



The Class of 1946-47 - Three Mills School, Stratford

Top Row: Leonard Askew, Mary St Pierre, Derek Westrop, Derek Thick, Joe Olroy,

Middle Row: Billy Gormer, Roy Bissett, Dennis Marriott, Charlie Bowes, Marie Hill, Gladys Squires, Phyllis Kemp,
Marie Smith, June Nash

Bottom Row: Tony Sheppard, David King, Fred Rundell, Gerald Schim, Mary Quinlin, Jean Threackle

(See Ivy Alexander's article on page 8)

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Editorial Note:

The East London History Society Newsletter is published twice yearly and is free to members of the Society.

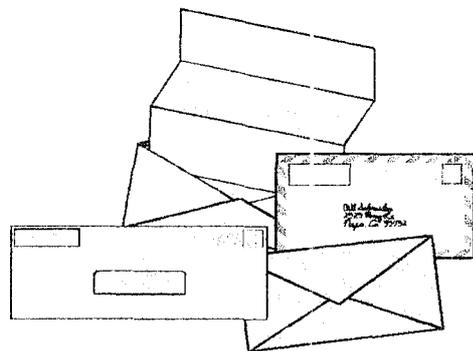
The Newsletter is edited, typeset and produced by Rosemary Taylor with the assistance of an editorial team comprising John Harris, Doreen Kendall, David Behr, Philip Mernick and Doreen Osborn.

Letters and articles on East End history and reminiscences are always welcome and we make every effort to publish suitable material. Whilst handwritten articles are acceptable, items of interest that are typewritten or even better still, on disk will get priority!!

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All queries regarding membership should be addressed to John Harris, 13 Three Crowns Road, Colchester CO4 5AD.

The Present committee are: Philip Mernick, Chairman, Doreen Kendall, Secretary, John Harris, Membership, David Behr, Programme, Ann Sansom, Doreen Osborn, Bob Dunn, Howard Penberg and Rosemary Taylor.



BOOKSHELF

BOOKS FOR SALE

East London Records for sale at £1.00 each. A real bargain! Nos. 6 & 7, 10, 11, 14, 17 and 18 are still available.

**A Pictorial History of Victoria Park
Price £6.95 plus £1.50 postage.**

**East London Record No. 19 -
A4 pb 48 pages Price 2.75 + 75p p&p**

The East London Record, published in 1998 in a brand new large format, making it even greater value for money.

Articles include:

- **George Lansbury and the Bow and Bromley by election of 1912 by John Shepherd.**
- **The Simple Life at Essex House in Bow, C R Ashbee and The Guild of Handicraft by Rosemary Taylor.**
- **Arthur Morrison by Stan Newens MEP.**
- **Bethnal Green's Sailor Tailor by Harold Finch.**
- **Terror at Wenlock Brewery by Stephen Sadler.**
- **Drinking in Mile End in 1750 by Derek Morris.**
- **Tunnel Vision by John Harris.**

Enquiries to Doreen Kendall, 20 Puteaux House, Bethnal Green, London E2 0RF

**EAST LONDON
HISTORY SOCIETY
PROGRAMME
2000**

Thursday 16th March 2000

Yiddish Theatre in London
(illustrated)
David Mazower

Thursday 13th April 2000

Arthur Morrison
Stan Newens

Thursday 18th May 2000

Open Evening - Street Furniture, Family
History and other favourite themes.

Note:

The lectures are held on Thursday evenings at 7.30 pm in the Latimer Congregational Church Hall, Ernest Street, E1, - 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. Bus No. 25.

**MARY SMITH -
LIMEHOUSE KNOCKER-UP**

The famous picture of Mary Smith at work with her peashooter was taken by John Topham, who has left us a remarkable legacy of memorable photographs of the East End. Topham was a local policeman who apparently became so fascinated by the scenes of everyday life he encountered in the East End, that he took to carrying a camera with him on his beat. He had been taking photographs for six years, when he sold this particular picture to the press in 1933. He went on to become a successful professional photographer.

Mrs Mary Smith lived in Brenton Street Limehouse, and was employed as a Knocker-Up. A Knocker-Up's job was to go round the houses to wake people up in the early hours, usually from about three in the morning for market workers. For sixpence a week she would shoot dried peas at their bedroom windows to rouse them from their slumbers.

Mary Smith gave birth to sixteen children, but Joe Moore's mother and uncle were the only two to survive into adulthood. Joe's uncle died in the First World War. Mary's maiden name was Mendoza - she was the great-niece of Mendoza the Boxer. She was also related to Peter Sellers, whose mother was also a Mendoza, making her a great niece to Mary Smith.

(The above has been compiled from notes made by Doreen Osborn during a conversation with Joe Moore, volunteer at the Ragged School Museum, who is a grandson of Mary Smith. Mary Smith's picture was reproduced in Ben's Limehouse, the autobiography of Ben Thomas, published by the Ragged Museum Trust and available at the Museum Book shop).

Memories of the Blitz

Very many thanks for the information sent to me about the bomb that fell in Tower Hamlets Cemetery. (See also last Newsletter)

As regards the bomb, it saved our lives in a roundabout way. When the air raid warnings sounded we always went to the Anderson shelter but after the bomb dropped in the cemetery my mother would not go there again. When the warning sounded on Saturday 7th September my parents, my twin sister and baby brother born in 1939 all went to the cow barn shelter at the Whitethorn Street end of Tidey Street. I stayed behind and stood at the street door, I told my parents that if nothing happened I would go on to the barbers for a haircut. As I stood there I had a feeling that I was the only one alive, there was a deathly hush everywhere, there was no sign of any other human being, there was no sound of a dog barking even. Suddenly I heard faint explosions in the distance, these got louder as the bomber drew nearer and then an enormous explosion a very short distance away followed by some more. The streets had become very dangerous. I ran at speed to the cow barn shelter and got there just in time as the bombs came down. I remember locking up and seeing several bombers and hearing the sound of machine guns as our fighters attacked them. In the shelter my father and I lay across my mother, sister and baby brother to protect them from shrapnel or flying debris. Suddenly there was a terrific explosion and the whole shelter shook as if in an earthquake, all the lights went out and a strong smell of oil and paraffin permeated the shelter. I knew then that Merriots oil shop on the corner of Tidey Street and Bow Common Lane had gone. In the shelter a lot of women and children were screaming and some were trying to remember half forgotten prayers, a lady who was elderly lay next to me on the floor quite still, the shock of the explosion had killed her. When the All Clear went we emerged dazed from the shelter and gazed on a scene I shall never forget. We

seemd to be surrounded by a ring of fire. I heard and saw some explosions that seemed to be in the Chrisp Street area. They were probably timed to go off when the All Clear sounded. Tidey Street was covered in rubble and the part where we lived was roped off. My mate Frankie Tompkins at Number 10 was dug out of his Anderson shelter unhurt. Our house at Number 8 was only a matter of yards from the destroyed houses. I saw a family named Martin digging through the wreckage of their house for the body of their mother and I believe the body of a relative, a Mrs Verlander. My father and I discovered our street door hanging off the hinges and the passage to the back door choked with rubble. We crawled across the top of this to the staircase, very carefully, as the whole lot appeared to be in danger of collapsing. When we reached the landing we found the roof had been blown off. In the front room, which was covered in debris we found our three piece suite had been cut to pieces when the windows blew in. On going to a chest of drawers in an alcove my father found that the rent money my mother had left there had been stolen along with some other items. So much for honesty! We made our way downstairs very slowly and crawled across the rubble to the back door that was half hanging off and found several feet of rubble stretching right down past the Anderson shelter. On shifting the rubble to expose the shelter entrance we found that inside bricks had been blown in with such force that it was completely blocked from top to bottom. There is no doubt that if we had used the Anderson on that day we would have all been killed. It is due to the cemetery bomb that we used the cow barn shelter instead of the Anderson. What made me feel sad was to discover the Holy Name School had received a direct hit. It was the school my mother, my aunts and I believe my uncles attended, also my sisters and I went there.

Harry Willmott

STEPNEY GAS WORKS (COMMERCIAL GAS COMPANY 1839-1946)

The process which turned the docks into Docklands is sweeping around the canal network in Tower Hamlets. In October 1998, Bellway Urban Renewal applied for planning permission to build housing on the 8 1/2 acre Stepney Gas Works site on the Regent's Canal. The application was not determined by Tower Hamlets Council and, as a result of an appeal by Bellway, a public inquiry was held in November 1999. The Save Stepney Campaign, representing fifteen member organisations (including GLIAS, the Victorian Society and Save Britain's Heritage), was granted Rule 6 status at the inquiry. Our case for the better remediation of the site was made by Mark Hadley (Environmental Auditors Ltd.) and John Gillespie (SSC) and, for the better retention of industrial archaeological structures, by Malcolm Tucker, Brian Morton (The Morton Partnership Limited) and Tom Ridge (SSC).

The inspector's report on the inquiry may be sent to the Secretary of State in February or March and John Prescott will either allow or dismiss Bellway's appeal. Should he allow the appeal and grant planning permission, British Gas will make an immediate start on the dewatering and demolition of the gas holders.

Nos. 2 and 3 GAS HOLD GUIDE FRAMES (middle two of four on Harford Street) contain the oldest surviving guide frame columns in this country and probably the world. Their hollow cast-iron column bases, built in 1853-54 (and the No. 1 bases) are now the only surviving 'single-order' column bases with enlarged toruses on hollow plinths with concealed holding-down bolts. One of the No. 2 column bases may be seen through the short section of railings in the boundary wall on Harford Street. Each 1853-54 column shaft consisted of three cylinders; the top cylinder was unbolted and replaced above two extra

cylinders in 1892, when a third lift was added to the original two-lift holder. The heightened cylinders were connected by three new rings of perforated wrought-iron plate girders, the lower two rings being bolted to new cast-iron collars around the columns. The collars bear the Commercial Gas Company seal of the White Tower on a shield. This unique arrangement of collars and girders makes each c. 77 ft high column look like three separate columns on top of one another, as in the listed 'superimposed orders' type at St Pancras and Bromley-by-Bow.

The campaign has proposed the retention of a representative portion of the No. 3 guide frame on its below-ground brick tank, in a landscaped area between two of the proposed four-storey blocks. It would consist of four columns cut down to about 28 feet and include four lower cast-iron collars and three wrought-iron girders. This in situ preservation is also necessary because the Stepney gas holders survived the Blitz, thanks mainly to the bravery of the gas workers on fire watch; partly for this reason the campaign plans to have the representative portion dedicated as the Stepney Blitz Memorial. Bellway opposed the memorial at the inquiry and presented its own 'public art' proposal for four cut-down columns, ranging in height from 6 1/2 feet to 13 feet, on a new lower surface; with some of the collars retained elsewhere in the landscaped areas. This was included in the suggested draft conditions agreed by Bellway and Tower Hamlets Council at the end of the inquiry.

No. 1 GAS HOLDER GUIDE FRAME (north) large but otherwise almost identical to the Nos. 2 and 3. It was the third largest in London when built in 1863-64. It was enlarged in 1886.

No. 4 GAS HOLDER GUIDE FRAME (south) rebuilt in 1925-26 by Samuel Cutler & Sons of Millwall on the Isle of Dogs, on the original 1851 below-ground brick tank.

REMAINS OF CAST-IRON COAL

TRAMWAY, three truncated columns and girders below Johnson's Lock which were part of a 24 ft high tramway constructed in 1872 and extended in the 1890s. Until 1912, coal for making gas was unloaded from canal barges into trucks which ran to the several coal stores. From 1912 to closure in 1946, the tramway carried coal brought by road from Wapping where it was unloaded from the company's own small fleet of colliers. Apart from a few surviving jetties on the Thames, the remains are now the only indication of a gas works coal-handling structure in London and are the only remains of a coal-handling structure on the canals in London. Bellway has indicated that it will incorporate the remains in its proposed canal walkway but the campaign is concerned about their proper preservation.

VICTORY BRIDGE WALL (A) four panel boundary wall built in 1907 by LCC, as part of its new Victory Bridge over the Regent's Canal; to be retained as part of a screen between Ben Jonson Road and the relocated gas governor.

COAL STORE WALL (B) massive eleven-bay wall which is the surviving lower part of the south wall of a 'two storey' coal store built in 1853-54. Ten intervening piers have large oval wall-tie plates; iron tie-rods secured both north and south walls against the weight of coal in the store which was raised to 'three storeys' and extended westwards in the late 19th century. This is London's only known remnant of a 19th century gas works coal store. The five eastern bays will be retained as part of a screen between Ben Jonson Road and the relocated gas governor, with an archway in the fifth bay for access to the proposed canal walkway.

METER AND GOVERNOR HOUSE WALL (E) five bays (with bricked-up basement window openings) between buttressed piers. The ground floor of the 1853-54 building housed the station meter which measured the

volume of purified gas under constant pressure as it passed from the gas holders into the mains. This is London's only known remnant of a 19th century meter and governor house. The campaign has proposed that railings are inserted into the five ground floor window openings and the wall retained as a screen between Ben Jonson Road and the front of the proposed employment training centre. Bellway is opposed to this idea and the wall will probably be demolished.

HEAD OFFICE AND SHOWROOM WALLS (F) two long bays and five short bays on either side of bricked-up entrance in splay wall on corner of Ben Jonson Road and Harford Street, remains of a two-storey building erected in 1853-54. This is London's only known remnant of a mid-19th century gas company head office and showroom. There are only three surviving late-19th century gas company office buildings in London, two of which were head offices.

STORE WALLS AND GATE PIERS (G) nine-bay wall in Harford Street with short flank wall at southern end and gate piers at northern end; all built post-1894 when the store building was extended to the back of the pavement. This is London's only known remnant of a 19th century gas company store; it probably served mainly as a warehouse for the adjacent showroom. The campaign has proposed that railings are inserted into the ground floor window openings in WALLS F and G, with new stone caps (matching those on the gate piers) on the intervening piers. This would make an attractive and useful screen between the heavy traffic on the adjacent roads and a safe courtyard in front of the proposed community health centre, with a pedestrian entrance in the middle of the splay wall on the corner. Bellway is opposed to this idea and WALLS F and G will probably be demolished.

The coal store, meter and governor house, head office and showroom were all designed by a local architect and built in 1853-54 by John

Perry, a Bethnal Green builder. His company built the brick exterior of Bethnal Green Museum (1871-72), now the Museum of Childhood, and the stone exterior of Tower Bridge (1886-1894). The coal stores, meter and governor house, head office and showroom were all built at the same time as the original Nos. 2 and 3 gas holders. WALLS B, E & F are therefore 'related contemporary monuments' associated with and mutually enhancing the value of the nationally important Stepney Blitz Memorial. The value of this group is further enhanced by the proximity of WALLS A & G and the unique remains of the cast-iron coal tramway. This is the only fully representative group of surviving 19th century gas industry structures in London and is therefore the only place in London where schoolchildren and others can see evidence of the several stages in the production, storage and distribution of town gas, at what was the most important gas works in the East End.

Whilst English Heritage informed the inspector that Nos. 2 and 3 gas holders at Stepney are of national importance, it failed to acknowledge the regional importance and value of WALLS A,B,E,F & G and the remains of the cast-iron coal tramway. Furthermore, it recommended that one of the guide frames is removed from its below-ground brick tank for retention within the development and subsequent scheduling as an ancient monument. However the Save Steney Campaign believes, that, even if this were a practical possibility, relocation would be far too expensive for Bellway. It is also contrary to Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology & Planning PPG 16 which makes a presumption for in situ preservation of nationally important archaeological remains.

All the evidence presented at the inquiry is now being considered by the inspector. In view of the government's brownfield housing policy, the campaign thinks it highly unlikely that he will ask the Secretary of State to accept English Heritage's advice. The campaign hopes that he will recommend the Stepney

Blitz Memorial, rather than Bellway's 'public art' proposal, and also the retention of WALLS E, F & G and the proper preservation of the remains of the cast-iron coal tramway.

English Heritage gave its evidence to the inspector as a result of the campaign's request (following a failed attempt to list the No. 2 gas holder guide frame) to consider the Stepney Blitz Memorial for scheduling as an ancient monument. In a final effort to save the representative portion of the No. 3 gas holder guide frame and the equally important related remains, the campaign has recently applied to English Heritage for the Stepney Blitz Memorial and the six associated structures to be recommended for scheduling as a group.

The gas holders and associated structures may be seen from Harford Street, Ben Jonson Road and the canal towpath between the Ragged School Museum and Johnson's Lock. The museum is open to the public on Wednesdays and Thursdays and the first Sunday afternoon in the month (020 8980 6405). There is also a small exhibition about the gas works and the campaign's proposals at the OCEAN ESTATE COMMUNITY HALL (behind the flats on the corner of Harford Street and Ernest Street), open 10 am to 12 noon on Mondays and Tuesdays and 2 pm to 4 pm on Wednesdays (020 7790 1294). The address to write to is Save Stepney Campaign, c/o Ocean Estate TLA, Community Hall, Anson House Forecourt, Ernest Street, Stepney, London E1 4SE.

TOM RIDGE

THREE MILLS SCHOOL

The Class of 1946-1947

After the Second World War, there was a shortage of teachers and an Emergency Teacher Training scheme was introduced. There were also grants available for ex-service people and others whose 'essential' employment during the war had interrupted their education. I had left school, The Russell Central School, at Upton Park, West Ham, in 1940 and until 1946 had worked as a clerk at the West Ham Tuberculosis Clinic in Balaam Street. I became eligible for one of these awards and was placed on a waiting list for an emergency teacher training course. There was also the possibility of a grant to commence a university degree course. The London County Council was obviously in possession of these waiting lists and consequently I was approached with the offer of a teaching post whilst I was waiting. As I had always lived in West Ham, I contacted the education office there and enquired whether they too, would be interested in my services.

The result was that I was offered a teaching post and without a break, and without any training, I left the TB clinic and became a teacher. After a week at the Ashburton Senior Girls School, Custom House, where I taught nothing but Physical Education, and a few weeks at Carpenters Road Primary School at Stratford, I was sent to Three Mills School, in Abbey Lane, Stratford. There, I had my own class. I was very fit and full of enthusiasm. As this was my first class, I have clear memories of those days. I also kept notes the children sent me and I have a photo of the class of '46 to '47.

Three Mills School in Abbey Lane was opened in 1895 with places for 1,576 pupils. It had a primary department on the ground floor and a senior school above. It was similar in design to many other schools of the period. For two weeks I taught in the junior department in a

room with desks rising in steps. There was no room for the children to move about and it must have been very unpleasant for them sitting in a desk for hours on end. I then went upstairs to the senior school. There was a large rectangular hall in the centre of the building, with classrooms leading off and a staircase at each end. In the centre of one of the long sides was a dais reached by a few steps on which stood the headmistress's desk, rather like a throne. When she had the time, which seemed to me to be quite often, she would sit at the desk and survey the scene. All the classrooms were to the front of her and to the left and right. Mine was on her left. On her desk was the signing-in book, which all teachers had to complete on arrival. I was given a first year class, the lowest stream of about three, I think, and requested to do the best I could. In effect, I was given a free hand and I don't remember having a timetable except for those occasions when we swapped classes for boys to do woodwork and the girls to do needlework and likewise for netball and football.

The class was not too large, about 23. The children were aged 11 and 12 and came from that unfortunate group of children who were 5 at the outbreak of the war and should have started school. In the book, 'War over West Ham', by Doreen Idle, written in 1943 and prepared for the Fabian Society and Ethical Union, she stated:

'Those children who should have started schooling at 5, and instead started at 6 or 7, are the most affected. In one school of between 300 and 400 children, there was not a child of 7 who could read concentration is said to be poor in elementary schools. It seems that small children are more easily unsettled in this way than older ones. There is also a greater coming and going through evacuation than among older children.'

This was written in 1943 and it was this group of children who went on to suffer the unsettling effect of doodlebugs and rockets in 1944 and early 1945. Although, for many of

the children in my class at Three Mills, their performance was below standard, they were by no means of low intelligence. For a variety of reasons, they had missed out. Some, even, might now be diagnosed as dyslexic and given preferential treatment. They'd had a raw deal and should have been compensated for their educational deprivation, but were instead placed under the care of an inexperienced, uncertificated teacher. Actually, far from being at a disadvantage, I was in a very favourable position. To begin with, I understood these children. I had come from the same background. They lived in the 'single cold tap' type of house that I had been brought up in, in Wharf Street, Old Canning Town, and the Bidder Street School which I attended would not have even featured in a 'league table' of desirable schools. My own brother Eddie was just two years younger than these children and I knew how unsettled he was.

The desks were arranged in rows, in pairs, and there was very little space between the rows. My desk was raised on a small plinth, designed it would seem to distance the teacher from the pupils. There was a shortage of materials, especially paper, so there was little opportunity for freedom of expression. It 'wasted' paper. I had learned from my own school days that children had to be kept occupied, so I purchased odd rolls of cheap wall paper and ceiling paper, and cut it into squares and this was freely available at all times. I also made sure there were plenty of coloured pencils available. They loved this and produced some interesting drawings, not always executed in silence. One, Bill Gormer, would draw airplanes and bombs and make the sound of planes crashing and bombs dropping as he did so, as though drawings should have a sound track. Pictures were pinned on the wall, and the classroom became 'alive'.

I made a pillar-box for the classroom, where pupils could post letters to me on any subject. This proved to be very useful and encouraged them to try their hand at writing, instead of the

copying they had been used to. For many of them this was a struggle, but they were uninhibited and really made any effort.

PT or Physical Training as it was then called, took place in the hall and I usually changed into shorts for this and encouraged them to do so as well. This caused great excitement, as the letters proved. Charlie wrote, 'All the boys sed are you going to were your pt cloce plice.' And from Hilda, 'When we have drill, will you put your drilling clos on and some of the girls will put on our dilling close. love from Hilda.' There were many letters like this. By presenting them here as they appeared, I do not think I am doing them a disservice as I have had letters from them since, and they wrote beautifully.

I had letters requesting tracing paper and more spelling tests. The pence table was in great demand, probably because they and their parents could appreciate its usefulness. I can still repeat it, singsong fashion, rising in multiples of ten and twelve. 'Twelve pence are one shilling, twenty pence are one and eight pence, twenty-four pence are two shillings. Thirty pence are two and sixpence,' and so on, culminating in, 'hundred and twenty pence are ten shillings,' which we said slowly and decisively, emphasising the 'ten'. They loved it. I think I did too. I had desperate pleas to 'write out the pence table for me' and one letter said, 'Someone has took my pence table out of my desk and I do not know them properly.' So the pence table even drove one of them to theft. A box of pen-nibs went missing from my desk and I must have kicked up a fuss, as there were many letters on the pen-nibs saga. Some expressed sorrow, some divulged names, but best of all, from Roy and Dennis, 'Dear Miss Hick, I am sorry we took a nips.'

During the lunch break for a few days a week, I taught ballroom dancing in the hall. I think they enjoyed listening to the records as much as anything. This was a great success and some of the older boys from other classes joined in,

sceptical at first. I still have a beautifully written letter from A R Flewitt from Mr Davies Class, which reads:- 'I am writing to you to express my gratitude for the dancing classes you have given me and also for some of my friends, who did not like dancing at first but now jump at the chance of going dancing. Yours sincerely.'

Sometimes I would get little presents, such as the cough sweet I received, accompanied by, 'This is a bit hot and good for a cold.' I had a promise of drawing pins, and four pencils. In February there must have been some suggestion that I was leaving at Easter, and there was a flood of desperate letters. I didn't actually leave until the summer, when they moved up a class anyway. Typical was the letter from Peter Andrew. I hope he doesn't mind my reporting it as it was written, as I know he writes perfectly, now:- 'The class and I are gowing to bye you a gowing away present. We do not now wot to by you so I hame arskin you wot youe wald lick. We can not get to miche money to gevev but we are trying to get au nufe to bye a smale present for you. Yors sisiley.'

I returned to Three Mills School after the summer holiday of 1947, for just two weeks and before the beginning of term at the South East Essex Technical College, but by then, my class had moved on.

IVY ALEXANDER

Juniper, an Independent television production company is developing a major documentary for Channel 4, which will tell the story of the plague in London in 1665. The director will be Justin Hardy, who made the documentary Georgiana last year. If any of our members has an interest in this subject or would like to contribute to the programme, please contact John Toba, you can email him john@junipertv.co.uk or telephone 0171 722 7111. their address is Juniper, Iron Bridge House, Bridge Approach, London NW1 8BD

NOTES AND NEWS

BLACKWALL UPDATE

In the last newsletter we mentioned the new monument to the Virginia Settlers at Blackwall. This was unveiled by the American Ambassador to the United Kingdom in an exclusive ceremony, without any representation from the local community present. Barratts have, however, promised that the public will eventually have access to the monument, once the development, called Virginia Quay has been completed.

WEST INDIA DOCK GATE

A replica of the famous Hibbert Ship on the old West India Gate or Clock Gate will be unveiled on 16th July to mark the 200th anniversary of the construction of the Docks.

Members may remember a discussion some years ago as to the whereabouts of this monument. Mr French, our President finally supplied the answer to this, when he reported that he had tracked it down to the PLA warehouse, where it lay for many years, following its removal when the gate was demolished in 1932. An attempt was made to move it to Poplar Library, but the model simply crumbled and had to be scrapped.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives is changing its opening hours from Monday 3rd April 2000, to the following times:

**Monday and Wednesday - closed
Tuesday and Thursday - 9am-8pm
Friday - 9am-6pm
Saturday - 9am-5pm**

**For more information, please contact:
Loccal History Library and Archives,
Bancroft Library, Bancroft Road, London
E1 4DQ.
Tel:020 8980 4366**

BOOK REVIEWS

A Century of the East End, by Rosemary Taylor and Christopher Lloyd. ISBN 0 7509 2411. Published by Sutton Publishing, Price £14.99. On sale at W H Smith only.

This book was specially commissioned by WH Smith and is part of a series of 25 'Century' books, to celebrate the new millennium. The size, 27 cm by 19 cm (or for our older members 7 1/2" by 10 1/2" allows the 102 pages of photographs to be reproduced in black and white to a larger size. The text is clear and informative and enables the reader to identify not only the main subjects in the photographs, it makes the backgrounds clearer, so shops, street names and bill boards can be read with ease.

This book is a celebration of our East End in the 20th century, covering all the major events, disasters and the people who played their part in them. The ordinary people who worked in local firms and dock areas, and enjoyed the cinema, dancing in the parks and cheering Royalty from Queen Alexandra to Diana the Princess of Wales.

Well done, Rosemary and Chris. It has made all your hard work a pleasure to read and browse.

DOREEN KENDALL

The Forgotten Service, by Angela Raby (144 pages, 198 illustrations, published by After the Battle Publications, £14.95)

The role of the Auxiliary Ambulance Service during the Second World War in London and other cities is undocumented and forgotten. No other wartime service, from Bevin Boys to the Land Army, has been totally ignored by literature and the audio-visual media.

From over 130 stations, an estimated 10,000 volunteers collected the injured, as well as mutilated and dismembered bodies in outdated commercial vans crudely adapted. These volunteers - most were women - coming from all social classes and career backgrounds, were plunged into a scenario as traumatic and horrific as anything encountered by any of the other Services.

This book uses much original and unpublished material to tell the story of Auxiliary Ambulance Station 39 situated in Weymouth Mews in the heart of London through the memories of Station Officer May Greenup who served at Station 39 for five and a half years.. Nearly all the records of the service were lost after the war so the material here is almost certainly unique and fills a gap in the history of wartime Britain.

Many of the photographs used in the book were taken by May and her colleagues, and they reflect not the hour by hour horror of their duties but the humour that kept them going and carried them through the days as they witnessed the destruction and devastation of London.

The East End at Work, by Rosemary Taylor and Christopher Lloyd. ISBN 0 7509 2006 8. Published by Sutton Publishing, Price £9.99.

This new selection of outstanding historic photographs from the Tower Hamlets Local History Library follows the successful formula established by *The Changing East End*, and *Stepney, Bethnal Green and Poplar in Old Photographs*. The new book provides a graphic record of the generations of people who worked in the East End, and contributed to its special character, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The pictures show the rapid and lasting developments that took place in the working life of the area in the late Victorian period and in the 20th century. Social customs, economic condition and working practices evolved over the decades, and local industry and business prospered then fell into a period of sharp decline. The pictures serve as a vivid reminder of the uncomfortable and often dangerous conditions that prevailed in the lives of those trying to earn a living just a few generations away.

Mill Football Club, 1885-1939, compiled by Chris Bethell, David Sullivan and the Millwall FC Museum. ISBN 0 7524 1849 1. Published by Tempus Publishing Limited, Price £9.99.

A collection of over 250 rare images which illustrate the first five decades in the history of Millwall Football Club. Action shots, team groups.

player portraits, newspaper cuttings, cartoons, programme covers and other items of printed ephemera from Millwall FC Museum's unique archives are combined to bring a long and proud sporting history to life.

The book begins the story in 1885, with the club's foundation, and illustrates its development up until the Second World War. This includes the early days in the Southern League from 1894, the founder membership of Division Three in 1920, promotion seasons in 1928 and 1938 and glorious FA Cup runs in 1900, 1903 and 1937 (in all of which the Lions reached the semi-final stage of the competition). Special attention is paid to the great players that have represented the club, including Obed Caygill, J H Gettins, Wally Davies, Jack Fort and J R Smith.

An essential read for anyone who has an interest in Millwall Football Club or the history of Association Football.

Hackney, from Stamford Hill to Shoreditch

Tempus Publishing Ltd.

Price £9.99.

200 old photographs covers the area from Stamford Hill and Stoke Newington in the north and follows the roads down through Homerton and South Hackney, ending in Hoxton and Shoreditch.

The photographs cover health, education and entertainment, and there was many interesting photographs of the German Hospital which was in Dalston Lane.

This book will appeal to all who knew Hackney in the old days, and is well worth the price.

The Life of John Newton by Richard Cecil, edited by Marylynn Rouse, published by Christian Focus in 2000, ISBN 1 85792 284 0. Hardback, price £11.99.

The book launch was held on Thursday 2nd March at the church where John Newton was rector for 28 years in the heart of the City of London, at St Mary Woolnoth's, Lombard Street, almost next to the Royal Exchange. The present Post Office buildings in Lombard Street used to be the vicarage, but this

had changed before Newton's time. When Newton arrived in London from Olney, where he and William Cowper had been writing hymns together, he first stayed in Charles Square for 3 years, then moved into No. 6 Coleman Street Buildings where he remained until his death in 1807.

Marylynn states: "Richard Cecil was a friend of Newton's and had direct access to Newton's diaries and correspondence. He also had Newton check most of his work, so it is effectively the authorised version. I have divided Cecil's work, first published in 1808, into chapters and added some background to people, events and places. For instance it was remarkable to discover that the Christian Captain whom he met in the West Indies, who strengthened his new faith and put him in touch with Samuel Brewer of Stepney Independent Meeting, had a house just round the corner from Newton's birthplace in Wapping. Newton was born in Red Lyon Street (now Reardon Path) in 1725. His mother attended David Jennings's Independent Church in Old Gravel Lane. I know very little about his father, Captain John Newton, and his mother, Elizabeth (nee Seatcliffe). They were married in St Mary-le-Bow in 1724. Newton himself married Mary Catlett in Rochester in 1750. There is quite possibly a family connection between the Seatcliffe family and Mary Catlett's mother, Elizabeth (nee Churchill). It is thought that the two Elizabeths went to school together. Whether that was in the Catlett's home town of Chatham, or elsewhere, I don't know.

I would love to find out more about the Newtons and the Seatliffes in Wapping and any connection between the Seatliffes and the Churchills of Chatham. If anyone can place the house the Newtons lived in (they are in the Wapping Land Tax for 1730) that would be good to know. Perhaps his Wapping connection may be considered for a blue plaque commemoration."

Newton had a very wide influence amongst his contemporaries, including William Wilberforce, William Herbert (first Librarian of the Guildhall), John and Charles Wesley (Charles asked him to be one of his pallbearers) and many others.

The book has a substantial "Who's Who" and bibliography at the back. It also includes

previously unpublished material such as his own sermon notes for which he wrote the hymns *Amazing Grace* and *How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds*, as teaching aids.

For further information, please contact, Marylynn Rouse, The Hill Lodge, Warwick Road, Stratford-on-Avon, CV37 0NP, tel 01789 298174.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Society of Genealogists Fair is being held this year on the 6th and 7th May. If you buy your tickets in advance from the Society, they cost £4, otherwise it is £6 at the door.

The event is a must for all family history enthusiasts, as well as local history buffs. There is a wealth of information available from history societies around the country, and one can spend hours browsing, and leave with a very heavy bag indeed (and a very light purse!)

Essex History Fair is being held this year at Cressing Temple, Braintree, on 11th June. This is a great day out for all the family, with events held throughout the day. The last Fair was held in Harwich in 1997. The venue was excellent, and the organisers put everything they had into making it a success. Unfortunately, the weather was not kind to them - it simply bucketed down! Although everyone who attended enjoyed it, the financial loss proved too much for the organisers, hence, the extra year's delay in holding this event. Previous Fairs at Cressing Temple and Waltham Abbey were really enjoyable days out, if a bit chilly and damp, for the month of June, that is. So, make this a date in your diary - and pray for fine weather!!!

London Garden Squares Day

Following on from last year's successful event, The London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust are organising and sponsoring London Garden Squares Day on Sunday 4th June 2000 from 10 am to 5 pm. The Trust hopes to encourage as many garden squares as possible to open to the public.

Look out for the opening of the Green Bridge and the newly landscaped Mile End Park, due for completion in early summer.

**Definitely a Date for your Diary -
Monday 29th May 2000, Spring Bank Holiday -
Open Day in Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park.**

War Months - a documentary series produced by Brook Lapping

Brook Lapping is a television production company which specialises in documentaries. They have produced a number of award-winning series including, *The Kennedys*, *The Windsors* and *The Dynasty: the Nehru-Gandhi Story*, as well as dramas such as *A Vote for Hitler* and *Innocent in Judea*.

They are currently making a documentary series consisting of thirteen half-hour programmes about the Second World War. Each programme covers a month of the war from 1939 to the summer of 1941.

The idea of the series is to hear 'from the horse's mouth' personal recollections of the war. They will cover not only the major historical events: Dunkirk, Blitzkrieg, V for Victory etc., but also major personal events: couples who met during an air raid, the five year old who vividly remembers eating black market jam, the brothers who were reunited in a concentration camp, etc.

We are at present looking for people who have stories to tell about the London Blitz - about being bombed or seeing the fire raid of December 1940, about Anderson and Morrison shelters or sheltering in the tube, about the black out and hearing Churchill's speeches on the wireless, or any other personal memories of being a Londoner during the war.

If you have a story to tell, or you know someone who does, please contact Kate Orr on 0171 428 4754, or Molly Milton on 0171 428 4753. They will phone you back and come and meet you in person if you prefer it.

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

An early Victorian time capsule, found on a building site in Whitechapel, has sent us a fascinating message from the past. The capsule, a clear glass bottle about 24cm tall, was found by the resident site engineer, JOE FLORES, of Ove Arup and Partners, who reported it to the Museum of London. It was later opened under the watchful eye of TV cameras in the Museum's conservation laboratory.

The bottle contained various documents, including a set of 1845 Maundy money, a list of benefactors and a copy of 'The Times', dated Tuesday 16th December 1845. The capsule had been buried on that day in a massive stone emplacement as part of a public ceremony marking the start of work on the Whitechapel Public Baths and Wash-houses - a building eventually opened in 1847. Chief among the benefactors was 'Her Most Gracious Majesty, the Queen,' who gave the sum of £200.

The site is being redeveloped to become The National Library of Women, the new Fawcett Library, at London Guildhall University, and the original 1846 facade will be retained in the new library building.

(Extract of an article by Francis Grew, from Archaeology Matters No. 8, December 1999, published by Museum of London)

Editor's Note:

Gladys McGee, who died in March 1999, was for many years an attendant at Whitechapel Baths. On retirement, she took up writing poetry, and was a founder member of the Basement Writers. She took to performing her work in public anywhere and anytime, in her gold lame suit and gold shoes, and as the 'Bard of Stepney' has found a place in the East End Hall of Fame.

GREEN DRAGON YARD

A brief report on an archeological dig in Green Dragon Yard, Old Montague Street, reveals the following:

Roman - Above the brickearth was a layer of greenish cultivation horizon, this contained Roman pottery. This layer was present in all trenches and

may indicate that the area was cultivated either for agricultural or domestic purposes during the Roman Period.

Medieval - An 18th century pit fill also included two residual fragments of medieval pottery dating from the late 13th or early 14th centuries.

Post-Medieval - A thick layer of garden soil containing 18th century finds was observed in each trench. These finds were particularly concentrated in the southern area where 50 pipe bowls were recovered, mostly dating 1700-40. Half of the pipes had makers marks, the initials RS occur 22 times.

This suggests that the maker must have been working locally. Pottery recovered from the pit has been dated to 1700-50 which correlates very well with the date for the tobacco pipes.

MEMBERS WAX LYRICAL

Joan Higgs of Canvey Island writes:

What a good read the ELHS Newsletter is, it brings back so many happy memories. Reading Harry Willmott's 'Pre War Recollections of Bow', I wonder if any of your readers remember the following ditty. This was always sung by all our family and I have only found one person outside this who actually knew this song:

Last Sunday for dinner we had a duck, and that was by way of a treat.
We took it along to the Bakers shop just at the end of the street,
We walked about till it was done from morning until night,
When all of a sudden walking by we caught a terrible fright.
We all had a potato out of the dish for luck,
We upset all the gravy and somebody pinched the duck,
With the batter pudding they pelted me and spoilt my Sunday clothes,
And all I had was a piece of the dish and a bit of the parsons nose.

Also my grandparents, the Higgs and Foster family lived in Selsey Street and I well remember Shales the Ice Cream man who sold the most tasty lemon ice served in shell shaped wafers - I can taste it now!

We also used to come up every year to see the Catholic procession round the streets of the East End.

Incidentally, we came up a couple of weeks ago to the Open Day and was pleased we were able to visit St Anne's Church and St Dunstan's Church. A little disappointed the Ragged School Museum was shut, but have the details and hope to visit one day with a couple of items they might find of interest.

Excuse my ramblings, but hope you find the above amusing. My copy of the ELHS Newsletter is now on its way to Australia to a recently discovered relative.

T McNeilly, from Benfleet, writes:

My wife, who was born in Prussom Street, Wapping, more years ago than she would allow me to mention here, has for many years harboured the very natural desire to find the burial site and grave of her mother, who died when my wife was only three years old. Now in our retirement, we decided to take up the search. Our search led us from the London Metropolitan Archives to the bewildering wilderness of Bow Cemetery. On our first visit we stood at the entrance gate, took one look and felt our spirits sink. The daunting task of finding a small plot in such a tangle of undergrowth seemed to be impossible and so far it has proved to be so. But, though our search has been fruitless, our searching has not. The people that we've met along the way, not least the delightful Doreen Kendall, whose infectious enthusiasm for the cemetery is a joy to witness, and the familiarising of places from the past till they seem like old friends has unexpectedly enriched our lives. The experience prompted me to write two poems: *Pensive in Bow Cemetery* and *The Prospect of Whitby*.

What connects the two? I hear you ask. Every researcher needs to be fed and watered. We chose the Prospect, much frequented by me in the heady days of my youth, as our retreat at the end of a day's search and my poem, *The Prospect of Whitby*, I'm proud to say, adorns its ancient walls. The Manager, I've just remembered, still owes me one half pint of his finest draught for my fee. I must

remember to collect it the next time we call in. Cheers!

Pensive in Bow Cemetery

A solitary bird in the he evening sky;
The length'ning shadows and forgotten graves,
Evoke the breathing of a whispered sigh,
While all is hushed, stillness here pervades.

There - a broken headstone lies half seen,
Obscured by nature's wild embrace.
Her tangled tendrils ever green,
Deny the reader its weathered face.

Yet, what can simple rhyme impart.
Of those who mutely lie below?
How feeble is the mason's art,
Vainly charged to tell us so.

So many, touched by penury,
In humble 'common' graves interred.
No tribute to their history,
No chiseled text to them refers.

Who knows what true and noble hearts,
Beneath these matted weeds may rest?
Their reckless youth aflame with love,
Their dotage numb with loneliness.

Perhaps, there in that nettled glade,
Some mother's fevered child was lain,
Taken from her sobbing breast,
Mid cries of anguish heard in vain.

The flight of time in passing,
So soon allays the fleeting grief.
No mourner comes to this place now,
Strewn o'er with bramble, twig and leaf.

But, in the midst of such neglect,
There is a natural order found,
Encroaching forth with scant respect,
For those who lie within these grounds.

However tall the marble stone,
However grand the titled name,
Nature's wild and careless matle,
Enshrouds us each and all the same.



SPRING COACH TRIP

Saturday 6th May 2000

Claydon House, Bucks, and Buckingham

The Spring Coach Trip will be to Claydon House, Bucks, and the town of Buckingham. Claydon House is in Middle Claydon. Originally Jacobean, it was remodelled in the 1750s, and as the National Trust guide says, it is 'one of England's most extraordinary houses.' The rooms were lavishly decorated in the 'chinoiserie' style with oriental motifs. It was in continuous occupation by the Verney family for over 350 years. We can also see the church nearby.

In the town of Buckingham there is a chantry chapel, 15th century, with a fine Norman doorway. This is also National Trust. It is open, free, by special arrangement, which I should be able to make.

We shall visit Buckingham first, to allow for lunch and a look around (own arrangements for lunch). Tea is available at Claydon House.

The coach fare will be £7.00, please send this to me with the form below. The house is free for National Trust members. Provided there are 15+ non-members on the coach we can get a party rate for £3.60, otherwise it is £4.10. I will collect entry charges on the coach. Please make sure you let me know if you are NT members on the booking form.

The pick-up will be at Mile End, opposite the station, at 9.30 am. Please send your bookings to: Ann Sansom, 18 Hawkdene, London E4 7PF (Tel: 0181 524 4506)

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SPRING COACH TRIP TO CLAYDON HOUSE Saturday 6th May 2000	
I/We would like _____ seat/s for the coach trip.	
NAME/S _____	
ADDRESS _____ _____ _____	
TEL. NO. _____	I enclose a cheque/PO for £ _____
(Cheque made payable to the East London History Society.)	
National Trust Member: Yes. No.	

Post this form to Ann Sansom, 18 Hawkdene, London E4 7PF