ Finally, a rumour about witches appears in a 1645 pamphlet, which describes a monstrous birth in Radcliffe, mentions witches in Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk, and continues 'by the voice of the people there are some in Stepney now in question about Witchcraft, being persons of eminence: their names must as yet be concealed, but time will bring the truth to light'.¹¹

For our second question, why only some misfortunes were blamed on witches, the limited evidence seems to support the theory that an accusation of witchcraft may be a way of attacking someone against whom one already has a grudge.¹² Elizabeth Newman's husband had apparently been pressed as a seaman by the husband of the woman she was accused of bewitching.¹³ Peter Wilson, who was bewitched by Joan Peterson, had failed to pay her for treating another illness, and the cow keeper's wife who came to Peterson for help seems to have had the identity of the witch she was seeking in mind. The grudge against Lydia Rogers was of a different kind, the writer of the pamphlet attacking the Anabaptist sect, which she had recently joined.

The grudges which led to accusations of witchcraft being made have been identified primarily with the stresses of rural village life.¹⁴ Although most of Stepney and Bow were relatively rural during the Commonwealth, three of the witches came from Whitechapel, nearer the City, and Joan Peterson from a built up part of Wapping (although her indictment merely says she is from Stepney).

It is interesting to compare these indictments with those from Essex.¹⁵ Between 1560 and 1680, 427 victims of witchcraft are mentioned in indictments, of which 255 were people who died, 108 who survived, 80 were animals, and 6 cases involved property. In our East London cases, 3 people died, 14 survived, and no cases involved animals or property. Although the London sample is rather small, it seems that a larger proportion of people attacked by witches survived than in Essex, and animals and property were not so commonly believed to be affected. There are a number of possible reasons for this difference – perhaps common beliefs about the powers of witches differed in the two areas, or the stresses of village life that led to accusations being made were different from those around London. London, with its high adult mortality rate and an extraordinary mobile population due to large scale movement in and out of the city, was perhaps less conducive to the kind of atmosphere required.

After realising that one's illness could be blamed on a witch, it was common to go to a witch finder who would confirm the witch's identity. The witch finder might be a specialist in this alone, a doctor,¹⁶ or a 'white witch' who performed general spells and cures (Joan Peterson herself was one). For example, in the case of Elizabeth Newman,

the woman was bewitched to an extream costivness in her body, and repairing to a Doctor, he told her that she was bewitched... he directed her to make a cake, and to knead it with her own water, and to eat it, using a form of words... his counsel being followed she became as it were distracted and in a strange manner, entering the Witches house.¹⁷

A pamphlet about Joan Peterson says:

... There was a Cow-keepers wife, that had one of her Cows in such a condition that all who saw the Cow did verily persuade themselves that it was bewitched; whereupon she came to this Peterson and promised her a reward, if she would cure the Cow: she desired the woman to save her water, which she did: and then taking the water, shee set it on the fire and it had not been on long but the water rose up in bubbles, in one of which she showed her the face of the woman which the Cow-keepers wife suspected to have bewitched it.¹⁸

After the restoration, belief in witchcraft declined, in common with the rest of the country. Two witches from East London are mentioned in pamphlets, Alice Fowler in 1685, and Sarah Griffiths in 1704. We are left with a record of this rather curious aspect of mid-seventeenth century life, in an urban setting.

NOTES

1. Thus the evidence against Joan Peterson, although it may be false, does reflect contemporary belief about witches. A full account of this case is given in C. H. L. Ewen *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials* (1929), pp. 272-281. Briefly, the prosecution of the 'Witch of Wapping' was an attempt to prevent her implicating the enemies of the relatives of Lady Powel, after they had tried to make her give evidence that Lady Powel's death was due to poison.
2. J. C. Jefferson *Middlesex County Records* (1974) vols. 1-111.
3. *ibid* vol. 111.
4. Ewen pp. 111-113.
5. *The French Intelligencer* April 6-13, 1652.
6. *The Tryall and Examination of Mrs. Joan Peterson... for supposed Witchcraft* (1652).
7. Several Proceedings of State Affairs, Jan 12-19, 1653. *The Grand Politique Post*, Jan 17-24, 1653.
8. *The Tryall... Peterson*.
9. April 7-14, 1653.
10. *The Snare of the Devill Discovered: or A True and Perfect Relation... of Lydia the wife of John Rogers Hous Carpenter, living in Greenbank in Pump Alley in Wappin* (1658).
11. *Signs and Wonders from Heaven. With a true Relation of a Monster born in Ratcliffe Highway... likewise a new discovery of Witches in Stepney Parish* (1645).
12. M. Marwick (ed). *Witchcraft and Sorcery* (1970), pp. 201-320; K. Thomas *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971), pp. 638-669.
13. *The Grand Politique Post*, Jan 17-24, 1653.
14. Thomas, pp. 669-680.
15. A. MacFarlane *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (1970) p. 153.
16. One such was Dr. Franklin of Ratcliffe, who was paid 20 shillings in 1621 for finding the identity of a witch (MacFarlane, pp. 301-2).
17. *The Weekly Intelligencer* Jan 17-24, 1653.
18. *The Tryall... Peterson*.

BOOK REVIEWS

Robert Barltrop and Jim Wolveridge. *The Muvver Tongue*.

The Journeyman Press, 1980. £6.95, £2.95 paperback.

Peter Wright. *Cockney Dialect and Slang*.

Batsford, 1981. £8.95.

LANGUAGE is one of the most important skills that we start acquiring from the moment we are born. Strangely enough, in the past, schools did their very best to stifle these skills. Teachers seemed mainly concerned in moulding their children's language into Standard English. People all too often are judged by how they speak rather than by what they have to say. Fortunately there is now a growing awareness of the richness and variety of dialects and the different cultures they represent. Cockney is probably the most renowned of all the English dialects and one of the most misunderstood. It was widely used in comic acts in the Music Halls and over the years has been laughed at, criticised and labelled uneducated.

Two books have been published recently dealing specifically with the Cockney dialect. Robert Barltrop and Jim Wolveridge were born and brought up in the East End, and who better to write about the Cockney dialect? They straighten out many misconceptions about the Cockney people and their language. Even Charles Dickens comes in, quite rightly, for criticism. The book has a sympathetic understanding of the social conditions which have given rise to many of the forms of speech and special brand of humour of the East End. In particular it puts the famous rhyming slang into its proper context. They also show how the dialect has developed over the years by the addition of words from immigrant groups such as the Jews, Romanys and Asians that have settled in the community. Other influences include the World Wars and the coming of films and television.

Peter Wright's *Cockney Dialect and Slang* is a well researched, more academic analysis of the dialect. Despite his statement (p. 150) '... I often feel that the most important things found are not pronunciations, words or grammar but the culture they portray', it is with the former that he is mainly concerned, although fortunately he avoids much of the jargon of many academics. But the feeling one gets from both books is of a warm vital community with a rich culture that is likely to survive despite the many factors of modern life which threaten it.

Jill Hankey

Michael Hunter. *The Victorian Villas of Hackney*.

The Hackney Society, 1981. £1.50.

ALTHOUGH small in size, this book is a comprehensive work packed with information on many aspects of the development of Hackney, including the old Metropolitan boroughs of Shoreditch and Stoke Newington.

In spite of some thirty photos of houses and street scenes in all parts of the Borough, it is more than a purely narrative account of the district. There are also population statistical tables, maps, vignettes, illustrations and many architectural plans of both the exteriors and interiors of houses; in such a way that this book is in addition a brief but informative social survey of Hackney (and by extension of much of North East London) during Victorian times.

There are chapters dealing with the growth of the Borough, on the developers (the builders, the sources of finance) with the social and political implications involved, and the type or social level of the families which moved in. The final chapters go into the subsequent steps towards the transformation of this area from a handsome suburb of well-built houses spaciouly laid out in broad streets, to the later social decay and over-crowding with some larger houses turned into factories.



The author is not daunted by the problems which this district has been increasingly facing since the end of the last century, presenting them fairly and squarely to the reader and arguing for a cautious optimism for the future. Let us hope he is right.

In the meantime we have here in a concise form a serious survey of the present state of Victorian domestic architecture in one of London's less affluent boroughs. There must be other areas of London, and in some of our provincial cities, with similar heartrending problems. This book deserves a readership beyond the confines of Hackney.

Michael Hunter, the author, has included a few remarks on 'How to find out more', 'Which ways you can help', and a small glossary of the architectural terms used. A most commendable book with a wide appeal, as much to those already initiated into the mysteries of efforts to preserve our architectural heritage as to the amateur who might try and help if he understood more.

Alan Searle

Jerry White. *Rothschild Buildings: Life in an East End tenement block 1887-1920*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980. £11.50. £6.95 paperback.

AS ONE best described as a Jewish East Ender with the experience of veteran residential and employment associations, I warmly welcome the opportunity of reviewing an outstanding work, which portrays with depth and authenticity the general structure of a Jewish community in Spitalfields.

In his foreword Raphael Samuel provides the factual detail to stimulate interest and the necessary background for those unacquainted with East End Jewishness and its environment. Jerry White has avoided the reiterated conventional nostalgia and replaced it with graphic presentations of daily existence in the ghetto, including economic struggles, domestic issues and family developments. The Industrial Dwelling projects, a combination of patronage and 'landlordism' is excellently documented, as is the environment of drabness, squalor and hostility.

Despite the grimness, the degree of affinity among the tenants defeated attempts to enforce ruthless disciplines, termed 'rules of tenancy'. Indeed, the regulations were not allowed to interfere with the cherished 'way of life'. The book should be of equal use to the student and the layman, and will be of particular value to the increasing number of courses dealing with Jewish studies, the history of housing and, of course, the history of London. In conclusion, it can be said that the subject matter of *Rothschild Buildings* contains sufficient material of concern and relevance to the problems of the same area to-day.

Louis Behr

J. E. Connor. *All Stations to Poplar*. THAP Publishing. 1980. £1.50.

A MOST interesting account of yet another of London's railways that has gone the way of so many lines since the last war. This short history of the old North London must bring back memories for those of us who knew the line between the wars and the areas it served. Travelling on the route today one wonders just why the line became so run down. Undoubtedly, one of the main causes must have been the loss of trade caused by the closure of the docks, and the lessening number of industries in the East End. Knowing the area that the line runs through, I found myself constantly asking 'How could the line have failed so miserably?' Was it mismanagement of yet another nationalised institution? Was it the result of Government policies? Or had the railwayman, like the dockworker is so often accused of, priced himself out of a job and onto the dole queue? Surely when one sees the area through which the line runs there must be enough passenger traffic offering to make the line a viable

proposition, if the fares were attractive enough and the service was reliable, especially now when the bus services are so unreliable and the roads so congested. Having read the book I was tempted to ride on the line and found the stations still as Mr. Connor describes them. My mind wandered back to the days when the working conditions of railwaymen were bad, but each and every one seemed to have an innate pride in their stations and allegiance to their company which was such a feature of our railways until the 1960's when it seems to have died. The spread of the railways in the 1800's brought great social change with it. Social conditions have now caused the demise of the railways, but how long will it be before the pendulum swings again to give our inner urban lines the rebirth that they and we so badly need and deserve?

M. Brown

Barry Burke and Ken Worpole. *Hackney Propaganda. Working Class Club Life and Politics in Hackney, 1870-1900*. Centerprise Trust Ltd. 1980. 80p.

THIS booklet aims to give an insight into working class politics in Hackney from the eighteen seventies to the end of the century and the club life which contributed greatly to its strength and support. This was a period of growing political consciousness and activity in East London and this work highlights the struggles which ultimately secured the liberation and expansion of working class Socialism in the early 20th century. Women did much 'behind the scenes', and perhaps more could have been said about them, as also about the impact of the greater East London movement towards Socialism and effective trade-unionism. However, this was not intended to be a comprehensive study, though the bibliography is of great value. It is a fascinating work, easily readable, and is highly commended to all who have an interest in the political development of East London.

A. H. French

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