

EDITORIAL

The Docks, which have been part of the East London scene for nearly two centuries are gradually closing. The old firm of Stevedores, Scruttons Maltby, have been taken over by the Port of London Authority who now employ two thirds of the London dock labour force. The story of Scruttons is told by Carole Lyders on another page. Another old firm, Thomas Wallis & Son, is struggling on with a reduced labour force. Dock labour in East London has always been a story of struggle for survival and members will recall an earlier Bulletin where the morning rush for employment was the substance of an article. The Docklands Development Team are getting out wonderful plans for Dockland and one thing is quite clear, that in a generation or so there will be no Dockland in East London.

Whilst on this subject, it was heartening to see the assembly of craft around the Tower and St. Katherine's during the Port of London Regatta at the end of August. The assembly of clippers, Thames sailing barges, square-riggers, sailing cruisers, barges, whalers, etc. reminded some of the tea-race days, and the sailing barge era of fifty years ago. Photography enthusiasts were able to take pictures around the Pool which might easily have been taken a century ago.

"Rebels without a cause".- This is the name of a publication (80 p. including postage - Centerprise Publishing Project, 136 Kingsland High St.E.8.) issued by the Hackney Trades Council to commemorate their 75th Anniversary. Founded in April, 1900, as the "Hackney Labour Council", it changed its name in the Second World War. The anniversary is marked by an exhibition at the Town Hall in Mare Street from September 22nd until October 4th. There is also a programme of films and lectures, most of which will have passed by the time this Bulletin is circulated. The book deals with the struggles in the early part of the century to progress Trade Unionism and to get an improvement in living and working standards. In the 30's there was the battle against unemployment and Fascism. The post-war world brought problems of the Welfare State, of nationalisation, wage freezes, etc. The book, naturally left-wing, is worth reading by all local historians.

Good luck to Miss Merion and her colleagues who are fighting hard to keep something of the historical nature of Tower Hamlets Cemetery. The G.L.C. seems to be determined to destroy the character of the Cemetery and even the water supply has now been cut off. Millicent Rose wrote "In the years since 1945, nothing has been done to put back fallen headstones or to fill hollows; the place has become a wilderness, in which the funereal hollies stray and spread, competing with self-sown deciduous bushes. The children, in this corner of Stepney and Poplar meet amid a proliferation of gasometers, are starved of playgrounds, and so they have made the bombed cemetery their own territory, bringing in old tin cans and stolen milk crates, and building little houses among the hazel bushes. After stumbling across this unseemly no man's land (having broken into the place by the children's wall) one comes to an area where an occasional new grave is decked with flowers, and thence into the Victorian burial ground. Here, pompous monuments stand thickly along the winding paths, urns and angels, crosses and broken columns. The oldest of these graves date back to the early forties, a time when East End employers still thought it no shame to lie after death in the area which had brought them their wealth, and a study of the most prominent inscriptions shows that many were raised above City merchants' tombs. There is a noticeably high proportion of German names among them." When the Society last visited the cemetery, there were still many tombstones and monuments interestingly carved and tablets noting many famous East London personalities. Alas to the G.L.C. this is "shapeless sculpture" and now reduced to hard core. Their promises of preservation seem to have gone no further than the Drapers' Almshouses or Wilton's Music Hall. Keep trying, Carolyn!

PARMITER'S FOUNDATION.

Parmiter's Foundation came into being as a result of the provision in the will of Thomas Parmiter, a prosperous silk merchant of Bethnal Green, dated February 28th 1682, which called for the establishment in Bethnal Green of:-

1. A school for ten poor children.
2. Six almshouses for poor and deserving old people.

These were to be maintained by the rents on Parmiter's two farms in Suffolk which he estimated to have an annual value of £46, but not only did the Founder err on the side of optimism, he also underestimated the "law's delays", and it was not until 1722 that the first school and almshouses were built in John Street, off Brick Lane. This was mainly due to a gift of land in 1720 by Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and a valuable bequest of £100 by Mr. William Lee towards the building costs. Another bequest in 1724 by Mr. Edward Mayhew made the provision of school clothing possible.

The buildings were completed in July 1722, and opened in the following September at a cost of over £500. Since 1722 there have been three Parmiter's Schools:-

- (1) The School and Almshouses in John Street remained in situ until 1839, when they had to make way for the railway line to Cambridge.
- (2) The School and Almshouses were then rebuilt in Gloucester Street (now appropriately called Parmiter Street), the architect being Sir William Tite, who designed the Royal Exchange in the City. The leading spirit in this important development was Mr. Peter Renvoize, a noted benefactor and servant of the Foundation, and the last of the four after whom the School houses were named in 1919.

This school eventually vacated its premises in 1885 by order of the Charity Commissioners, but the Almshouses (expanded to eight) continued until February, 1945, when they were destroyed by a V-2 rocket. Plans to rebuild in Cyprus Street are in existence and the Foundation, of course, continues to give small pensions to elderly residents of Bethnal Green.

- (3) The present School in Approach Road was built in 1887 at a cost of just over £10,000. The move to a much larger site enabled the School to expand quickly from some 70 boys to 300-400 with, of course, a correspondingly larger staff. The School has enjoyed the advantage of staff prepared to give many years of service to the School, three of the most notable being A.C. Bodéy (1894-1935), J.H. Fudge (1899-1940), and E.G. Thrasher (still on the staff after 37 years of service). There have been only five Headmasters in the 85 years of the New Foundation:-

Dr. R.P. Scott, 1887-1904.
 Mr. W.J. Sharples, 1904-1930.
 Mr. R. McArthur, 1930-1950.
 Mr. A.J. Hopkins, 1950-1967.
 Mr. G.H.C. Waters, 1967-

The School has an extremely good record of academic work and sporting achievement and can number among its 'products' the celebrated chemist, Dr. C. Doree, (still with us at 97!); the first volunteer to win a V.C. in World War One, Lieut. G.H. Woolley; the Cambridge Don, Dr. R. Stoneley; Sir Frank Morgan, Chairman of the Prudential Assurance Company; Mr. D.G. Lambley, (at present Chairman of the Governors); etc., and in more recent times, the well-known sports figures, Mick Carter and Graham Stilwell.

The future of Parmiter's Foundation is uncertain, but let us hope that 250 years of history will not be lightly swept away and that the Foundation, if necessary, can continue its work elsewhere.

FLOREAT FUNDATOR!

(Compiled by Tower Hamlets Libraries Dept. to commemorate the 250th Anniversary). 1972.

THE SCRUTTONS STORY BEGAN WITH A TAILOR'S SON

The story of Scruttons began in 1802 when Mr. James Scrutton, a tailor's son from Ipswich invested £500 in the shipbroking and insurance firm of Urquhart and Hope. His son, Thomas, joined the firm and became a partner in 1825 to begin a family association which ended only with the death of Mr. Philip Scrutton 132 years later. Thomas lived in the country in a large house set in orchard gardens at the western end of East India Dock Road, near other shipowners who chose to live near their business.

Over the next 50 years the shipowning side of the firm grew steadily and the name became Scrutton, Sons & Co. The firm had over 20 ships sailing under the house flag and in 68 years suffered only one loss. It is known that this company, along with others, were associated with the slave traders.

During the 1880's the firm finally got around to forsaking sail for steam and going into the ships stores market with another firm as Coubro and Scrutton. The year 1889, the year of the Dockers' Turner Strike, was the beginning of the company's life as a stevedoring firm. After the strike the London and India Docks Joint Committee gave up its exclusive right to discharge ships in the Royal Albert and Victoria Docks and Tilbury. The company set up their own master portorage department and offered their cargo handling and clerical service to other shipping companies. The company kept apart the labouring and clerical sides. Each was handled by its own department with employees hired by the day.

Although Scruttons did work for lines such as Clan and Ribby the company did not make any money, and in 1892 the stevedoring side was sheared off from the ship-owning side. All stevedoring and clerical work became part of a new company, Scruttons Ltd. The shareholders were all Scruttons - Frederic, James, Herbert and Claud Alexander, whose mechanical flair played a major part in the genesis of mechanisation in the Port. The new company soon ran into industrial troubles, and in 1907 became one of the founder members of the London Master Stevedores Association only to pull out the next year because of intra-Association problems aggravated by differences between the Stevedores Union and ordinary dock workers. However, the young company did work for a growing number of shipping companies and were the first employers to make an attempt to put their dock workers and stevedores on a regular weekly wage.

In 1912, Scruttons, jointly with the Atlantic Transport Company, City Line and the New Zealand Shipping Company, brought in an agreement to transfer dock labour between the companies when work was short. In return the labour got a weekly minimum, plus piecework and one week's paid holiday a year. But because of piecework fluctuation the company introduced a new system based on a four-week minimum wage. Each man got a quarter for three weeks and piecework and other earnings were paid with the final quarter. The deal formed the basis of engagement for Scruttons dock workers until 1947. Still the unions did not care for it and the Stevedores Union would have nothing to do with it.

The firm became the country's largest contractors of dock labour. The man behind this was Claud Scrutton who pioneered mechanical handling techniques. He introduced automatic conveyor systems to handle cargo from jute to beef, and using an axle from his mother's electric bath chair helped to develop the electric platform truck still in use. By 1930, Scruttons were supplying labour or clerical staff for more than 60 services in London's ocean trades, working ships in four enclosed docks and on the Riverside. In 1937 Furse V. Scrutton took over, but he died the following year and nearly all the company's shares passed to Barclay's Bank in trust until his son Philip became Chairman in 1953 at the age of 30.

The war gave the company the opportunity to extend business to the Clyde and to Liverpool. In post-war years the company went ahead with mechanisation. The Company went to Southampton in 1954 to work ships in the New Zealand trade but had to pull out when the lines withdrew from the port. In 1958 Mr. Philip Scrutton was killed in a road accident and in 1966 Scruttons merged their stevedoring interests throughout London with T.F. Maltby.

Scruttons Ltd. continued to employ all tally clerks, and the new firm all registered dock labourers. It subsequently became the largest private employer of dock labour in the port, but has since been overtaken by the P.L.A.

(Acknowledgements to "The Port" for whom this Article was compiled by Carole Lyders).

Jewish Festivals (3)

FESTIVALS OF AUTUMN

Christians are sometimes inclined to talk as though Harvest Thanksgivings were their own exclusive possessions and indeed it is often said that they were invented by the eccentric Parson Hawker of Morwenstow in the nineteenth Century. In reality, however, Parson Hawker was reviving a very ancient practice, which, like so many Christian observances goes back to the Hebrew Scriptures and is carried out in a more traditional way by our Jewish neighbours today.

Harvest Festivals in the Bible :

There are three great festivals mentioned in the Bible which can all be described as Harvest Festivals. The Feast of Unleavened Bread (coinciding with Pass-over) when the people gave thanks for the barley harvest, the Feast of Pentecost for the wheat harvest and finally the Feast of Tabernacles for the harvest of grapes and wine. In the early days of ancient Israel great care was taken to make these holy festivals in contrast to the Canaanite harvest festivals which in Rabbi Epstein's words "were marked by obscene fertility rites and orgiastic scenes". The Hebrew Festivals were often spoken of as Pilgrim Festivals because so long as the Temple stood on Mount Zion all the males in the Jewish community would journey to Jerusalem for these feasts bringing offerings with them. This was in obedience to the command "Three times a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord God - in the place which He shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty: every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee". (Deut.16: 16,17).

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES (SUCCOTH).

The third Harvest Festival, The Feast of Tabernacles, gave thanks for the vintage in accordance with the Hebrew belief that all good things come from God and are to be used rightly but not abused by excess or selfishness. It also reminded the Hebrews that their forefathers were pilgrims in the wilderness dwelling in "tabernacles" (tents). "Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths; that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." (Leviticus 23: 39-43).

In Bible times the feast was one of the most joyous observances of the year. It fell on the fifteenth of Tishri (round about the end of September or the beginning of October). In the words of Dr. Buksbazen "The harvest has been brought in from the fields, the groves and the orchards. Barns and sheds are full. Hearts, too, are full of praise and thanksgiving for God's bounties. It is "the Feast of Ingathering" or Israel's thanksgiving Festival - it is the "Feast" referred to in the

New Testament in John 8: 37. The old Rabbis used to say, "He who has not seen Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles does not know what rejoicing means".

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES (SUCCOTH) TODAY

Since the Feast was commanded to be observed "for ever in your generations" its celebration has continued down to the present day and not long after the solemn "Holy Days" of the New Year and the Day of Atonement are over, once again the Jewish people are keeping a festival, this time Succoth.

Needless to say as with the other festivals the destruction of the Temple in A.D.70 has caused considerable modifications in the manner of observance. No longer could the processions of pilgrims go up to the Temple in Jerusalem. No longer could water from the Pool of Siloam be poured together with wine from a golden pitcher into a basin at the foot of the altar. No longer could the Temple be illuminated not only with the lights and torches of the pilgrims but also by the lighting of the golden candlestick. All this lies in the past but the Feast has continued through the centuries of exile and is observed by the Jews, not only in Israel, but throughout the world today. When possible and where the climate is suitable, the Jews will still build booths with boughs and leaves in their gardens or on their roof-tops. The present writer saw a number of such erections in Bucharest before the War. Where this is not possible a room may be decorated in the house. In East London it was the custom to decorate the rooms with festoons of coloured paper as children in Christian households sometimes do at Christmas time. Frequently Jews will bring their offerings of fruit to the Synagogue where a Sukkah, or booth, will have been erected. The ceiling of this booth is made of interlocking twigs and greenery and is open to the sky. Various types of fruit will hang from it.

THE LULAV AND THE ESROG.

During the synagogue service at Succoth a "Lulav" consisting of branches of palm, myrtle and willow leaves is held together by an "Esrog" (citrus fruit) and waved or shaken in all directions during the service. It is believed these were chosen because they were the commonest types of fruit and plants in the land of Israel and so taken to symbolise nature, while the shaking in all directions of the compass was to show that God's providential care extends over the whole world. It is also said that the ancient Rabbis interpreted the "boughs of goodly trees" in two ways. Some thought that the phrase referred to the building of the booths, while others maintained that the branches were meant to be carried in the hands of the people at the feast. In order to satisfy both schools of thought both interpretations were followed. The booths satisfied those who held the one view and the "lulav" the others.

LESSONS OF SUCCOTH

The feast of Succoth has valuable lessons for both Jews and Christians. The building of the Booths reminds us of God's protection and care while the waving of the Lulav and Esrog emphasises the fact that all good things come from God, a truth which a materialistic age is all too ready to forget. Then again the erection of a Booth symbolises the tents or temporary dwellings of the Israelites before they reached the Promised Land speaks to us of the fact that in a very real sense we are "strangers and pilgrims" in this world (Hebrews 11:13) and that our true home is in Eternity. Prayers offered at the Festival look forward to the Messianic age when the days of pilgrimage are over and the Kingdom of God has come. This again is a hope Christians share with Jews.

THE REJOICING OF THE LAW

The seventh day of the festival, Hoshana Rabbah, if the Great Feast of John 7:37, the eighth is the Day of Solemn Assembly ordained in Leviticus 23:36.

Immediately following the eight days of Succoth, Orthodox Jews keep a ninth day known as Simchath Torah, or Rejoicing of the Law. It derives its name from the fact

that on this day the systematic reading of the Torah in the synagogue is finished and begun anew. This joyous day reflects the fact that for the Jew the Law of God is no burden. Rather it is his constant delight to fulfil the will of the God who made him. Here again is a valuable lesson for us all. We hear much today of the "permissive society" but fulness of life is possible only to those who seek to fulfil the purpose of their Creator and use His gifts rightly without abusing them by selfishness or excess.

(Rev. George H. Stevens, B.D., M.Th.).

WEST HAM PEOPLE, NAMES AND PLACES (2)

PLAISTOW AND BEMERSYDE WARDS.

Mention has not previously been made to two hospitals within Plaistow Ward - St. Mary's and the Maternity Hospital. Both owe their origin to the Rev. T. Given-Wilson who, as Vicar of St. Mary, Plaistow, from 1884 to 1914, was responsible for much religious and social work for the betterment of the neighbourhood. He came to Plaistow when houses were fast covering the remaining open land on the eastern side of West Ham. Through his efforts, the present St. Mary's Church, the Church Halls, the Vicarage in Stopford Road, and the daughter churches of St. Katherine and St. Thomas were all built. His social work is remembered in the Given-Wilson Institute by Pelly Bridge.

Under his inspiration in 1888 two ladies - Sister Katherine and Sister Maud - established a maternity charity, sick nursing club and day nursery in London Road. The following year Sister Katherine moved Howards Road and founded "St. Mary's Nurses". From these and from two houses in Howards Road sprang the modern Plaistow Maternity Hospital and Nurses' Home. Sister Maud remained in the London Road area and the day nursery work developed into the modern St. Mary's Hospital for Women and Children. Permanent Day Nursery buildings were opened in 1893 with a ward for sick children. The site was given by Rev. T. Given-Wilson and the building by Rev. Henry Blisset. In 1895 it became the Hospital for Sick Children and by 1898 it had 38 beds. Lord Lister became its first President in 1899. In 1905 it became "St. Mary's Hospital for Women and Children". The new in-patient hospital was opened in 1911 and the first section of the out-patients' department in 1928.

Mr. Given-Wilson's son (Canon F. G. Given-Wilson) was Vicar of Dedham in the Constable country from 1906 to 1950 and Mr. Given-Wilson, Senr., lived there during his brief retirement until his death in 1928.

Whilst on the subject of hospitals (and moving now into Bemersyde Ward) - the modern Plaistow Hospital reminds us of the time when infectious diseases were far more rife than today and of the time when open land round Plaistow was a convenient place for a fever hospital.

Between 1871 and 1884 three authorities built hospitals for infectious diseases in the neighbourhood - the West Ham Guardians a Smallpox Hospital in a (now closed) part of Western Road. The Poplar Board of Works an Infectious Diseases Hospital in Samson Street, and the West Ham Local Board of Health a Smallpox Hospital in Prugel Street. During 1894-5 the West Ham Borough Council (which succeeded the Board of Health) closed "Prugel Street" and bought "Samson Street" and "Western Road" from the other authorities. With the closure of that part of Western Road a large island site was acquired and new buildings were opened in 1901 as the Plaistow Fever Hospital.

From 1906 it was recognised by Oxford, Cambridge and London Universities and the Royal Colleges for the training of medical students in infectious diseases. Over 3,000 students passed through the hospital during its use as a fever hospital.

Bemersyde is one of the newer Wards formed in 1922 and was "carved out" of the earlier Plaistow Ward. The first Councillors were William John Clare, Cuthbert St.

Clair Collins and William Henry Luscombe (the first two of these were new elections to the Council with the increase in Wards and seats). The present Councillors are Councillors Harry Bauckham, Henry Henney and Terence Charles MacMillan. The Ward takes its name from the "Bemersyde Estate" which was developed to the south of the Barking Road in the 1890's.

As far as we know the name originated from the property of Mr.N.S.Haig (after whom a road is named) and from Bemersyde, the seat of the Haig family in Roxburghshire, just north of the border. (Earl Haig took "Bemersyde" as the title of his Barony and Bemersyde House and fishing on the River Tweed were presented to him by his fellow countrymen of the Empire in 1921 in recognition of his war service. We do not know whether there was any close relationship between Mr.N.S.Haig and the Earl.)

Jedburgh Road appears to be named from the town in Roxburghshire.

Upperton Road is derived from Mr.Clement Upperton, another property owner of the 1890's. The old roads in the Ward are Boundary Road, Tunmarsh Lane, Prince Regent Lane and Greengate Street. Barking Road is only about 150 years old. That part of it from Augurs Lane to Boundary Road roughly follows the line of an older road which, in the 18th century, was called Brewers Lane. Boundary Road was named Broad-gate Lane in Roque's map of c.1741-5, Ton Marsh Lane in a survey of the Manor of West Ham in 1787 and Blind Lane from Tunns Marsh in a map of the earlier part of the 19th century. Tunmarsh Lane seems to have taken the name over! Augurs Lane is thought to come from Nicholas Augur who owned a field and a barn on the site sometime before the 1740's. The upper part of Prince Regent Lane was called Trinity Lane in 1787 - leading to Trinity Marsh.

One or two name derivations for newer roads in the Ward:-

Pragel Street comes from Clement Pragel (I) who, in 1681, left a rent charge of £6 per annum on an eight-acre field in the neighbourhood - £1 for the repair of his tomb and £5 for the poor.

In more modern times, St.Clair Road commemorates Mr.Cuthbert St.Clair Collins who as Councillor Collins was Mayor of the Borough in its Jubilee Year 1936, and St.Quinton Road his niece, Miss E.F.St.Quinton Collins, who was his Mayoress.

In 1821 a large part of the Ward south of the Barking Road was taken up by James Adams 80-acre farm and the 1851 census and the Ordnance Survey of the 1860's still indicate agricultural occupation.

Some extracts from John James' Map Book of Plaistow which was mentioned in the last article:-

"Residents in the area of the building work in the Bemersyde Ward will be interested to know that two fields in the Boundary Road district used to be called "Dustlands". The field now occupied by the property between Claughton and Boundary Roads used to belong to the "Poor of Hollowell near Hitchin in Hertfordshire - left to them by Mr.Rand who lived in the church porch there and sold gingerbread and gin by the roadside."

The fields which occupied the Barking Road/Green Street corner (now part in Bemersyde and part in Plaistow Wards) used to be called "The Stains": John James records "In this field the uncommon appearance of the grass and corn in a dry season. On the hill is a circle 5 yards in diameter, has an entrance; and 20 yards S.W. another circle 18 yards in diameter and an entrance is about 4 ft.wide; and about 20 yards S.W. of this is a diamond 12 ft. wide, the sides 44, 66, 56 and 54 yards."

A problem for the archaeologist? Or the numerologist?

F.Sainsbury B.E.M.,A.L.A. c.1962.

- For your Diary:-
- 22nd October 7.15 p.m. Q.M.C.- Annual General Meeting.
 - 25th November 7.30 p.m. Annual Lecture, Central Library, Bancroft Rd.
 - 10th December 7.15 p.m. Q.M.C. Illustrated talk by J.M.Tildesley.
 - 21st January 1976, 7.15 p.m. Q.M.C. "The Church in Tower Hamlets" by Rev.A.Royall, R.D.

FASHIONABLE OPENING (1881) FOR HALL AMONG THE SWEAT SHOPS.

The Italian style Limehouse Town Hall was first opened to the public in 1881 six years after the decision to build. The job cost £10,000. Part of this cost was met from the sale of the old parish workhouse and the rest was raised from a Metropolitan Board loan. The opening took place in April and was widely reported, giving us a lively picture of civic dignitaries determined to mark the occasion with proceedings confirming their own sense of their place in history.

In all, one hundred and fifty gentlemen sat down to "dejeuner" while the ladies had to content themselves with viewing the jamboree from the gallery. An endless succession of toasts ensued, each followed by a song from an assortment of singers including a soprano, which was evidently novel since it gave rise to comment. It was not reported whether the soprano sang from the floor or took her place in the gallery along with the rest of her sex. The pomposity of some of the worthies may amuse us at this distance but it is evident from the support from the floor, that such sentiments met with ready approval. The Chairman, one E.T.Hawkbridge, toasted the Army and Navy, explaining at length that he was himself a man of peace but nevertheless confessed that he would like to have seen the Army gain some advantage at the Transvaal. This met with thunderous support and was clearly the subject of some excited responses.

Throughout the occasion there was some originality in trying to marry the toast with an appropriate song. Thus when the clergy was proposed, there followed a rendition of "There is a happy Land" from the soprano. As the evening wore on a certain impatience could be detected among the 'gentlemen', a condition no doubt aided by the number of toasts. Thus a Mr.Hopson who bravely embarked on an historical appraisal of the parish met with "considerable noise notwithstanding several appeals for silence". Realising the temper of his audience Mr. Hopson redeemed himself by proposing the toast "Prosperity to the Parish of Limehouse and success to the new Town Hall". This was far more suitable and was devoured with much applause. Quick to seize upon a cue, a Mr. Davies rose to remind the assembly that prosperity had been threatened by the siting of a smallpox hospital at Todd Street. Why, he asked, has this "pest house" been placed in their midst? There had been those, he continued, who thought that people should shut up and grin and bear it, but fortunately the Limehouse vestry were not of that mind. This reference to what must have been a heated campaign received a mixed reception and if there had been a principled opposition to the vestry those who had tried to shut them up clearly viewed it as politic on this occasion to abide by their own advice. They had organised successive protests and an appeal to the House of Commons had led to its closure.

They toasted everybody - the Metropolitan Water Board, the churchwardens etc. and each toast was followed by a song. Eventually they ran out of worthies and the end of the evening was signalled by a toast to the Press.

Thus was the Town Hall at Limehouse opened to the public and the gap between the dignitaries of the Town Hall and the people they were supposed to represent was epitomised later in the month when one of the inspectors of workshops reported on conditions in the clothing trade of the East End of London. He spoke of about 2,000 workshops measuring 12 sq.ft. with an average of eight workers to a shop. The "sweaters" were nearly all foreign - Russian, Polish, German, Dutch and Belgian - and they tendered with the merchants for the lowest possible bid. The Inspector reported that often a sweater would guarantee to supply his own thread and equipment to sew and completely finish a cloth coat for two shillings and one penny and if it were not delivered on time, there was a fine of six pence per garment. He described the 18,000 operatives as slave labour who worked until early morning for their share of the two and a penny. So the Town Hall is now to be a Labour Museum and Mr.Davies' ghost is no doubt desperately trying to summon the vestry to protest, but the march of history has not been triumphant. Recent studies by the Runnymede Trust and the Low Pay Unit show that homeworking and outworking are as widespread as ever, and that these workers are just as much exploited.

Mary McGowan (From "Visual History", Trade Union Labour Co-op.Hist.Soc'y).