

- Glasman, Judy 'Architecture and anglicization: London synagogue building, 1870-1900' in *Jewish Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 1987.
- Higgs, Edward 'Women, Occupations and Work in the Nineteenth Century' in *History Workshop*, 23, Spring, 1987.
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- Marks, Lara 'Jewish women and Jewish prostitution in the East End of London' in *Jewish Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 1987.
- Norman, Edward 'Stewart Headlam and the Christian Socialists' in *History Today*, April 1987.
- Smith, Elaine R. 'East End tailors, 1918-1939: an aspect of the Jewish workers struggle' in *Jewish Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 1987.
- Stuart-Macadam, Patty 'Health and disease in the monks of Stratford Langthorne Abbey' in *Essex Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Winter, 1986.

THESES

- O'Flynn, K. L. 'The Impact of War on Secondary Education for Girls in East and West Ham 1935-1946' (copy in Newham Local Studies Library).
- Srebrnik, H. F. 'The Jewish Communist Movement in Stepney: Ideological Mobilisation and Political Victories in an East End borough, 1935-1945' (copy in Tower Hamlets Local History Library)

Some recent additions to archives

(a) Hackney Archives Department

- Papers of the Norris family of South Hackney, 1625-1958
 Papers of Israel Renson
 Parish Relief Committee minutes and records 1904-1911 for St. Leonards, Shoreditch
 Applications for building and drainage plans, 1855 to date, with a gap in 1970s
 Various Trade Catalogues

(b) Tower Hamlets Local History Library

- George Fourniers Charity, St. Matthews Bethnal Green: accounts, 1842-1934
 Little Alie Street Baptist Chapel, Whitechapel: records 1790-1899
 The Highways Clubs: records and photographs, 1886-1986
 Deeds re land in Limehouse, 1781-1829
 Account book of Robert Womersley, industrial chemist of Spitalfields, 1803-1863
 Day books (baptisms) for St. George-in-the-East, 1786-1790 and 1832-1834

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TENTH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



EAST LONDON RECORD

No. 10

1987

EAST LONDON RECORD

Editor: Colm Kerrigan

The East London History Society publishes the *East London Record* once a year. We welcome articles on any aspect of the history of the area that now forms the boroughs of Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets. Articles, which need not be in their final form, 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 Ridgdale Street, Bow, London E3 2TW.

Numbers 1 (1978), 2 (1979), 4 (1981) and 5 (1982) of the *East London Record* are out of print. Copies of number 3 (1980), price 60p + 25p post and packing, numbers 6 (1983) and 7 (1984) each at 95p + 25p post, number 8 (1985) at £1.25p + 25p post and number 9 (1986) at £1.30 + 25p post are still available from the circulation manager, Mrs D. Kendall, 20 Puteaux House, Cranbrook Estate, London E2 0RF, who can also supply further copies of the present issue (1987). Photocopies of issues 1 (1978), 2 (1979), 4 (1981) and 5 (1982), costing £2.00 each including post, can also be supplied on request. All cheques should be made payable to East London History Society.

We are grateful to Tower Hamlets Libraries for assistance in many ways with the production and distribution of this magazine. We also gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the National Westminster Bank, Whitechapel Bell Foundry, Sedgwick Group and Shell U. K. towards the costs of this Tenth Anniversary Issue. Finally, thanks to the following people without whose help this issue could not have been produced: Mr. D. Behr, Mr. H. Bloch, Mrs. V. Crouch, Mr. J. Curtis, Mr. J. Farrell, Mr. A. H. French, Mrs. D. Kendall, Mr. C. Lloyd, Mr. D. Mander, Ms. C. Merion, Mrs. J. Page, Mr. A. Searle, Mr. T. Ridge, Miss A. J. Wait and Mr. H. Watton.

Cover illustration: The Bow and Bromley Institute around the year 1900.
(Tower Hamlets Libraries).

EAST LONDON RECORD

No. 10 1987

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C. & R. LIGHT LTD., CABINET MAKERS OF SHOREDITCH

John Light

THE earliest known member of the family which founded the firm of C. & R. Light, was John Light, who was apprenticed in 1754 to John Troughton, a cabinet maker of St. Leonard's Shoreditch, on a seven year term, for the fee of ten guineas.¹ At that time, Shoreditch was on the fringe of north east London, beyond the jurisdiction of the city and its guilds. Much of the parish consisted of fields, only about a quarter of the area being built on, mainly the narrow tongue of the Liberty of Moorfields which in 1745 contained 630 houses. In 1760 John Light married Elizabeth Gray in the church of St. Botolph, Bishopsgate.² They had a son, David, christened in St. Mary's, Whitechapel, but the family settled in Crown Alley in Shoreditch where their third son, the first Jonathan, was born in 1773, and where four years later, John Light died.³

David Light married a Huguenot and one of his sons, David John, was probably a cabinet maker of Britannia Street. Jonathan Light was a cabinet maker and his first son, the second Jonathan who was born in North Green in 1798, also became a cabinet maker, as did one of his sons, Joseph, but thereafter that branch of the family took up other occupations.⁴ The first Jonathan's second son Charles was born in 1809, and became a cabinet maker like his father and grandfather.⁵ He and his wife Frances had a large family including Thomas, the younger Charles, who was born in 1843, Richard in 1847 and Alfred George.⁶ At the time of the 1851 Census the family was living in Ivy Terrace, and Charles described himself as an 'Easy Chair Maker'.⁷

Alfred George worked as a cabinet maker but died in 1871 leaving an estate of less than £100. Thomas died when he was thirty-five. The Letters of Administration of his estate describe him as 'late of No. 144 Curtain Road Shoreditch, Nos. 10 and 11 Le Blonds Buildings and No. 145 Kingsland Road, all in the County of Middlesex, Cabinet Manufacturer', but he and his wife Mary Anne and family lived at No. 145 Kingsland Road. The estate was valued at under £5000. His son Thomas Charles, died in 1885, at the early age of 20, and two years later, the latter's brother and sister, Alfred George and Rose Emily Anne, both died, bringing that branch of the family to a tragic end.⁸

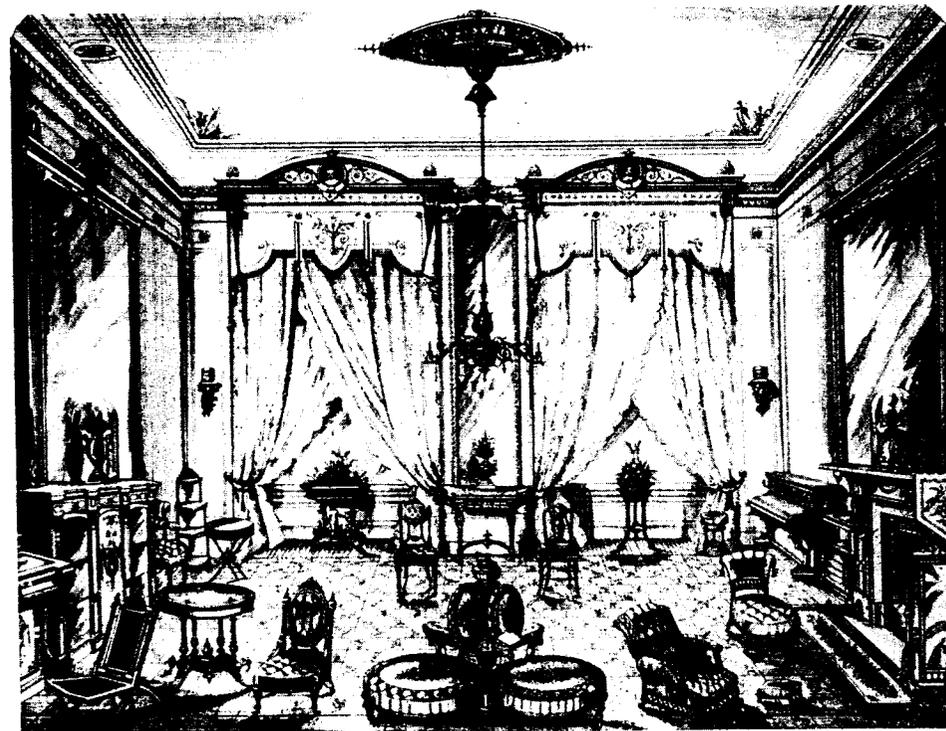
It was left to the two remaining brothers, Charles and Richard, to carry the family occupation of cabinet making forward. In 1855 the elder Charles Light was listed as a cabinet maker in Kelly's Post Office Directory of London and again in 1856 and 1861. In a rate book of 1854 Charles was described as occupier of 'house and room' and 'house at back,' 135 Curtain Road. An 1864 rate book lists him as occupier of a house at 132 Curtain Road and in 1872, C. Light cabinet manufacturer, was listed in a local street directory as having 140, 142 and 144 Curtain Road.⁹ By this time Curtain Road was the chief centre for cabinet making and distribution in London.

Charles died in 1877. His estate was administered by his son Richard of 144 Curtain Road, wholesale cabinet manufacturer, and valued at not more

than £12,000, a very large sum in those days.¹⁰ The younger Charles had a large family, but Richard Light seems to have remained unmarried.

In 1880 the firm issued a comprehensive catalogue, of which there is a copy in the British Library. It measured 16 inches by 12½ inches and was about one inch thick, in heavy card covers. It was published by Waterlow and Sons Limited, London Wall and contained 435 pages listing over 1,908 items. Its summary title was 'Registered Designs of Cabinet Furniture,' but the full version on the title page was 'Designs and Catalogue of Cabinet and Upholstery Furniture, Looking Glasses etc. by C. & R. Light, Wholesale Manufacturers, 134, 136, 138, 140, 142, 144, Curtain Road, London.' The

Arrangement of drawing room furniture. (By permission of the British Library)



Catalogue contained a Preface followed by a list of sections, which gives some idea of the scope of the company's products. There were 33 pages of items for the hall, 44 for the library, 100 for the dining room and parlour, 156 for the drawing room, 94 for the bedroom, one for the camp and ship, only two for the kitchen, and one for the garden.

In the Preface, the authors make the following comment:

We have been influenced in publishing this volume by the consideration that there is an entire absence of any comprehensive book of Furniture Design of a Superior Character, which can be used for general purposes.

Some of the drawings here are simply reproductions of the ordinary kinds of Furniture as now manufactured; the greater part are, however, entirely new and original Designs.

The Catalogue itself gives a fascinating list of the furniture which Victorians might require in their homes. The section on Hall Furniture includes benches, brackets, chairs, gong stands, hat stands, hall tables, hat rails, ink stands, step chairs, suites, tiles and paintings and umbrella stands; in a multitude of styles — Antique, Chippendale, Gothic, Italian, Medieval, Modern, Neo Grecian, Early English, Elizabethan, Queen Anne and Renaissance. Each item is illustrated by a detailed perspective drawing in black. The tiles are illustrated by drawings in blue and the panel paintings in red brown.

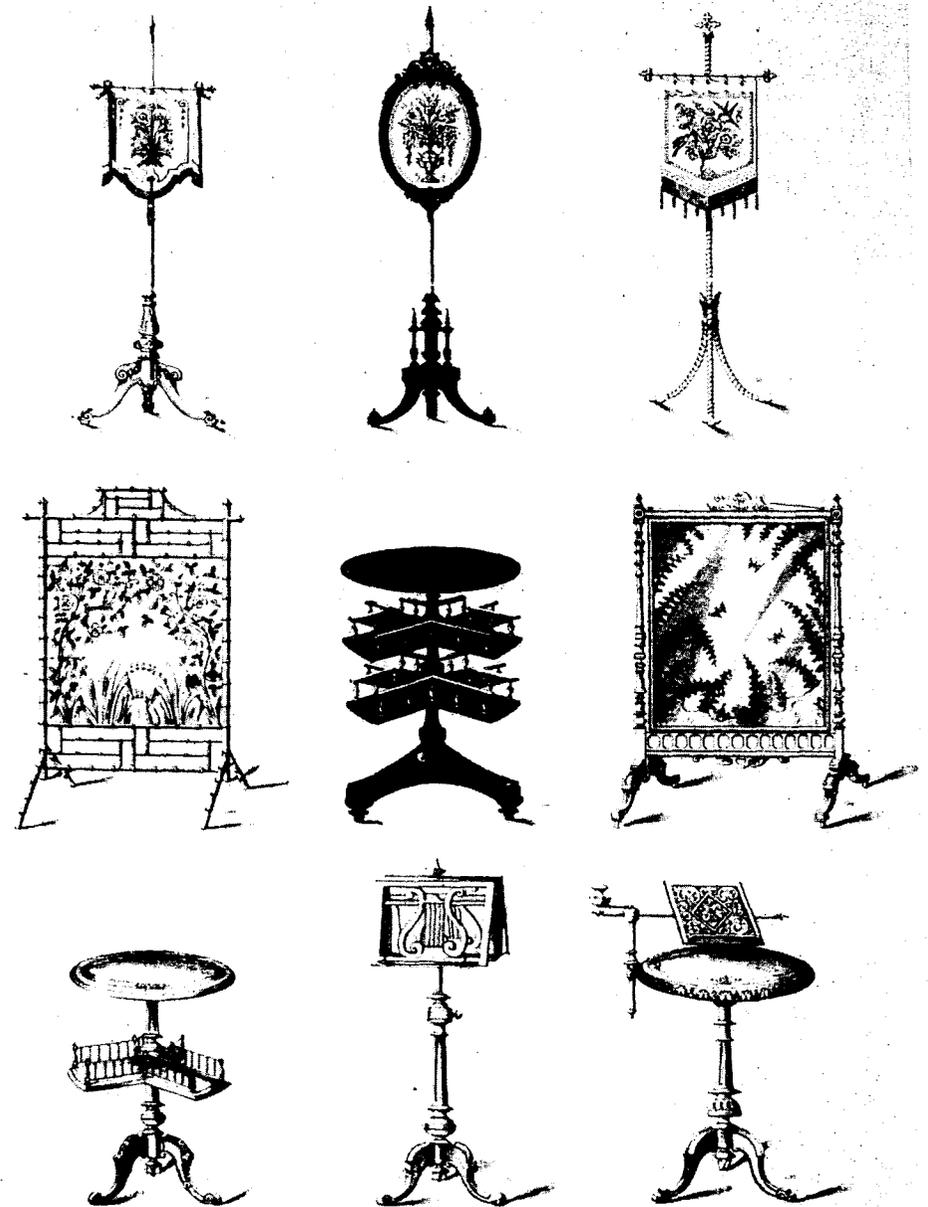
The pages devoted to Library, Office, Billiard and Club Room Furniture describe bookcases, bookshelves, book wagons, cabinets, chairs, clock brackets, copying press and stand, cornices, couches, date cases, Davenport (a kind of writing desk), desks, drapery, mirrors, settees and seats, slopes, steps, suites, tables, wagons and washstands.

For the Dining Room and Parlour are offered bookshelves, bookcases, chairs, chiffoniers (i.e. ornamental cupboards), chimney pieces, a coal case (!), corner cabinets, couches, dumb waiters, dinner wagons, flap stands, fire screens, folding screens, gong stands, sideboards, sidebrackets, sofas and settees, stands, stools, a sarcophagus (!), tables, table legs, trays and the ubiquitous wagons.

For the Drawing Room, furniture is available also in the style of Louis XVI. Some of the drawings are coloured in black and mustard. Patrons can choose from baskets, book rests, book slides, brackets, cabinets, Canterbury's, chairs, chiffoniers, cornices and cornice poles, couches, cupboards, Davenport, desks, dagères, glasses, girandoles (i.e. branching chandeliers), harmoniums, jardinières (i.e. flower stands), mirrors, ottomans (i.e. backless couches), pedestals, pianos, screens, settees, stools, suites, tables, trays and whatnots (gilt ones for hanging and special ones for corners!). Many of these headings are sub-divided. For instance, among tables there are the following kinds listed: card, centre, console, coffee, fancy, gaming (or Whist), gipsy, occasional, reading, sutherland, trio, work and writing.

Bedrooms could also be filled to overflowing with baskets, bedsteads, bedrests, bidets, boot horses, box ottomans, chairs, chests, commodes, corner cupboards, cots and cribs, couches, glasses, leg rests, pedestal cupboards (not

Drawing Room.



Paraphernalia for the drawing room. (By permission of the British Library)

for keeping pedestals in!), stands, suites, steps, tables, towel rails and wardrobes.

By contrast the Kitchen received scant attention.

Among other oddities (odd, that is, for a cabinet maker) were perambulators, folding perambulators, portable water closets and invalid's carrying chair.

The enthusiasm for their trade evinced by this Catalogue is staggering, and no doubt it was this whole-heartedness which made them successful. Richard, alas, did not enjoy this success much longer, dying in 1884 at the age of 37. In his will Richard gave his address as 140, 142 and 144 Curtain Road, half of the property given as the Company's address in its Catalogue. He left legacies of nineteen pounds and nineteen shillings to all employees of the 'firm of Charles and Richard Light' who had been in service for more than five years. Those employed for more than ten years prior to his death were to receive fifty pounds — handsome sums in those days. He bequeathed one hundred pounds to the Royal Hospital for Diseases of the Chest, and the same sum to Saint Mark's Hospital for Fistula, both institutions being in City Road. He also left one hundred pounds to the London Hospital, Whitechapel Road. He left substantial legacies to his sisters, and he was anxious that they should enjoy these gifts themselves, saying that 'I further direct that each and every legacy hereby bequeathed to a female legatee shall be paid and payable to and be held and enjoyed by her for her sole and separate use and benefit free from the debts, control and engagements of any husband.'

The legacies were not to be paid until five years after his death, unless the executors so desired, presumably to give the firm time to adjust. The residue of his estate was left to his brother Charles. The value of his estate was almost £24,000, an enormous sum for that time.¹¹ The firm continued under the name of Charles and Richard Light after the latter's death. By 1899 it had become a limited liability company, C. & R. Light Ltd., of 134-148 Curtain Road, with factories in Great Eastern Street. In 1911 it was described in Kelly's Furniture Trade Directory as of 134-146 Curtain Road and Rivington Street, E.C., which adjoined Great Eastern Street.¹²

In 1912 the younger Charles died, having made his final will in 1911. It begins 'This is the last will of me Charles Light of 9 Daleham Gardens, Hampstead, London, Chairman of C. & R. Light Ltd.' and covers twelve closely typed foolscap sheets. Among his executors he appointed his son Richard and his nephew Albert John Edwards, both of them Directors of C. & R. Light. He directed that his body should be interred in the family vault in Highgate Cemetery.

The will revealed that in 1881 he had made a marriage settlement on his wife. In addition to the provisions of the settlement his wife was to have money and shares in the company. Much of the will was taken up with the provisions he made for his numerous children, principally in the form of bequests of shares ordinary, preference (that is, those receiving a fixed dividend before any is paid on the ordinary shares) and debenture (a form of mortgage on the company's assets) often left in trust for them. Besides his wife

the beneficiaries were his sons Charles, Richard, Harry Arthur, Leonard Hastings, Percy and Douglas Surtees; his daughters Florence Fanny and Doris, his sisters Sarah Cockcroft and Frances Light, his nephew Albert John Edwards, and various others. Some were obviously employees while others were more likely to have been colleagues or friends.

The will also contained instructions for the trustees in management of the estate, authorising them to run the company, C. & R. Light Ltd, for the benefit of his heirs, and to invest any money in 'public stocks, funds or Government securities of Great Britain or Bank Stock or India Stock or the securities of the Imperial or Colonial or Provincial Governments of India, Australia or any other British Colony or Territory,' or upon the purchase of property in England and Wales. They were also permitted to invest in any company in a British territory, or any foreign railway company deemed secure.¹³

Charles Light must have been a dominating personality. After his death, the Lights' interest in the firm diminished, until by the end of the Great War the family seems to have had no further connection with it. In 1915 its registered address was still Curtain Road, but when the Company was reconstituted as C. & R. Light (1918) Ltd. it moved to 288 Old Street, E.C.2. By 1925 it was established at 54 Great Eastern Street.¹⁴

The company is now little more than a letterhead, having been absorbed into Charles J. Barr and Sons Ltd., and has finally abandoned its old haunts for the rural calm of Sandy in Bedfordshire.

NOTES

1. Boyd's Apprentice Index, Guildhall Library.
2. St. Botolph Bishopsgate Parish Register, Guildhall Library.
3. St. Mary Whitechapel Baptism Register, G L C Record Office; St. Leonard Shoreditch Parish Register, Guildhall Library.
4. St. Leonard P. R.
5. St. John Hoxton Parish Register, G L C Record Office.
6. St. Leonard P. R.
7. 1851 Census, Shoreditch. Public Record Office.
8. Wills and Letters of Administration, Principal Probate Registry.
9. Rate books and Street Directories. Shoreditch Library.
10. Wills and Letters.
11. Wills and Letters.
12. Kelly's Furniture Trades Directories.
13. Wills and Letters.
14. Kelly's.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE BOW AND BROMLEY INSTITUTE

G. P. Moss

FOR over forty years the Bow and Bromley Institute played a lively part in the local cultural and educational scene. From the surviving records it is possible to build up a picture of its origins, its activities and its decline. Built as an integral part of Bow Station in 1870 it became in 1897 a branch of East London Technical College and finally closed in 1911.

There appear to be two organisations which predate the Institute and which seem to have acted as midwife if not parents to its formation. In 1932 an enquiry by an American to the principal of Bow and Bromley LCC Commercial Institute initiated a series of letters between W. B. Thorne, Poplar Librarian, and W. Noble Twelvetrees.¹ The original enquiry concerned Bromley Literary Association where it was claimed 'Tod' Lincoln, son of President Lincoln, attended meetings given by such eminent speakers as John Bright and John Stuart Mill. It was also claimed that the Association developed into the Bow and Bromley Institute.

The Bromley Literary Association was founded in 1861 and met in a lecture hall provided by Mr. Harper Twelvetrees (father of W. N. Twelvetrees) at the Imperial Works in Three Mills Lane, Bromley by Bow. At the opening soiree and public meeting on 4 November it was reported '1400 hundred (*sic*) persons were present'.² One of the first activities the Association organised was a prize essay competition on either 'the cheap press' or 'the universal penny'. Prizes, presented by Harper Twelvetrees, were awarded for the best two essays in each category and they were subsequently published.³ All four winners were employed at the Imperial Works, Three Mills Lane. A lecture in 1862 on his experiences in America was given by Rev. J. Sella Martin, an escaped slave. The audience gave £10 afterwards towards a fund for the purchase of the freedom of his sister and two children.⁴ It appears that the speaker ran a Free Church in the hall.

The second precursor of the Bow and Bromley Institute was the Bow Working Mens Institute. Formed in 1866, it met first at St. Stephen's National School and then at Bow Vestry Hall. In 1869, at the Annual Meeting of the Working Mens Institute, it was reported they were ready to move to Bow Station.⁵ Later that year there appeared the first mention of the Bow and Bromley Institute⁶, although it was not until April 1870 that Bow Station opened with the Institute hall forming part of the station building.⁷ Notwithstanding these origins the Bow and Bromley Institute always stated on its literature 'founded 1870'. Perhaps it was the merger of the Bromley Literary Association with the Bow Working Mens Institute that gave rise to the Bow and Bromley Institute and its name.

The activities of the Institute from 1871 to 1897 are documented in the semiannual syllabus.⁸ The programme consisted of regular lectures, dramatic and musical entertainments. After the 'Grand Opening Concert' the first

scientific lecture was by Dr. Edwin Lankester, FRS on 'The Laws of Life,' followed by an historical lecture on 'Celebrated Women' and a literary lecture on 'Barnaby Rudge'. In 1871 there is a small note on evening classes given in connection with the Tower Hamlets Educational Association and the Government Department of Science and Art, South Kensington. This aspect of the Institute will grow to eventually take over its activities. Initial classes in drawing, elocution, French and choral work were expanded in 1872 to include book-keeping, engineering & architecture, mathematics, instrumental classes and an orchestra. By 1881 there were a total of 193 students examined, with the most popular class being plane and solid geometry (39), down to inorganic chemistry with only three. Six years later in 1887 there were 1,484 students registered, rising to 1,547 in 1888, 1,582 in 1890 but dropping in 1891 to 1,470.^{9, 10}

A feature of the Institute which, in the days before public libraries, must have been much valued by members was the library. There were already 2,000 books in 1871 and 3,000 a year later. Over the next twenty years the stock increased by about 160 books a year to 6,000 in 1891. The library also subscribed to seven daily, twenty two weekly and ten monthly papers and magazines. Although *Lloyds List* was dropped in 1872 they continued to subscribe to such journals as *Builder*, *Engineer*, *Lancet* and *Edinburgh Review*.

As part of the Institute's activities a number of clubs and societies were associated with it. While some such as the Chess Club (1872-4 revived 1885), Cricket Club (established 1874, last record 1891) and Rovers Bicycle Club (1876-85) seem to have been formed as part of the Institute's social programme, others such as Tower Hamlets' Bicycle Club (1877-9), The East London Amateur Floriculture Society (established 1864, recorded in the syllabus 1877-83) and East London Natural History & Microscopical Society (founded 1871, first listed in the syllabus for 1881-2), were clearly separate organisations which used the Institute as headquarters. The Institute choir (from 1878) and orchestra (from 1884) clearly developed from the evening classes.

The Bow and Bromley Institute hall was also used for public meetings, although after an incident in the 1880s the North London Railway Company banned its use for political meetings. Professor James Bryce (later the 1st Viscount Bryce) was Liberal MP for Tower Hamlets 1880-5. His views on Ireland were strongly opposed by local Irish residents and Radicals. When he organised a public meeting in the hall the platform party (with the exception of George Lansbury and a friend) were displaced by a section of the audience opposed to government policy. Thereafter political meetings were banned.¹¹

A feature of the Institute was its Organ. With funds raised from a regular appeal the necessary £800 was raised by 1873. The instrument was built by Messrs. Brindley and Foster of Sheffield with two keyboards, pedal-board and 27 stops,¹² and was opened on 4 November, 1874.¹³ Organ recitals formed a standard item on the programme from that date on.

Finance was always a problem. This was one reason for the expansion of the educational side of their activities. When afternoon classes were tried in

1884 it proved a success and with a grant from the Drapers Company this aspect was expanded including taking on additional premises. However by 1888 the depression in trade and the opening of the People's Palace seriously reduced the receipts from entertainments and the Institute ended up in debt to the extent of £250. An appeal was made to the Livery Companies¹⁰ which resulted in a £50 grant from the Clothworkers' Company. In the following year £150 grant from the Charity Commissioners must have helped.

The trade depression was noted as a cause of the fall in receipts in 1896. Competition from the People's Palace perhaps made it inevitable that the solution to the problem should be the merger of the two institutions. This was agreed in 1897 and the merger scheme was agreed by the Charity Commissioners the following year. This union did 'not meet with wholesale enthusiasm'.¹⁴ The Institute was run as the Bow and Bromley branch of the People's Palace and its associated East London Technical College. Although advertisements in local papers show the social side of the Institutes activities continued, programmes do not seem to have survived. The evening classes continued much as before and details were now given in the East London Technical College Calendar (later East London College). However, clearly the main Mile End Road site was much more attractive to students. By 1909 only 472 evening students were enrolled (200 science, 94 civil service and commercial, 59 dress making and millinery and 119 music). The day classes were down to about 30 youths aged 15-18 intent on passing the matriculation exam to enter East London College.¹⁵

When set up the North London Railway had supported the Institute by only asking a low rent and encouraging its employees to use the facilities. This was no longer relevant and so when the lease of the Institute's building social expired in 1911 the governors decided to give up work in side. As one correspondent Bow Road. The impending closure was regretted by many, especially for its described the Institute it was the 'once famous centre to which old musical amateurs in London resorted — a home for instruction and amusement used by the middle classes in all the vast region of the Eastern half of Greater London.'¹⁶

It was decided in 1913 to sell the organ¹⁷ and it ended up in a 'popular West End place of worship'.¹⁸ It is not clear where the library went; perhaps it was sold or added to the stock of the Stepney Public Library in Bancroft Road or Poplar Public Library. By 1906 it was still in Bow Road, but with no more books than in 1891 and with few subscribers it was threatened with closure.¹⁹ However it probably remained there until the Bow Road branch was closed.

Thus after providing educational facilities for forty years an era came to an end. However, it did continue to provide recreational facilities albeit on a limited scale. Between the two world wars the Embassy Billiard Hall was located in the building. Today the site, to the east of the railway bridge in Bow Road and on the north side, has been redeveloped and no sign remains of the Bow and Bromley Institute.

NOTES

1. Tower Hamlets Central Library, Local History Library, LP102, 100TWE.
2. *Illustrated London News*, 9 November 1861.
3. Rev. Hugh Allen, *The Bromley Prize Essays*, 1862.
4. *East End News (EEN)*, 1 February 1862 (Quoted in *EEN*, 1 February 1952).
5. *East London Observer (ELO)*, 24 April 1869.
6. *EEN*, 30 October 1869.
7. *ELO*, 2 April 1870.
8. Bow and Bromley Institute Syllabus. A bound set for 1871-97 is in Queen Mary College Archives together with the Calendars of the Bow and Bromley Branch of the East London Technical College and later the East London College for 1897-1909. Details of the programmes and other unreferenced material in this article are taken from this material.
9. Data for 1881-2 see reference 8; 1887 and 1888 see reference 10; 1890 and 1891 from the report to be presented at the 22nd Annual Meeting, 25 January 1892 (copy in Tower Hamlets Local History Library cutting file 830.2).
10. Appeal letter dated 29 May 1888 is in Queen Mary College Archives, People's Palace file 115.
11. George Lansbury, *My Life*, 1928, p.86.
12. E. J. Hopkins and E. F. Rimbault, *The Organ, its History and Construction*, 3rd edition, 1877, p.470.
13. *EEN*, 6 November 1874.
14. Tower Hamlets Local History Library cutting file 830.2 labelled 'London' 3 December 1896.
15. *ELO*, 22 October 1910.
16. *ELO*, 29 October 1910.
17. *EEN*, 21 October 1913.
18. *ELO*, 14 October 1916.
19. Letter from Clarence Brandon dated 28 March 1906, to the People's Palace Visiting Committee. Queen Mary College Archives, People's Palace file 17.

TRANSPORT EAST OF LONDON BRIDGE AFTER 1825

E. F. Clark

Introduction

THE new Docklands Light Railway uses a long section of the route of the original London & Blackwall Railway. The opening of the new system calls for more than a simple reference to the earlier railway, whose detailed history has already been well traced.¹ The opportunity will therefore be taken to set the old and the new railways in their contexts and to test certain general principles by a study of the history of transport and related topics in the whole interesting area from a date when the present author's great great grandfather, George Parker Bidder first came on the scene.² Most consideration will be given to the next half century during which Bidder continued active. He played a major part in the building of the London & Blackwall Railway.

Transport is Civilization³

Consideration of all types of transport points to certain principles which appear to be universally applicable unless they are suppressed or distorted by external forces, usually political. Against these the East London scene will be judged. They may be summed up as follows:

1. Transportation is only a means to an end, not an end in itself. Any route or system of transport is therefore subject to the requirements which called it into existence.
2. The means of transport available for any particular route or requirement is limited by the current state of technology.
3. Any new transport mode introduced on the basis of new technology, if it is successful, tends to force ahead the development of that technology once some critical point of feasibility has been passed; but after a further period, development levels off into established practice. Later, a period of decline usually sets in.⁴
4. For any given journey, traffic will tend to be drawn to the route which involves the fewest changes of mode of transport.

Stated thus, the principles appear self-evident, except perhaps the last. Our Victorian ancestors perceived it in railway terms as the Evils of Break of Gauge⁵ but subsequent experience shows that it is of universal applicability and a useful touchstone to judge prospective transport schemes. While East London was not penetrated by the Great Western's broad gauge, there were examples of non standard gauge railways in the early days and there were plenty of different modes of transport.

G. P. Bidder

The dictum that Bidder should be considered on a par with those heroes of the early railway age – Robert Stephenson and Isambard Kingdom Brunel – is



George Parker Bidder. (Reprinted from The Illustrated London News, 15 March 1856)

not just partisan family feeling.⁶ He was born in 1806, two months after Brunel. Between the ages of about 6 and 13 his father took him up and down the country on a series of public exhibitions to show off his extraordinary powers of mental calculation. It is clear that he received practically no schooling during this period and that he taught himself all the methods he used. Fortunately he became sufficiently articulate in later life to be able to record them.⁷

He was then sent to Edinburgh University for 4 years, leaving in 1824 just before his eighteenth birthday. After a brief spell with the Ordnance Survey he joined H. R. Palmer, an ex-pupil of Thomas Telford and effectively the founder of the Institution of Civil Engineers. Later, he worked for the partnership of Walker and Burges, for whom he was Resident Engineer at Brunswick Wharf, Poplar. While on that job, he met his wife who was the daughter of a sea captain and lived at Pekin Place, Poplar.

In 1834, Bidder joined Robert Stephenson on the London & Birmingham Railway but within little more than 6 months he ceased to be an employee of the Railway because he and Stephenson set up what was effectively a partnership and certainly a true and close friendship which lasted for a quarter of a century until Stephenson died in 1859.

Bidder was involved in a vast range of work, sometimes with the Stephensons (both Robert and his father George) but increasingly on his own account. Often he appeared before Parliamentary Committees, where his powers of mental calculation allied with a remarkable memory usually proved devastating to those who opposed him. He also did a great deal of engineering work on the ground. Like most of his contemporaries this was dominated by the great surge in railway building of the 1840's, but he made his mark in other fields. His deep interest in hydraulics and in the flow of tides in estuaries gave him a breadth of vision that transcended specific projects. The Presidency of the Institution of Civil Engineers crowned Bidder's professional career in 1860, a few weeks after Robert Stephenson died. He lived a further 18 years and continued active as an engineer up to the last.

1825

Apart from being the year that Bidder started to work on the Thames it is a convenient turning point between the old and the new. Much of what had been the same for centuries, continued. Roads in general were poor except where they had been turnpiked. Even on these improved routes travel was slow, expensive and uncomfortable, although it was a great improvement on what had been on offer 50 or 100 years previously. Within London, there was no public land transport. The first horse omnibus came in 1829, but there were coaches and cabs for hire. The River Thames provided a ready-made east-west through route. Despite the fact that it follows a far from direct line, Londoners had made major use of it for centuries in preference to their roads. One major change had already occurred to stimulate this traffic, namely the introduction of steamboats in 1815. Their use spread rapidly both above

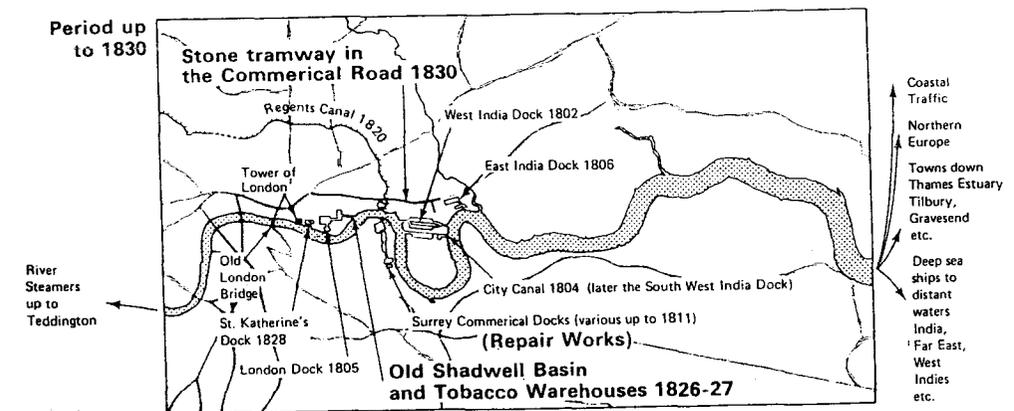
London Bridge as high as Richmond and down the tidal reaches below it. This change is a good example of principle 3 enunciated above.

Below London Bridge, the Thames also provided the route by which trade from longer distances – in some cases half round the world – was brought to London. Up to 1825 the technology of steamships had not progressed enough to make any impact on other than the local services, so all this traffic, even to the outer estuary, was carried in sailing vessels.

But there had been other improvements brought on by improved engineering skills, knowledge and confidence. Since 1800 enclosed docks had been built at the East and West India and London Dock sites on the north shore and at corresponding areas on the Surrey side. St. Katharine Dock, situated in a difficult area already built up just downstream of the Tower, was in hand but would not be finished for another 3 years. Even so, many ships were still moored in the river where they caused congestion and danger to themselves and other river users and endless opportunities for damage and theft to cargoes and passengers.

All traffic was carried in wooden sailing ships which cannot be built above a certain size so bulk cargoes were virtually unknown – the only real exceptions being timber and grain from northern Europe and coal from the North East coast. For the rest, cargoes were largely of small volume and high value.

This eased the problem of unloading and distribution but meant that the enclosed docks were like fortresses because of the requirements of the Customs who took a close interest in all the highly dutiable goods stored in them. Apart from some very short range transport by land, local distribution was by barge. The facilities of the Thames itself had been supplemented by navigations on tributary rivers, such as the Lee, and by canals, the most



This, and the three maps that follow, show the strategy of railways, wharves and steamer lines down the Thames until 1860. The projects with which G. P. Bidder was directly associated in each period are identified on the maps by bold lettering

important of which, the Regent's Canal, looped round the north of London to join up with the main English system at Paddington. It has been in use since 1820.

The single dominating factor in the whole situation and the one which many historians ignore, was old London Bridge. This dammed the water upstream so that it was fresh and virtually tideless, producing the waterscapes made familiar by the works of Canaletto and many others. It also reduced the tidal flow in the lower reaches to a fraction of what we know today.⁸

1825-1830

After this lengthy consideration of general matters and an assessment of the general state of affairs in our area by 1825, it is time to trace developments. Railways have not been mentioned since, except for the primitive Surrey Iron Railway, there were none anywhere nearby. The Stockton & Darlington was opened in 1825 and the Liverpool & Manchester in 1830. The resounding success of the latter only began to impinge on the general consciousness during the next decade.

Within our area there were two developments worthy of notice in which Bidder was directly involved. There was the interesting technical blind alley of the granite tramway for carts down the Commercial Road, completed in 1830, and the building of Shadwell Basin, an important extension to the existing London Dock (1826-28).⁹

While Bidder worked at Shadwell Basin, the Brunels, father and son, were labouring on their Thames Tunnel nearby. We know Bidder visited the works and he must have come into contact with his young contemporary. Despite the tragedies and eventual triumph which that project entailed, there were those in a position to assess its true value who did not see its worth as a commercial proposition and hence the need for it to be built at all. They were in fact largely justified by later events and it so happens that Bidder was closely influenced by a man who was offered but refused the chairmanship of the tunnel company.¹⁰ Perhaps Bidder's later doubts about the viability of a Channel Tunnel were affected by this early experience. Certainly most projects he was involved with throughout his life were built within their estimates and proved profitable.

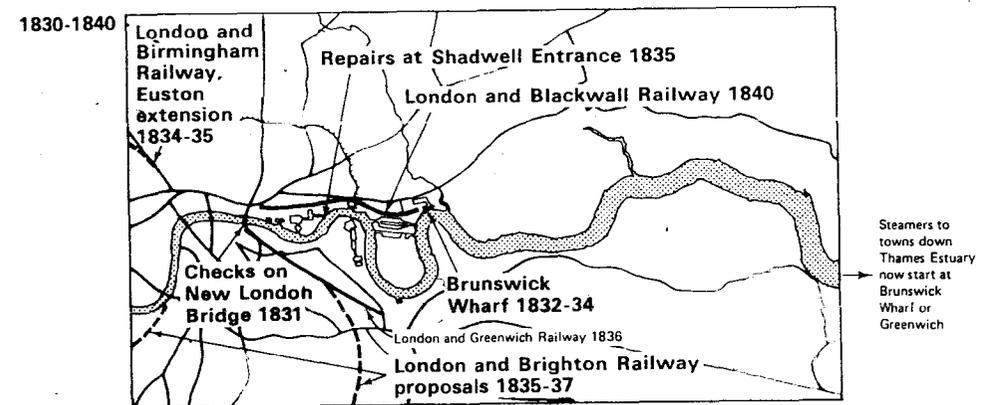
1830-1840

As our theme is transport, the most important factor to note during the early years of this decade was the resounding success of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway. This had an immense impact on the general consciousness and is a clear instance of a breakthrough in technology, despite the fact that railways still had far to develop. On the other hand the entrenched opposition of the turnpike trusts and the lack of the required technology combined to defeat the development of steam power for road vehicles so that the future for land transport was set in a railway context, even for quite short distances, for a long time. This soon led to the promotion of many railways schemes, but

before turning to those in our area, two quite different developments must be mentioned.

London Bridge itself was renewed. Sir John Rennie's new bridge was opened in 1831, allowing the old bridge to be removed. Immediately the tidal regime of the river changed. Upstream the foundations of all the old bridges were scoured out so that they all had to be replaced. Downstream the mass of water moving in and out increased enormously. Bidder was not directly involved except in taking measurements on the new bridge which subsided soon after it was opened. Access to Southwark across the new bridge was greatly improved.

In 1834 Brunswick Wharf was completed under Bidder's direct supervision. This was a new concept to meet a new need. It was a steamer terminal to which steamers could go alongside at any state of the tide and which saved traversing the circuitous and congested stretch of the river round the Isle of Dogs up to the Pool. The new requirement also called forth a new technique. Whereas all the earlier docks, when not built of timber, had been constructed of massive brickwork or masonry, Brunswick Wharf was built of cast iron sheet piling - a great saving in cost and the first major application of the system.¹¹



But man is essentially a land animal and the next development was to eliminate a section of river transport altogether - again the crowded and most congested section. Bidder had no hand in the London & Greenwich Railway opened in 1836. The line started virtually at the southern end of the new London Bridge and set the pattern for the construction of railways in urban London by being built on a brick viaduct. This required the minimum land take and allowed existing streets to cross the line of the railway without interruption to either. It was found so satisfactory that eventually about 11 miles of such viaducts were built in the London area.

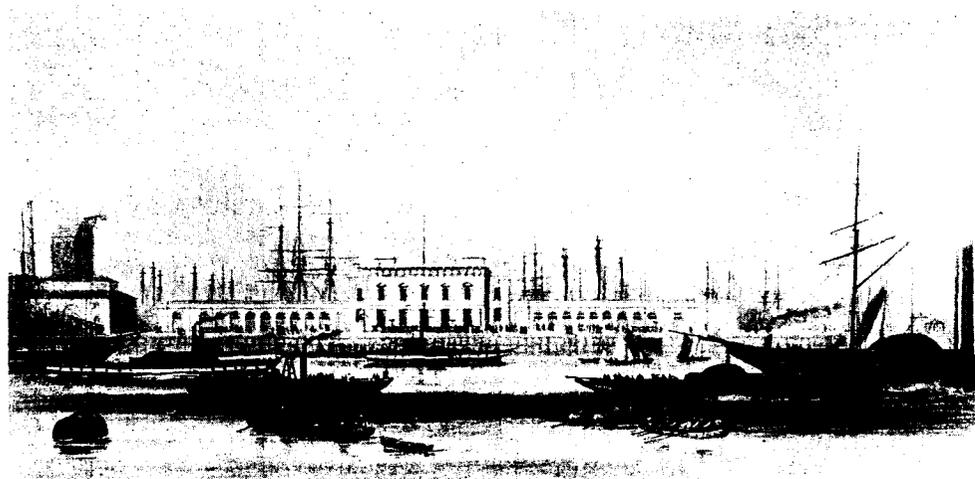
Various main line railways came to London during this decade, the first being the London & Birmingham with which Bidder was connected.¹²

Out of the other major routes, only the Eastern Counties from its Bishopsgate terminus really impinges on the area we are considering. The London & Brighton, as authorised in 1837, used the Greenwich line as its approach to London. Bidder had been active in promoting an alternative route for this Railway but was unsuccessful.

The London & Blackwall Railway

In 1836, the year before the London & Brighton, the Act for this little railway received the Royal Assent. As well as being the focus of this study, it demonstrates several of the general principles enunciated previously and deserves separate consideration.

Once having understood the significance of Brunswick Wharf, the strategic importance of a railway from the City direct to the steamer terminal beyond the Isle of Dogs is obvious. Not only that, but most of the distance traversed was already built up, so that considerable local commuter traffic could be expected. Several intermediate stations at short distances apart were therefore planned. At the time of its inception, the London & Blackwall was an important counterpart on the north shore to the London & Greenwich on the south. A number of factors dictated a railway with characteristics very different from most others being built at the time – in a way not unsurprisingly similar to the novel solutions which have been found necessary for the new Docklands Light Railway.



The Blackwall Railway Terminus and Brunswick Pier, with the 'Brunswick', 'Propeller' and other steam vessels. (Guildhall Library)

Those who have had any experience of operating either replica ancient locomotives, or the real thing, know how difficult they are to start and stop due to their primitive valve gear. This must have been a considerable disincentive to their use to haul trains on a line with 7 stations in only 3½ miles. The Company's Act also assumed that locomotives produced smoke and sparks which were undesirable. These were the main considerations which led to the adoption of rope haulage.¹³ In both the planning of the railway, the decision to use rope haulage and the methods of working adopted, Bidder played a considerable part. Because the line was not far from the Eastern Counties railway and it was envisaged that through running would eventually be needed, the same non-standard gauge of 5ft. was adopted.

By far the most significant technical innovation on this little railway was the adoption of the electric telegraph from the outset to control its operations. For this Bidder was largely responsible. He had been present at the major demonstration of the telegraph at Euston in 1837 and became thereafter an enthusiastic advocate of the new technology. In 1844 he was co-founder of the pioneer Electric Telegraph Company. Although the system used on the Blackwall line was primitive, it formed an integral part of the rope haulage operations which would have been almost impossible to conduct without it.¹⁴

1840 – 1850

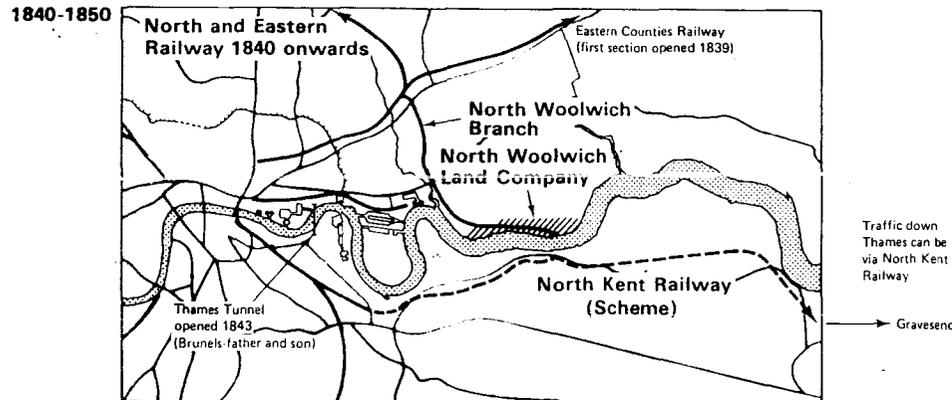
Such was the strength of the demand for railways in Britain that most of the developments to be considered in this decade were for railways.

On the London & Blackwall Railway, rope haulage proved troublesome, even when wire rope was substituted for hemp. Nevertheless the railway was basically successful and the terminus was moved from the Minories further into the City to a new site called Fenchurch Street in 1841. In 1849, when rope haulage was abandoned, the gauge was reduced to the standard 4' – 8½". The Eastern Counties had already been changed in 1844. By the time the London & Blackwall was changed to locomotive haulage, link motion had become general on locomotives so frequent stopping and starting no longer presented a problem – a direct benefit from principle 3.

The Eastern Counties Railway was an unhappy enterprise. The Lee marshes proved almost as troublesome to build a railway across as Chat Moss had been, landowners pursued exorbitant compensation claims for land and the railway company was reduced in some cases to suing its shareholders to pay up when calls on shares fell due. The line was opened only as far as Colchester by 1843 (its original objective had been Norwich).

There was another even more miserable railway called the Northern & Eastern which was originally planned to go to Peterborough and even further north. In the event it was authorized only as far as Cambridge. To save money it had allied itself to the Eastern Counties and shared the same London terminus at Bishopsgate. It had petered out 16 miles short of Cambridge by 1843. A natural solution was for the two lines to merge, which they did in

1844. Bidder acted for the Northern & Eastern during the negotiations, having been its Engineer with Robert Stephenson since 1839. The shareholders were so grateful to Bidder that they subscribed for a large silver presentation epene which still exists.



While all this was going on north of the Eastern Counties main line, Bidder's attention had already been directed to the railway needs in the area to the south and in particular to a requirement for a line to give a connection to Woolwich by means of a ferry from North Woolwich. Bidder originally promoted the North Woolwich branch himself in 1842. At one time it was nicknamed 'Bidder's Folly.'¹⁵ But he persuaded the Eastern Counties to take the line over and so provide another, rather circuitous, rail link which came out further down the Thames than Blackwall.

At the same time, Bidder and a group of friends promoted the North Woolwich Land Company which acquired land along the river frontage east and west of the station and ferry terminal. The land to the east became the Pavilion Gardens. The roll of companies who established themselves along the shore to the west is testimony to the soundness of Bidder's judgement in spotting development potential. The North Woolwich Land Company lasted until virtually the end of the Century and proved an excellent investment.¹⁶

On the south shore, a major scheme had been promoted to extend the Greenwich railway to link up places of importance on that side of the Thames to Gravesend. At this stage the project was known as the North Kent and Bidder was very active in helping it get its Bill through Parliament successfully. He earned a great deal of money in doing so although he did not get the job of building the railway. This was a logical use of railway to supplant the steamer services that still provided the main transport facilities – usually from Brunswick Wharf, to such destinations. The writing was thus clearly on the wall for steamer services as the main means of passenger traffic

on the Thames as a whole. Where a railway could take passengers it could also take goods – and to inland destinations where barges could not deliver except by transshipment – a change of mode, a clear demonstration of principle 4 above.

1850-1860

Although this decade saw no more innovations in technology, what had already been proved and established rushed ahead so that this was a period of bold moves and large expansions, confirming once again principle 3.

Looking first at the London & Blackwall, the first extension to the line was brought into use just after cable haulage was abandoned, in June 1849. This was a connection between Stepney and the Eastern Counties line at Bow but it was not as useful as it might have been because the ECR were far from cooperative.

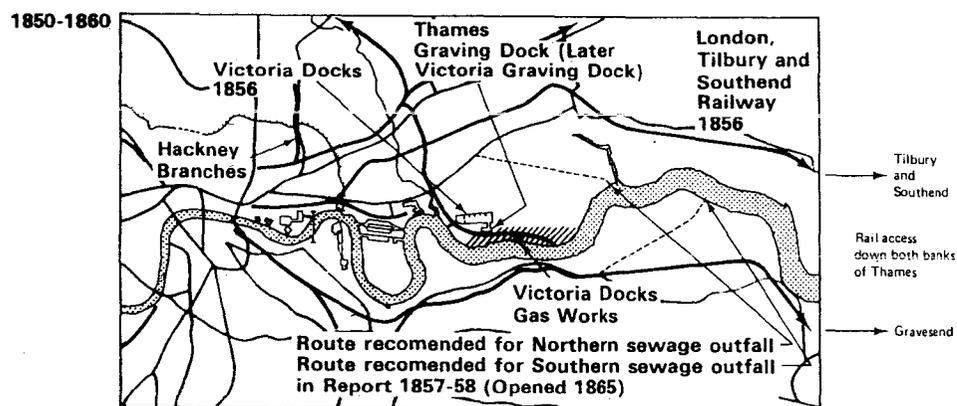
A further connection to the North was made in 1850 by the East & West India Docks & Birmingham Junction Railway, a child of the L & NWR, linking up with this newly opened extension line, also near Bow. This gave the stimulus to the use of rail transport for distribution from the West and East India Docks and extensive sidings were eventually laid in and provided steady traffic, by eliminating changes of mode.

However the London Dock never had any effective rail connection and St. Katharine Dock none at all. When competition really started to bite after the Victoria Dock was open, they were soon in trouble financially.

But these were small steps; very much greater things were afoot. The underlying factor as far as the economy of the area was concerned lay in the fact that steamships had greatly developed – another application of the second principle (of 'rapid development'). Iron had started to displace wood for hulls so that ships could be built bigger and indeed were. Brunel showed what was possible by laying down his leviathan of 20,000 tons – the 'Great Eastern' on the west shore of the Isle of Dogs in 1854. The saga of that ship continued for the rest of the decade.

The growth in the average size of ships and the rapidly growing level of trade meant that the great docks which had been so proudly completed half a century before were inadequate in facilities and physical dimensions by 1850. This situation called forth what was probably Bidder's boldest conception – the Victoria Dock.¹⁷ Bidder's Victoria Dock and Brunel's 'Great Eastern' point up the difference between the two men. Both projects cost much the same and were carried out over the same period of time. Both were the product of bold vision – and were an enormous technical advance in their respective fields. Yet everyone has heard of the failure that was the 'Great Eastern' – but who sets this against the success of the Victoria Dock? In fact the latter was so successful that within 6 years of being opened, its rivals upriver, the London and St. Katharine Docks had been compelled not only to amalgamate but also to buy out their rival (at a comfortable profit to the promoters, of whom Bidder was one), in order to avoid going out of business

themselves. The Brunels, father and son, had the knack of getting themselves involved in schemes which hit the headlines, but seldom paid. Bidder is little known, yet he carried out an almost equal amount of work in widely differing fields. Virtually all his projects were built within the estimates and became profitable enterprises afterwards. The Victoria Dock triumphantly exploited various technological features which had become feasible (Principle 2 again) while with technology in the 1850's a ship of the size of the 'Great Eastern' was not really practicable. In addition the project was seriously under capitalized.



Pollution of the Thames became critical during this decade. There were major outbreaks of Cholera in London in 1848-9 and 1853-4, by which time a 'strong suspicion prevailed that defective drainage had contributed to the alarming mortality.' Although the sewage question did not affect transport directly it was a major background factor. Had solutions not been found and applied, the area east of London would have become virtually uninhabitable. As it was, travel by steamer anywhere on the Thames must have become very unpleasant, so hastening the decline of the steamer services.

Bidder, with his interest in the wider fields of hydraulics and estuaries besides railways, played a large part in the professional debates on the subject from the mid 1840's on. He was one of the 3 'coadjutors' who prepared the final report, presented in 1858 on which the scheme for London's drainage as it now exists, was based. The enormous works were put in hand as soon as the Act authorising them received Royal Assent on 2 August 1858. The great Crossness pumping engines which ceased work in 1952 were started by the Prince of Wales in April 1865. Bidder was consulted about many aspects.¹⁸ The main outlets were brought to Beckton and Crossness, well within our area. Despite a great improvement when the works had been commissioned, there was still trouble with sewage being washed back upstream until treatment was introduced at the two outfall works at a much later date.

There remains one major transport development to be described which was accomplished during this momentous decade and in which Bidder

played a major part. Just as the North Kent railway had been built along the southern shore to provide a better service than could be given by river boats, so there was a need for an equivalent line along the north shore. This duly came about as relations between the London & Blackwall and the Eastern Counties improved to the extent that they jointly promoted the 'London Tilbury & Southend Extension Railway' for which the Act was passed on 17 June 1852. It was built by Peto, Brassey and Betts, the promoters and builders of the Victoria Dock - and at more or less the same time. Bidder was the Engineer.

The opening of the LT & SR to Tilbury in 1854 and Southend in 1856 sounded the knell of the original London & Blackwall line to Brunswick Wharf - a good example of the working of the first principle. Steamer services to Tilbury and Southend (involving changes of mode) had been leapfrogged by through trains. There was therefore no requirement to travel to Brunswick Wharf and the line now dependent purely on local traffic, entered a long period of decline. Regular steamer services - as opposed to pleasure cruises - received their final blow by the major accident to the 'Princess Alice' in 1878.

1860 Onwards

The period of pioneering innovation and the immediate rush of technical development was now over and the stage set for a long period of slow change for the best part of a century, followed by another period of change almost more violent than the rapid developments just chronicled, during the last quarter century to date.

The London & Blackwall did not expire immediately the LT & SR was opened. There was still a need for local goods and passenger services and the connection south alongside the new Millwall Dock to the Greenwich Ferry created during the 1860's provided additional traffic.¹⁹ Booming traffic on both the North London (as the East & West India Docks & Birmingham Junction had now become) and the LT & SR for which it acted as the main terminus, meant that Fenchurch Street Station was called on to handle constantly increasing numbers and had to be enlarged. In 1865 the new Great Eastern Railway, successor to the Eastern Counties, and of which Bidder was at that time a Director, leased the London & Blackwall. Traffic dwindled on the original line to Brunswick Wharf until the passenger services were finally killed off by the General Strike in 1926. Further decline on the rest of the local rail network was hastened by the blitz in the Second World War.

Shipping traffic continued to expand so that Bidder's original Victoria Dock was enlarged by the addition first of the Albert Dock (1880) and then the King George V Dock (1921). Types of ships and their cargoes also changed so that the Victoria Dock was rebuilt in the 1930's.²⁰ Docks at Tilbury, much further down the estuary, were opened in 1886. But further expansion of the Royal Group of Docks which was planned for land already owned by the Port of London Authority north of the Albert and King George V Docks did not go ahead after the Second World War. Change was again in the air.

Technical advances and rising crew costs meant that the average size of ships started to grow rapidly, the nature of cargoes changed and new concepts such as containerization and roll-on roll-off were coming to fruition. The PLA celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in style in 1959, but the next few years saw a decline that few would have believed possible at the time. Some of the factors have already been mentioned. The extraordinary technical leap we all now take for granted, the introduction of jet propelled long distance passenger aircraft over the course of perhaps 5 years from 1959, swept the passenger liner from the seas of the world – except for cruising – within about the same time span. On land, the impact of road transport had already made itself felt before the Second World War. This had less effect on those railway routes which were essentially passenger carrying because the road system in the area was so woefully inadequate that car journeys despite their convenience, could not compete. The war in fact interrupted electrification schemes.

Road congestion also reacted on the docks, making them less accessible to the increasing proportion of freight that was being diverted from the railways.²¹ Major road improvements in the United Kingdom were signalled by the opening of the Preston by-pass in 1959. The East End of London did not start to see real improvements until the decline in the Docks was well under way. The first bore of the Dartford Tunnel was opened in 1963 and the M25 was completed in 1986. The desperate need for both is evidenced by their present almost continuously overloaded state.²²

All these external factors combined with a labour situation that had never been easy combined to kill virtually the whole of the dock trade in 20 years and with it a pattern of transport routes and systems which had grown to serve it. Truly all the principles enunciated at the beginning have been demonstrated.

Across this scene of devastation the new Docklands Light Railway has been built. It arises from a philosophy which Bidder would have recognized – build the infrastructure and the trade will follow.²³ It incorporates new technology and other developments which may well see wider application on all railways, but which seem to restrict it to carrying passengers. In its present form it is a reinstatement of the routes of the old London & Blackwall and North Greenwich lines without the Brunswick Wharf arm.²⁴ Unfortunately the lesson of the old L & B that the Minories was not a convenient terminus for the City was not incorporated originally so it is not surprising that an extension to the Bank is already in hand.

The policy of development by the LDDC would have been recognized and applauded by the man who was active in the North Woolwich Land Company; although Bidder saw his opportunities in the marshes of the Essex²⁵ shore, while the Development Corporation works with derelict dock areas.

It is always difficult to predict the future and one must be optimistic to achieve anything at all. In its present form, the DLR, despite its common railgauge, is as isolated from the rest of the railway network as the old

'Fourpenny Rope'. The principles enunciated at the beginning of this study still apply. The difficulty is to guess how they will do so. It could be said that 'good interchange facilities' are a polite euphemism for change of mode – always a drawback in any transport route. The traffic generating capacity of the old docklands areas will only be tested when the line has been open a while.

When the new STOL airport at the Albert and King George V Docks materializes and if the railway is extended eastwards to it, the main east west line would then present an interesting and exact parallel to the original London & Blackwall – each providing the necessary link to the interchange to a completely different mode of transport. The old line fed the steamer terminal at Brunswick Wharf and the new will serve the airport. So circumstances repeat each other a century and a half apart; but it is hard to envisage the change of mode to aircraft being supplanted – unless the Channel Tunnel is indeed built and provides a through route to the destinations served – without change of mode.

NOTES

1. See J. E. Connor, *Stepney's Own Railway*, Connor and Butler, Colchester, 1984. Most of the details of the later history of the London & Blackwall Railway as given in the main text are given in this work, so detailed references will not be given in later sections.
2. At a meeting at the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) in 1864, Bidder said that 'He had been professionally connected with works on the River Thames every year since the year 1825'. (See *Min. Proc. ICE*, Vol. XXIV, p. 348. The next few sentences of this interesting extract are given at Note 8 below).
3. This was the motto invented by Kipling for his fictional international Aerial Board of Control in the short story 'With the Night Mail'. See Rudyard Kipling: *Actions and Reactions*, Macmillan, London, originally published 1909.
4. The study of the cycles of rise and decline of technologies is recent but appears to be of universal application. The subject is far too broad to be considered here. The many references given in M. C. Duffy's paper: 'Technomorphology and the Stephenson Traction System' (*Transactions of the Newcomen Society*, Vol. 54, p. 55 et seq.) provide an interesting introduction to this thought provoking subject.
5. Bidder himself said with regard to a proposal to build part of the main line from Karachi in what is now Pakistan: '...the proposed introduction of a break of gauge, which could only be characterised as a calamity, as grievous, with regard to railways in India, as it had been in this country.' (See *Min. Proc. ICE*, Vol. XXXV, p. 251).
6. Only a brief outline of Bidder's career can be given. For a detailed biography see E. F. Clark and J. Linfoot, *George Parker Bidder The Calculating Boy*, KSL Publications, Bedford 1983. For the association of Bidder on an equality with Stephenson and Brunel, see Bidder's 'Memoir' (*Min. Proc. ICE*, Vol. LVIII, p. 299).
7. See Clark and Linfoot, op. cit. (Ref. 6), Part Four.
8. Bidder added after his introductory remark quoted at Note 2 above (referring to his memories of the state of the River in 1825):
'He was then occupied upon the London Docks, and he remembered perfectly well, as no doubt some others did, a bathing machine being established on the west side of the Blackfriars Bridge. He remembered London Docks themselves being choked with fish; the water for the supply of the ships was taken in from the river, just opposite the docks. The water, for the supply of the East Indiamen at Blackwall, was taken in by a pumping-engine on the old wharf, which pump was worked at low water...'

9. See E. F. Clark, 'G. P. Bidder at the London Dock Extension Works 1826-1828' (*Trans. Newcomen Society*, Vol. 55, p. 177 et seq.).
10. Isaac Solly. See Clark and Linfoot, op. cit. (Note 6), pp. 497-8.
11. See paper 'Memoir on Iron Piling' by M. A. Borthwick (*Transactions ICE*, Vol. L, pp. 200-203).
12. See Clark and Linfoot, op. cit., Chapter XI.
13. The fares were sixpence for first class and fourpence for second class. For this reason the railway was popularly known as the 'Fourpenny Rope'.
14. The railways were a forcing house for many technologies besides that of railways themselves, and the electric telegraph was one of them. See Clark and Linfoot, op. cit., Chapter XX.
15. See *Min. Proc. ICE*, Vol. XVIII, p. 483.
16. Bidder was very conscious of the commercial value of the development potential of land. See Clark and Linfoot, op. cit., p. 424, note 21.
17. There is space to note only that the Victoria Dock provided 90 acres of enclosed water, it had the largest entrance lock on the river, it was largely built using cast iron sheet piling, all its machinery was worked hydraulically, there were extensive rail facilities and, to embellish the whole, Bidder persuaded the Dock Company to invest in a great deal of extra land right up to Gallions Reach so that the later expansion to the east by the building of Albert and later the King George V docks were not prevented by lack of the necessary ground. See Clark and Linfoot, op. cit., Chapter XIV.
18. For a more detailed account of Bidder's participation, see Clark and Linfoot, op. cit., Chapter XVII.
19. This was the Millwall Extension Railway and ran from Millwall Junction on the London & Blackwall Railway to North Greenwich Station, at the southern end of the Isle of Dogs. Millwall Junction was reached by a long footbridge over railway sidings from Harrow Lane off Poplar High Street. Passenger services operated from 1880 to 1926.
20. Despite the fact that there had been criticism of Bidder's original designs, in particular the use of cast iron pilings, for impermanence (See W. J. Kingsbury's paper on the Victoria Docks, *Min. Proc. ICE*, Vol. XVIII), the rebuilding engineers had to resort to dynamite to remove the finger jetties (See R. R. Liddell's paper, *Journal ICE*, Vol. 10, p. 298 et seq.).
21. The East India Export Dock, one of the oldest and smallest in the system, together with the associated Brunswick Wharf, had been released as the site of a power station by the end of the Second World War. (Opened 1954). Life continues to move on. Even this generating station is now obsolete and various redevelopment plans are being discussed.
22. See *The M25 Orbital Motorway*, Department of Transport, London, 1986, in particular p.7. The aerial photograph of the complete area encircled by the M25 on the inside of the front cover helps greatly in visualising the overall situation.
23. The criticism that the Victoria Docks were too far from London was levelled against them at the time they were opened. (See Clark and Linfoot, op. cit., p. 423).
24. The Docklands Light Railway runs on a new viaduct alongside the London & Blackwall Railway viaduct from the Minorities to Branch Road, from where it runs on the original viaduct to West India Dock Road. A new viaduct takes it across the West India Docks and it then follows the route of the Millwall Extension Railway, alongside Millwall Dock and on to the Millwall Park viaduct to Manchester Road. This single track viaduct was built in 1872.
25. Actually North Kent at the time.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF BETHNAL GREEN

George E. Bishop

I WAS born in Appleby Street, Haggerston, on 27 April 1917. Shortly afterwards our family moved to Clarissa Street, where my father, mother and myself occupied the top floor of a 'two up and two down'. The family beneath us were named Billigan. In 1920 or 1921 we moved to Gosset Street, Bethnal Green, to be near my mother's parents. Our new home was in a tenement block bordered by Newling, Chambord and Ducal Streets. The block consisted of three flats of three rooms to each street door, and, unlike the block opposite, the rooms were bright and airy. It was owned by Messrs. Rosenthal and Cohen of Hanbury Street, whose agent used to call for the rent on a Sunday morning - an unusual time to call, even in the East End. On the rare occasions when the rent was not forthcoming the agent had to 'Take it out of the knocker,' as my grandmother used to put it.

Our flat was directly opposite Queen's Buildings, a large redstone edifice consisting of three four-roomed flats in each block. A sign facing our window stamped on our brain forever the information that it was built in 1884. The rooms there were very dark and a gas mantle had to be burning all day long, winter and summer. The staircase lighting consisted of a naked gas jet that did little to pierce the gloom. At that time most homes were lit by gas mantles, provided by either Messrs. Jivvy or Veritas, priced at 2½d. or 4d., whichever you preferred. They were about as robust as a spider's web and we were brought up with the familiar cry of 'Have a care and mind the mantle.' One tap on the gas pipe or a slight draught would shatter the precious fabric and it was another 'fourpence up your shirt' (another of grandmother's expressions). To be caught without a spare mantle on a Sunday night was just about the limit.

When I reached five it was time for school and for me that meant Daniel Street (now Daneford). It was only a few yards down the road, but for me in those few days it could have been a thousand miles away. However, I soon settled down to find that Miss Weston was in charge. The headmistress took assembly every morning, but being only five feet nothing, she had to stand on a chair to see the back of the hall. No nonsense was her motto, in common with the rest of the staff at the school, somewhat different to the free and easy fashion prevailing today.

In many ways the area I lived in resembled a small country village. Many people were related, and everyone knew his or her neighbours, their jobs, their worries, hopes and dreams. Mrs. Esther Goldstein ran a little store below us. She had a son called Abey who rarely helped in the shop as most of his time was taken up with his violin practice. A visiting teacher came once a week to advise him and judge his progress. When the teacher left Esther used to call me in to listen to Abey play. She was proud of his progress and the last we heard of him was that he was playing in an orchestra in New York. Esther herself was a particularly jolly lady and on one occasion when she saw me

coming home from school muddy and dusty from some game (covered with honest dirt) I remember her saying to me, 'Blimey, Georgie, what's the matter. Has soap gone up?'

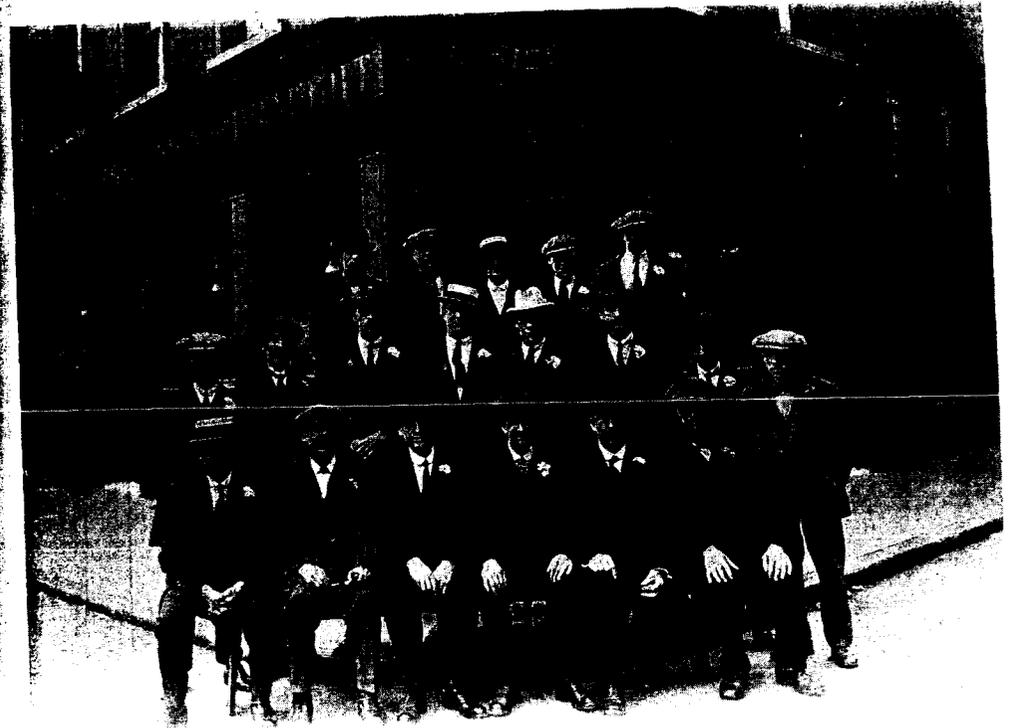
Living on the top floor was Mr. Bates, who had a passion for stray pigeons. He would feed them every morning from his top floor window and the pavement below resembled Trafalgar Square on a busy day. Mr. George Hollick, an old friend of my father's, lived with his family in Newling Street; next door was Mr. & Mrs. Ash with their daughter Cissie, and just up the street were the Colliers with their five or six daughters. On the same side of the street lived Dickie Pounds, who drove a Ford Model T van, painted a very brilliant red, and used to carry timber for a saw mill in Pitfield Street, Hoxton. On the opposite side was Granny Hemsworth, who had a yard next to her where costermongers' barrows were housed. Similar facilities were available at Malandines next to the Three Loggerheads pub in Virginia Road. The barrows could be hired for a few coppers by market traders and sometimes by cabinet makers. They also had another use locally: they were used by people moving homes. These 'do it yourself' removals were possible at a time when people usually moved no more than a few streets away.

A few doors from the John Bull pub in Brick Lane lived Mr. Brooks, chimney sweep, Justice of the Peace and former mayor of Bethnal Green. His younger brother, also a sweep, lived in Chambord Street. He and his family were pearly king, queen and princesses of the district. They were responsible for the summer carnival processions in aid of the Mildmay Mission Hospital. It was exciting for us to see the locals transformed for a day into clowns, gunfighters, Indian braves and squaws. Sadly, Mr. Brooks met a tragic end while putting up the street decorations for the children's party celebrating the Jubilee of the King and Queen. He fell from the ladder and died in the Mildmay Hospital he and his family had worked so hard to support. The incident cast a cloud over proceedings, but as arrangements had been made the party had to go on.

His wife, Mrs. Brooks, was a tiny lady, always on the go. She was the unofficial midwife for our block and would be hurriedly called for if 'things were happening'. She helped bring many babies into the world at a time when it was the rule rather than the exception for babies to be born at home rather than in hospital. Another of her duties was washing and laying out the dead, a scene I was to witness later when my grandmother did it for my grandfather.

Old Josh was the blacksmith at the forge at the end of the street. It was fascinating to watch him deftly apply the red hot shoe to the horse's hoof with the acrid smoke filling the air. The trick was to find a position where you had a clear view, but out of the direction of the wind so as not to get stifled. When I first watched this I was concerned to think that the horse might be harmed, but my father, a carman himself, was able to assure me that the animal came to no harm. A regular customer at the forge was Maxie Tyler, whose sawmill was nearby.

While the donkey work in the cabinet making trade was done in the many sawmills dotted around the area, the finishing touches were applied by



Outing from Queen's Head, Gosset Street, 2 July, 1922

local craftsmen in the small workshops. What they turned out in Ravenscroft Street, Gibraltar Walk, Columbia Road and Virginia Road was destined to be installed in far more elaborate homes than those in which the craftsmen lived. A few doors away from us, in Chambord Street, Mr. Collier made wooden palm stands for aspidistra pots and Mr. Scholfield (on the left of the second row in the photograph) was a clock-case maker.

My mother, who came originally from Bermondsey, was a skin dresser at Nicholson's factory in Swanfield Street. Known in the trade as a 'skin strainer', it was normally a man's job and got her a man's wage. The job demanded a certain amount of skill. The lizard skins, after being dyed and treated, would need to be stretched to prevent shrinkage. They would be laid on a large board, a few at a time. Mother's part consisted of nailing the skin to the board, banging the large-headed nails into the board with a box-wood hammer. The art of the process was to stretch the skin to the limit without splitting it. Occasionally I used to have to go round to the factory with a

message for her. I used to dread it as it meant walking right through the dyeing shop in the basement, often ankle deep in water. This, and the noise of the whirling drums was enough to scare the life out of a nine or ten year old. More pleasant was the view of the engine room from outside, where I would see the huge flywheel of the engine that drove those massive drums.

The centre of attraction for many people in the area was the Queen's Head pub at the corner of Gosset Street and Newling Street. It was run by Arther de Friese, a very quiet man who always wore a Homburg hat. He is third from the left in the bottom row in the photograph, seated beside Henry Collins, my grandfather (second from the left). The photograph shows the 'regulars' outside the pub just prior to leaving on their trip to Southend. Wearing flat caps or sporting straw boaters, they made a fine body of men, with their white neckerchiefs or shirt and celluloid collars, plus a tie to complete the effect. Not in the picture but not very far away the kids would be waiting for the 'scramble'. This meant that just before the 'off' the revellers would throw out their spare coppers through the open windows of the charabanc. This was followed by a general melee, a flurry of arms and legs, the diving kids scrambling for the coins, grabbing as many as possible until the pavement was cleared. The victorious scampered off to the nearest sweetshop with the spoils of war... A similar scene was to be enacted a few weeks later when Harris's furniture factory (also in Newling Street) took their day out, with the added attraction of bigger spoils because the workers at Harris collected up their spare coppers for several weeks before the event.

The warm and sunny days would introduce the season for taking the kitchen chairs outside the street doors and leaving them there until late at night to obtain a respite from the 'red army', as the bed bugs were called. It mattered not how clean or careful we were, these horrors would invade the home, bringing misery and discomfort to all. For this reason the majority of flats were 'decorated' by distempering. Our landlord's contribution to solving the problem was to allow us to choose any colour we liked so long as it was red or green... so most people's solution was to spend their leisure time outside on the kitchen chair in those days before deck-chairs.

CONTRIBUTORS

Doctors Light, Moss and Bolton are all at Queen Mary College, Mile End Road; E. F. Clark, M.A., C.Eng., M.I.Mech.E. is the co-author of *George Parker Bidder The Calculating Boy*. George Bishop now lives in Stepney, and H. Joseph and Bradley Snooks live in Bow. Stanley Reed used to be the Director of the British Film Institute; David Webb is at the Bishopsgate Institute. Jennifer Page is the treasurer of the East London History Society, John Curtis is the membership secretary and Doreen Kendall is the circulation manager for the *Record*. Ted Johns and Bernard Canavan are involved with the Island History Project. Bernard Nurse, H. David Behr, Alfred French, Michael Gray and John Harwood have had articles in past issues of the *Record* (in numbers 3, 4, 5, 6, and 9 respectively). Peter Aylmer is a fourth generation West Ham supporter and ILEA member for Bethnal Green and Stepney.

FROM 'BEN'S LIMEHOUSE'

Ben Thomas, the son of a lighterman, was born in Limehouse 80 years ago. His book, from which the extract below is taken, was published in June by the Ragged School Museum Trust, and is the first of a projected series by the Trust.

I distinctly remember my mother receiving my eldest brother's calling up papers. We were in the upstairs front room, when she held the letter in her hand. It was August 1914. Paper boys were running round the streets shouting out "Paper, war declared!", and carrying a bill poster in front of them, with 'War Declared on Germany, Official', and a big bundle of papers under their arms as they ran along selling them. Outside the paper shops there were placards with the latest headlines too.

At the beginning of the War I saw many German Zeppelins at night when the searchlights shone on them and they looked like white cigars. The searchlights flashed on as soon as the Zeppelins were heard, for they made a low moaning rumbling sound like a big dynamo. All the time a Zeppelin was in the grip of the searchlights there was heavy gunfire, easing up only when the Zeppelin dodged the beams. Sometimes, when a Zeppelin was in the grip of a lot of searchlights, we were able to see the British planes flying about the Zeppelin and firing at it. The planes were only the size of ants to us on the ground, the Zeppelin didn't look big either, but when they were hit they automatically nose dived down in flames and everyone cheered, though it was an awesome sight. Sirens used to go off when the enemy were sighted, the same as in the last war, except that at the beginning of the 1914-1918 War a special constable used to come round the streets on a bike blowing a whistle. Sometimes the raid had already started before the special got round, for he had to get the report and permission to give the warning from Limehouse Police Station. It was nearly always a bright moonlit night when the Zeppelins came and people used to say that the Germans could see the River Thames better, so as to follow it up to London. Another yarn was that Crystal Palace being all glass reflected the moon brilliantly so that the Germans knew where they were over London. They painted the Crystal Palace black, later in the War, and all factories with glass roofs and skylights were painted black, even to the factory windows.

I well remember the people raiding and smashing up the German shops, the three German bakers and butcher in Three Colt Street. It must have been awful for the German shop keepers especially as a lot of them had helped the poor people, so my mother told me when I grew up. Though she didn't like the Germans for causing the War, she wouldn't go near the shop raiding.

Ben's Limehouse: Recollections by Ben Thomas, with 40 illustrations and eleven pages of historical notes, is priced at £3.50. It is available by post (+ 50p) from the Trust at 46-48 Copperfield Road, E3 4RR, or from local bookshops.

JEWISH EAST END CELEBRATION

by H. David Behr

IT was the success of the 1985 Huguenot exhibition that prompted the Tower Hamlets Environment Trust to attempt an even more ambitious venture. Helen Carpenter became the co-ordinator of a series of events aiming to recreate an impression of what the Jewish East End was like in its heyday; at the beginning of this century there were 100,000 Jews living there, now there are 7,000. The topics covered by the celebration were varied, including Yiddish culture, religion, women, politics, music and art. The media used were equally diverse – exhibitions, religious services, concerts, talks, walks and films. But the range is best shown by describing how some themes were developed.

Avraham Stencl was the spirit of Yiddish Whitechapel.¹ A small gentle man with a ready smile to greet everyone, he insisted on always speaking Yiddish. In the war Whitechapel waitresses learned to understand his Yiddish order for tea.² After the war he managed to continue to produce a literary magazine in Yiddish. So it was fitting that a highlight of a day of Yiddish culture was a cycle of folk songs by Derek and Pippa Reid, dedicated to his memory. Also taking part were Anna Tzelniker, a Stepney resident, and her colleagues in the Yiddish Theatre Group. These events were complemented by Yiddish films shown at the Mile End Coronet and the National Film Theatre. Also on the South Bank there was an exhibition at the National Theatre telling the story of the Yiddish theatre in London.³ Religion was covered in an equally imaginative way. The Victoria and Albert Museum displayed some of its collection of Jewish religious art at the Bethnal Green Museum. Choral concerts were held at several synagogues. Magnificent buildings such as the East London Synagogue were once more full and seen in all their glory. The Settlement Synagogue held an 'explained' service for non Jewish visitors which attracted over 250 people. Above all, there was a synagogues exhibition in Princelet Street, Spitalfields, the very street where Israel Zangwill, author of *Children of the Ghetto*, had once lived. The synagogue has been closed for over twenty years and is now owned by the Heritage Centre. Yet the ark, central reading platform and ladies' gallery remain and with them, the atmosphere. Even the wax from the ceremonial candles is still on the platform.

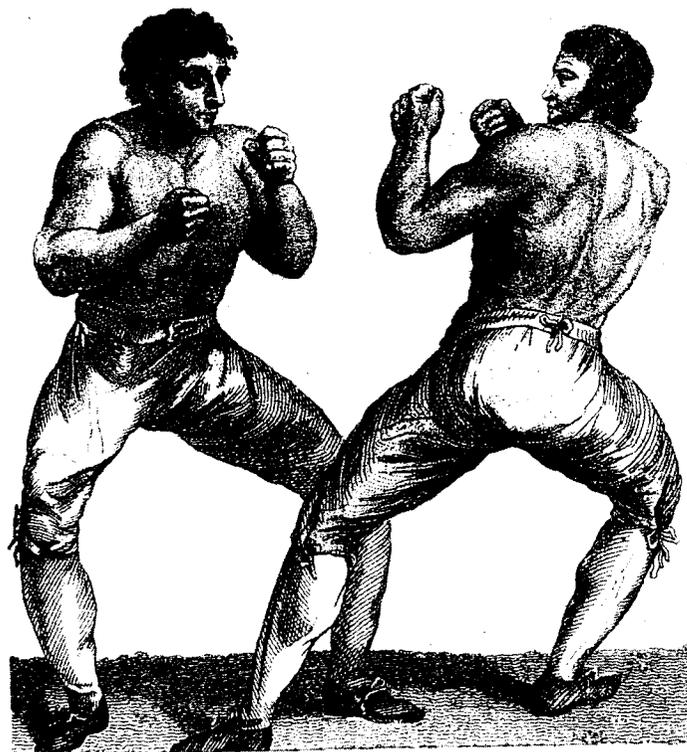
The small synagogue was built in the nineteenth century at the back of a house, yet once it was considered grand. Samuel Melnick has discovered an 1895 newspaper account of a one-room synagogue in a neighbouring house. The reporter was told it was set up because, for a much smaller subscription, twopence (one penny) a week, the congregants were able to share in the honour of reading the Law much more frequently. This spirit of participation is reflected in the exhibits of items on the various religious societies which ran synagogues, study groups and provided benefits. Also reflected are the disagreements which arose from such active interest and differing religious views.

The success of the exhibition was demonstrated by the reaction of the visitors. Naturally, they included old east enders. In one case, a mother revisiting the synagogue where her son had his barmitzvah. But there were many other visitors, young and old, discovering their ancestors' roots. They included many Americans, for the *New York Times* had printed a two page article on the Celebration. Other visitors included Bangladeshis, learning about the lives and beliefs of those who had lived in Spitalfields before them, often in the same houses.

I am writing this article half-way through the Celebration. Already it is clear that 'Celebration' is the only word to describe such an enjoyable series of events. It must also have introduced many people to the delights of research. Finally, the East End is being redeveloped on a vast scale. Just in time the Celebration has drawn attention to the many buildings of Jewish interest which have survived.

NOTES

1. Three of Avraham Stencl's poems, two translated by Elinor Robinson and one by the late Joseph Leftwich, appear in *The Jewish Quarterly* Vol. 34, No. 2, 1987.
2. *The Jewish Chronicle* colour magazine for 26 June 1987 contained several articles on the Jewish East End, including one by David Mazower on Yiddish Theatre on the East End stage.
3. See Barry Davis, 'Yiddish and the Jewish Identity', *History Workshop*, Issue 23, Spring 1987.



As part of the Jewish East End Celebration a plaque was erected to Daniel Mendoza at 3 Paradise Row, Bethnal Green, where the Jewish champion once lived. (Jewish East End Celebration programme)

THE EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY AND THE 'RECORD'

OUR President, Dr. K. G. T. McDonnell, has submitted the following observations on the occasion of this magazine reaching its tenth annual issue, and the East London History Society reaching its thirty fifth year.

Thirty years ago, the late Professor S. T. Bindoff, with the active support of the East London Borough Libraries and Queen Mary College, founded the East London History Group. He could have had no idea of what he was to bequeath to East London. Where there was nothing at all, there is now the vigorous East London History Society and its journal, the *East London Record*. *East London Papers*, brainchild of John Peterson of University House, and the History Department of Queen Mary College, became *The London Journal*. Theses have been written, books and articles published, and yet more work goes on about the history of our East London – all because of the vision of one man.

As for the *Record*, what a mirror of our past, how wide its vision, all-embracing its content, and all dependent upon the imagination, determination and devotion of fellow-members of our Society, men and women who have their own work to do, their own lives to lead. Let us thank them, and for the *Record* let us say, as they do in the classics, 'Ad Multos Annos' or, in plain English, 'Here's to you – more power to your elbow.'

Professor Bindoff, widely known for his work on various aspects of Tudor history, had a great affection for East London. He pioneered the Saturday afternoon visits and walks which the Society still endeavours to maintain, and was never happier than when conducting people around the area commenting upon the more favourable aspects of East London life.

His was the inspiration behind the wonderful Exhibition held at Toynbee Hall in 1949 on East London's past, and which resulted in the formation of the Society in 1952. For several reasons it would never be possible to hold such an Exhibition again, but he would surely wish that some credit be given to the band of stalwarts who shared his enthusiasm and helped him to put his ideas into effect: Charles Truman, Basil Henriques, Clement Attlee, Guy Parsloe, Frank Sainsbury, Rev. J. G. Birch, Dr. McDonnell himself, and a host of devoted East London personalities most of whom have long since left us.

The truth is, of course, that Professor Bindoff had the ability to draw upon the resources of those who, like himself, had a great enthusiasm for East London's rich history, and it is upon that enthusiasm, still very much in evidence, that the Society builds for its future.

Alfred French

NOTES AND NEWS

ANYONE fortunate enough to have known Israel Renson will be saddened by the news of his death. A mine of information on local history, especially that of Hackney, his gentle enthusiasm won many East Londoners to an interest in social, historical and conservationist issues. His death was shortly followed by that of John Allen, who had only recently spoken to our Society on his researches on Bow Creek and was planning an extended work on the subject. His energy in both research and Committee work will be sorely missed by his friends in the Society. Our sincere condolences are extended to their relatives.

In last year's *Record* John Allen reviewed Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*. This is now available as an Abacus paperback (£3.95). Mr. Doble, one of our readers, has written to say that he has been informed by Peter Ackroyd that no evidence exists to suggest that Hawksmoor actually engaged in black magic or other practices described in the book. Now you know.

Local History is published at 3 Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottinghamshire NG7 2DS. The annual subscription is £9.60 for 6 issues.

The copy for the *Record* goes to the printer at the end of July each year, and, as the magazine does not appear until October, it is impossible for this column to be up to date. David Behr had a similar difficulty when he had to write about The Jewish East End Celebration when it was about half-way through its run. One event associated with the Celebration which will still be running when this magazine comes out is 'Furnishing the World: The East London Furniture Trade 1830 – 1980' at The Geffrye Museum. Open until the end of the year, the exhibition will be of particular interest to anyone who enjoyed John Light's article. Indeed, one of the exhibits, a 'Gothic' oak side chair, was thought to have been sold by the firm of C. & R. Light, being identical to one shown in the firm's 1887 catalogue. The Museum have produced an information leaflet on the exhibition, but a more substantial work will be available by October. Bearing the same title as the exhibition and written by Pat Kirkham, Rodney Mace and Julia Porter, the book will be published by Journeyman Press.

Jack London's *The People of the Abyss* (slipcased with *The Iron Heel* and a collection of his stories and essays, £7.95 the three), has been reissued again by Journeyman Press (97 Ferme Park Road N8 9SA), whose backlist includes Sally Alexander's *Women's Work in Nineteenth Century London* (£3.50), Robert Barltrop and Jim Wolveridge's *The Muvver Tongue* (£3.95), as well as *William Morris's Socialist Diary* (£3.50). Their long-awaited *The People's Guide to London: East End* will be reviewed in the next *Record*.

Hackney Archives continue to produce *The Terrier* regularly and the Friends of Hackney Archives continues to thrive as an organisation. On 3 December Mike Gray will address the Friends on Hackney College for Protestant Dissenters and at the A. G. M., on 11 April 1988, Robert Barltrop will speak on Cockney Language. The Stanley Tongue Memorial lecture on 11 May will feature Robert Thorne on Victorian Buildings in Hackney. Still in

Hackney, the 'Save Sutton House Campaign' has been launched to save the early 16th century building in Homerton High Street. The owners, the National Trust, favour a scheme by private developers to convert the house into flats, while the Campaign, feeling such a course will be disastrous for the future of the building, have put forward an interesting alternative. The secretary of the Campaign is Julie Lafferty, 32 Ickburgh Road, E5.

The People's Palace was opened 100 years ago, and, while Queen Mary College is the most conspicuous of the institutions that have developed from it, it is interesting to note that another is still thriving and has recently produced a centenary history, *A Fine Spirit: The Story of the Newham and Essex Beagles Athletic Club*. Written by Tony Benton, it traces the history of the club from its days as 'Palace Harriers' and 'Beaumont Harriers' in the 1880s to its position as one of the leading athletic clubs in Britain today. Priced at £2.25 including postage, it is available from the club at 2 Harrison Drive, North Weald, Essex.

Simon Blumenfeld's novel *Jew Boy* was reissued by Lawrence and Wishart last year, with an introduction by Ken Worpole, (£4.95). In *The Jewish Quarterly* (Vol. 34, No. 2, 1987) David Cesarani of Queen Mary College discusses the book and some of Blumenfeld's other works in an article based on a conversation with the author. Now in his eighties, his play *The Battle of Cable Street* was due to be performed at Edinburgh in August.

The Ragged School Museum Trust continues its efforts to provide East London with its own history museum. Numbers 46, 48 and 50 Copperfield Road have been bought with a GLC grant, and a curator is being funded by the London Boroughs Grant Scheme. A series of talks organised by the Trust has been well supported. As most work at the Museum is still done by volunteers, offers of help or money are most welcome.

The Museum of London's exhibition 'Londoners' which ended recently, was widely praised. The Museum has now acquired the Henry Grant collection of 75,000 black and white photographs, showing all aspects of life in London from around 1950 to 1980. The Museum's £500 prize for their photographic competition 'Marking Time' was won by Ed Sirrs, a teacher from Bow, with a photograph called 'Breaktime' taken at Langdon Park School in Poplar. Finally, local historians look forward with interest to the report on the findings of the Museum's work on the site of the Abbey of St. Mary Graces, near the Tower.

Meanwhile, nearby Wilton's Theatre, in a street that derived its name from the same Abbey, cannot claim on its revival literature that it is the oldest surviving music hall in the country. The Managing Directors of the City Varieties Music Hall, Leeds, think *their* establishment has been operating since 1762 (*Sunday Times* 7 December, 1986).

Three women who, in different ways, played an active role in East London's history, and were also national figures, have recently been remembered in the world of books, or in one case, the world of microfiche. The British Library have put Annie Besant's *Autobiography* on fiche (£8), and Virago have reissued Vols. 1 and 2 of *The Diary of Beatrice Webb* (£7.50 each

volume). The Cresset Library have reissued Sylvia Pankhurst's *The Home Front* in paperback, with an introduction by Shirley Williams (£6.95). Barbara Castle, meanwhile, has written a paperback called *Sylvia and Christabel Pankhurst*, which gives fair treatment to Sylvia's East End campaign (Penguin, £3.95).

Mayhew must sell well. Following *The Unknown Mayhew: Selections from the Morning Chronicle 1849 - 1850*, last published by Penguin in 1984 (£5.95), comes *The Illustrated Mayhew's London* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, £14.95) and *Mayhew's London Underworld* (Century Hutchinson, £6.95).

Several members of the Society have been actively involved in the conservation and resiting of the Virginia Settlers Memorial at Blackwall. Captain John Smith's writings have been printed in expensive editions, but Richard Hakluyt's *Voyages to the Virginia Colonies* has been reprinted, with an introduction by A. L. Rowse, at a very modest price (Century, £5.95). Patrick Beaver's *The Big Ship*, the story of the Millwall-built 'Great Eastern' has been reprinted (Bibliophile, £5.95). On a recent visit to Portsmouth I saw East London's second most famous ship, the 'Warrior' docked almost alongside the railway station and shortly, I understand, to be opened to the public. John Wells' book *The Immortal Warrior* (Kenneth Mason, 1987) was perfectly timed.

P. D. James and T. A. Critchley's *The Maul and the Pear Tree*, on the Ratcliff Highway murders, has been reissued in paperback (Sphere, £3.50), and ten of W. W. Jacobs' stories have been collected in *Night Watches* (Century Seafarers, £4.95). Finally, Vol. XLIII of the Survey of London is due to come out next year. Dealing with the Parish of All Saints, Poplar, it will cost £60 from the Athlone Press.

The East London History Society

The programme of events for the session 1987-8 will include a talk on Days out at Epping Forest around the turn of the century, with a follow-up excursion to the Forest, Growing up in Shadwell in the 'thirties and 'forties, Recollections of the clothing industry, Recent archaeological finds in Spitalfields, Hackney's Victorian Buildings and two local community history projects.

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. The membership secretary's address is 9 Avon Road, London E17.

BOOK REVIEWS

Newham Parents' Centre. *A Marsh and a Gasworks: one hundred years of life in West Ham*. Published by the Centre, 745-747 Barking Road, E13 9ER. 1986. £3.20.

THE title derives from the comment of an irreverent nephew on Henry Tate's 1874 purchase of riverside land for his sugar refinery. 'Is he quite sane?' asked the nephew:

'We'll either go down with swamp fever
Or the whole ruddy workforce will drown.'

The gasworks was the world's largest, opened at Beckton in 1870.

When Tate, Lyle, Silver and other industrialists moved into the marshlands, West Ham, cut off from London by the Lea, had no effective local government, despite a rocketing population already nearing 100,000. The defect was belatedly remedied in 1886, when Borough status was granted, the centenary of which event was recently celebrated. This 100-page large size paperback, well illustrated and printed by a local press (Plaistow has a tradition of quality printing), compiled by Newham's History Workshop, contributes to this celebration. Newham Council themselves issued a commemorative booklet, but also backed the present venture, both directly and through their Local Studies Library.

The two publications differ markedly: the text of the 'official' booklet (*West Ham 1886 - 1896*) is reprinted from the Victoria County History, complemented by notes and illustrations, and is the more authoritative and comprehensive; but there is nothing amateurish about the Centre publication (apart from some slack proof-reading), which draws on academic theses by local researchers, including several of the contributors. Its main virtue is an immediacy, a closeness to the streets and people and a feeling for characteristic detail which those, like myself, born and bred in West Ham, will recognise. The two approaches are not conflicting, but complementary: the truth, as usual, has several faces.

A concise Introduction stresses the explosive nature of West Ham's industrial revolution, brought about in a few decades and unmatched anywhere in Britain. This phenomenon is enlarged on in an admirable opening chapter by John Marriott, who is interesting on the adaptation of immigrant farm-workers to factory conditions and properly trenchant on the casual labour practices in the docks and elsewhere. He goes on to stress the transience of West Ham's industrial ascendancy, already entering a period of decline by the mid-'twenties, soon matching in reverse the speed and inevitability of the growth years of the previous half-century. A chapter on Immigration follows, dealing with the problems faced over the century by successive waves of Irish Catholics, Jews, and, more recently Asians and West Indians; West Ham today has a 30% coloured population.

There are chapters on Welfare and Education, in which West Ham had a proud record up to 1939, thereafter entering a difficult period of reorganisation, exacerbated by acute shortage of teachers. A section on

Family Life consists of recollections of local women, ranging from a centenarian who recalls her schooldays to a Pakistani girl who came here at seventeen to become the second wife of a man she had never met. Following contributions on Leisure provision and one on Religion - or rather religions - comes an account of Politics and Unions, again by John Marriott, reflecting the vigour and significance of the Borough's political history, local and parliamentary.

Centenary retrospectives are too often complacent, a fault here avoided; the authors make clear that the problems of today, though very different from those facing the new Borough in 1886 are certainly no less formidable.
Stanley Reed

Charles Korr. *West Ham United*. Duckworth, 1986. £7.95. Tony Hogg and Jack Helliard. *Who's Who of West Ham, 1900 - 1986*. Helliard and Sons Ltd. (235-7 Barking Road, E13 8EQ), 1986. £6.50.

'ORGANIZED sport' is a paradoxical term, implying as it does that the spontaneous needs to be planned. 'Organized professional sport' is perhaps even more so, for it requires questions of labour to be embraced. Is it necessarily true that the nature of a professional sporting organisation will reflect at least in part the social milieu in which it is placed?

This is one of the key questions which Charles Korr, Professor of seventeenth-century politics at St. Louis, has sought to address in his book on our leading soccer club. He certainly recognises that there is something different about West Ham, and indeed makes it clear that the subject would not have been chosen unless it was in some measure more rewarding than its peers. But he has ultimately been distracted by just what makes this book unique - his unparalleled access to the club's records, not of teamsheets and goalscorers, but of balance sheets and board minutes.

Korr's method is to give us three histories in one. First, and in greatest detail, is the history of the shareholders and directors. Although in general Korr's style is lucid and easy to assimilate, much of this section is unavoidably dry. Its events take place in closed gatherings, more often than not concerned with the detail of rate appeals and debenture issues. He does successfully isolate the early establishment of the Director-as-paternalist, seeking simply good management and a firm financial base rather than flair and controversy, and illuminates the causes of the few occasions when this broke down, such as the fuddle that set in over the accession of Paynter to the managership. And also we learn of time-bombs for the future: no-one knows the present ownership of Arnold Hills' original shareholding. Of what there was in the directors' lives and upbringings that led them to act in this way we are however barely aware - an especial disappointment, as we do learn that almost without exception they have been drawn from the east London entrepreneurial class, small - or medium - scale merchants and contractors.

The managerial and administrative staff are dealt with next, and the effects of a Board interested in continuity are well marked. Even the committal in 1940 of an apparent fraud by their secretary Searles could not bring the club to institute proceedings against a long-serving employee.

Korr's most successful passages are in his three relatively brief chapters on the playing staff. His introduction to them is somewhat apologetic, but it need not be. We at last have some detail of the lives of key West Ham personnel within the community: their housing, their earnings, and the comparison of professional footballer with skilled worker, both before and after the abolition of the maximum wage. Best of all, he finds in Malcolm Allison one character whom he cannot typify. Here was a player who uniquely would not be cowed either by the Board or by manager Fenton, but who was crucial to the late-50's transition of the club from almost-continual second-division to almost-continual first. Through him, we learn far more of the reasons for the removal of Fenton than Korr could glean from the Board minutes.

Hogg and Helliar have a simpler task, to summarise the playing careers of West Ham's League footballers, with a few from pre-1919. Jack Helliar has seen practically all take the field, and his opinions are rarely to be challenged; but Korr for one would be surprised that Allison had a 'much-cherished ambition to play for Hammers in the first division'. Picture layout leaves something to be desired, but it is the promised comprehensiveness which is so valuable. Even now, I do not doubt the West Ham Statisticians Group are scouring it for inaccuracies: I hope they fail. Peter Aylmer

Peter Marcan. *Artists and the East End*. Peter Marcan Publications (31 Rowloff Road, High Wycombe, Bucks), 1986. £9.95.

THIS is a most interesting and useful publication. It is divided into two parts. The first is a survey of artists who have recorded life in East London on canvas from the turn of the century to the present day. The remaining part of the book is devoted to a very detailed catalogue of all artists who have produced work of the East End. It also includes facts such as where they studied and where their paintings have been exhibited.

The survey states that the East End has only ever held a passing interest for most artists and the area has not produced its own great artist. Nevertheless, Rose Henriques and Elwin Hawthorne have been very active in recording local life. Elwin Hawthorne and a group of friends worked together as the East London Group and between 1930 and 1936 exhibited regularly at the Lefevre Gallery. The Wapping Group of Artists formed in 1938, is well known and still exhibits today. In the early 1980s an artists colony was to be found in Metropolitan Wharf; their final exhibition being held in 1985. Most of the members produced works in abstract but a few painted the area and an interesting circular view of Wapping by Canadian Mary Jo Major is reproduced in the book.

Although the paintings reproduced in the survey and catalogue are in black and white, some are very striking. I found the ones by Nathaniel Kornbluth particularly so. Five of his works are shown: '...many of his subjects he searched out and depicted have long since vanished, so his work is important topographically as well as artistically. It is only to be regretted that his East End output is so small...' There are many paintings which could be

singled out for mention but as most are of buildings, markets, the river and street life, I would choose 'Kissing the Law' by Sir William Rothenstein, as this splendid, but unfashionable work shows a culture which became so much part of the East End.

I hope the rather high price of the book does not deter anyone with more than a passing interest in the East End from buying a copy.

Jennifer Page

A. J. Robinson and D. H. B. Chesshyre. *The Green*. A history of the heart of Bethnal Green and the legend of the Blind Beggar. London Borough of Tower Hamlets, 1986. £1.95.

ARTHUR Robinson and Hubert Chesshyre's monograph on Bethnal Green was originally published in 1978, and has now been reprinted with additions and corrections. The first section deals with the history of the Green itself, from the days of Sir Balthazar Gerbier in the early 17th century, through the period of the Natt family in the 18th century, and on to the Museum of the 19th century, and the West Side of today. On the way, the authors relate the history of Bethnal House and Netteswell House, the building of Victoria Park Square, and the remarkable trials of Joseph Merceron for fraud in the handling of the Poor's Land in the early 19th century. There is a fascinating panorama of the west side of Cambridge Heath Road 1819, by Robert Schnebbelie, in complete contrast to the dull and workaday facades of today.

The second part of the book is concerned with the celebrated story of the Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green, and in particular with the verses which seem to date from the 17th century. The authors make out a reasonable case for the origins of the story to reach back into the 15th century, that Montfort (the blind beggar) fought in the French Wars of Henry VI, and was brought back, wounded, to Bethnal Green, where his daughter, Bessy, was born in c 1430. The earliest version of the ballad is c 1650, but it was probably written well before 1600. The authors reproduce several woodcut versions from 18th & 19th century chapbooks, and there is a full apparatus of notes and bibliography.

For anyone with an interest in the Bethnal Green area, which has not been over-burdened with histories in the last hundred years, this well-researched and produced booklet is highly recommended. David Webb

John Stow, *The Survey of London*. Edited by H. B. Wheatley; new introduction by Valerie Pearl. Everyman History. J. M. Dent and Sons, 1987. £5.95.

JOHN Stow was a tailor in sixteenth-century London. He could obviously read Latin but he may have been a self-educated man rather than having attended one of the few grammar schools in London. And yet he wrote one of the classic surveys of the City, first published in 1598, reprinted in 1603 (which, with corrections by Wheatley, is the text we have here), enlarged and reprinted and republished in 1618 and 1754-5. Charles Kingsford's two volume edition of 1908 (reprinted in 1971 by the Clarendon Press, Oxford) is

the standard and critical text but for we amateurs (and I include myself in that category) this new edition is splendid. Dr. Pearl's introduction is short and much to the point. She tells us of his life, how he set out to discover 'my native soil and country (London)' but she also illustrates the deficiencies of Stow, his obsession with the past (he was, after all an antiquarian), his dislike of London's expansion in the sixteenth century, the crowding of the City, the development of tenements, his attitude to the Reformation. In all, this is an excellent edition which all students of London should have on their shelves – or in their public library (which is a broad hint). J. L. Bolton

Anne Cunningham and Christopher Lloyd. *Bow Then and Now*. London Borough of Tower Hamlets Directorate of Community Services (Libraries Arts and Entertainments), 1986. £1.95.

IN this 42 page booklet views, mostly from the turn of the century, appear together with recent photographs of the same scenes. It would have been better if some of the recent photographs had been taken in winter as in many of them the leafy trees block the view.

Two other small points: on page 13 it says that Victoria Park is in the distance when in fact it is in the foreground. On page 22 it says the hall has been reconstructed as a community centre but it does not say that it is still a church. On the whole I must say it is a very interesting publication which I enjoyed very much. Bradley Snooks

Ken Weller. *'Don't be a Soldier!'* The radical anti-war movement in North London 1914 – 1918. Journeyman Press, 1985. £3.23.

THIS is a brief history of the radical anti-war movement in North London highlighting the difference of opinion, the restraints by the moderates, the passions of the devoted, the weaknesses of Committees, and the disunities which prevented the movement making greater impact.

Anti-war activities are always to be found in times of hostilities, but the academic, religious or political factions from which they spring rarely succeed in influencing the course of events and this little book goes some way in explaining why this is so. The aims are unpopular, the background formidable, and even amongst the campaigners periods of indecision, apathy and disillusionment neutralise a good deal of the effort. Had the War not taken place, this would have been a period of struggle within the Socialist movements, as workers achieved an authority and recognition hitherto denied to them.

This is a useful little book for the student of Socialism under pressure and of its effects on a divided town community. Alfred French

Andrew Pettegree. *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London*. Oxford University Press, 1986. £27.50.

FROM about 1540 until 1600 the existing community of foreign workmen and merchants in England was reinforced by a growing number of religious refugees, who were victims of Catholic persecution in northern Europe. Of these the Dutch were more numerous and economically more significant than the French. Probably as many as 50,000 came to England during the century, most to London and the south-east. Despite this increase, they did not always stay, and it is estimated that no more than 10,000 were in London at any one time. Moreover, London experienced such a rapid growth in population because of an influx of English migrants that the foreign immigrants represented a smaller proportion of the population at the end of the century than at the beginning.

Andrew Pettegree has based his study of these protestant refugees largely on the extensive records of the 'stranger' churches which they established in London in 1550. Some of the main sources have already been published notably by the Huguenot Society, but the author has also heavily used records of the City of London and its livery companies and foreigners' wills. He has not however used the records of two of the parishes outside the City with the most immigrants, St. Olave's Southwark and St. Katharine's by the Tower, where he might have discovered references to the separate Flemish burial grounds there.

Apart from these two parishes, the highest concentration of 'strangers' were to be found within the City, in the poorer wards to the east such as Portsoken, by the waterfront in Billingsgate for example, and in the small liberties particularly St. Martin le Grand. Two trades of special interest for the later history of East London, weavers' and coopers', are examined closely. Pettegree found that the foreign weavers tended to be scattered around the suburbs (more in Southwark than anywhere), whereas the Dutch coopers were found mostly in East Smithfield near the breweries of St. Katharine's.

Although the author has little to say directly about East London, he has provided for the first time a full and scholarly account of the first generation of foreign protestant immigrants to London. He has shown how the Dutch and French churches helped towards the peaceful integration of the newly arrived refugees, and a firm foundation was provided which later protestant arrivals could build upon. The mixed reactions of the English, accusations of overcrowding in housing and exclusiveness in work have a familiar ring; anyone interested in the richness of London life and the important part played by immigrants will find this an absorbing and enlightening work. Bernard Nurse

Benjamin Clarke. *Glimpses of Ancient Hackney and Stoke Newington*. London Borough of Hackney Library Services Archives Department, 1986. £8.95.

WHEN I first came to live in Hackney over fifteen years ago I was very fortunate to acquire an original copy of *Glimpses of Ancient Hackney and*

Stoke Newington. That, and a reproduction of Roque's 1745 map of the Parish of Hackney, sparked off an interest in the history of East London which has survived and grown with the years. I am very pleased to see, therefore, that a new edition of this work is now available, particularly as it contains an index, lacking before, which much extends its usefulness as a work of reference.

The author Benjamin Clarke, known only by the pseudonym F.R.C.S. in the original volume, was by profession a doctor whose life spanned the five or six decades it took to achieve the urbanisation of Hackney. The market gardens and country mansions of his early 19th century childhood were progressively being replaced by terrace after terrace of Victorian villas. It is Clarke's personal recollections of the earlier topography of the parish and the characters who lived there that is the most valuable and fascinating aspect of the book. His forays into more ancient times are largely based on the writings of early 19th century local historians Robinson and Thomas and often tend to reinforce myths and inaccuracies. To help us avoid some at least of these pitfalls David Mander, the Hackney Archivist, who has edited this new edition, has provided extensive footnotes. Unfortunately the need to publish within financial year limitations has meant that insufficient time was available for thorough checking of these notes and a number of typographical and factual errors remain. (I'll mention just one because an article by myself in *East London Record No. 6 (1986)* is misquoted as suggesting that Hackney Phalanx evangelist Joshua Watson and radical scientist and Unitarian Joseph Priestley lived, at different times, in the same house. Their houses, in fact, stood apart on either side of Clapton Passage in Lower Clapton Road, E.5.)

David Mander's introduction is also a valuable addition to the original volume, providing an interesting biographical insight into F.R.C.S. himself. The new illustrations, mostly 19th century photographs and drawings, help us to visualise Clarke's Hackney and Stoke Newington, although sadly the quality of reproduction often mars their usefulness a little.

It is worth mentioning here another valuable visual aid to *Glimpses* published in 1985 by the Hackney Archives – the Starling map of the Parish of Hackney dated 1831. Printed in four large sheets it complements admirably Clarke's rambling perambulations, helping us to find our way around his streets of a century and a half ago.

Altogether the book is a very worthwhile publishing venture and one which I am sure will inspire many readers to explore further for themselves the rich historical heritage preserved in the Hackney Archives and the new Hackney Museum in Mare Street.

Mike Gray

Robert Barltrop, *Growing up in North East London between the wars*. Part III. 'Bright Summer – Dark Autumn'. London Borough of Waltham Forest, 1986. £2.25 plus 35p postage.

THIS is the last in a trilogy of booklets and it seems good marketing policy to publish in three parts. Firstly, the trilogy, if published as one long book, could possibly seem a bit overpriced, whereas smaller booklets, at a cheaper price, make them most attractive to the pocket and more collectable. Second, it

could be that the contents, whilst interesting in small doses, may not stand up so well to a lengthy read. I have found all three booklets to be absorbing reading and this third part the most interesting.

Although the author tells us this is not an autobiography, there is much of that element in the contents. As the story is told from the viewpoint of someone from an upper working-class to lower middle-class background there is inevitably a great deal of his own story in it. This is a viewpoint I cannot recall encountering in this type of local-history publication.

The text has no story-line but does not suffer from this. It is full of cameos and we go behind the scenes of many situations which are in many cases long gone and forgotten. Perhaps most important, this book covers the war period, not from any heroic or self-suffering point of view but from an everyday account of working and living.

The book can be well recommended... and if you like this one, buy the others.

John Curtis

Harold W. Walker *Mainly Memories*. 1906–1930. Sewardstone Investments Ltd (Hague House, Sewardstone Road, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 1NB) 1986, £4.95.

'THE Wake Arms' at Waltham Forest is today merely the site of a restaurant. Harold Walker recalls the public house when it was a meeting place for waggoners returning from London's Haymarket. But especially perhaps he remembers it as the country headquarters of the Walthamstow Motor Club for the theme of his *Memories* is Walthamstow before and after the Great War. It was a time of change, and the author's remarkable memory, complemented by his research, vividly recreates the period.

While his family benefitted from the full employment created by the war, they could never become completely financially secure. Harold Walker, like his father, became a plasterer and experienced the anxiety that he would be laid off before the job was completed. Early in the century his father had even been forced to roam the countryside for work resorting to traditional lay (contricks) to survive. (Typically, one involved pretending to be on a sponsored charity walk.) Even in Walthamstow there was a neighbour who was eager to spread Harold's detested cod liver oil on his bread, while in 1920 Hackney, where he started work, he saw buildings with only one lavatory per landing of four flats.

H. David Behr

Down in the East End. An illustrated anthology. Peter Marcan Publications, 1986. £7.95.

THE black and white drawings and prints are a bonus in this lively account of life in the East End from around the turn of the century. The texts used come from a wide variety of sources, as do the illustrations, and, together with Peter Marcan's observations on the area today, they offer an interesting introduction to how people felt about the area.

Doreen Kendall

South Shoreditch. Historic Industrial Buildings. A Hackney Society Report. The Hackney Society, 1986. £4.50

THIS well-produced survey is welcome for two reasons. First, there is little material of any sort on the old borough of Shoreditch in print; second, buildings of the type and period covered here are fast disappearing from the East End.

The work covers Shoreditch south of Old Street plus a small area around Hoxton Square. All the important nineteenth century factories and workshops – not just those connected with the furniture trade – are included, together with the occasional pub, bridge, bollard etc. It is, however, a pity that the opportunity wasn't taken to produce a *complete* survey of this quite small area, which would have only added perhaps twenty pages to the existing sixty. The majority of pre 1914 buildings in south Shoreditch are of course industrial but it would have rounded that picture by including the last of the old tenements, the remaining pubs, and recently cleaned St. Michael's Church (Mark Street) which was being used as an antiques storeroom the last time I passed it. These omitted buildings were only partly covered in the earlier report *From Tower to Tower Block*.

Having made this small criticism I should like to congratulate the compilers and photographers on their wholly admirable production. Very sensibly the area and its buildings are described street by street, not alphabetically but starting at the extreme south near the boundary of the modern borough of Hackney with the City of London. This makes the survey ideal for anyone wanting to walk round and see for themselves. The photographs are well-chosen and show how fine the Victorian industrial buildings really are. They also exude a sad silence, for many are now unused; yet so recently the whole area hummed with life. I can remember that when the 'industries of Shoreditch' were blessed one year by the clergy of St. Michael's nothing could be heard of the outdoor service because of the noise in the surrounding streets.

To sum up, I can only hope that the publication of this book helps in the struggle to preserve and maintain such historic buildings, and hopefully to return them to their proper use as places of employment and service for London.

John M. Harwood

Jack Dash. *Good Morning, Brothers*. London Borough of Tower Hamlets Wapping Neighbourhood Committee, 1987.

THE autobiography of a man who helped to shape the history of the British working class will always make for fascinating reading. Jack Dash begins his story through the University of Life with a childhood memory of a schoolboy at an Empire Day Speech asking his own father when he was going to buy his son a pair of boots and ends his story quoting Omar Khayyam.

Leaving school at fourteen, Jack's industrial experiences, especially during the General Strike, and his experience of class conflicts on the street, struck a deep chord in him and were never to be forgotten. Moving to Stepney in 1931 he could not but be influenced by the local traditions of humanism and internationalism. During the 'thirties he worked on various building sites and gained organising experience which earned him the TUC Tolpuddle medal. The Unemployed Workers' Movement, the anti-fascist struggles increased his political awareness and in 1937 he joined the Communist Party.

In 1945 the Port of London employers were recruiting workers and Jack learned a new subject, 'Dockology'. The struggle in the docks goes back to the nineteenth century and when, with the end of war-time rationing, employers tried to impose unacceptable conditions and rates of pay, a Docks Liaison Committee became the established dock workers leadership from then up to 1968. Jack took part in every major strike, and as organiser, orator, internationalist, poet providing political leadership he has won his place in history, never deserting his class. It should be added that he could never have achieved what he did without the support of his wife and daughter.

The Wapping Neighbourhood Committee are to be congratulated on reissuing a book which will provide inspiration for those who struggle for peace, employment and real socialism. Perhaps it is now time to consider naming a street or a school after the author, preferably along his beloved Thames.

H. Joseph

Tony Phillips. *A London Docklands Guide*. Peter Marcan Publications, 1986. £6.95.

THE East End of London, the old East End, lies like a blowzy old harridan with her toes in the Thames and her head in a garland of green at Victoria Park. Like an old beauty queen whose term of office has long since expired, she is nevertheless regarded with a deep and abiding affection by her sons and daughters – the people who will claim, with some pride, 'I'm an eastender – born and bred!'. Sometimes feared, often scorned, frequently patronised by others, there is, deep, in the belly of every eastender, a glowing ember of anger, ready to be fanned into flame whenever 'the old lady' is being paraded, like a five-minute sideshow, before the gaze of the merely curious, or, worse still, the romantic sensation seeker.

In the Docklands, that sprawl of the East End, the other East End, along the banks of the Thames, remote even to many eastenders, this sense of place, of almost fierce local pride, is perhaps even more intense. In an atmosphere of rapid, bewildering change created by speculative developers, estate agents, and advertisers' hype, Docklanders cling tenaciously to the vestiges of their homeland, their pride of place sharpened by a keener sense of loss as, daily, they witness Docklands, their land, transformed into a Disneyland. In the market-place economics of 'regeneration' much of the evidence of the real past is being swept away – to be replaced with smug, trendy, high cost housing estates with new fanciful names; 'Jamestown Harbour', 'Quay West', 'Compass Point', and 'Clippers Quay'. Names which

owe more to the imagination of an up-market advertising copy writer than to the area in which they now stand.

It was then, with some trepidation that I, a born and bred eastender, began to read Tony Phillips' *A London Docklands Guide*. Was this yet another trendy trek through Docklands? Another quick peek under the skirts of the old East End to look for a little titillation for the tourist – and the nearest Yuppy wine bar? But no! Here is an excellent guide to the Docklands. Brief but informative and packed with illustrations, the guide is written with keen sense of history, and a discerning eye on the present (I particularly liked the description of the 'bizarre, futuristic housing and business complexes' being built on the Isle of Dogs!). Tony Phillips writes of a Dockland that is – and how it was, and whets the appetite of the reader to learn more. To my fellow eastenders I would recommend you get this book on your lap as soon as you can – it tells it as you know it to be – and can tell you more than you think you know! To anyone seeking a guide to the byways, and backwaters, of London's Docklands, this is the one. It will set your steps, and direct your eye, in the right direction.

Ted Johns

Asa Briggs, with John Dekker and John Mair. *Marx in London: an Illustrated Guide*. Journeyman Press, 1987. (Previously published by the BBC). £2.95.

THE BBC ran a series of programmes on the life of Karl Marx in 1982 and issued a lively pictorial booklet to accompany the series. As one might expect of a work written by Asa Briggs, it is a mine of interesting material, not just about the great man, but about the history and development of London, the political culture of the working classes and the family life of Marx – all accompanied by maps, drawings and photographs of the period.

There is an interesting account of radical London and emigre politics in the 1840s, accompanied by the daguerreotype of the 1848 Chartist meeting on Kennington Common discovered a few years ago and first published in the *Sunday Times*. There are also accounts of Marx and the British Museum; Marx in Camden (46 Grafton Terrace, not the Town Hall) and the Marx family on holidays – usually at the seaside resorts of Margate, Eastbourne or Harrogate, when Karl did not visit one of the Continental spas for reasons of health. The final couple of chapters of the book give us a brief and rather tragic account of his family after his death, and the attraction his legend exercised on London visitors, thousands of whom make the pilgrimage to the rather oppressive looking monument to his memory in Highgate cemetery. An argument could surely be made that the world might be a very different place if a Rodin had created an image to his memory rather than that concrete colossus designed by Laurence Bradshaw. It might not have resisted vandals so successfully, but then fewer people might have wanted to blow it up. As an aid to visiting his grave, and the many other places associated with Marx, there are a number of helpful maps – altogether the book is a little gem, and shows us how much London was Marx's Capital. Bernard Canavan

SOME RECENT HISTORY ITEMS RELATING TO EAST LONDON

Books and Booklets

A to Z of Victorian London

Introduction by Ralph Hyde. London Topographical Society, 1987.

Bates, L. M.

The Thames on Fire. Terence Dalton, 1985.

Chisholm, N., and others

Linked by the Same Thread. The Multi-Fibre Arrangement and the Labour Movement. Tower Hamlets International Solidarity and Tower Hamlets Trades Council, 1986.

Clutterbuck, D. and Devine, M.

Clore: The Man and his Millions. Weidenfeld, 1987.

Hook, John

The Air Raids on London During the 1914-1918 War. No. 15 The Raids on Tower Hamlets. (copy in T. Hamlets Local History Library).

House of Commons

First Report on Bangladesh in Britain. Vol. 1. H.M.S.O.

Kverndal, Roald

Seamen's Missions. Their Origin and Early Growth. William Carey Library, 1986.

Lyders, Carole, and Harrison, Averil
Madgett, Kenneth C. J.

Docklands Heritage. L.D.D.C., 1987.

A History of 75 years of St. Georges and 50 years of St. Georges and St. Ethelbert, East Ham. The Church, 1987.

Mazower, David

The Yiddish Theatre in London. Museum of Jewish East End, 1987.

Norman, Edward

The Victorian Christian Socialist. Cambridge, 1987.

Police Monitoring and
Research Group

Policing Wapping. An account of the dispute 1986-7.

Schweitzer, Pam

Can we Afford the Doctor? Age Concern, 1985.

Shorney, David, and
Wilnot, Bob

A Brief History of the Mile End Campus of Avery Hill College. Thames Polytechnic, 1985.

Thurlow, Richard

Fascism in Britain. A History 1918-1985. Basil Blackwell, 1987.

Wolfston, Patricia S.

Greater London Cemeteries and Crematoria. Society of Genealogists, 1985.

Articles

Balkin, H.

'Memories of Old Canning Town' in *Hamaor Journal* of the Federation of Synagogues, April, 1987.

Bloch, Howard

'Extra Everything and Everything Extraordinary: a History of North Woolwich Pleasure Gardens' *Theatrephile*, Summer, 1987.

Colla, Barbara

'An early eighteenth century timber-framed building' (30 Romford Road, Stratford) in *Essex Journal*, Vol 22, No. 1, Spring, 1987.

Corea, Ivan

'Brick Lane - Then and Now' and 'Brick Lane - In a world of change' in *Asian Times* 18 April, 5 June, 1986.

East of London Family
History Society

Recent articles in *Cockney Ancestor* include 'East End Dock Police' 'Harriers and Beagles' 'Memories of the Blitz' 'Do the best Families Move About?' and 'A Musical Background'.

Fishman, William

'The Condition of East End Jewry in 1888' in *Hamaor* April, 1987.