

EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY

PROGRAMME 1994-1995

Thursday 29 September	7.30pm	The London Hospital and the Mercers' Company - examples of respectable landlords in the East End (illustrated) Mona Paton
Thursday 27 October	7.45pm	Regent's Canal Michael Essex-Lopresti (Preceded by A.G.M. at 7.15pm)
Thursday 17 November	7.30pm	Tokens and medals of Tower Hamlets (illustrated) Phillip Mernick
Thursday 1 December	7.30pm	History of Stoke Newington (illustrated) Peter Foynes
January		to be confirmed
February		to be confirmed
Thursday 30 March	7.30pm	Asylums and academies: the afterlife of the great houses of Hackney (illustrated) Isobel Watson
Thursday 27 April	7.30pm	The largest school in the world: Jews' Free School, Bell Lane, Spitalfields 1817-1939 Gerry Black
Thursday 25 May	7.30pm	East London shops and street markets: members share their memories and research.

All talks are held at Latimer Congregational Church Hall, Ernest Street, E1. Ernest Street is between Harford Street and White Horse Lane, off Mile End Road (opposite Queen Mary and Westfield College). The nearest underground stations are Mile End and Stepney Green.

The East London History Society (founded 1952) exist to further the interest in the history of East London, namely the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets Hackney and Newham. Besides the East London record we publish two newsletters a year and organise a programme of talks (details above); we also arrange local walks and two coach outings a year are organised. Details of membership are available from John Harris (Membership Secretary) 15 Three Crowns Road, Colchester, Essex CO4 5AD.

£2.50

ISSN 0 141 6286



EAST LONDON RECORD

No. 17

1994-95

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 forms the London boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Newham. Articles, which need not be in their final form, should be sent to the editor at 13 Abbotsbury Close, Stratford, E15 2RR.

Back copies of the following issues of the *East London Record* are available:

Number 10 (1987) £1.50 plus 40p post and packing

Number 11 (1988) £1.80 plus 40p post and packing

Number 12 (1989) £1.90 plus 40p post and packing

Number 13 (1990) £1.90 plus 40p post and packing

Number 14 (1991) £2.10 plus 40p post and packing

Number 15 (1992) £2.25 plus 40p post and packing

Number 16 (1993) £2.25 plus 40p post and packing

These, and further copies of the present issue (£2.50 plus 40p post and packing) are available from the above address. Cheques should be made payable to the East London History Society.

We are grateful to Tower Hamlets Libraries and to authors for permission to reproduce photographs and to the following people for their help in producing the magazine: Mr H.D. Behr, Mr H. Bloch, Mr B. Canavan, Mrs D. Kendall, Mr C Lloyd, Mr P. Mernick, Mrs R. Taylor, Mr H. Watton and Mr D. Webb.

Cover illustration: **Sunday best** in 1941; Ivy Alexander's brother Jimmy is on the right of the photograph, taken outside the Durham Arms public house on the corner of Wharf Street and Stephenson Street. See the article on page 2.

EAST LONDON RECORD

No. 17

1994-5

CONTENTS

- 2 'Old Canning Town'
Ivy Alexander
- 11 A Short History of the Youth Service in Tower Hamlets
Harold Finch
- 19 Hackney Schoolboy Football in the 'Thirties
Les Jolly
- 25 Status Seekers in a Grand House: 21 Stepney Green
C.J. Lloyd
- 28 An East London Business
E.J. Erith
- 35 The Burial Grounds of Backchurch Lane, Whitechapel
Bruce Watson
- 41 Notes and News
- 44 Book Reviews: Rosemary Taylor, Ron Smith, Fred Wright, Philip Mernick, Doreen Kendall.

© East London History Society and contributors

'OLD CANNING TOWN'

Ivy Alexander

I was born in 1924, the third of 6 children. My arrival was not awaited with any great joy, my elder sister having been born only 17 months previously. Except for the first born, a boy, we were all born at home, a two bedroom terraced house in that part of West Ham known as Old Canning Town. We lived there until it was destroyed by a land-mine in March, 1941. My recollections of Canning Town, therefore, are based on the first 16½ years of my life, but such was the separateness and isolation of Old Canning Town that events of those days are firmly fixed in my memory.

I used to think that the area was called 'old' because it was shabby and 'well-worn', but now understand it was 'old' in historical terms. Canning Town began to emerge in the early part of the nineteenth century, at the north-western end of Plaistow marshes and close to a shipyard, which later became the Thames Ironworks and Shipbuilding Co. Development was confined to the area between the River Lea on the west, and the Eastern Counties Railway branch line to the east. Earlier roads may have gone right up to the River Lea, but by the time I was born, these had been replaced by wharves and gas-works. Roads had been truncated, which explains why the area to the west of Bidder Street, which ran north to south was a mystery to me. Fragments of roads led to gates and factories and I was certainly unaware that a river lay beyond. Old Canning Town was the narrow strip of land left behind, wedged between the wharves and gas-works and the railway, with Stephenson Street running alongside. It had the appearance and feeling of an area left over by accident. It was best left to atrophy. Its earlier reputation as an area where one would not venture alone, for fear of 'footpads', had lingered, as did many memories of the past. Older folk still spoke of the Iron Bridge and the Marshes. When we went out to play we were instructed not to go 'over the Iron Bridge' or 'down the marsh'. The Iron Bridge, across the River Lea, had long since been replaced as a crossing by a new road linking East India Dock Road, to Barking Road. 'Down the marsh' referred to Victoria Dock Road, which to me, as a child, seemed a foreign place anyway, frequented by 'black men' who wore their shirts outside their trousers. These were the Lascars. Some of their families lived in and around Victoria Dock Road and they lived wretched lives.

The type of housing in the area has been well documented and 6, Wharf Street where I lived, was no exception. The houses fronted directly on to a pavement. Each had a wooden window 'shutter' fixed to the wall. Our pride and joy was a strip of garden at the back. Beyond our garden and in somebody

The author with her brother Jimmy in Wharf Street in 1967.



else's back, was a large mature tree, a survivor of West Ham's pastoral past. The road itself was divided by Bidder Street, with the wharf gates at one end and Stephenson Street and the railway at the other. In our section, on the opposite side of the road to us, on the corner of Bidder Street, was what had been a large, substantial house, with an imposing frontage surrounded by railings. It was now dilapidated and formed part of the sack factory. The women workers there were the most depressed I have ever come across. They had sacks covering their heads and shoulders, folded to provide a hood, but they were still covered from head to toe in a fine dust which smelt of pepper. The four houses opposite us were numbered 3 to 9. No.1 was missing. An older resident said there had been a 'lovely country cottage' there. Could it have been related to the large tree, I wonder? The cottage had been demolished and replaced by a paint factory, close to, and over-looking our front rooms. The large, sliding gate was set back slightly from the wall, and the alcove thus formed made a cosy nook for courting couples on dark nights, after leaving the adjacent Durham Arms, no doubt. This provided a good source of entertainment for my sister Marie and I. Night after night, when we should have been tucked away safely, we peered through our bedroom window and discovered the facts of life.

6, Wharf Street was in a terrace of five houses. It had two small bedrooms and two small rooms downstairs and a single-storied back scullery with a sloping roof and a concrete floor. The scullery contained a copper, a single tap and an earthenware sink and, later, a gas cooker. The living room had in it a 'kitchener' stove, which was used for cooking and heating, and was surrounded by a fire-guard, a 'Home Sweet Home' steel fender and a rug, made by hooking strips of rag on to sacking. My sister and I spent far too much of our childhood polishing the stove with 'Zebo' and the fender with emery paper. The front 'parlour', not used and kept tidy 'in case anybody comes', was like an ice-box and the kitchen was like a furnace. Nailed to the wall in the outside toilet was a sheaf of neatly torn newspaper, secured by string; replenishing the stock was one of the few manual tasks my father took upon himself.

This type of housing was better than most in the area. Further into the 'Old Town' the quality of the houses deteriorated. However, many of these were demolished in the early 30's under a slum clearance scheme, for which we did not qualify, much to my mother's disappointment. A constant battle was waged to keep these houses clean and free from vermin. Bugs were in the brickwork and plaster, and difficult to eradicate. They got behind the wallpaper in the bedrooms. My mother stripped the wallpaper off and painted the walls, but bugs still got into the bed springs and in the folds at the end of the mattress. The beds were constantly being dismantled and painted with 'turps' to kill the bugs. We would squash them with our fingers on the walls which was not a pretty sight. Our friend Ethel, next door but one, had a better idea. She said if you held a lighted candle underneath the bugs, they would drop off and then you trod on them. We watched her from outside doing this one night and had a good laugh. She later worked as a domestic help at one of the houses where 'Missionary' workers lived. She responded to helpful advice and blossomed in these improved living conditions. She changed her name to 'Eve' and put her past behind her.

We rarely entered neighbours' houses and never entered the bedrooms, so where everybody slept is a mystery. As for us, we had various arrangements, with the addition of each child. Five children presented no problems. The children were in one room and the parents in another. When the sixth child, a boy, was born, my parents slept on a bed-settee in the living room. We then had three boys in one room and three girls in another. This arrangement was not entirely satisfactory. Whenever we had friends round my father would open the bed-settee and start preparing for bed, to our great embarrassment.

I don't know how Ethel's family managed with eight children. The houses opposite had three bedrooms but then Mrs Crush had nine children. Come to

think of it, what an apposite name that was. Mrs Bush next door had seven children and Mr Bush lay dying in one of the bedrooms for years, before he succumbed to cancer. The other two houses had two families in each. Children, however, continued to be procreated, though considerable subterfuge had to be exercised. Sending the children to Sunday School was one solution. Ethel's father's plan was even more ingenious. Ethel was sent on a long journey, after Sunday lunch, together with younger brothers and sisters, to buy winkles and



The author in 1940. Note the Anderson shelter.

water-cress for his Sunday tea.

When we were younger we were not upset by our cramped conditions. We spent as little time as possible in the house. Except for bed-time, or when we were scrubbing and cleaning, or at school, we were playing in the street and great fun we had, too. We played rounders, using neighbours window shutters as bases. We tied rope to a lamp-post and swung round it. There was whip and top, hop-scotch, skipping, and marbles in the gutter. One dark night, we made toffee, and together with Ethel and a few other friends, we stuck all the door-knockers down with it. We had plenty of friends and always had younger brothers and sisters to look after. The street was a good playground, unlike today. Nobody had cars and the roads were traffic free. The street was a communal meeting place. Mrs. Bush, opposite, had a spastic daughter, Trixie, who was seated in a wooden push-chair, outside her house, on the pavement, all day. Everybody passing by spoke to her, much to Trixie's delight, although what poor Trixie said was unintelligible. A spastic young man in Bidder Street had a similar experience.

In the summer people sat at the front of their houses and watched the children play, or just chatted. The houses round the corner from us had a small fenced area at the front, about 5' deep, which contained a bench. These were ideal meeting places, especially at Mrs. Brown's. Mrs. Brown's spinster daughter, Lil, had a job putting fasteners at the end of pearl necklaces. She brought strings of these home from work by the gross and would sit for hours attaching the fasteners at lightning speed. Anybody leaving the Old Town had to pass through Bidder Street or Stephenson Street, so Mrs. Brown, sitting on her bench, knew most people and what was going on. People in trouble often went to Mrs. Brown, my mother included. One woman, who regularly passed by, wore the same suit, for as long as I can remember, winter and summer. Whenever she passed, she remarked, 'It's a lovely day', or 'Isn't it cold today' followed by, 'You don't know what to wear do you?' Mrs. Brown helped everybody. When the River Lea overflowed, as it did on two occasions whilst I lived there, our houses were flooded. On the first occasion, water gradually climbed up the kitchen stove, hissing as it went. We were four children then, and I remember being carried over the back gardens to Mrs. Brown's, whose house was at a slightly higher level than ours. Mr. Brown was less friendly and gave his wife a hard time.

Women generally had a very hard time. They were trapped. Birth control was not considered. 'The men won't have it', said my mother. It was not until just before the war that my mother and her two fertile neighbours began to talk about Marie Stopes, but not before Ethel's mother nearly bled to death after a

Jubilee party in Wharf Street in 1935: the author, aged 10, is with Harry Holding, 9.



self-induced abortion. I was not aware of any child sexual abuse, but there was certainly wife abuse. They were always available. Very few people moved out of this situation. In all the 16 years I lived in Wharf Street, nobody escaped. They were not in a position to do so. In the 20s and 30s there was a great deal of unemployment and those at work were poorly paid. Work in the docks was casual, but men had to turn up in the hope of being selected. The young man next door, who left school at 14 years, like everybody else, used to come home with sore, sticky feet when he was 'working on sugar'. He said it got into your shoes. He didn't complain as he was paid extra - 'dirty money' it was called. With poor pay, and so much unemployment, people were caught in a 'poverty trap'. Another child meant a bit more R.O. - money from the Relieving Office. Although relief was later administered by the Public Assistance Committee, they still called it R.O. From the men's point of view, there was no reason to stop having children ... they had their value.

Children were also caught in a 'no win' situation.. Although teachers did the best they could - and I have a great deal to thank some teachers for - education was poor. Classes were large and children were lethargic, no doubt through undernourishment and ill-health. Some were more deprived than others and were sent to the Fyfield Open Air School, in Essex. If they returned to Canning Town School they were quiet, well-mannered and subdued and spoke 'posh'. Homes were devoid of books, music, or even pencil and paper. Most

children had no good role-model and limited aspirations. To work in Woolworths was the dream of many girls. Consequently very few children were expected to pass the 'Scholarship' exam. They left school at 14 and took whatever job they could. Educational provision improved slightly in the 30's. When Pretoria Road School was built, Canning Town School no longer took children up to the age of 14 years. My older brother, in 1932, at the age of 11 years, went to Pretoria Road, when it first opened. I was 'selected' for the Russell Central School in Queen's Road, at the age of 11 years. Sister Marie went first to Pretoria Road and then to the new Trade School for Girls in Water Lane. My younger brothers' and sister's education was affected by the war. I know of nobody in Old Canning Town who, before the 30's continued at school beyond the age of 14.

One's prospects depended largely on chance factors - your position in the family, the school you went to, whether or not your father had a job or your mother's resourcefulness. My father was unable to work due to the brain damage he suffered as a professional boxer in his early years. As a result of this, his speech was slurred and he was unsteady on his legs, walking with a shuffling gait - the typical 'punch-drunk' syndrome. He had violent outbursts of temper and it was generally assumed 'it was to do with the boxing' Brain damage was not confirmed till after his death in 1970 when his brain was used for research into the aftermath of boxing (See footnote). However, as my mother said, "We



HICKS' FOOT SALTS.

If you suffer with bad feet consult JIMMY HICKS, Ex-Bantam Weight Champion, who knows the torture of bad feet. Instant relief and permanent cure in one week for Rheumatism, Gout, Swollen Feet (Tired, Tender, Aching), Burning, Itching, Perspiring, Hard Skin, Corns (Soft or Hard).

6d. PER PACKET. **7½d.** POST FREE.

CORN SALVE, which is a Corn Cure,

6d. PER BOX. **7½d.** POST FREE.

These two prescriptions were given to Jimmy Hicks by SIR ARTHUR MACPHEARSON, Scotch Foot Specialist, at the National Sporting Club, Monday, January 6th, 1906, the night Hicks fought Digger Stanley, Bantam Weight Champion of the World.

P.S. Do not destroy this bill as it will be called for in one hour, and any advice given on foot ailments, if required.

6, WHARF STREET, CANNING TOWN, E.16.

had to make the most of it. You made your bed and you had to lie on it". Such pearls of wisdom were commonplace in Old Canning Town. We were adequately fed and clothed however, as my father was always devising means of supplementing the R.O. money. He sold leather bootlaces, pearl buttons and linen buttons, press studs and matches, from a tray slung round his neck, outside the Boleyn Arms, Plaistow, on a Saturday and Sunday. Another money earner for a brief period was the selling of 'Hicks' Foot salts', actually common soda and Epsom salts, which he sold from a stall in Rathbone Street. The soda was purchased in a large sack and he and my mother put it into small packets. Leaflets were put through doors advertising this miracle cure. My mother brought two second-hand 'fairy-cycles' and let them out for a penny an hour. She iced cakes and machined garments for a small charge. At one time, my sister Marie and I took mint from the garden and sold it in Rathbone Street, to the cry of, 'Penny a bunch of mint!' My younger brother, Jimmy, used to 'mind' people's cars whilst they sat drinking in the Bridge House Tavern, a public house close to the old Iron Bridge. This insured them against vandalism. My mother bought second-hand clothes from the 'Old Gels' in Crisp Street, Poplar. The 'Old Gels' were women who obtained clothes from the more affluent members of society and sold them to the less well-off. The clothes were unpicked, the sections washed, and then machined into 'new' clothes for us. She also mended our shoes and I still have the hobbing foot she used.

One might have imagined that out of these oppressive conditions, some radical thought would have arisen, but, so far as I am aware, this was not the case. I witnessed no unrest amongst the unemployed and poorly paid in Old Canning Town. They were apathetic and accepted their lot. Ill-health may have had something to do with this. For generations they had been grateful for whatever crumbs came their way. My mother, a reasonably intelligent woman, thought government was best left in the hands of those who had money. 'They know what to do with it', she said. 'Look at us. If we could govern we wouldn't be in this state.' She was a Royalist and stayed up all night when George the Fifth lay dying, to listen to the radio. I was a staunch Royalist too and when at last our Monarch died, my mother woke me up and with tears in her eyes, said 'Ive (Ivy), he's gone.' For his jubilee, in May, 1935, we swept the street and scrubbed the pavements in readiness for the party. Again, my mother stayed up all night - she was good at doing this - to make bunting on the sewing machine. She dyed my father's white long johns red at the top and blue at the bottom leaving the centre, white, and wore these to compete in the mums' race at the party. My father was not a member of a political party or a Trade Union, but was the proud possessor of a large certificate which was framed and hung in the passage-way. This proclaimed that he was a member of the 'Ancient Order of

Buffaloes'. This was as far as his membership went. When I enquired what the Buffaloes were my mother said, 'The poor man's Freemasons'. So I was none the wiser.

In September, 1936, after I 'passed the scholarship', and went to the Russell Central School, I saw less of my Old Canning Town friends. I was given a £2 clothing allowance to buy a school uniform so I even looked different. This was a pity. Even families were divided under this system of education, my own included. I know of many people for whom comprehensive education would have opened up a new world. The Russell School offered a four year course, but after I had completed only three years war was declared and I was evacuated to Chelmsford, where I stayed for a few months.

Old Canning Town and the southern part of West Ham suffered heavily during the blitz, as factories, houses and docks were packed closely together. The war proved a water-shed in the history of Old Canning Town. There are now no houses there. A land-mine demolished ours in March, 1941, and several houses in Stephenson Street, just round the corner. Mr. Brown had been standing at his front door. Eleven bodies were recovered but Mr. Brown caught the full blast and finished up in the big tree in fragments, together with shreds of the parachute which had carried the land-mine. Mrs. Brown had died of a heart attack shortly before the war. 'What a good thing,' we said, 'She would have only been blown up with Mr. Brown.'

During the next few days I heard one of the rare political comments to reach my ears during my childhood in Canning Town, 'That's all they were fit for,' said some of the neighbours, when their houses were blown up. Ethel's father went round with a hammer, breaking anything that was left unscathed - the toilet, the sink, even the kitchen stove. 'I'll make sure the bastards don't put these together again' he said. They never did.

A factory now stands on the site of 6, Wharf Street. The Durham Arms is still there and the paint factory, but no prying eyes look out for courting couples. I don't know if the big tree remains. I hope it does. It was Mr. Brown's resting place and a relic of West Ham's distant past.

NOTE:

This research was carried out by the Department of Neuropathology at Runwell Hospital, Wickford, Essex. 15 former British boxers brains were studied. The report, *The Aftermath of Boxing* was published in 1973 and produced conclusive evidence of the lasting cerebral damage that can be incurred from repeated blows to the head, and which can lead to loss of memory, speech disturbance, lack of balance, outbursts of violence and eventual dementia.

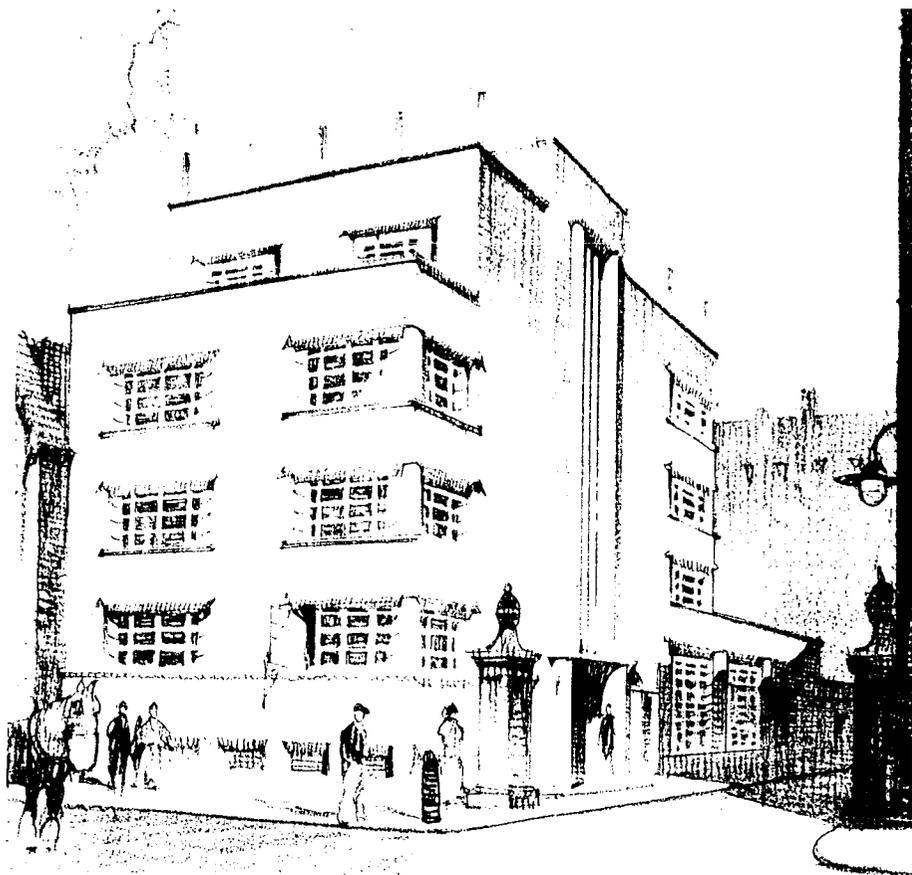
A SHORT HISTORY OF THE YOUTH SERVICE IN TOWER HAMLETS

Harold Finch

Growing up in the nineteenth century in East London for the ordinary boy and girl was a grim and serious business. There was not much fun. Childhood was short and children were expected at an early age to play their part in helping with the family income. An article in the *East London Record* (1992) (1) described the life and achievements of Frederick Rogers, bookbinder and trade unionist (1846-1915) who lived with his parents in Whitechapel. When he was ten, although not physically strong, he took a job as an ironmonger's boy, working twelve hours a day for two shillings a week. Gillian Wagner, in her biography of Dr Barnardo (2) records the incident at the Ragged School in Ernest Street, where the discovery that Jim Jarvis had no mother and no home, and was one of many living by their wits on the streets of Whitechapel, led to the founding of the East London Juvenile Mission in Hope Place, E1, later Dr Barnardo's Homes. Many children preferred life on the streets rather than in the workhouse, whose conditions were so graphically described by Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist*.

Most of the concern about children and young people at that time had come from Sunday Schools, Ragged Schools, Band of Hope and various evangelical institutions. They provided some leisure activities, in addition to the more serious evening activity of learning to read and write. Starting in the 1850s several 'Institutes' as they were called, had by 1870 been established in the East End, catering mainly for boys from 14-18 years. Games like chess, draughts, dominoes together with newspapers and magazines formed the first hour of the evening programme. The Drapers Company helped Henry Hill, a well known evangelical social worker, to open the Whitechapel Institute (now the Whitechapel Mission, then next to Whitechapel Station). There were facilities for reading and writing, a refreshment room, a gymnasium and two dormitories for those who needed accommodation. It was in 1870 that the Education Act of W.E. Forster was passed by Parliament, providing rudimentary education for all children, but not compulsory until 1880.

The need for girls' institutes and clubs at this time was less urgent because many girls were employed in resident domestic service, and there were preventative societies which existed to keep girls off the streets. There were, however, many girls who worked in shops and factories who required some form of evening recreation.



Brady Clubs, Hanbury Street, in 1938.

Fred Wright's interesting article in the *East London Record* (1990) (3) describes how F.C. Mills, a resident of Toynbee Hall, purchased 27, Broad Street, Stepney, and the shop next door to begin the Broad Street Club which opened its doors on 26 August 1886. The Broad Street Club was the first of seven, among them Paddy's Goose, Pell Street and High Street which formed the Highway Clubs in 1916. The Broad Street Club was a founder-member of the London Federation of Boys' Clubs formed in 1877. Other local boys' clubs formed between then and the end of the century were the Webbe Club, Bethnal

Green, associated with Oxford House (1888), Repton (1894), Brady, Whitechapel (1896) and Haileybury, Stepney (1896). Early twentieth century clubs included Stepney Jewish Lad's Club (1901), and Oxford and St George's at the Bernhard Baron Settlement (1914). In Poplar, Muriel and Doris Lester had begun a club for girls in 1903.

The opening of Toynbee Hall in 1884 made a great difference to social and educational work in Tower Hamlets. Canon Barnett had invited men from Oxford and Cambridge Universities who were coming to work in London to take up residence there and engage in social and educational work in the district, in their spare time. Those who came could see, at first hand, the conditions and deprivation prevailing at the time. Among the residents, apart from F.C. Mills, were C.R. Attlee, who became leader of Haileybury Club, and Basil Henriques, who with Rose, his wife, founded the Oxford and St George's clubs. (4)

The clubs provided a variety of activities; Fred Wright described those at Broad Street - drum and fife band, boxing, cross country running, football, cricket, swimming and gymnastics, together with chess, draughts, carpentry and wood carving.

In May 1908, Robert Baden-Powell published *Scouting for Boys* and a Toynbee group of Boy Scouts was formed only a few days afterwards. T.S. Lukis, at that time a medical student at St Bartholomew's Hospital, formed the group, which was quickly followed by a Jewish group, also associated with Toynbee Hall.

Scouting became a popular activity. Roland Phillips, appointed Scout Commissioner for East London in 1913, was killed in the battle of the Somme 1916. His family and friends developed his house at 29, Stepney Green, as scout headquarters and an activity centre. It also provided residential accommodation for young men involved in the movement. The house closed in 1982.

Organisations like the Boys' Bridge, the Church Lads' Brigade, and the Jewish Lads' Brigade began in 1890.

An important experiment was initiated by W.J. Braithwaite, also a Toynbee resident, who began a club at Northey Street, E.14, combining recreational and educational facilities, which continued for many years. This led eventually to the Recreational Institutes and later the Youth Centres, which had their own accommodation in secondary schools.

Clubs and other organisations continued on a voluntary basis until the outbreak of war in 1939, when the government, concerned about young people

with fathers away, published Circular 1486 giving permissive powers to Local Education Authorities to financially assist voluntary youth groups. The London County Council responded immediately by making grants available. They also gave help in indirect ways, such as the free use of school premises in the evenings and at other times. The Council also established the London Youth Committee and youth committees in each of the 28 metropolitan boroughs. Full time youth organisers were appointed to assist and develop the work in each of the nine education divisions.

In 1945, a report of the Youth Advisory Council (5), a national body appointed by the Minister of Education, defined the purpose of the youth service as 'to promote and provide an opportunity for participating in activities carried on in a community, different in its nature from school or work.' The report sought to bring a partnership between the voluntary organisations and the statutory education authorities.

In the 1950s there were a great many clubs and organisations offering a wide variety of activities. Within the then large Jewish community in Stepney there were several setting high standards of achievements in physical activity, drama, art and music. There was also great emphasis on member participation in club government.

In Stepney, there were Brady Boys' Club, Brady Girls' Club, Stepney Jewish Club, Stepney Jewish Lads' Club, Victoria, Butler Street, with Arbour, Haileybury, Vallance, Broad Street and St John Bosco. In Bethnal Green, Webbe, Repton, St Hilda's, Mansford, Friends Hall and New Cambridge. In Poplar there were Kingsley Hall, Frances Mary Buss House, Poplar Boys', Dockland Settlement and South Poplar Youth Club. In addition there were many smaller clubs in the churches.

Outstanding leaders included Miriam Moses, Phyllis Gerson, Yogi Mayer, Myer and Miriam Sopol, Florrie Passman, Winnie Taylor, Leslie Lynham, George Desert, Peter Duke, Merfyn Turner, Arthur Boor, Rosemary Sansom, Mary Turner, Gwen Rymer and Tom Derby.

In 1957, Sir William Houghton, Education Officer for the London County Council, initiated a survey of the youth service with the double objectives of finding the facts and producing a plan for its re-organisation and improvement. This was followed by the Albemarle Committee report which established the national youth service training course and recognised the needs of many young people not using the youth service. The London County Council, in its evidence to the committee, stated 'that the youth service should be regarded as an

important part of the education service, with the task of the all-round development of the young person'. (6)

The major re-organisation of the youth service in London, increased the number of youth officers, changed the recreational institutes into youth centres with their own accommodation in secondary schools, providing activities and support to the voluntary sector clubs. In a major innovation the Council would provide its own clubs. There was also an improvement in the system of grant-aid, and borough youth committees were given executive as well as advisory functions.

In 1964, the Stepney Youth Committee had been concerned about the needs of young people who were not attracted by what the clubs or other organisations had to offer. They invited a group of interested people to consider the value of a 'detached project' to try to reach more young people. As a result of their discussions and in co-operation with the London and Southern Area Young Womens' Christian Association, the community project 'Avenues Unlimited' was established. The management committee appointed two workers to explore the possibilities of developing the work. As a result, work was begun in Wapping and Spitalfields. The work in Wapping came to a conclusion with the renovation of the old fire station as a youth club, but the work in Spitalfields, which Derek Cox began, continues to this day. It was determined by the management committee that the work should be community based, and contact made and continued with existing clubs, schools, tenants' associations, families, and local social and community workers. In 1970, there was an expansion of the work. As more money became available, work was begun with young drug addicts, and the first worker, Ashok Basudev, was appointed to develop the work with the growing number of young people from Bangladesh who were arriving. A community worker, Clare Murphy, was appointed, and for a time there was a solicitor, Roy Mincoff, who helped young people having to make a court appearance.

The workers organised camping trips at weekends and at holiday times using sites at Lambourne End, belonging to the East End Mission, and Rickmansworth, belonging to the Highway Clubs, now owned by Toc H. A Camping Association was set up to enable a pool of equipment to be available and a co-ordinated timetable for use of the sites. Another development was the 'holiday projects' financed by the Inner London Education Authority and Tower Hamlets Council beginning in 1968. A series of outings and activities was arranged by local community groups. Avenues Unlimited were able to extend their activities to Old Ford. (7)



The 'Ellen Elizabeth'.

This was a time of much development. In 1976 the East London Marine Venture, a local group, with the youth service as partners, was able to establish a Water Centre at Shadwell Basin, offering a variety of activity, while the 'Ellen Elizabeth' a 120 foot Dutch Barge, equipped as a mobile residential centre for 14/15 young people, was able to explore the Thames, with teaching about navigation and living together in a confined space, under the leadership of Peter Wade.

A new club was opened in Limehouse, while others were renovated and brought up to a better standard, such as at St Paul with St Stephen Church, Saxon Road, Bow, Arbour in Stepney, and the Bow North Club, while detached workers were placed in needy area like Coventry Cross.

John Goodwin, a youth worker, brought up on a farm, was appointed to help develop the Urban Farm on the Mudchute on the Isle of Dogs, a popular venue for school visits and families. Great amusement was caused when the Youth Committee was asked to grant-aid the purchase of a cow, which it did.

A move forward in community education in London was made in 1973 with the opening of the Montefiore Centre in Hanbury Street. Use of the old primary school building was developed in partnership with the Adult Education

Institute to provide social and community amenities. The building also provided an office for the Spitalfields Project, formed to inject new life into the area.

The growing number of young people of Bangladeshi origin in the borough meant that special attention had to be given to encouraging leadership from within and providing buildings for them to meet. John Newbiggin and Caroline Adams, workers for Avenues Unlimited, together with Abbas Uddin and Peter East from Toc H. gained their confidence and were able to lead training courses.

With the shortage of qualified leaders in London, the Inner London Education Authority, with the help of Avery Hill College, arranged a training course over three years, for those leaders working full-time but unqualified. The course for a time was held at the Mile End Annexe of the College in English Street, later becoming part of Thames Polytechnic, now the University of Greenwich.

The London Training Group which had been responsible for training part-time leaders was abolished in 1978, and training became the responsibility of the youth officers, working in partnership with the full-time youth workers. Working on a community-based programme, a series of successful courses were held. A further development was the Arts Project or 'A' team formed in 1978, designed to provide and encourage youth groups to develop art and craft activities. The team, based at the Limehouse Club, would visit a group for several weeks, and then move elsewhere. Assistance was also given to Holiday Projects.

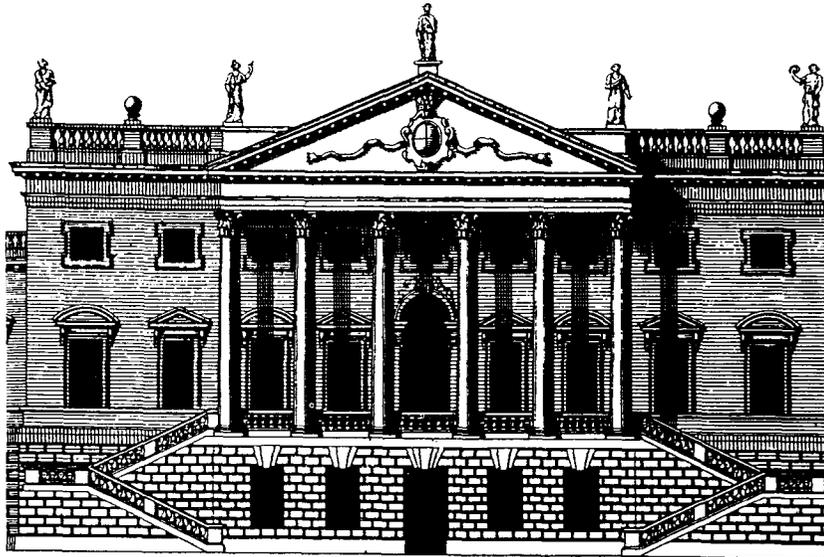
In 1979, the Play Centres and Junior Clubs, in existence since 1905 and taken over by the London County Council in 1941, were integrated into the youth service, and a youth officer appointed to oversee and develop them. Special schemes were arranged in addition to the ordinary games and activities, e.g. for the disabled, music, and 'mother tongue' classes.

The Youth Service in Tower Hamlets began in the nineteenth century, because of the concern for the needs of young people. It was later supported by the education authority and recognized as part of the education service. Over the years a large number of young people have benefitted in many ways, extending interests and achievements. Much of this has been due to the dedicated work of so many leaders, voluntary and paid.

In 1990, with the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority, Tower Hamlets Council became responsible for the education service. It must be hoped that the youth service will continue, as in the past.

NOTES

1. *East London Record* No 15 (1992).
2. Wagner, Gillian. *Barnado*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979.
3. *East London Record* No 13 (1990).
4. Briggs, A. & A. Macartney. *Toynbee Hall*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.
5. Ministry of Education. *The Purpose and Content of the Youth Service*. HMSO, 1945.
6. *London Youth Committee Commemorative Booklet 1940-1990*. ILEA.
7. Cox, D. *A community approach to Youth Work in East London*. YMCA, 1970.



This engraving of Wanstead House comes from Colen Campbell's Vitruvius Britannicus, published in 1725, and is reproduced on the cover of Denis F. Keeling's Wanstead House: The Owners and Their Books (Wanstead Historical Society, 81 Warren Road, E11 2LU). In the 54 page booklet the author has examined the sale catalogue for the books (they were sold in 1822 and the house demolished two years later) of the library of nearly 5,000 volumes. His knowledge of the family and his understanding of books - he is sometimes as illuminating on what was not in the collection as on what is - make this a highly entertaining read, and at £1.50 plus 50p post and packing, the publication bargain of the year.

HACKNEY SCHOOLBOY FOOTBALL IN THE 'THIRTIES

Les Jolly

I had sworn at my Aunt Rose.

I was nearly six years old.

I was to be punished!

My punishment?

I would not be allowed to accompany my uncles to the next home game played at the old Millfields, Homerton, ground of Clapton Orient.

I quickly learned two lessons. One, life was very unfair. Nobody in the family liked Aunt Rose; I had spoken out and received an immediate one - match suspension. Not even a caution! Number two was that in future I should consider the consequences before I spoke. Though Orient were not the greatest team of the decade, I enjoyed going to see them play. This, together with my supply of Park Drive, Players and Wills cigarette cards gave me such an early start in the field of football knowledge that I was often able to provide the answers to the many football disputes within my family.

Though times were hard for us, as for many others in the East End in the 'thirties, one thing I did manage to get hold of and keep was a football. Like most kids interested in football, whenever there was a spare moment I was out in the garden with the ball and later out in the street with it until it was nearly dark. All I needed was a ball, 'goalposts' chalked on the wall and a vivid imagination. One moment I was Jack Townrow from the Orient intercepting a pass, then down the garden and I was Dixie Dean of Everton shooting for goal, then back to the other end, kick the ball against the wall, make a brilliant save from the rebound and I was Ted Hufton of West Ham. By the time I was called indoors I had played for half a dozen different clubs and was never once on the losing side!

You will have gathered that by this time I had arrived at Daubeney Road School and was keen on football. Not very good, but enthusiastic. Being too young to get into the school team in my first year, I used to go to watch them when they were playing on Hackney Marsh and long for the time when I, too, might be wearing the yellow and black strip.

At that time the school had a period for 'organised games' which on

dry days used to take place on an open space to the rear of Daubeney Road near the wood yard and timber mill. In my mind I can still hear the buzz of the saws and smell the wood as it was sliced through to make long planks to be stacked and 'weathered' before being loaded on to barges. Daubeney Road School were having a great deal of success with their sporting activities during this period, winning the Hackney schools' football league championship on four consecutive occasions in the early thirties as well as the cricket cup two years running.

The football matches were played mainly during the lunch break which was between twelve o'clock and two (the school hours then were nine to half twelve and two to half four). At this level (aged under eleven) the duration of play was 20 to 25 minutes each way, so matches were always completed in time to resume school at two o'clock. At senior level, school matches were 35 minutes



The Daubeney Road boys were Hackney League champions for three successive seasons in the 'thirties. Left to right, back row: Mr. Elliot (headmaster), Mr. Hunter, Mr. Chapman; team, back row: Soar, Carter, Walker; middle row: Whiston, Noble, Slack; front row: Cowup, Ebert, Knight, Rawling, Jolly. Noble and Rawlings later earned amateur caps for England.

each way. This usually meant leaving school at quarter to twelve and being allowed back at around ten past two, to the envy of non-players in the class!

Away games were more difficult and would sometimes involve a bus journey to Hackney Downs or Springfield Park. This was usually alright, but sometimes a miserable bus conductor wouldn't let all the team on his bus and we had to wait on the pitch until the next bus brought the missing players. On reflection, opposing teams must have been pretty sporting, because I suppose they could have demanded that we kick-off at the correct time. It must have been doubly annoying for them to have sportingly waited and then get beaten four or five nil! Other pitches, besides those named already, where school matches took place were Mabley Green, Victoria Park, Well Street Common, Millfields and, if you were lucky enough to be in the Hackney schools' district team, fixtures took place at the Eton Manor ground or sometimes at Clapton Orient's ground, both when the club was at Homerton and (after 1930) at Lea Bridge Road.

Pitches varied in quality, with that used by Mandeville Road School without doubt the worst. Situated behind the Orient ground (later Clapton Greyhound Stadium) and adjacent to the Hackney Electricity Power Station, the 'pitch' was of crushed cinders, originally from the power station, and as well as getting us players filthy dirty, it played hell with the leather ball, with cut elbows and knees a regular sight. No wonder the poor goalkeepers were reluctant to dive for the ball, countering the abuse from irate team mates with 'Well, why don't you come in goal then?' No one accepted such offers!

Berger Road School's ground on Well Street Common was another bad pitch, being hard, gritty and bumpy, with uncut tufts of grass over it. Our own 'home' pitches on Mabley Green and Hackney Marsh tended to be very heavy going, except in the really cold weather, when the pitches would firm up a lot. Although it was good to play 'at home', this always entailed having to collect and erect the goal posts. These were collected from sheds at the edge of the field and were full size posts of 8 foot (2.40 metres) with a crossbar 8 yards (7.20 metres) wide and sometimes had to be carried a long way, depending on which pitch we had been allocated. Fortunately there were no goal nets or corner flags to carry in addition! I often think how ridiculous it was to have full size goals for lads of ten or eleven. What chance had a boy of that age of stopping a ball under the 8 foot crossbar? No wonder high scores were often recorded. The wonder was that some of these 'keepers didn't become discouraged, and many went on to play in higher circles.

There were no showers or washing facilities at any of the grounds, so if

the pitch was wet you got covered in mud and if it rained you got covered in mud *and* wet. If this happened and you had a mum like me, you were threatened with not being allowed to play again. Can you imagine it? 'Why aren't you playing, Jolly?' 'My mum says I'm not to play in the rain.'

No boy in the school would ever have spoken to me civilly again. I suffered under the twin disadvantages of being an only child (when most of the lads were from large families) and of fair curly hair (when most of the lads had 'tupenny all offs'). The 'tupenny all off' was an almost shaved head but with a fringe and had the advantages of being cheap and taking a long while to grow again, thus saving a few coppers of the household budget. Stuck with my disadvantages, I pleaded with my uncle, who did all the family haircutting, for a 'Gillespie' haircut, but with no success. (Billy Gillespie played for Sheffield United and was completely bald).

When I was at school 'tactics' and 'team talks' didn't figure very highly in preparation for matches. In most instances all that happened was that the sports master would gather the team around him and say something like this: 'Right, lads, today we are playing... School. I want you to get stuck in, but play fairly. There will be no questioning of the referee's decisions, and remember three cheers for your opponents after the match.' All very well as far as it goes. However, imagine the scene in a frantic goalmouth scramble and the ball goes over the line right near the goalpost. Remember, there were no nets, the defending side would claim, 'It was just outside, ref.' while the attackers were equally sure, 'It was just inside, ref.' I can assure you that many goalscorers just could not contain themselves if the 'goal' was not given. Dire threats of being reported to 'sir' and of getting the 'stick' (the cane) if this did not stop immediately usually restored order. The required three cheers for opponents, also, were not always forthcoming, especially after a game where we were beaten. More like three mutters!

Added to all this there was still the job of taking the goalposts down and carrying them all the way back to the shed. Looking back, I can see that we must have been keen on the game to have played under these conditions. But really we thought ourselves lucky to have actually had goalposts and a proper pitch to play on. The rest of the week's football games were played in the road with coats put down to act as 'goalposts'. You can imagine the arguments when the ball went over a coat. Was it in or did it just miss? The verdict in such disputes usually depended on size: the decision always seemed to go in the bigger boy's favour. I wonder why!

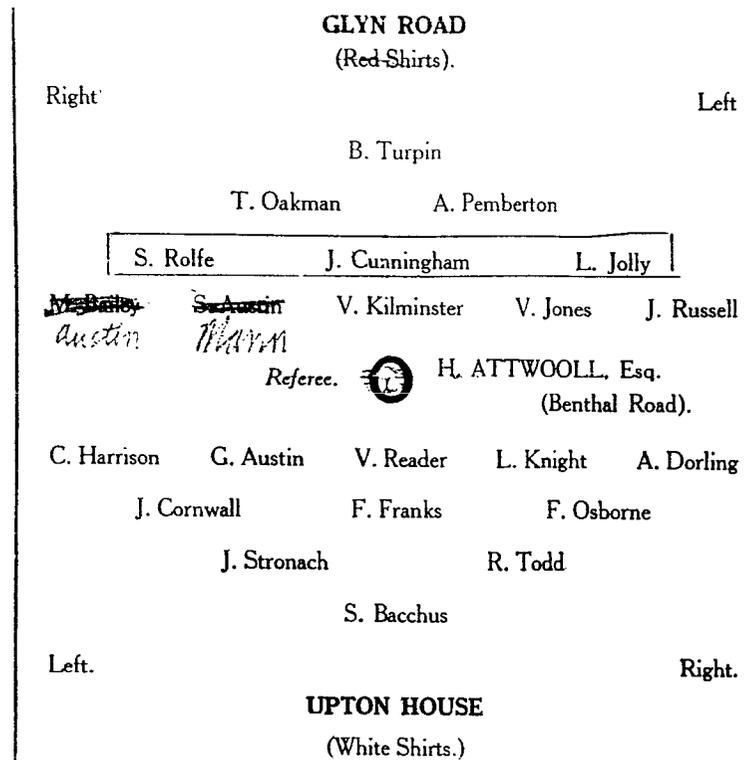
Before concluding this short piece I should mention the role of the sports



Glyn Road School, Hackney Schools' Charity Shield winners in 1937. Team, back row, left to right: Rolfe, Oakman, Mann, Turpin, Pemberton, Bailey, Kilminster; front row: Austin, Jones, Cunningham, Russell, Jolly.

masters and their assistants. At both schools I attended - Daubeney Road and Glyn Road - the masters gave a lot of their free time to coaching the team, organising fixtures, travelling to matches and running the team. This took place not only at lunchtimes but for those masters involved with the district team there were engagements after school and at week-ends. They must have been dedicated men, something that many of us failed to appreciate at the time. I can only speak for myself, but I know that having been shown how to trap the ball and head it correctly for long sessions in the playground, I became a better player. I can hear one master to this day saying, 'Get in there, Jolly, you'll never get hurt if you tackle right. Do it, lad, do it!' He was proved right.

I left school in 1937, but wanting to continue my sporting activities I applied to join the Eton Manor Club. A month's satisfactory probation had to be served before one was accepted for membership. No one was allowed to join before reaching 14 or after 16. You then became a club member for life. During the probation period attendances were monitored and appearances at various



Part of the programme for the Hackney Schools' Charity Shield final at Clapton Orient's ground in 1937. The half backs on the Glyn Road team were boxed in when Les was explaining the tactics of those days to a younger generation! He would like to hear from any surviving members of the teams listed here (or from anyone in the photographs) through the editor, address inside front cover.

activities noted. One could not just be a footballer or a cricketer. All round sportsmen were required. Besides football and cricket there was boxing, tennis, rugby, swimming, athletics, a rifle club and even a concert party. Indoor activities included billiards, chess, fencing, table-tennis and there was a gym and a debating society. So there was not much excuse for non-attendance. It is easy to see why the club, with its comfortable buildings in Riseholme Street (now demolished), became a second home for many of us.

After a few years there, when many of my former opponents in schoolboy matches had become my team-mates in the various Eton Manor elevens, I was called into the army and had to take part in an away fixture in Burma against Japan, which, I am happy to report, we won.

STATUS SEEKERS IN A GRAND HOUSE: 221 STEPNEY GREEN

C.J. Lloyd

Within the medical world of the 1890s the cries to protect patients from the activities of unqualified and unregistered health practitioners became more frequent. Orthodox and long-trained members of the medical profession expressed their anxieties in the *British Medical Journal* and *The Lancet*. The erosion of their practical monopoly of patient care was a threat to their high fees which would surely fall with the emergence of competitors.

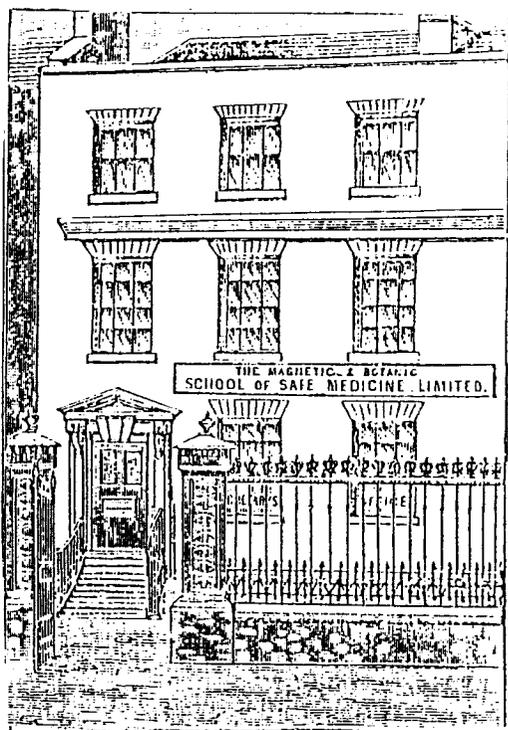
Patients were sometimes prepared to be more sceptical of allopathic remedies and those who were able to read found an increasing number of cheap tracts to be useful and informative. Orthodox practitioners united in their condemnation of the advertising of the secrets of their skills. Those who were ailing discovered there were diverse and sometimes successful alternative treatments; chiropractics, osteopathy, hypnotism, magnetism, dietetics, herbalism, homeopathy, nature curing and hydrophaty, to name but a few.

The Medical Act of 1858 was used by the medical authorities to maintain tightly controlled regulations and these made many specialists poor and powerless in their attempts to change the established system. Without a registered medical qualification from an officially approved medical college, fees were not payable for appearances at coroner's courts. Death certificates were not legal documents unless signed by qualified medical practitioners. Registered medical practitioners had the right to refuse to assist and advise unregistered practitioners.

A few of the unorthodox healers pressed for reform of the established set of rules. In East London a group of supporters of medical herbalism and organic magnetism methods decided to raise the status of their profession by establishing a training college in 1892 at 21 Stepney Green.

The Medico-Botanic Training College of Great Britain originally operated in West Kensington at 432 Fulham Road (Dec 1891-May 1892) and at the time Reverend Veryman Trimming, M.A. of Battersea, SW, believed this was a good way to bring together and strengthen the British and International Association of Eclectic and Medical Botanists with others. Students, he wrote, could receive training in the same manner, as any other profession and ultimate object was to have the College granting a diploma which would be a recognised credential for practice as a medical botanist in any part of the United Kingdom.

The Magnetic and Botanic School of Safe Medicine Ltd, as the college later became known in 1892 at the time of its incorporation, declared its object to be to found a school of natural medicine to prove that 'all the ills which flesh is heir to can be cured without the aid of vegetable and mineral poisons, at the same time demonstrating the cures brought about by animal magnetism scientifically applied'. Treatment was based on the principles of using various natural forces to cure diseases and to alleviate pain. A diploma was issued to successfully examined pupils, and postal tuition was also provided. Publicity for the movement from 1891-94 came in the form of the journals *The Light of Day* and *The Magnetic and Botanic Journal*, and these carried frequent articles concerning the anti-vaccination campaign and alternative systems of healing.



The 'School' at 21 Stepney Green.

Lists appeared of people 'pledged to supply genuine botanic preparations at as low prices as possible.' The Hon Sec of the College in Stepney Green, who later became one of its directors, was 27 year old Charles Gapp, Ph.D. a herbal practitioner at 104 Green Street, Bethnal Green. He dealt with the tutorial secretarial work from that address until transferring it to the College in Stepney Green after May 1892.

The College soon found a platform for their cause for a higher status for the profession, with a court case balanced upon the point of recognition of the College's qualification M.D.(Botanic). In the new periodical *The Magnetic and Botanic Journal* edited by the president of the College, D Younger M.D.(US), a herbalist of 20 New Oxford Street, the College appealed to readers to raise money for a fighting fund to help one of its students who qualified there on 15 August 1893. This was Joseph Steel M.D.(Botanic), of Durham, who appealed in the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court of Justice on 10 May 1894 against a prosecution for wilfully and falsely taking the title of Doctor of Medicine, thereby implying that he was registered under the Medical Act. For 20 years he had studied natural sciences during the evenings after labouring as a miner, in order to become a magnetic and botanic physician and for the last ten years was in practice. The appeal was dismissed. In an open letter to the journal the College President called for the reversal of the judgement of Hon Mr Justice Wright, stating that the College had obtained the licence from the Board of Trade to use the letters M.D.(Bc), and to award the diplomas. In court he stated that the General Council for Safe Medicines which issued the certificates was in 1893 duly incorporated and registered under the Companies Act of 1882.

By the end of 1894 the activities of the enterprise were probably diminishing, its journal having ceased and the organisation seems to have been conducted from 20 Oxford Street, with a free dispensary being set up in the Workman's Institute next to Holborn Town Hall in Gray's Inn Road.

The present occupants of 21-23 Stepney Green, Circle Industries plc, a construction company, believe the property was largely rebuilt after war damage. None of the original internal features have survived.

Notes on sources:

1. The Royal Botanic Gardens Library, Inverleith Row, Edinburgh has *The Light of Day* published 1891-92 and *The Magnetic and Botanic Journal*, published 1893-94, which can be found in one volume. Many issues of the former title are undated and unnumbered.
2. Steel v.Ormsby, *The Times*, 11 May 1894 - No. 34261 p14b.

AN EAST LONDON BUSINESS

E.J. Erith

Although I was born in 1907 in Filey Avenue, Clapton, within the parish of Hackney, my father moved from that address when I was three weeks old to what he considered the more salubrious surroundings of Sutton in Surrey. Nevertheless my family has been connected with East London since early in the nineteenth century until, to some extent, the present day.

My grandfather had told me that his great-grandfather had married in Sudbury in Suffolk a girl named Sarah Heard and by her had twenty-two children. It was not until long after his death that I was able to find confirmation of this statement. The Bishop's Transcripts for St. Peters in that town record that John Ercyth married Sarah, then a minor, on 1 November 1754, both signing the register with an X indicating their illiteracy. Of their children I have only traced eight; presumably many of them died in infancy as was usual at the time. At least three of his sons came to Hackney about 1800, no doubt lured by the good wages to be earned in the market gardens which catered for the rapidly increasing population of London. All were described as gardeners. Isaac married firstly in 1801 Elizabeth Swadling, spinster, of Hackney about 1800, who died soon afterwards. His second wife was Anne Ratcliffe, a young schoolmistress from Sunderland which no doubt enabled Isaac and his brothers to attain some measure of literacy. He lived at Hartwells Cottages in Dalston and died at 4 Princes Terrace, Bethnal Green, in 1863, said to be aged 97 although earlier census returns suggest he would have been 94. My grandfather remembered his great-uncle as 'a tall upright old man, his wife exceedingly stout.' His son Charles Ratcliffe Erith was said to have had seven children all born in India but only two unmarried daughters survived to old age. My father found them living in straitened circumstances in Homerton and did his best to help them.

George Erith, baptized at Bulmer in 1778, married at Hackney in 1803 Hannah Brackett, then of Lambeth. She was born in Sudbury, so presumably George had become betrothed to her before he came to London, waiting to marry until he had gained good employment in the market gardens. He died in 1840 in the Sudbury Union House from 'fever' according to his death certificate, so it must be assumed that he had become unemployed, perhaps through illness, and so a charge on the Hackney Guardians, who exercised their rights under the Settlement Acts to send him back to his place of birth. Hannah died in Islington aged 92, having borne seven children of whom George was born in

1808. In the 1841 census this second George was said to be living in Hartwells cottages near his uncle Isaac and then described as a clerk.

We know that in 1825 he gained employment with a very substantial builder named Hobson whose office was in the Kingsland Road. This Hobson seems to have built all over London and to that end had acquired wharves at Scotland Yard and Southwark to which barges could bring bricks and lime from the Medway and to these he added two more with the opening of the Regents Canal in 1820 at Paddington and Cambridge Heath. It was at the latter where George became in charge and his son (my grandfather) told of his daily walk to Kingsland Road with the cash takings and to bring back the wages. He described him as a small but very tough man. It must be remembered that at that time the only means of transporting heavy goods over any distance was by water and for that reason the wharf at Vyner Street was an important point for Hobson. He was said to have become a millionaire and in 1845 decided to give up his business activities and put up all his wharfs for sale by auction. George Erith during his twenty years service must have been prudent enough to accumulate a fair amount of capital for he was able to bid successfully for the wharf at Cambridge Heath and start to trade on his own account and so found the firm of builders' merchants now known as Erith plc. About 1834 he had married Grace Haynes and in 1836 she gave birth to a son, Henry George, who in due course was taken into partnership with his father, trading as George Erith & Son.

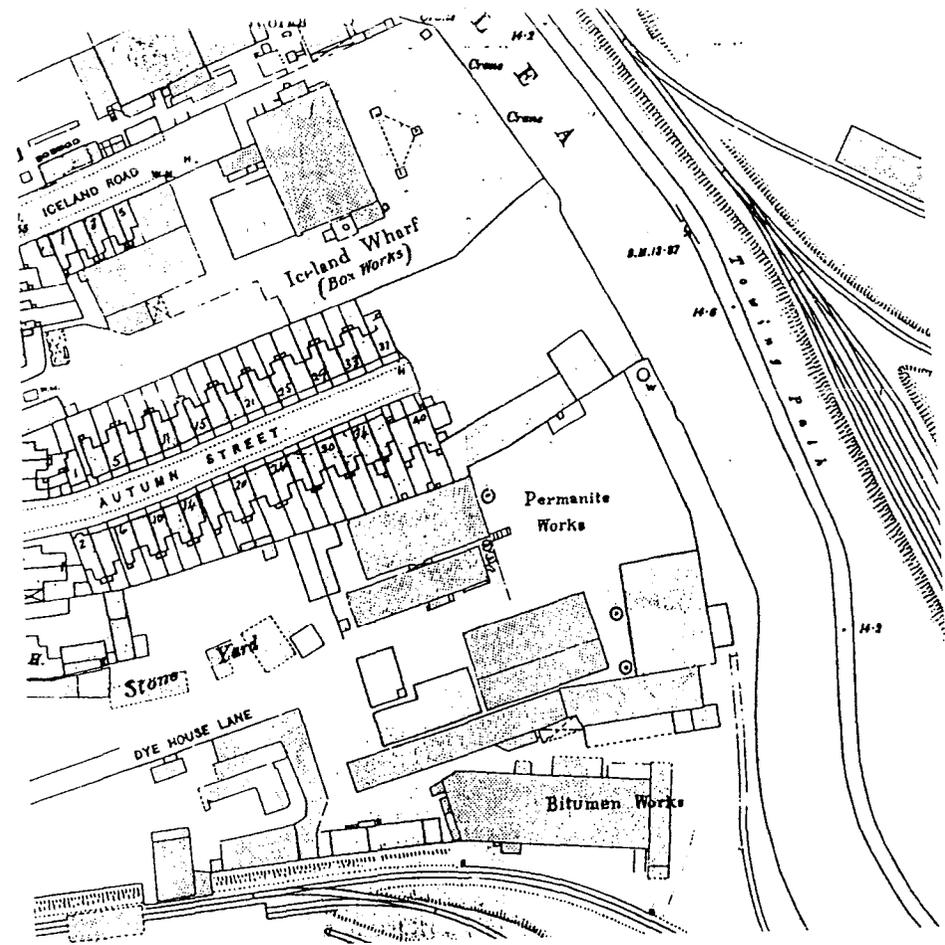
The building trade has always been notorious for its ups and downs and the two Eriths, father and son, has their experience of good and bad times. There is a record of them having to take a block of houses into their hands from a builder in order to get settlement for goods they have supplied. Unfortunately no records have survived in the Company from those times. However, many years ago I had an elderly customer who told me that his father had been supplied with bricks by the Eriths for his work in building martello towers which must have been a most satisfactory order. Barges were still used to bring bricks into the wharf until the 1930s but this traffic became far less important with the coming of the railways. I myself remember seeing barges unloaded; a regular gang of sturdy men was contracted for the task which would take two days to complete. The usual load was 30,000 bricks which would be thrown up by a man in the barge four or five at a time and caught by one of his fellows on the wharf. This required considerable skill and strength especially when the bricks had to be thrown up from the bottom of the barge towards the end of the unloading.

George Erith died in 1892 and meanwhile my grandfather, Henry George, had married Isabel, daughter of Joseph Nichols, Chief Accountant of the General Steam Navigation Company. 'H.G.' as we all knew him, was a strict Baptist and a stalwart of the Meeting House in Bethnal Green. He was also a Justice of the Peace for Middlesex. He was well known for his charitable work but no easy touch in that direction. If any mendicant came to him with a hard luck story, he would only help after stringent enquiries as to its veracity. As a Governor of the Orphanage at Snaresbrook he had the right of nominating pupils and here again he took immense care to ensure the case was a deserving one.

With the coming of the railways in the second half of the nineteenth century competition for business in the building trade became ever more fierce. Nearly every station had its goods yard, with coal and builders' merchants renting land beside the sidings on which to stack their wares, most of which could be stored in the open although some goods such as cement and plaster needed to be protected from the weather in sheds. No longer were supplies of materials limited to local manufacturers or to what could be conveyed by water. Now the railways could bring into their sidings building materials from anywhere in the country. It is true that deliveries could still only be delivered to sites within five or six miles of a merchant's depot but now that area could contain perhaps a dozen or more other merchants' yards and competition became intense, making business less and less profitable. 'H.G.' became so concerned that he contacted some of the firm's more important competitors to form the Builders' Merchants Alliance with the aim of controlling prices. Fortunately for all concerned there was no legislation to prevent such actions which would today be illegal.

Of his sons, Henry Charles (my father) and George did not join their father in business but formed their own engineering business; Arthur went to South Africa to seek his fortune but not meeting with much success returned to set up his own builders' merchants business in the goods yard in the Old Ford Road at Bow; only Herbert, who was somewhat retarded mentally joined his father who had recently opened branches in the goods yard at Cricklewood and in premises at Leytonstone. To cope with the supplies now coming in by rail a piece of ground was rented in the sidings at Hackney Downs station. Until recently the railway companies would never on any account consider selling the freehold of any of their massive property holdings. In 1903 Arthur agreed to join forces with his father to form a limited company as Erith & Co. Ltd. For twenty years this traded sufficiently well to pay the Directors enough to live on in reasonable comfort leaving a small profit. Then, as so often happens in family businesses, differences of opinion arose among the Board. This started

when Arthur proposed to install a crane on the wharf at Cambridge Heath to make it possible for the Company's own staff to unload barges and so dispense with the hired gangs. This was bitterly opposed by 'H.G.' who was backed by Herbert, leading to solicitors being employed on both sides. However, peace was eventually restored and in 1927 I was invited by my uncle Arthur to join the Company. Unfortunately he had become very depressed and really did not know what to do with me and so I decided to pass the time by becoming a clerk at the Bow depot and this was the time I really had experience of East London.



The site of the Bow yard in 1937.

My duties included taking my turn on the early shift seeing the carts off to make their deliveries which had been arranged the previous afternoon. In the same goods yard open trucks were shunted in containing loads of bones for Yardley's soap works. These provided enticing nourishment for thousands of bluebottles many of which found their way into the office. In the mornings it was the practice of the first arrival to unlock the office door and step back as the door opened to avoid the numerous pests making their escape. It was always possible to ascertain the wind direction by what one could smell. From the west it was that of rotting bones and from the east that of a rubber works. Only from the north was the atmosphere reasonably fresh. At the time Bow depot specialised in firebricks and I think only one other merchant in London had such a comprehensive stock. At the time there were many factories in the area which generated their own steam power and their boilers required lining with a multitude of firebricks of varying shapes and sizes. In addition supplies of what were known as firesavers were stocked. These came in sets of three which were placed on each side and at the back of domestic fireplaces, the idea being by making the size of them smaller thus saving fuel. A catalogue was circulated to ironmongers of all the different shapes and patterns and a representative was employed to call on them. Even stone hot water bottles were included.

In those days merchants were divided into what were known as light or heavy side, the former stocking ironmongery and sanitary ware and the latter bricks, cement, lime, plaster, stoneware pipes and roofing tiles. Erith was a predominantly heavy merchant, entailing the use of some twenty horses and carts. I remember going with my uncle Arthur to a farm at Abridge to buy horses and he acquired a fair skill in selecting animals. He had also purchased a few ex-army motor lorries and was one of the first merchants to experiment with this form of transport. They were usually more than well-worn and susceptible to breakdowns and heavy bills for repairs. Busy London roads were then usually paved with granite setts which gave horses a better grip than tarmacadam. Iron shoes and iron rimmed wheels on horse drawn vehicles made the streets sufficiently noisy for hospitals to put down straw on the road outside their doors as a silencer. Another hazard of those times was fog which, with factories and virtually every household burning coal, could be almost impenetrable. As a car driver I found that these fogs were the only time I blessed the tramlines for providing some sort of guide. Even so, one had to have a good memory to choose the right line when encountering junctions; on several occasions I made the wrong choice and became hopelessly lost.

One of the most objectionable events encountered in the east side of London was travel on the old Great Eastern Railway on the loop line from

Liverpool Street to Woodford and Ilford which I had to experience on many occasions. It must have been just about the dirtiest line in the country. In the rush hours each compartment's passengers were seated six a side with up to eight standing. Every three compartments had divisions which did not reach the roof so that one could converse with one's neighbours in the next compartment. I remember gangs of three songsters who would enter the central of the three and provide so-called entertainment, pass the hat round over the divisions and at the next station get out and take themselves to the next set of three. Most passengers regarded them as a nuisance but some must have given them something because they were there every day. I remember one day when I was about eleven years old I happened to be in an empty compartment when a number of Board School children entered the next one. In due course a hand came over the division and removed my smart preparatory school cap with its badge. I was apprehensive as to how I was going to recover it when fortunately one of their number realised the enormity of the offence against a 'toff' and threw it back.

One of the disadvantages of railway deliveries was caused by the violent shunting into merchants' sidings. Burst bags of cement and plaster were commonplace and stoneware pipes, which were far less robust than they are today, were particularly vulnerable. It must be admitted that the rail companies rarely made difficulties in settling claims. We needed strong men in our yards,



head offices, 530 High road, Leytonstone
 E11 (T N LEYtonstone 1151 [10 lines]);
 depots at Bow, Midland wharf E3 (T N
 ADVance 1894); Leytonstone, 526 to 528
 High road E11 (T N LEYtonstone 2231
 [2 lines]); Cambridge Heath, Bridge
 wharf E2 (T N ADVance 4201 [2 lines]);
 Cripplewood, L. M. & S. Railway goods
 station NW2 (T N GLADstone 1091 [4
 lines]); Metropolitan Railway, Eastcote,
 Middlesex (T N PINner 2828 [2 lines]);
 Metropolitan & L. & N. E. Railways,
 Watford (T N Watford 4488 [2 lines]);
 L. M. & S. Railway, Elstree (T N Elstree
 1146); Station approach, Radlett (T N
 Radlett 6226); S. Railway, Staines (T N
 Staines 2388) & 174 Millbrook rd. South-
 ampton—T N Soton 71073

A trades directory entry in 1947.

for cement was delivered in jute sacks, eleven to the ton. Thus a 10 ton load comprised 112 sacks, which gave a bonus of two sacks when the load was delivered out in smaller portions. With each bag weighing 200lbs they took some lifting, although I do remember one Ginger Turner who could lift two at a time. Another perk for merchants was the fact that sacks were charged at 1s.9p each to customers and credited at 1s.7¹/₂p each when returned empty. As sacks could be bought in bulk at about 2¹/₂ p each and could be used time and time over again this was a useful profit to merchants. Every depot had a sack mender repairing more or less broken sacks to ensure that the utmost use could be made of them. Unfortunately, one of the cement makers started providing free paper bags and perforce all the others had to follow suit and this bonus came to an end.

It was not long after I joined the Company that both my grandfather and my uncle Arthur died, leaving the latter's widow as Chairman. Soon after I left Bow to replace Herbert, who had become mentally unstable, as Secretary at the Head Office in Leytonstone. With virtually no top level management it was fortunate that Sidney Garner, who had been outstandingly successful as manager of the Leytonstone branch, forced his way on to the Board as Managing Director. One of his first steps was to make an arrangement with the Tunnel Cement Co. to collect cement at a favourable price from their works at Thurrock rather than leaving them to deliver to our depots and customers on their own vehicles. He then scrapped Erith's expensive ex-army lorries and replaced them with new 6 ton Swiss Saurer lorries which could pull an additional 6 tons on a trailer behind them. It may be mentioned that all commercial vehicles were then fitted with solid rubber tyres because pneumatic tyres had not reached a standard good enough to cope with heavy loads. This proved a highly profitable move and justified the large expense which had caused consternation among the remaining Directors. Garner soon opened several new branches and Erith & Co. ceased to be regarded as a predominantly East London merchant. It is now a Public Company serving some twelve counties in South-East England. The original depot at Cambridge Heath has since been sold as being redundant since the demise of commercial traffic on the canals. Bow and Leytonstone remain in being and a new branch in Docklands has since been opened.

THE BURIAL GROUNDS OF BACKCHURCH LANE, WHITECHAPEL

Bruce Watson

The district of Whitechapel derives its name from the parish church of St Mary Matfelon; originally it was a chapel of Stepney parish. By 1329 this 'Whitechapel' had become a church with its own parish, reflecting the growing importance of the area as a London suburb, long before the 18th century, when large areas of farmland were transformed into a dense mosaic of streets, houses and industrial premises.

This rapid population growth was reflected in the establishment of a number of new cemeteries within the Whitechapel area. These private cemeteries were referred to as burial grounds because of their nondenominational status. In fact these were speculative ventures, which took advantage of the fact that all the small parochial cemeteries were grossly overcrowded. One of these new burial grounds lay between Backchurch Lane and Gower's Walk, on the south side of Commercial Road (see the plan, site A).

In 1993 the area of the Backchurch Lane burial ground was evaluated by the Museum of London Archaeological Service, in advance of the proposed redevelopment of the site (Watson, 1993). The extent of the burial ground was determined during this evaluation, so that it could be preserved, undisturbed, as parking or open-space within the new housing development.

The Backchurch Lane Burial Ground

On the Roque map of 1745 the area of the burial ground is shown as a number of small plots of arable land, but both Backchurch Lane (then called Church Lane) and Gower's Walk (a trackway) are shown. The earliest reliable date for the existence of the burial ground comes from a headstone dated 1776, discovered during the evaluation (see Appendix One). There is an unsubstantiated claim that the burial ground was in use in 1763 (Holmes, 1896;297). However, it is possible that this may refer to Cain's burial ground, further south along Backchurch Lane (discussed later).

On the Horwood map of 1799 the area of the burial ground is marked as an unlabelled area of open land. On the 1819 edition of this map the same plot is marked as 'Burial Ground' (1). By this date most of the street frontage around the burial ground was occupied by buildings. Along the Backchurch Lane street frontage the evaluation excavations revealed remains of a late 17th or early

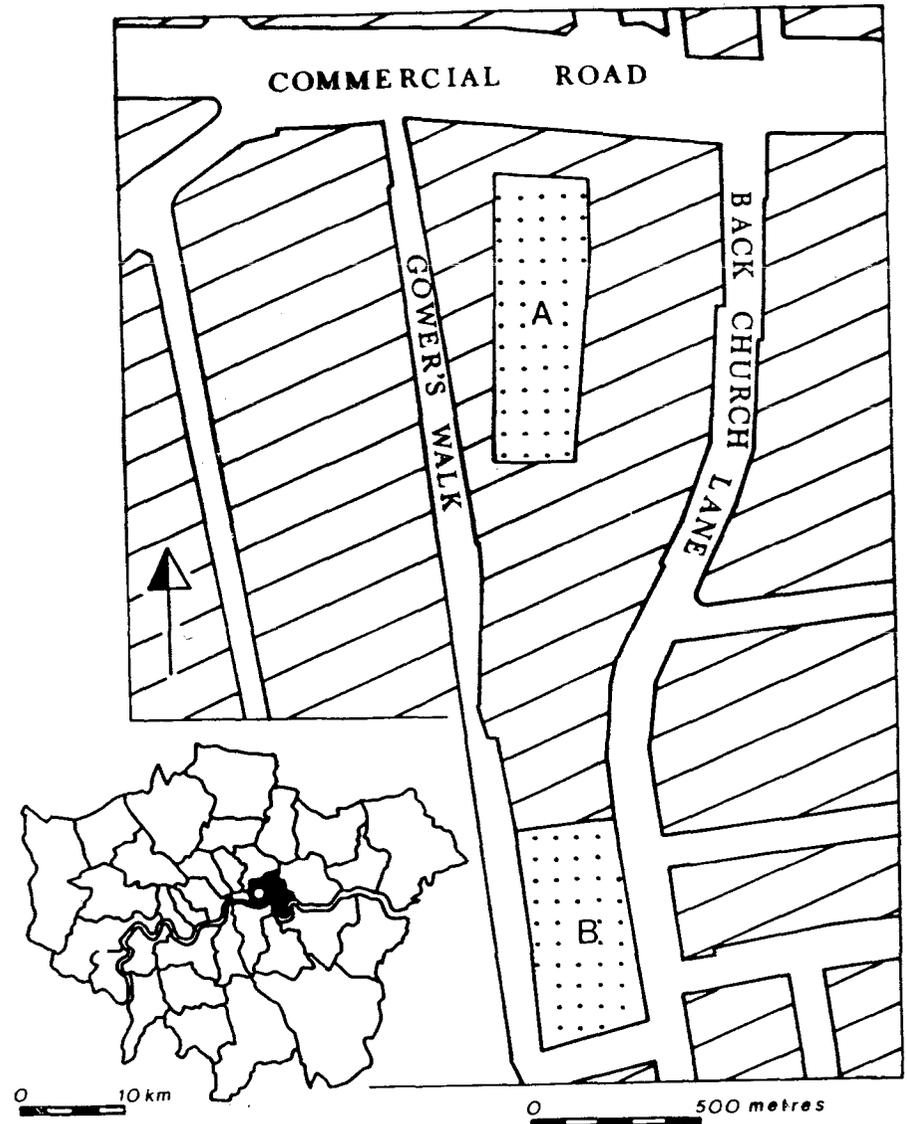
18th century brick building, together with a well probably of early 19th century date. Excavations along the Gower's Walk street frontage revealed the remains of a brick-built cellared building of late 17th or early 18th century date, and an 18th century rubbish pit line with cattle horn cores.

In 1823 the interment of a Lascar (probably a sailor in the service of the East India Company) was recorded at 'Britton's Burial-ground, Church Lane'(2). In 1825 this site was the scene of drama, when a man was almost buried alive. His wife had died at the London Infirmary from fever, but she had 'marks of violence about her face'. A crowd of some 8,000-10,000 people attended the interment with the intention of burying the husband too, in the belief that he had battered his wife to death. 'The poor fellow struggled with all his might and roared out lustily for assistance; and fortunately at this moment a body of officers, belonging to Lambeth Street Police rushed forward to save him from the dreadful sentence that awaited him...' (3).

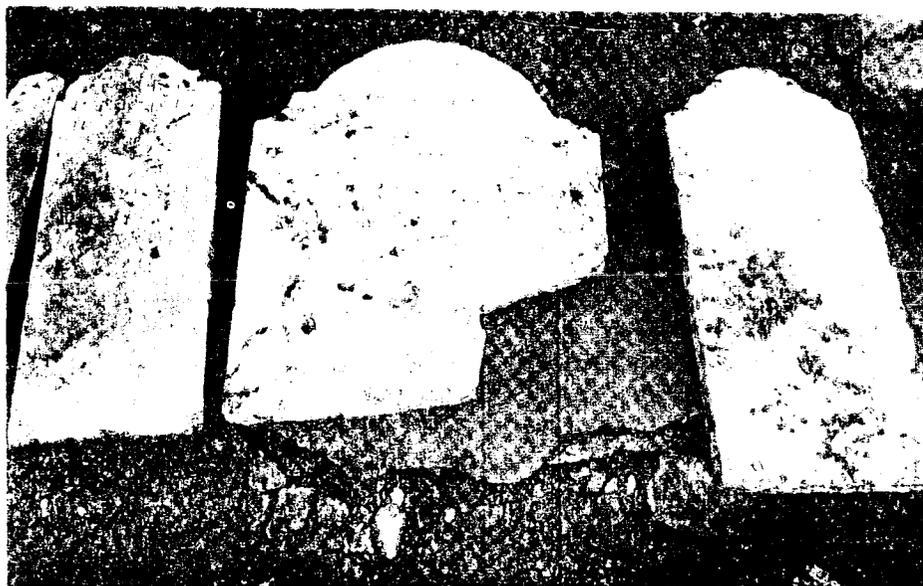
During the 1830s the burial ground was acquired by a local undertaker, Samuel Sheen. In a London-wide guide to burial fees (c.1838) the prices at 'Sheen's Ground Church Lane', for an adult varied from 8 to 15 shillings, while a 'brick grave' or vault was more expensive (4). An 1850 survey of London graveyards included Sheen's burial ground, stating:- 'The proprietor is also an undertaker. He has planted it with trees and shrubs, which are sufficiently attractive, but the ground is saturated with human putrescence' (Walker, 1850;173). Another account stated:- 'Sheen's Burial Ground was much patronised. It was at the rear of Ebenezer chapel, in Church Lane, next to Gower's Walk, and Sheen kept a public house opposite. A big notice was displayed in the ground. "Beware of spring guns." This was done to prevent "body-snatching"'(5).

The Closure of the Burial Ground

The 1852 Burial Act allowed the Secretary of State to close any burial ground or cemetery on public health grounds. From 1853 onwards many London cemeteries and church vaults were closed. All these sites were grossly overcrowded with recent interments. The technique of burial or disposal was to dig pits or linear trenches up to 6 metres deep and simply to fill these with stacks of coffins, creating a serious public health risk (Walker, 1849;10-29, Richardson, 1989;60,79). The 1993 evaluation of the site established that mode of burial consisted of large pits or trenches, packed with coffins, stacked up to 7 deep. The remains of a brick burial vault was located. A number of out of situ grave stones dating from 1776 to 1848 were recovered. These stones had been



Site location plan. A = Backchurch Lane burial ground; B = Cain's burial ground.



Some of the out of situ gravestones recovered during the evaluation. The large headstone in the centre is context 39 (see Appendix One for details).

Photo copyright: MOLAS.

laid flat as foundations from the yard surface, which was constructed over the burial ground during the late 19th century (see the photograph on page 38). For details of the gravestones see Appendix One.

The closure of Sheen's burial ground appears to be undocumented. It does not appear in the London Gazette list of sites closed by order of council, which suggests it was closed on a voluntary basis. It was listed in the 1855 Post Office Directory, but not in the 1857 edition, which strongly suggests that it closed between 1854 and 1856 (6).

On the 1873 large scale OS. map (7), the area of the burial ground is shown as a Cooperage, consisting on a large open yard, surrounded by buildings. Before 1896 the site had become a Carter's yard. An 1895 survey of disused burial grounds stated that the site had been 'immensely used and disgustingly crowded' (8). In 1894 a new stable block was built on part of the site (Holmes, 1896;297).

Cain's Burial Ground

The identification of documentary references to Britton's or Sheen's burial ground is confused by the vagueness of some of the information and presence of 'Cain's Burial Grounds' very close by. In 1799 this burial ground was given as the address of Susannah Blake, a member of the Little Alie Street baptist Church (9) and the address of the Kilbey family in the Baptism record of St George's church 1809 (10).

On the 1799 and 1819 Horwood maps is shown a short street labelled 'Cain's Place', to the south-east of the Backchurch Lane burial ground. Another post-medieval burial ground was discovered here during the redevelopment of 95 to 105 Backchurch Lane in 1988 (Roche, 1989;3) (see the plan, site B). Human remains were also discovered here during the construction of Kinlock Wine Merchants in 1893 (Holmes, 1896;127). All the remaining burials were exhumed during 1988. Cain's burial ground is probably the site referred to in the 1763 documentary reference, as Holmes (1986;297) appears to have been unaware of the existence of the second burial ground in the Backchurch Lane area.

Acknowledgements

The project was generously sponsored by Tower Hamlets Borough Council. Thanks to the staff of the Bancroft Local History Library of their assistance with the documentary research.

NOTES

1. *Horwood's map of London*, 1799 sheet F2 and the 4th edition of 1819, sheet F2.
2. *Gentleman's Mag.* 1823 vol.93, pt. 1, p.80.
3. Unattributed press cutting entitled 'Attempt to Bury a Man Alive', 24 July 1825, Bancroft Lib. press cutting file 022.
4. Turner, J.(circa 1838) *Burial Fees of the Principal Churches, Chapels and New Burial Grounds in London and Its Environs*. Undated pamphlet 5713 in Guildhall Lib.
5. Recollections of Thomas Catmur in *East London Observer* 26 Oct. 1914. Bancroft Lib. press cutting file 015.
6. *Post Office London Directory* for 1855 (compiled 1854) pp. 1315-1316 and 1857 Directory (compiled 1856) p. 2034.
7. OS. 1873 (pub. 1875) London 1:1056, sheet VII, 67.
8. London County Council, *Return of the Burial Grounds in the County of London, 1895*, compiled by Mrs B. Holmes. Guildhall Lib. SL 46/4.
9. *Minute Book, Cash Book* (Sarah Lynall Charity) and *Register of Members of Little Alie Street Church*. Bancroft Lib. S868.

10. Register of Baptisms in the Parish Church of St George, Middlesex. Bancroft Lib. S156.

REFERENCES.

Holmes, B. *The London Burial Grounds*. London: Fisher and Unwin, 1896.

Jones, J. *How To Record Graveyards*. CBA and Rescue Pub., 1984.

Richardson, R. *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*. London: Pelican books, 1989.

Roche J. *Report on Archaeological Excavations at 95-105 Backchurch Lane, E1.* (BCL88). Museum of London Archive, 1989.

Walker G.A. *Series of Lectures on the Actual Condition of the Metropolitan Graveyards*. London: Longman, 1849.

Walker, G.A. *Gatherings From Graveyards particularly Those of London*. London, Longman, 1850.

Watson, B. *109-153 Backchurch Lane, London E1. An Archaeological Evaluation.* (BKL93). Museum of London Archive, 1993.

APPENDIX ONE, GRAVESTONES.

The procedure used to record the gravestones was adapted from Jones (1984). All the stones were reburied on site (Watson, 1993; 28-29).

Context 38, footstone. Inscription - 'J.C. 1837; R.H. 1840; W.H. 1842; H H 1843; W L. 1848'.

Context 39; headstone. Inscription (incomplete) - 'family grave; SACRED to the memory of Mr JAMES COVE—TON; late of Penton Street Walworth; who departed this life at 41 Mansell Street White Chapel; January 18th 1837, in his 74th year. Near this spot is interred the remains of Mrs SARAH HARRIS; of Mansell Street; Sister in law to the above; who died April 19th 1833 aged—; REBECCA HA— (unreadable)... and daughter of (unreadable) died Dec 28th— aged 3 years;' (the lower portion of the stone was missing).

Context 40, footstone. Inscription - 'JR 1842; CER 1845; RR 1848'.

Context 41, headstone. Inscription (incomplete) - 'The Family Grave of —M & ANN MARTIN of Backchurch Lane. In Memory of GEORGE MARTIN ...; Son of the above; (missing)...ed this life August 21st 1834; Aged 8 years (rest of inscription fragmentary).

Context 42. headstone. Inscription (incomplete) - 'M. R WILLIAM...; Departed this life; aged 32 years'.

Context 44, headstone. Inscription (incomplete, top portion missing) - '... —M TREACHER; Son of the above; died Jan. y 1st 1937 aged 14 months; also Mrs SUS. h MARTHA TREACHER; mother of the above; who died June 24th 1832; aged 41 years; A loving wife a tender mother dear ...'.

Context 57, headstone. Inscription - 'Sacred; to the memory of; M.rs CHARLOTTE SAWYER; Who departed from this life July 6th 1836; Aged 62 years; Mother of the above'.

Context 88, headstone. Inscription (incomplete) - 'SACRED; To the Memory of; Elizabeth Holliday, Wife of Samual Holliday; Pilot: who departed This life Oct.r 29th 1801 Aged 35 years. Also of John their son; who departed this life on the 23rd of May 1796 Aged 5 years. Mr SAMUAL HOLLIDAY; Died 11th March 1807 Aged ...' (rest of inscription missing).

Context 89, headstone. Inscription (incomplete upper part missing - 'SARAH GEORGE daughter of; the above; ELIZABETH GEORGE; Who departed this Life the 1st July 1776 in the 17 year of her AGE'.

NOTES AND NEWS

Readers will notice that this issue, number 17, is dated 1994-5. The next issue, due out towards the end of 1995, will be dated 1996.

Two responses to articles in last year's *Record* were of particular interest. Mr. E.R. Bodley, prompted by reading Vi Short's account of her time at Malmesbury Road School, wrote an interesting account of his own days there - in the Boys' Department, of course. And Mr. Woolf Gevertz, once a next-door neighbour of Charles Chisnell, wrote sending a picture of the spot at Blackwall from where he swam across the Thames - he was once an East London Schools' swimming champion. He could not recall the use of the term 'High-Bob' for Poplar High Street and, as others have wondered about its use, Charles is investigating how widespread it was beyond his immediate acquaintances.

The Bishopsgate Institute, which will be known to many readers from its collection of items relating to the history and topography of the Inner London area, was opened by the Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, in 1894. A centenary booklet has been produced (£2.50+50p post and packing), written by David Webb, which traces the origin and development of the Institute. Besides portraits of key figures in the Institute's history, the illustrations include some excellent views of the building and the street outside.

Stepney Books have produced an updated edition of *Brick Lane 1978: the events and their significance*, first published in 1980. In a new introduction the author, Kenneth Leech, reminds us of the 'persistent commitment' needed to combat the injustices that give extremist policies a foothold (£3.95).

Connor & Butler have published volume III of *Tender Grace: Wapping Letters and Diaries*, which consists of correspondence between the Mayor of Stepney, Walter Jones, and his daughter Annette who was training to be a teacher in Brighton between 1913 and 1915 (£4.95).

Anne Blackburn and Mike Gray's *Sutton House traces*, in 32 pages, the history of the house from its origin in Tudor Hackney to its repair and refurbishment by the Sutton House Society, acting in partnership with the National Trust, who published the well illustrated booklet (£3).

Ashton Emery's *The Emery Papers* (details from the author at PO Box 55322, Northlands, S.Africa, 2116) has a chapter headed 'The Man of Property'. It refers to William Moran Emery who spent over 25 years running a business on the south side of Mile End Road, where the new Mile End Park is now.

For those awaiting the East London History Society's book on Victoria Park, patience is requested from the compilers. Like most publications involving volunteers and committees, it has taken longer than expected, but the text is now assembled and nothing new is likely to turn up in the way of illustrations. We expect it to comprise 64 pages (slightly smaller than A4) with about 100 pictures, covering all aspects of the park, both historical and topographical.

Dr. Brooks, whose work has appeared in the *Record* in the past, has compiled a monograph *Dr. Hannah Billig 1901-1987: The Angel of Cable Street*. She was awarded the George Medal for her work during the Blitz and later helped famine victims in India. Details from Dr. Brooks, Karkur, Israel 37000.

Another *Record* contributor - his article on street sellers was in last year's issue (number 16) - has written a major article in the *London Journal* (vol.18,no.2) dealing with the children of the Foundling Hospital. Fred Wright's family history is due from the printer's shortly and will be reviewed in next year's *Record*, with, hopefully, a substantial extract from one or more of the many local references it contains.

Peter Marcan's *Greater London Local History Directory* has been reissued to include publications (like our own) by history societies in the London area up to the end of 1992. It is £15 from PO Box 3158, SE1 4RA.

In recent years members of the East London History Society have put together a number of exhibition panels for the use of Key Stage I and II students. With the co-operation of Oxford House we have been able to display these exhibitions which have been well received by the public. A series of workshops for schools was also organised with the help of the PDC, the Teacher's Centre at English Street. A successful fortnight at the Soanes Centre in Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, encouraging school children to explore history in the cemetery received an enthusiastic response from both schools and the local councillors.

For those teachers who were either too busy or not sufficiently motivated to join in these events, it is still possible to make use of these well-researched and beautifully presented exhibitions. They are available on loan and most of them are stored at Oxford House, Bethnal Green. The following is a list and brief description of the panels we have produced to date:

1. East End Suffragettes

The life and times of Sylvia Pankhurst during her 10 years in Bow. Both an introduction to the subject of women's suffrage, and a visual commentary on women's lives in the East End. Based on Rosemary Taylor's book, *In Letters of Gold*, the final panels bring the subject into the present with a list of women's struggles to achieve equality.

2. The Education of Girls, and the Life of Clara Grant

Clara Grant, who founded the Fern Street settlement in Bromley by Bow, was a pioneer in primary school education. She dedicated her long life to the hard-working mothers and poverty-stricken children of her neighbourhood, earning herself the title of 'The Bundle Woman of Bow' as a result of her farthing bundles scheme. This exhibition traces the history of the education of girls in the London area, noting the constraints and disadvantages, especially around the turn of the century. Again, the topic is brought into the present. Illustrated with some of Harold Mernick's wonderful collection of school

certificates, and archive material from the Fern Street Settlement.

3. Every Stone Tells A Story - Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park

The history of our local cemetery is combined with fascinating vignettes of some of its famous and infamous 'residents'. Using archive material from the Greater London Record Office, as well as Bancroft Local History Library, we were able to put together a superb display. The lives of Clara Grant, Samuel and Susan Soanes, Joseph Westwood, Charlie Brown, Will Crooks and David and Annie Roe are brought to light and have captured the imaginations of the hundreds of students whose teachers were fortunate enough to have secured a place on our programme. Besides the brief introductory talk, a walk around the cemetery, a chance to do some symbol spotting and detective work, the children were encouraged to use the worksheets which were prepared with explanatory notes for teachers. A leaflet on symbols found on gravestones and a History Trail completes the package.

The Exhibition panels are the work of Rosemary Taylor, Doreen Kendall and Maggie Hewitt, who also run the workshops for schools. Enquiries to Maggie at Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, Bethnal Green, E2 6HG. Tel: 071 739 9001



'The farthing bundle lady', Clara Grant (on extreme left) and children at the Fern Street Settlement, 1934. (Whiffin).

BOOK REVIEWS

Jill Wallis. *Mother of World Peace, The life of Muriel Lester*. Hisarlik Press, 1993. £19.95.

I must confess I find it difficult to comment objectively on the merits of this book, because this biography is such a welcome addition to the bookshelf of women's history. Muriel Lester is one amongst a host of women whose life and work in East London has remained unacknowledged by mainstream historians. For this alone, I must congratulate the author for her splendid effort. Would that this could be repeated a hundredfold, and the lives of women such as Miriam Moses, Mary Hughes, Daisy Parsons, Clara Grant to name but a very few, were given the attention they deserve - the biography of Susan Lawrence is about to be released.

Muriel Lester was an extraordinary woman, whose influence encompassed the globe. Here in the East End she was simply 'a saint'; Americans hailed her as a twentieth-century peace apostle; Indians saw her as a dazzling jewel, while to the Japanese she was no less than the 'Mother of World Peace'. Her fame lay in her dedication to preaching and practising the concept of peace and social justice through the auspices of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. But our interest in her lies in activities with her sister Doris Lester when they worked with and amongst the people of Bromley St Leonard. The Kingsley Halls, the first at Bromley by Bow and the second at Dagenham, named after their beloved brother, are a testimony to their work. The concept, that of a 'settlement' in the East End, had its origins in the University Settlements of Toynbee Hall and Oxford House, later successfully emulated by Clara Grant at the Fern Street Settlement. But whilst Doris continued to serve the needs of the disadvantaged in this part of London, Muriel began her travels in India, where she found a respectful audience and life long friends, and a new career. She had made her mark in local affairs, however, when she was called upon to serve as Alderman following the premature death of Minnie Lansbury in 1922. Her robust defence of Poplar's Maternity and Child Welfare budget expenditure before a hearing at the Ministry of Health earned her the respect and admiration of her fellow councillors. But Muriel's great moment came when Gandhi visited England and chose to stay at Kingsley Hall in Bow, and the eyes of the world were focused on a small corner of the East End.

Muriel Lester's long life dedicated to the cause of peace has been exhaustively researched and the book has an extensive bibliography (though no mention is made of Kingsley Royden's article in the *ELR* 1, 1978 - not a major oversight, but we would have liked a mention!), and with endnotes and indexes, sure to win the approval of the academics, it is hard to fault this work. My only quibble is that the price puts it well beyond the reach of so many local history enthusiasts.

Rosemary Taylor

Malcolm Johnson. *Outside the Gate*. Stepney Books, 1994. £8.95.

Reading this book on the District Line proved to be inconvenient for me as I found myself at St. James' Park, two stops past Embankment where I had actually intended to get off.

It is that kind of book and one I thoroughly enjoyed reading. The author outlines the history of the parish of St. Botolph's and Aldgate in what feels like a bit of a 'Cook's tour'. I found myself wanting to stop and get off to explore yet another nugget which he had made available to me. For instance, the parish clerk who added his own notes to marriage registers. In 1623 he describes a couple of 17 and 14 who were married as 'a worthie ancient couple of young fools', of another couple the bride was 'a piece of cracked stuff'. Then there is Dr. Andrew Hatt, curate in 1826, who used to slip food into his pockets when dining with parishioners. Countless other incidents are recorded, many of a more serious nature such as when dealing with records of the plague. I was left wanting to know more.

A high percentage of the book is given over to dealing with the more immediate past. Malcolm Johnson is a very honest writer which makes him fulsome in his praise of some predecessors, such as George Appleton and contemporaries such as Ken Leech. He is not afraid to be as straightforward about those who, in his eyes, did little service to the kingdom of God. For these names you must read the book!

His account of the work of St. Botolph's amongst the homeless is superb and a reminder both of the quality of care offered there and of the social circumstances which are part of the plight of the homeless. We have cause to be grateful for the work carried out by St. Botolph's in this field and to Malcolm Johnson for outlining it so well.

The saddest part of the book is the author's account of the way the establishment dealt with the presence of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement in an office at St. Botolph's. It makes unhappy reading for those in the Christian church who seek to be inclusive rather than exclusive. In the most searchingly honest section of the book Malcolm Johnson's indictment of some (not all) church leaders is a salutary reminder of how far we have to go. His own pain is not far from the surface but he handles the material in a sensitive and courageous way without any sense of self righteousness showing. As a Methodist minister I am only too well aware of the 'fudge' which we, as a church, are making of the issue of sexuality to sit in judgement on brothers and sisters in the Church of England.

I warmly commend this book as a good read which encompasses history ancient and modern in a creative way. A word of warning. Don't read it on the underground!

Ron Smith

Stan Shipley. *Bombardier Billy Wells: The life and times of a boxing hero*. Bewick Press, 1993. £9.95.

I must be one of the few people still around who knew the subject of this book personally, and knowing him and reading through this very well researched book I feel the title should have read 'Bombardier Billy Wells: The life and times of a reluctant hero'.

Though he came from a poverty-stricken background, Billy Wells was not a 'hungry' fighter, and did not seem to have inherited the will to destroy opponents. In his early days at Broad Street Boys' Club Mr. Chambers, the boxing instructor, took one look at the well built big-for-his-age boy and put him into his boxing squad. Commenting on this, Wells confessed to me his reluctance, 'I didn't want to be a boxer - my mates talked me into it.' One way to a boxing pinnacle in those days was by a London Federation of Working Boys' Club title and an ABA championship. Wells won neither. The closest he got to a 'Fed' title was to get into the final of his weight, where his opponent was a friend and a fellow club member. Another club member present commented, 'Wells wanted his mate to win and made no effort to down him. He just flapped at him with open gloves and was disqualified because of that.' Another club member saw Billy knock out Corporal Brown at 'The Wonderland' in 1910 and noted, 'Always a gentleman, Billy helped to pick up the bloke he'd just knocked down and get him to his corner.'

I admire writers who embark on projects with limited appeal such as this and Stan Shipley has gone to great pains to recreate the atmosphere around the boxing scene of those days. Then people went to see a boxing match, unlike the 'baying for blood' fraternity of to-day who go to see a fight where opponents employ all manner of means (some of which would have led to disqualification in Wells' time) in order to attain one of the three (or is it four?) cheap-jack positions they now call championships.

This is a very readable book, not only for boxing fans but for those who could benefit from a glimpse at social conditions in the East End at the time and one man's effort to find a way out. One criticism I would offer is that there is no mention of the break-up of Wells' marriage, his taking up with 'the other woman' and the subsequent estrangement from his family and a posing of the possibility that this might have affected his later performances.

Stephen Pewsey. *Stratford, A Pictorial History* Phillimore, 1993. £11.95.

This book and its companion reviewed after are additions to a series published by Phillimore covering what was originally the Western edge of Essex.

There is an introduction giving the history of the area covered, which is actually the whole of the former borough of West Ham. The main body of the work is then divided into 14 chapters starting with early history and ending with war and disaster. Between them we have chapters including Stratford Broadway, Churches, Shops and Streets, Industries and Public Transport. Each subject is well illustrated mostly by photographs, but also copies of prints and diagrams. Most of the photographs are of excellent quality, many reproduced full page size. Some of the map reproductions are however not very successful; surely a better map of the Royal Docks could have been found than illustration 106 and the growth of West Ham in 4 small maps was not detailed enough. Although the text seemed slightly repetitive the real strength of the publication is in its illustrations, many of which were provided by Newham Library Services and Newham Museum Services. The photographs are full of detail and much superior to those used by books illustrated solely from post cards. It is hard to choose favourites but I was particularly interested by the street scenes of markets and shops and also one of the Abbey Mills Pumping Station with its tall chimneys (later demolished) looking like very thin versions of the Crystal Palace towers. As someone who is largely ignorant of the history beyond his own back yard the book also clarified several matters. I had always confused Will Crooks and Will Thorne, now I know who was who. I also now know the name of the school (South Hallsville) referred to by Richie Calder in *The Lesson of London* where so many lives were lost due to lack of organisation of the authorities, both national and local at the start of the blitz. The fact that the only illustration of Angel Lane Market shows it empty and the shops closed confirms my experience of seeing very few post cards of this market. It was my favourite part of Stratford in the nineteen fifties and early sixties, but maybe it was too narrow for photographers to get decent photographs.

Brian Evans. *Bygone East Ham*. Phillimore, 1993. £11.95.

This book with the same format as the previous, covers the former County Borough of East Ham. Phillimore has previously published books by the same author on Barking, Dagenham and Rainham, and Ilford. The 170 illustrations are divided into 9 categories. East Ham grew very rapidly in the 19th century with the population increasing from less than 3,000 to 96,000 between 1861 and 1901, and the author probably had less illustrations to call on, than available for West Ham. Possibly because of this he has chapters on two specific topics, West Ham Football Club and John Cornwell V.C. as well as the topographical subjects. There is no criticism intended here as I found them very informative especially the early history of 'The Hammers'. There is again a wide variety of street, transport and market scenes although with a higher proportion derived from postcards, which means a concentration on the first decade of this century. As always I find the most interesting photographs are those street scenes with a lot of detail and there is a splendid example of this on the two facing pages with pictures 128 to 131. We see the Reliable Clothing Store, Manor Park with its windows crammed full of a wide range of clothes, Mark Liell's Estate Agency in East Ham with the most elaborate railings I have seen around a commercial premises and pictures of two bakers shops. The first a small bakers and confectioners in Romford Road has a sign across the window 'Hovis-Bread prevents indigestion', the other a much larger establishment on Wanstead Park Avenue, in addition to many advertisements for Hovis also has signs for R. White's Ginger Beer and Cadbury's chocolates: a testament to the longevity of many trade marks.

Both books contain much of interest and information and can be recommended.

Phillip Memick

Routes and Beyond: Voices from Educationally Successful Bangladeshis. Centre for Bangladeshi Studies, 1994. £3.30.

In an article in the *East London Record* 3 (1980) Irving Osborne drew attention to the large number of Jewish children in Tower Hamlets who gained Technical Education Board and London County Council awards at 11-plus between 1893 and 1914. The booklet under review, available from Eastside Books, 178 Whitechapel Road, E1, contains no statistics that can compare the achievements of the children of Bangladeshi immigrants with those of their Jewish predecessors. What the study does is to record the opinions of twenty second-generation Bangladeshi young adults who were successful in the sense that they attended schools in Tower Hamlets and went on to University. Their responses to interview questions throw a lot of light on the factors that enabled them to succeed (as well as factors they felt held them and others back), and also provides insights into their attitudes to issues like religion, racism, the role of women, sexual politics and male power.

Despite its subjective elements, this kind of research cannot fail to be of value to everyone engaged in educational and social work in Tower Hamlets, although it will need to be supplemented with studies of those who have not succeeded and by statistical work on how the children of Bangladeshi origin do at school and after compared with other children locally and nationally. For their work so far the Centre for Bangladeshi Studies is to be applauded, although another of the declared aims of the Centre will be of even greater interest to local historians, namely 'to undertake research into the history of Bangladeshi settlement in the area.' It is to be hoped that the *Record* can help give the results of this research the maximum publicity.

Colm Kerrigan

Christopher Miele. *Hoxton: Architecture and History over five centuries*. Hackney Society, 1993. £4.

This is a glossy A4-size publication of 45 pages, with illustrations on every page.

Very little is left of the old Hoxton. This book sets out the history of its famous gardens, with fresh produce for the City. It tells about how nonconformity flourished in this area, its charity almshouses, its inhabitants from the famous to those who lived in tiny back-to-back houses with hardly any windows and no drains in the last century, and about St Leonards Workhouse and the hospitals. The author explains what little can be found of past history in buildings that have survived. Anyone interested in Family History or the growth of areas outside the City will find a wealth of information in this beautifully produced book.

Doreen Kendall

Gilda O'Neill. *Whitechapel Girl*. Headline Book Publishing, 1993. £5.99

Gilda O'Neill is known to most members of the East London History Society for her wonderfully evocative memories of hop-picking holidays in Kent. This, her second venture into fiction, is a tale set in the East End of 1888, a story woven around the infamous murders of that year. The protagonist, a young girl from the Whitechapel slums, teams up with a certain Professor Jacob Protksy who works the penny gaffs, as a way of escaping into a brighter and better world. Ettie, however, is drawn into the murky world of Jack the Ripper, as her erstwhile friends, the miserable creatures of the back alleys are picked off one by one and her lover becomes a prime suspect. Along the way Ettie Wilkins is befriended by the daughter of a surgeon, who is herself a competent midwife. The tale alternates between the two women as it draws to a dramatic conclusion. The author is a born and bred Eastender and is unerringly accurate in both language and setting. If the intention was to produce a novel in the murder, mystery and suspense genre, it falls short of that expectation. It lacks the willing suspension of disbelief which is an essential requirement - possibly because the plot is too well known and there is no denouement, but perhaps also because the writing lacks the tautness required of a 'thriller'. Having said that, it is a good read for anyone with a taste for the macabre, mixed with the romantic and the added spice of authentic local history.

SOME RECENT ITEMS RELATING TO EAST LONDON

Books and Booklets

- Harry Blacker, *East Endings*. The author.
- Joanis Book, *Joan Littlewood*. Methuen.
- C.E. Challis (ed.) *A New History of the Royal Mint*. Camb. Univ. Press.
- David Englander (ed.) *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants in Britain 1840-1920*. Open University.
- David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social relations and political culture 1840-1914*. Yale.
- Peter Graham & Fritz H. Joseph Oehschlaeger, *Articulating the Elephant Man: Merrick and his Interpreters*. John Hopkins Univ. Press.
- Joseph Green, *A Social History of the Jewish East End in London 1914-1939*. Edwin Mellen Press.
- Peter Lindsay *The Synagogues of London*. Valentine Mitchell.
- Samuel L. Melnick, *A Giant Among Giants: A History of Rabbi Shmael Melnick and the Princlet Street Synagogue*. Pentland Press.
- Theya Mollem and Margaret Cox *The Spitalfields Project*, Vol 2, 'The Anthropology'. Council for British Archaeology.
- Diana Ran (ed.) *1891 Census - Index of Heads of Family - Spitalfields*. Univ. of Leicester.
- Stuart A Raymond, *London and Middlesex: a genealogical bibliography*. Fed. of Family Hist. Socs.
- Jez Reeve and Max Adams *The Spitalfields Project*, Vol 1, 'The Archaeology'. As Vol. 2.
- Geoffrey Tyack, *Sir James Pennethorne and the Making of Victorian London*. Camb. Univ. Press
- Peter Watherston, *A Different Kind of Church (Mayflower Centre, Canning Town)*. Harper Collins.

ARTICLES

- Jennifer Barry, 'Eighteenth Century Chinese export porcelain from three London sites' in *London Archaeologist* (Spring, 1994).
- N.N. Feltes, 'Misery and the production of Misery: defining sweated labour in 1890' in *Social History* (Oct. 1992).
- Bob Grimwood, 'The Heyday of Newham's Cinema' in *Cinema Theatre Association Bulletin*, Nov/ Dec 1993.
- John Kirkham, 'Barnado's Photographic and Film Archive' in *Local History Magazine*, Nov/Dec. 1993.

- Mona Paton, 'Corporate East End Landlords: the Example of London Hospital and the Mercers Company' in *London Journal*, Vol 18 (2) 1993.
- Gerald Vinter, 'Toynbee Hall: self serving or accountable?' in *The Ethical Record*, April, 1993.

Some accessions received by Tower Hamlets Archives since September 1993:

- Account book of E. Tann and Sons, locksmiths and safemakers, of 1 Hope Street, Hackney Road: 1829-1860 (TH/8567)
- Mss. memorandum giving a brief history of and statistics re the West India Docks : 1817 (TH/8570)
- Records of the Poplar Relief Service Unit: 1940-1993 (TH/8571)
- Ledgers of an unidentified firm of pawnbrokers in Stepney, recording loans made: 1924, 1925 (TH/8573)
- Records of the East End Dwellings Co. Ltd., and the Tenement Dwellings Company Ltd., 1884-1952 (TH/8578)
- Records of Southern Grove Lodge: 1960s (TH/8593)
- Records of the Campaign to save Spitalfields from the Developers: 1980s, 1990s (TH/8606)
- Records of St. John's, Bethnal Green: c20th (TH/8607)

The last three accessions are still unsorted and unlisted, and it would be advisable for anyone wishing to consult them to speak to the archivist first before visiting the Local History Library and Archives.

Thanks to David Behr, C.J. Lloyd, Harry Watton, Jane Kimber and David Webb for help in compiling these lists.