

East London History Society

Newsletter

Summer 1995

Vol.1 No.9

V J Day

The Day

The War

Ended

**50 YEARS AGO
MAY 1945 - AUGUST 1945**

The war in Europe was over, the war against Japan went on. To the British Army fighting in Burma and the United States Army in the South Pacific, V E Day meant very little, for them it was just another day of hard fighting against a ferocious enemy. Many East Enders who had fought in France and Italy now found that their units were being detailed for service in the Far East.

In the streets of the East End the flags came down, the party was over, everyone went back to work.

Local councils began to add up the cost of all those V E Day bonfires which had damaged many road surfaces. Every piece of timber close to the fires had been burnt. This included market barrows and stalls, wood fencing, builders' scaffolding and ladders.

In June the first men and women were discharged from the armed forces. Evacuees began to return to the East End. They were sent to Senrab Street School, Stepney which was being used as a dispersal point.

Bethnal Green tube station was to be used as temporary accommodation for returning evacuees who were homeless. But it was not needed. The cleaning staff were discharged and the keys handed back to London Transport.

A German U-boat was brought up the Thames and moored close to Tower Bridge, the first day it was open to the public 20,000 people queued to see inside it.

On the 5th July the nation went to the polls in a General Election. At the end of the day the ballot boxes were sealed for 3 weeks to wait for the postal votes of the service men and women who were scattered all over the world. At the time of the General Election 19% of the male population were in uniform.

The results came through on the 26th July, it was a Labour victory with a majority of 183. Bethnal Green, Hackney, Poplar, Limehouse, all voted

Labour. Stepney (Whitechapel) had a Labour MP, while Stepney (Mile End) now had a Communist MP.

On Monday 6th August, an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, on Thursday 9th August a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.

On the 13th August, London Dockers resumed 'normal working' after a 3 month go-slow. Railway workers agreed to a 7 shilling rise (35p) after a number of Sunday strikes.

14th August, Japan surrendered, the Prime Minister, who was now Clement Attlee, broadcast at midnight that the 15th and 16th would be national holidays. The broadcast was repeated at 7 am the next morning, but again confusion reigned, many people had already left for work, not knowing that the day had been declared an official holiday.

Slowly the celebrations began, the flags came out, street parties were organised, crowds gathered in the West End and outside Buckingham Palace, and yet, something was missing, there was not the same 'zip' that was present at V E Day, could it be that many people felt that although the war was over, we now faced a very uncertain 'peace'?

John Harris

NOTICE

The East London History Society will be holding its Annual General Meeting on Thursday 19th October at 7.15 pm. at the Latimer Congregational Church Hall in Ernest Street, Stepney.

It is hoped that members will be encouraged to stand for election to the committee. Please write to Doreen Kendall at 20 Puteaux House, Cranbrook Estate, Bethnal Green, E2 0RF if you or anyone you know wishes to come on board. Committee meetings are held once a month at No. 3 Puteaux House.

Letters and Queries

Harry Salton, Dagenham, Essex:

I was reading through the No. 17 issue of the East London Record, with special interest in the article regarding Miss Clara Grant.

This interest stemmed from the fact that me and my brothers and sister used to go every Saturday morning to get our bundles from Miss Grant. It was also of special interest to my wife, who recognised herself and two older sisters in the photograph of the children lining up to receive their bundles. The three girls in the photo of the bundles are about 11, 12 and 13 from the front of the queue, all have the same hats. My wife's eldest sister was Joan, she was about 9 years when this photo was taken, then came her sister Mary, about 7 years old and my wife Agnes about 6 years old. Their name was Sullivan. Their mother's name was Rebecca Mary, and they lived at No. 33 Sumner House.

My own children also used to go, but of course after Miss Grant had died, and I believe it was run by a Miss Curl then. My father used to go to the Settlement to do repairs that were needed to the buildings.

The reason I am writing to you is the article stated that you were involved in compiling information on the life of Clara Grant. I would be very interested in a book of her life if one is available, or the information as to where it would be available.

I am enclosing a photocopy of the class I used to be in. It was taken at Devon's Road School, which was situated in Knapp Road, Bow, E3. The period was about 1938. I have put the names of the pupils that I remember, but as for the teacher's name, I'm not sure, but I think it might have been Miss Cooke. I sent this along to you to see if it will be any good for any future publication of East London Record. I will also try and write some details of the area I lived in and some of the events that took place.

Also, does anyone have any information on a Miss Waddington, a small lady, about 45-50 years, who wore wide brimmed hats. She visited my mother (1943) to enquire about renting two rooms at No. 15 Lawes Street. She used to display jigsaw puzzles depicting religious scenes in the front window, and was there for 3-4 years before moving to a big house next to Bow

Road Underground Station. She was such a lovely person. I would appreciate any information on her.

Ed. Note: I was delighted that people have recognised themselves in the photographs at Fern Street (another of our members also picked himself out). It makes our research so much more valuable if we can put names to those pictured. Mr Salton's reminiscences are published in this issue.

Thank you also for the photocopy of the children. This will be put on display at the Ragged School Museum along with the exhibition on Clara Grant. There will also be a talk on the life and times of Clara Grant, by Rosemary Taylor, at the Museum on 8th November 1995.

Alex Hewston of Lancing, West Sussex writes:

I found No. 17 (East London Record) most interesting, particularly the mention of Charlie Brown and Tower Hamlets Cemetery (page 43). In the 1st Form of the old George Green School in East India Dock Road (early 1930's) we read 'Ancient Mariner' and as an educational trip were taken to Charlie Brown's pub to see the stuffed Albatross which he had strung up, wings spread wide, above the saloon bar! As an additional treat we were taken upstairs to see Charlie's private collection of curios, art treasures etc. He gave us each an autographed photo-card of the 'museum'. I still have my copy! A grandson and grand-daughter of Charlie Brown were at the school in my time there. If I remember correctly they left the school well before normal leaving year because the family moved to the Barking area or beyond.

Mr A Tedder, 21 Lambton Tower, High Street East, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR1 2AZ has been on the trail of Harry Harris. Can any of our members help?

Harry Harris claimed to be a Russian Jew and gave his age as 21 when he was arrested while trying to break into a pawnshop in Sunderland on March 1911.

I was curious as to why this East Londoner should have come so far north along with two companions also from East London, this at the time shortly after the drama in Sidney Street, etc, and though Harris was arrested his two companions in crime evaded a similar fate. (Harris was using an alias, and also gave a false address 36 Everard Street, Houndsditch). He said he was an

assistant tailor's worker and curious as to why a Russian Jew should have adopted such a common English name, I soon learnt that in two separate incidents in the history of the East End that very name had risen up. In 1888, on September 30th, a Joseph Lavande, Joseph Levy and a Harry Harris claimed to have seen Jack the Ripper talking to his fourth victim Catherine Eddowes on the corner of Duke Street and Church Passage. A few minutes later she was murdered in Mitre Square. Obviously this witness Harris was Jewish like his companions and I wonder if you know anything of him, address etc., also playing a hunch could he have been the Harry Harris, the Houndsditch Jeweller whom the anarchists were trying to rob when they were surprised at the Exchange Building?

I am working on the theory that this Sunderland H. Harris who adopted that name to fool the local police may have been involved in such circles as he was known to use a Jewish Club in Commercial Road, then the centre for the drama of the Sidney Street affair.

The fellow H Harris (alias) of Everard Street I strongly suspect was involved with the likes of Rudolf Rocker who I gather was sent to jail in 1914 (no doubt owing to his opposition to the 1st War).

The reason I am interested in photos of Commercial Road in 1911, which the Bancroft Road do not have, though Mr Lloyd did send me a photocopy of C. Rd. 1921 is that Harris told the northern police he had met his accomplices in a Jewish Social Club in that road (March 1911) hence the need for the photo of that year only.

I have tried to trace Harris through various Jewish groups relating to the old East End but alas they too have drawn a blank.

If you do turn up a 1911 photo, hopefully showing any Jewish club, or perhaps you have a list of such clubs at the time I would reimburse you for your effort and costs.

Mrs L D Canning, 25 Fernhill Close, Priestwood 1, Bracknell, Berks, RG42 1SX writes:

My Grandma was born in Maroon Street in Stepney in 1886 and lived there until 1942. She married and brought up her children in the Stepney area. My father was born in Matlock Street, Stepney in 1923.

It is about him I write and would like to know. I believe he went to the nearby Cayley Street School, Stepney, which all these years later still exists and operates as a school - I have been in touch with the school office but unfortunately the school historic records went missing some 4 years ago when there was a theft at the school. I wonder if you would be able to put me in touch with someone who has some knowledge of the school archives material and hopefully old photos.

I am also very interested in any information about the Stepney area during the years my father and his family lived there (he worked for a building works - W Stuttle and Son in 1942 which was based at the end of Matlock Street).

I would be very pleased to hear from you and receive any information you might be able to offer.

Connie Thomas, 7 Darwall Drive, Seaford, E. Sussex, BN25 4LW has been researching her family tree, and is seeking help:

I was surprised to learn from the death certificate of my 2 x Gt. Grandfather, William Aust Witherly, that he was found dead in the Regent's Canal Dock on the 25th October, 1860. Cause of death - suffocation by drowning. Information received from John Humphreys, Coroner for Middlesex. Inquest held 29th October 1860.

William was a Cooper, and I think may well have been employed at the docks.

I recently scoured the pages of the East London Observer for October/November 1860, in the hope of gleaning further information about this event, but could not find anything. Can any member please suggest another source of information which may prove fruitful?

Whilst writing, I would like to say how much I enjoy all the local information about the area where both my parents were born, grew up and married, and about which I know little, as they had left the area long before I was born.

Ed Note: Many thanks for all your letters. We do try and answer them promptly, or hold them until someone is available to carry out research on queries raised.

Doreen's Diary

Many letters and phonecalls of congratulations have been received for our Victory in Europe Newsletter, Spring 1995 edition.

The memories shared by members of where they were when peace was declared was well researched and showed how relieved everyone was that at last the terrible war was over in Europe. So congratulations to Rosemary and John Harris for a truly fantastic edition, one you both must feel proud of.

Our newsletter along with Tom Ridge's chronology of street parties held after the war (on sale at the Ragged School Museum, Copperfield Road) were the only written items on the end of the war in Tower Hamlets. No new official book or reprint, as produced by other boroughs and towns was published, yet this area was one of the hardest hit from enemy action all through the war.

In June three 22 storey blocks built in the 1960's on Trowbridge Estate, Hackney, were demolished. The broken concrete that is all that remains is being used to infill an area behind Lefevre Walk Estate in Bow. In future 'digs' I wonder what will be made of concrete rubble mixed up with Roman remains, which can still be found in this area?

The Largest School in the World - the Jews Free School, Bell Lane, Spitalfields 1817-1939.

Gerry Black has researched his school and this lecture is a forerunner to a forthcoming book on the subject. Well, if the number of old pupils who turned up for this lecture is anything to go by, Gerry has a best seller on his hands. Everyone who had arrived in the East End wanted a better start for their children and the Jews Free School provided both education and religious instruction. Funded by voluntary contributions, notably from the Rothschild family, which built the school, paid the teachers' salaries, arranged uniforms for the poorest and provided sports equipment. In the 1900's classes of 1,000 children were normal. Teachers taught the monitors early morning and they passed on this knowledge to the children in classes of 50. Many monitors themselves later became teachers. Old pupils present recalled the strict Head mistress and how they had been evacuated during the War. The school moved to Camden Town after the war.

Judging by the packed room this lecture was a resounding success.

East London Shops and Street Markets.

Our members always come up trumps on an Open Evening. Many had brought their collections of postcards, photos and memories. The outstanding contribution was by Artist and Photographer Janet Brooke of Brokesley Street, who brought along her portfolio of old shop fronts which she has been photographing over the years which together with her sketches and paintings formed an exhibition by itself.

The walks in Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park have continued through the summer and we also had a stall at the Friends Open Day. Much valuable information has been gleaned as people have come from far afield in search of family members and have added to our research. Tuesdays up at the Greater London Record Office finds committee members transcribing registers. The Cemetery Park has been a riot of foliage with grasses, fools parsley, lupins, poppies, daisies, and not forgetting the nettles and brambles. Members have learnt how to listen for the cries of the sparrow hawks nesting in the trees, although not one of us has gone on the dawn chorus walks yet!

Victoria Park played an important part in the VE Day Bank Holiday Monday celebrations. The Fly Past for the Queen's salute in Hyde Park which assembled over Chelmsford came over the Park in perfect formation to the cheers of the children who had gathered to see them. Many organisations held small gatherings and picnics in the park, making it a very lively day.

The evening was very hot with a long twilight. The band played and sang forties music which could be heard all over the park, then the music ended with the LBTH Mayor Cllr. Arthur Downes accompanied by the Mayoress, members of the Council and the Town Crier, who in a loud voice called for everyone to be silent for the prayer and minute's silence which was held throughout the UK at this time, after which the beacon was lit to cheers. A memory to treasure walking back through the Park in the evening.

Doreen Kendall

Sweet Memories?

Two ladies who attend the Lawrence Day Centre shared with Doreen these unusual memories of their childhood and early employment.

Ethel Haylock (Aged 92 years): On the evening of the Silvertown explosion I was walking along to see the fire when I was struck by the blast. I ended up in hospital with a broken arm and ribs.

My friend Katie Oakes lost her arm in the explosion and in later years used to chase us with her arm stump which really hurt if it caught you. As a result of the explosion my sister went to live with our aunt in Kingston and stayed for good. I still visit her there. We were all kitted out with second hand clothes after the explosion.

I worked at Tate and Lyle the sugar firm for 47 years in the print shop and later in the social club. I would collect a large carton of tin approximately two feet high made up of wafer thin sheets of tin. I would feed these sheets one at a time into a print machine to make the labels of Tate's Syrup. This operation went through the print machine three times to make the syrup tin labels green, gold and black print. Then the sheets were cut into long strips to form syrup tins.

The hardest part was getting to work on time. Mr Bill Tizack or Mr George Stocks were the gate keepers. They would see you running to be on time yet would close the gate exactly to the minute. This meant reporting to the office where a half hour would be deducted from your wages. If you timed your journey to work you could cross the railway line before a train was due and save a few minutes. The hardest was when a train was shunting and made you late.

I am still in contact with Tate and Lyle and I still get invitations to the Christmas socials and outings, but these days I am unable to accept. Christmas hampers filled with lots of exotic foods are also sent out to all long standing employees. One year all these beautiful hampers were stolen and it was a rush for the company to collect together all the Christmas fare.

We can also go and buy sugar etc at cost price at the company shop, but these days I am unable to travel there.

Rose Warren (Aged 94 years): Work was very hard to find in the twenties when I was eighteen and my brother informed me that Lyle the sugar company just before it was amalgamated with Tate were looking for staff a few weeks after my eighteenth birthday.

I was employed as a folder, one of four girls working piece work bagging sugar in blue bags standing at a bench in line. The first woman was very fast filling the 2 lb bags of sugar from a machine into distinctive blue paper bags which were Lyles trademark. The sugar was weighed twice, and we folded the tops of the bags into corners then folded over to make sure all was correctly uniform and minding fingers were not cut on paper. If too many bags were produced, we would place them on a ledge until the work eased up. Twelve bags were then packed into one brown paper parcel and stacked. I also used to push 2 cwt of sugar on a trolley between benches.

The rules were very strict. We wore uniforms and a Mr Woods the foreman walked up and down behind us, keeping check on us. I worked shift work 6 am to 2 pm one week and the the following week 2 pm till 10 pm. I also remember, as Ethel does, trying to get to work on time.

On the Friday evening of the Silvertown Explosion, my mother had tea ready for my brother all set out on a lace tablecloth. We were all coming down the stairs when the explosion happened and we were thrown down together in a heap.

I married my husband John Warren in the twenties. He worked in the syrup section at Tate, on the barge unloading raw sugar. This was very hard manual work.

During the Second World War, I worked at Quasi-Arc Copperfield Road, engineering works, making steel rods woven with asbestos threads. These were placed in the hulls of ships and were meant to stop fire spreading.

John Harris, our Membership Secretary, has sent in this report:

In the Spring Issue of the newsletter, Billy Scotchmer mentioned a brick built air raid shelter in Sutherland Road, Bow which was hit by an H E bomb.

The society has researched this incident, the civil defence reports state that the shelter was hit at 2.20 am 8th September 1940 and the last of the victims were dug out of the shelter at 3 pm 8th September 1940. Many of

the dead were from outside the district. The records state that they lived in Stepney, Poplar, Ilford and Forest Gate. An entire family of 6 from Tredegar Road were killed plus a family of 6 from Campbell Road, Bow.

Among the victims was a lady who could not be identified. The mortuary service could not estimate her age because of the extent of her injuries. No relation or neighbour came forward to report her missing, no friends or workmates came to identify her. She carried no identity card, no ration book. The rescue squads found part of a dress she had worn. It was satin material with blue and white stripes.

The remains of this lady were buried in a mass grave in Bow Cemetery with other victims of this raid. She will always be the unknown lady of Sutherland Road.

BOOKSHELF

Hackney at War by Jennifer Golden. £7.99. 154 pages A5 paperback.

This book recalls the outbreak of the war, the organisation of the Civil Defence and the widespread destruction of the Blitz in Hackney. It includes tables containing details of many streets that were damaged by enemy action and information where damage can still be seen today. Many unpublished photographs from Hackney Archives and informative text.

We Think You Ought to Go. Ed. Richard Samways. £5.00. 56 pages A4 size. 40 original photographs.

The original text of the evacuation of children from London during the Second World War from the LCC Education Department Archives listed in this book show the mammoth task that this authority faced throughout the Second World War. Individual children will be impossible to trace due to complexity of the categories listed.

Leyton and Leytonstone. Compiled by Keith Romig and Peter Lawrence. £8.99.

This ancient parish grew up with the arrival of the railways and Eastenders moving out and able to commute to work. 200 postcards from the 1900's locate churches, schools, recreation, residential streets and

public transport. The informative text under each postcard describes the changes that have taken place and includes a photograph of Knots Green 17 storey tower block demolished in June 1995.

Mildmay - the Birth and Rebirth of a Unique Hospital. Derek Taylor-Thompson. 1992. Mildmay Mission Hospital.

This 64 page history of Mildmay Mission Hospital has not been given the publicity it deserves, for few people appear to have heard of it, or know where to obtain it. A neatly produced and printed book, packed full of useful information, with sections on past history, a chronology of events, and archive photographs.

Hopefully, the society will endeavour to get some copies for sale to our members at the lectures. Otherwise your enquiries should be directed to the Mildmay Mission Hospital, Hackney Road, Bethnal Green, E2.

It Happened Here

This 83-page, A4 paperback, compiled by Stanley Tiquit, tells the story of Civil Defence in Wanstead and Woodford, 1939-45. It is a reprint, first published in 1948, and is available from Redbridge Library. It records the activities of the Civil Defence and the effect the war had on the Borough. It records heroic deeds, with photographs and maps of areas bombed, as well as lists of names of volunteers. The book is a real tribute to the Civil Defence and gives the reader a fine introduction to the Borough's history.

THE INFERNAL DIVER

By Dr. John Bevan

The lives of John and Charles Deane, their invention of the diving helmet, and its first application to treasure hunting, civil engineering, salvage and military uses.

Alexander McKee's quest for the Tudor warship Mary Rose, unearthed the early salvage activities of an obscure seaman named John Deane. This gentleman had rediscovered the ancient shipwreck in 1836 and had recovered many artefacts including cannons, bows and human bones.

The strangest aspect of this work was that John Deane had been using a diving helmet to undertake the

excavation work, apparently several years before the diving helmet had previously been thought to have been invented by Augustus Siebe.

Subsequent investigation revealed that John Deane and his brother Charles were the actual inventors of the diving helmet and dress but that their names had been effectively erased from the history books. The name of Augustus Siebe had since been superimposed on this achievement, and following his death, wrongly credited with the invention.

In attempting to unravel the true facts behind this story, the author has carried out many years of exhaustive research into the lives of John Deane and his brother Charles. This biographical work represents the fruition of the project.

The book chronicles the lives of these lowly, Deptford seafarers, from their humble beginnings at the Royal Hospital School, Greenwich, as 'objects of charity', through their seagoing careers, describing their great achievement, that of the invention and development of the diving helmet and dress and follows on to their amazing adventures. The chronology of the events and the characters involved are carefully detailed in this first ever definitive work on the subject.

The lives of the Deane brothers were totally changed by their invention. They launched themselves into treasure-hunting, wreck clearance, salvage, marine engineering and military support. The wrecks of the Mary Rose and Royal George figure prominently in the story as do the names of eminent civil engineers including Rendel, Cubitt, Burges and Walker. The diving helmet and dress were taken up enthusiastically by the Royal Engineers, followed by the Royal Navy and made a significant contribution to increasing tactical capabilities. When the Crimean War came, both the Royal Navy and Royal Engineers benefitted enormously from their newfound superiority in underwater and explosive operations. Indeed, they commissioned John Deane of Whitstable to be their resident diving and explosives expert in the Crimea throughout the campaign. His gallantry and indefatigable exploits won him accolades of praise from both General Codrington and Admiral Lyons, together with the dubious honour of the title, "The Infernal Diver."

This book charts the success, failures, triumphs and tragedies that the Deane brothers experienced in their remarkable lives. One of the two brothers, Charles Deane, spent much of his life in Limehouse, Lime Kiln Hill, Chrisp Street and 5 Providence Place, where he

committed suicide in 1848. Intriguingly, the author has been able to find the place of his burial. The book rewrites an important part of history, the very conception of today's international diving industry.

NOTES AND NEWS

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATION

Stepney, Bethnal Green and Poplar, in old photographs. By Rosemary Taylor and Christopher Lloyd. Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd. £7.99. 160 pages, 245 photographs. ppbk.

Soon to hit the bookshops, and just in time for the Christmas trade, this eagerly-awaited publication has caused considerable interest, as the majority of the selection of photographs from the Bancroft Library archives have never been published before. These, along with selections from Rosemary's own collection, and Philip Mernick's treasure-trove of postcards make this book a must for all collectors of East End history and nostalgia. Each photograph was carefully researched, with the expert guidance of Local History librarians Chris Lloyd and Harry Watton.

The 245 photographs range from the 1860's to the early 1960's, and are arranged by area, as well as topic, with sections on East End Markets, Transport, Trade and People.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

On my walks around Bow I often pass the little turning called Kitcat Terrace, off the north side of Bow Road. I decided the other day that it was time to investigate, especially as I had been meaning to find out a bit more about the large house at the end of the road.

This elegant building, now housing the Bow Computer Training Centre was originally the Parish Hall for St Mary's Church, Bow Road. It was built during the time when the Reverend Henry James Kitcat was Rector of Bow, from 1904 to 1921. Previously Avenue Road, it was renamed Kitcat Terrace in 1937.

Rosemary Taylor

Memories of Bow Common

1.

I was born in Bow Common on 1st March 1950 at No. 11 Furze Street. My father's name was Harold Arthur Salton and my mother was Florence Salton (nee Showler). I had at that time an elder brother, Arthur George, he was born on 9th March 1928. We were followed by a sister Margaret Elizabeth born on 28th October 1933, and a brother James Thomas, born on 19th June 1939. My mother lived at No. 20 Furze Street, and my father at Sabbarton Street Poplar. They married in St Paul's Church, Bow Common on 25th December 1925.

Furze Street was rather quiet, the traffic that was there was usually during the day whilst we were at school, like goods being delivered or collected, from the various firms in the area. The tarmac road had a nice smooth surface, which was ideal for roller skating and marbles.

The most traffic that we used to see was when the horse and carts of the Wiseman's Stables returned after a day delivering. They used to be parked outside in the road until it was ready for the drivers to take them in the yard and be unharnessed. It was a pleasure for us children to stand and stroke these gentle beasts, who were generally feeding from their nosebags, and every now and then they would throw their heads back to get the last bit of oats or chaff at the bottom of the bag, which made dust go up their nostrils, when they would give a loud snort to clear them again. There was one drayman, Harry Knight, who used to take one of us kids up on his seat, whilst he drove the cart into the stable. It was certainly a thrill for the one chosen. I was lucky several times because I lived right opposite.

There were some places of interest around Bow Common although at the time we did not really appreciate them. There was the firm of Boroughes and Watts, Snooker and Billiard table makers. Next door to my Gran at No. 20 was the Slate Department where they used to make the slate beds for the tables and it was a very dusty place. I don't think it had proper ventilation. It was a long building with large gates which let plenty of air in.

There used to be, if I remember rightly, two big benches going about two-thirds of the way in, where the slate beds which must have been about 1 1/2 inches thick, were matched up, and holes drilled ready for the wooden framing, and holes cut for the pockets. Down the far end of the shop was where the slate was cut to size and levelled off smooth. This was done by hand, by using a cast iron frame in the shape of an oblong with a triangle shape on each end, with various cross-pieces. Centrally was positioned a handle, like a long broom handle, which could pivot over to be used from either end and this was pushed back and forth over the slate with fine sand used as a grinding medium, until the desired finish was reached. My uncle George Showler used to work there, along with a man called Bob Underwood. When the slates were finished, they were taken into the next department which was next door, where all the pockets and green baize etc were fitted. I believe they used to make everything connected with billiards and snooker there, like cues and balls etc. Us kids used to get slate wheels from the slate shop. These were about 1 1/2 - 2 inches diameter with a hole about 3/4 - 1 inch in the middle, and a 1/2 inch thick, I think they were cut out of the slate to put bolts through, but we got a lot of pleasure seeing who could roll them farthest up the street.

Down the far end of Furze Street was a firm which used to be called Berkels. It was owned by a Dutchman and they made bacon slicers. This was later taken over by an engineering firm called Butterfields.

Baythorne Street was at the far end of Furze Street and this was always referred to as the Barracks. I'm not really sure why, but I was told once that it used to be a stronghold for IRA sympathisers. I don't know if this was true, most of Baythorne Street on one side was taken up by warehouses and it was referred to as the 'Butter smackers'.

At the beginning of Furze Street was a public house called the Earl of Devon and before I was born it was said that a policeman was beaten up and stuffed down the drainhole outside.

Round the corner in Devon's Road on the left was a department of Jack Hood's Dart and Dartboard

manufacturers, and opposite the Earl of Devon, also in Devon's Road was another department, and we used to stand watching them make the brass barrels of the darts and fix in the points. It was very interesting to us kids, but the turner was most probably bored with the repetition. I believe Jack Hood was an old time Darts Champion, but I don't know much about him. I know he had a stall up Petticoat Lane for years.

Round Bow Common Lane, there was a little row of terraced cottages, also a row in Tryphena Place, and in Lawes Street, later Sherwood Street, was a row either side of the road. In Bow Common Lane nearly opposite the Sherwood Arms, a pub on the corner of Sherwood Street, was a single little cottage and living there was an old lady and her twin sons who must have been 45-50 years old. I never ever knew their names but they were always referred to as the Sand Dancers because they looked the image of the music hall act of that name. Next door to them was a firm that used to cure fish, smoked haddock and kippers etc. The brothers often used to be seen carrying a big tray of large cods heads which they collected from the fish curers, and it was said they used to cook and eat them. No doubt there was a lot of goodness in them.

I feel that those cottages were the remnants of one of the villages around, because my Gran used to talk about green fields in her childhood, and around Whitethorn Street, Frances Mary Buss House, part of that building used to be a dairy farm. The big hall used to be the cow shed, apparently, and the rings were still situated in the walls where the cows were tethered and the hay loft, which overlooked Whitethorn Street was turned into a library. I don't know how long ago it was a farm, must have been in the 1800's. The youth club which was held in the Buss House was run by Miss Hazlehurst and Sister Banks, and teachers from Canon's Park Girls School used to come and help out at various times. Jean Kennedy and Miss Shillito ran a thrift club and were regular visitors to my home, collecting the payments, and were great friends of my mother's.

Then there was the public house called The Widow's Son, now called the Bun House, I don't know why they had to change the name after all

those years. It is a listed tourist attraction now, I believe and they have even put a station opposite now, in Shepherd Street. My father, who used to work for a local builder named Herbert Haines, had to go to the Widow's Son pub, take down the buns and dust them off and varnish them, to help preserve them. He also did work for Miss Clara Grant and they became great friends.

There was a notorious slum called Perring Street and my father used to tell us stories about it. His Guv'nor, Herbert Haines owned some houses down there, and when he went to collect the rent, people unable to pay would move into empty premises along the street to dodge the landlord, and on one occasion, one chap answered the door, holding a baby in his arms and said: "Sorry I can't pay this week, but my wife has just had a baby." He found out later that the man had borrowed the baby from a neighbour. My father said it was not unusual to find a donkey with its head out of the front window, because they took them through the house, generally to the back garden.

It was most probably a blessing to the people who lived there when it was all pulled down and the Bracken House buildings took its place. They were built, I believe, about 1935.

Next door to my Gran Elizabeth Showler (nee Jeffers) was a stable, and the horses put their heads over her back wall, for a slice of bread or a piece of apple. She knew and called them all by name. She also told us of the time they had elephants stabled there. They were in a show at the Old Queen's Theatre, Poplar and were stabled next door to her during the show's run. I'm sure it must have caused great excitement to the local children, to see these giant beasts lumbering along. I don't suppose many had seen one, unless in a book or comic.

2.

Early on Sunday morning when all was quiet down Furze Street, very often you would hear somebody give a shout, "Shut your doors, it's a rat!", and then the sound of booted feet running as they tried to catch it. The early morning silence was also broken by the call of the Beigal Seller, he was a

little old man who carried a basket or sack containing the beigals. They were lovely, when my mother could afford them.

Another event that took place pretty regular was when one of the costers, Duggie Thornton, let his pony out in the street for a run, and it would behave just as if it was in the heart of the country. It would lay on the floor, rolling over, kicking its legs in the air. Another coster, Jumbo Reason used to bring out his nanny goat, much to the delight of the local children, who would chase it all around, and it in turn would playfully give us a butt up the backside, if you weren't careful. I and my mate would go into its stable to feed it with the specked apples or fruit that was bruised or damaged. But what we used to like giving it was lemons. It chewed them with relish, it never showed any reaction to the bitter juice. I think it used to have more effect on us, as the goat munched happily, we would grimace at the thought of the bitterness bursting forth, and in a strange way, it made our mouths water.

We had many street vendors round at that time. One we used to look forward to was the Indian Toffee man. He had an aluminium box about 8 inches deep, 8 inches wide and about 2 foot long, and he used to sell this very tasty toffee, as it was called. It was a pinky-orangey colour, something like present day candy floss, but it was flaky, like a Cadbury flake bar, and he would quickly twist up a little paper cone and fill it with this delicious tasting toffee, there wasn't a lot but it was really nice. It cost a halfpenny a twist.

One vendor I will never forget is the one who sold vinegar from a barrel and salt by the lump, which he cut from a big block on his barrow. He used to shout "Penny a pint vinegar, salt a penny a lump." Another vendor used to come round with a huge block of honeycomb and break it off as required. Then we had the catsmeat man, selling meat for cats. This was about three or four slices of meat on a little wooden pointed skewer. If people who'd ordered any weren't at home, he would put it under the knocker of the front door. But we used to have a local boy, who would take some of the skewers and eat it.

I think the ice-cream vendors on their three wheeler trikes were amongst the most popular for us children: Shale's, Walls with their triangular ice stick, the Ding-Dong Man with this four or five little cow bells which he hit with a hammer, making a tune, ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong. His ice-cream was in a cardboard tube and he would cut portions off to put in the cornet. But the favourite was Tony, a little Italian ice-cream seller. He came around pushing a little handcart with two urns, one contained ice-cream, the other one lemon ice. I think they were both family recipes, but the lemon ice was special, it contained real lemon slices and the children would hope to find a bit in their cornet or wafer, but if Tony was asked for a piece he would try and oblige, and would stir the ice round to find some for us. Late on, he came round in a two-wheeled pony and trap, with a roof supported by twisted brass columns. He also sold hot chestnuts and baked potatoes outside the Hippodrome in Stainsby Road and it was lovely to have a red hot potato to hold, on the way home in the winter.

The aromas that assailed your nostrils as you entered Cole's Grocer Shop opposite Furze Street was an experience. It was like walking into an Aladdin's cave of smells, which came from the many open barrels of pickles and foodstuffs which were sold loose. You could go in and buy halfpenny worth of mustard pickle, which Mr Cole would put in a square of paper and twist together like a little bag. Sugar and tea was sold loose, in a paper cone that was deftly made from sheets of paper on the counter. Butter and cheese was cut from blocks standing on the counter. Men went in to buy the necessary ingredients for making a cup of tea at work. Mr Cole would make up a paper cone, into it would go a teaspoon of tea, one or two spoons of sugar, and a spoonful of Nestle's condensed milk, I think that cost a penny.

So many smells and aromas, the rope factory, Blewitt's, the resin from the woodyard, the bales of hay and straw, the clean fresh smell of the bagwash laundry from George Leftley's shop on the corner of Whitethorn Street. It doesn't take much to spark off a nostalgic memory!

Harry Salton

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

The programme of talks will start on Thursday 14th September when Edward H Milligan will tell the story of the Quakers in East London. He will be concentrating on the period from the middle of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. Among the characters he'll be bringing to life will be Marie Hilton and Mary Hughes.

On Thursday 19th October the AGM will be at 7.15 pm. At 7.45 pm Ann Robey will give an illustrated talk on the history of Blackwall Yard. The talk will detail the establishment of the East India Company's shipyard at Blackwall in 1615 and the laying out of the yard and then give an account of what happened there up to 1995.

October 1995 is the 40th Anniversary of the consecration of the new All Hallows Church, Devons Road, Bow. On Saturday 28th October at 2.30 pm the society will visit the church to hear an introductory talk by Revd. Michael Peet and see an exhibition. The D8 bus passes the church. The bus runs from Stratford Station to the Isle of Dogs. There is a 15 minute walk from Bow Road Station. Turn right on leaving the station and go down Campbell Road and turn right at the top of Campbell Road. The Docklands Light Railway Devon's Road Station is also close by.

On Thursday 16th November the veteran MP and former Minister Peter Shore will speak on Clement Attlee as Leader of the Labour Party.

On Monday (please note, not Thursday!) 4th December E Martin Noble will speak about his experiences both in the West Indies and when he moved to the UK with the RAF in 1943.

David Behr

MARKING THE SPOT

English Heritage plan to erect a plaque to Bud Flanagan (1896-1968) in Hanbury Street. Born Reuben Weintrop, later Robert Weintrop, very little is known about his early life.

Tower Hamlets Councillors want ideas for plaques. Philip Mernick has suggested Jack Warner, who, with his sisters Elsie and Doris Waters, lived in Rounton Row, Bow.

Some other suggestions include Dr. Hannah Billig, "The Angel of Cable Street," 198 Cable Street, Miriam Moses, who founded the Brady Girls Club, (17 Princelet Street), Doris and Muriel Lester at Kingsley Hall, Clara Grant at Fern Street, Nellie Cressall in Cubitt Town, Will Crooks in Hale Street. These are just a few suggestions.

And finally, I do think it is about time the plaque to the Virginia Settlers is replaced. The council have been doing an excellent job landscaping the area and it is now accessible to walkers (I'm not sure if this is official, but I have been there!)

Rosemary Taylor

This newsletter is published on behalf of the East London History Society and is free to members of the Society. Edited, type-set on DTP and produced by Rosemary Taylor, with editorial contributions from Doreen Kendall, John Harris and David Behr.

Letters and articles are most welcome and we endeavour to publish as much of the material we receive as space permits.

Enquiries may be addressed to Doreen Kendall, 20 Puteaux House, Cranbrook Estate, Bethnal Green, E2 0RF, Rosemary Taylor, 5 Pusey House, Saracen Street, Poplar, E14 6HG. Membership enquiries to John Harris, 15 Three Crowns Road, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5AD.

**East London History Society
Programme 1995 - 1996**

Thursday 14 September at 7.30 pm

Plasnet House, Stepney Causeway and Vallance Road - the Quaker Story in East London.

Speaker: Edward H Milligan

Saturday 30 September at 10 am

Autumn Coach Trip to Wimpole Hall and Home Farm.

Details from Ann Sansom,
Tel: 0181 524 4506

Thursday 19 October at 7.45 pm

The History of Blackwall Yard from 1615 to 1995 (illustrated).

Speaker: Ann Robey

Preceded by AGM at 7.15 pm.

Saturday 28 October at 2.30 pm

Visit to All Hallow's Church, Devon's Road, Bow.

Thursday 16 November at 7.30 pm

Clement Attlee as Leader of the Labour Party - Keeping the Party Together.

Speaker: Peter Shore MP.

Monday 4 December at 7.30 pm

From the West Indies to the Wartime RAF.

Speaker: E. Martin Noble

Thursday 25 January 7.30 pm

East London Tailors' Trade Unions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Speaker: Anne J Kersten

Thursday 22 February at 7.30 pm

Morpeth Portman Place Higher Grade - from the 3Rs to universal Secondary Education in a Bethnal Green School 1878-1945.

Speaker: Frank Small

Thursday 14 March at 7.30 pm

Care Beyond Duty - the story of Edith Cavell.

Speaker: Margaret E Crispin

Thursday 25 April at 7.30 pm

From Chippendale to Curtain Road - the development of the East London furniture industry (illustrated).

Speaker: David Dewing

Thursday 16 May at 7.30 pm

How We Lived: memories and research of East London housing

Members' Evening

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.

Autumn Coach Trip 1995
on
Saturday 30th September
Wimpole Hall and Home Farm

Wimpole Hall, which is a National Trust property, is the most spectacular and largest mansion in Cambridgeshire. It is mainly 18th century, and the fine interior is described as both intimate and formal, with work by three famous architects, Gibbs, Flitcroft and Soane. As well as the grand rooms, some of the servants' quarters are on display. Wimpole Hall is set in a 350-acre landscaped park.

An additional attraction is the Home Farm. This was built as a model farm in 1794, and Sir John Soane designed the Great Barn. This houses a collection of historic farm machinery. Rare breeds of sheep, cattle, horses, pigs and goats can be viewed in the paddocks and buildings. Horse and cart rides are usually available.

The coach fare will be £5.50 a head. Entrance fees vary:

- House only - National Trust members free, others £4.50.
- Farm: National Trust members £1.75, others £3.75.
- Combined ticket for Hall and Farm - £6.00.

We are not able to get a party rate at weekends, and I am not sure if everyone will want to visit both Hall and Farm, so I will leave it to people to buy their tickets individually on arrival. Please note that if you are visiting both, and are not NT members, a combined ticket is a lot cheaper than paying separately.

The pick-up will be at Mile End, opposite the station, at 10.00 am (please note the slightly later start).

Lunch is available at Wimpole Hall, or you can picnic. Tea is also available.

Please send bookings to Ann Sansom, using the form below.

To: Ann Sansom, 18 Hawkdene, London, E4 7PF. Tele: 0181 524 4506. Autumn Coach Trip to Wimpole Hall and Farm on 30 September 1995.
I/we would like seats for the coach trip.
NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
TELE NO. _____
I/we enclose a cheque/PO for £..... payable to the East London History Society.