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MURTON TERRACE

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CAMBRIDGE HEATH

BETHNALL GREEN

The Atlas

THE BEACON

EDITORIAL

Since our last Bulletin, the Port of London Authority have closed their internal rail system in the various docks of East London. The 80-odd miles of tracks will no longer be used and most of the track and rolling-stock will go to the scrapyards. From the end of the last century, these trains have been a familiar sight (and sound!) in the docks and in crossing various East London streets, and it is regretted that we shall see them no more.

It is interesting to note that a condition of the permission to use the 100 feet of frontage at Oliver's Wharf, Wapping High Street, for conversion to artists' studios with living accommodation attached, is that the external appearance shall be preserved.

Most Sunday mornings, a man and his wife can be seen parading the streets of Canning Town with horse and trolley maintaining one of East London's traditions - they are the last of East London's winkle sellers. The man started in 1928 and has always been his own boss. "I bought a donkey for 7/6d and it died the next day. I stood outside the bloke's house for a week trying to get my money back. So I bought another one, a horse in fact, and started ragging and winking. It didn't run in the family or anything. I'd watched people doing it since I was really little. I picked it up from that." From those years when winkles were 4d a pint until now when they are 2/4d, he has had 14 or 15 horses. "Most of the other are dead now, we'll do it until we drop as well. But we'll be the last".

Mr. Harvey Sheldon hopes shortly to investigate the further section of the Roman ford near Lefevre Road, now cleared. He has little archaeological assistance in East London and would welcome help from interested members. Please send your name and address to Mr. French at 36 Parkland Road, Woodford Green, Essex, stating whether you can assist during evenings, week-ends or day-time. The "dig" looks like being an interesting one.

Newham - The talk on "The work of the Essex Record Office" by Mr. K. Newton, M.A., F.R.Hist.S., County Archivist, at the East Ham Library, High Street South, East Ham, E.6. on Tuesday, 21st January 1971 at 7.45 p.m. should be of great interest. A great deal of information on what is now Newham is held by the Essex Record Office.

Hackney.- There will be a fascinating Exhibition of water colour paintings of local scenes at the Town Hall, Mare Street, Hackney from the 9th to the 23rd January 1971. There will be an illustrated talk by Gordon L. Barnes entitled "Decline and Fall" - the story of the Church in Hackney, on Tuesday, 12th January 1971, and a talk on Tuesday, the 19th January 1971 by Dr. K.G.T. McDonnell on "Hackney in the 19th Century". The time for these two lectures at the Town Hall, Mare Street, will be 8 p.m.

Don't forget the lecture by Sarah Palmer at Queen Mary College on the 9th December, and by Mr. Dance also at Q.M.C. at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, 12th January. Make a note in your new diary of the walk on the 20th March round the historic Hamlet of Ratcliff.

Seasonal Greetings to you all.

A.H.F.

LOCAL HISTORY FOR BEGINNERS

Among adults history is not always regarded as an interesting subject, perhaps because it has been associated in the past with the need for remembering dates, and most of us found as the years went by that we could remember only two dates, 1066 and 1666! But Local History concerns the place where we live and the people who lived there before us and can be of absorbing interest. It is not an expensive hobby, most of the material being obtained free, and can be successfully undertaken by all those who can read, no matter what age or occupation! If you can also write or speak in public you can bring pleasure and knowledge to others. It may be of interest to readers to know how I first became interested and have retained my interest over the years.

It began some weeks after the last War when I was returning to my office after an absence of five years and was walking down Lemn Street, in the East End of London. Outwardly, I felt that despite the War and the Blitz, not much change had taken place in the 20 years that I had known this area, and felt also that this could not really be true and I became curious to find out just what had happened during that time.

When rejoining the local Whitechapel Library where I had been a frequent visitor in pre-war days, I noticed that a meeting was being held, the purpose of which was to form a Local History Group. I went along to this Meeting, and there met the Librarian in charge of the "Local Collection", a doctor of History at the nearby Queen Mary College of the University of London, and many other men and women interested in various aspects of East London including the author of one of the standard works on East London. After reading a few general books on the subject and a number of magazine articles, I decided to choose a particular street and neighbourhood, in my case Lemn Street and Whitechapel, and specialise in these for research. At first I just read all I could find on the subject, but later began to make notes with a view to putting them all together to make a complete history later.

It is difficult for one who works for a living and is not free during the day to do much in the way of original research, but much can be obtained from articles on the subject which often contain the original researches of others and also from meeting people with long associations with the district in which one is interested.

One of the nicest things that happened to me in this connection was when I accompanied an old inhabitant of the Borough around the district and he told me many stories that will never be printed. There are a lot of people like this everywhere, and greater efforts should be made to get their stories by taking a tape recording at the time of interview and later "writing up" from this. In most of these cases, people concerned have neither the ability or inclination to do anything like this themselves.

It is most essential to belong to a Historical Society or a History Group. One of the first things we did, as a Group, was to arrange a series of talks and lectures on varying aspects of the subject. These were followed by visits to churches, docks, houses, mills, factories, and even pubs and music halls! A lot of business premises will open readily to members of a Society, where one cannot gain admittance on one's own. I had correspondence with Scotland Yard regarding the old Lemn Street Police Station and found them most helpful, and in asking the Librarian to obtain books for me that have long been out of print, I

have received books that have come from all over the country. I also had an unexpected "book find" at a second-hand bookstall when on holiday at Westward Ho in North Devon.

The study of Maps is also of great help in your researches. I have had access to maps covering East London since the Tower of London was built and have been able to obtain much useful information from them. To see what changes have occurred in a neighbourhood one has only to look at maps to get a complete picture. Maps and old documents are available at the local Libraries, and you will always find the library staff ready to help you. The finest thing about the study of local history is the way it brings you congenial friends with a common interest and leads you to paths you never imagined you could follow.

A proud moment for me was when I was asked by the London Appreciation Society to organise and lead a "walk" around Whitechapel for their Members. On another occasion when asked to lead a similar walk for another Society, some seventy people turned up! Fortunately, I am a tall man with a loud voice but I would never do it again for such a large party.

In recent years I have been asked by several organisations to go and speak to their members on various aspects of East London history, and some time ago I wrote a series of articles for my firm's magazine suggesting places of local interest that could be visited in the lunch hour. This created some interest and brought forth some contradictory statements from which I learnt quite a lot! As a result of my "Walks" being reported in the local East paper, I received many letters and much information from local people which enabled me to fill in many gaps in my knowledge of the area.

I quote these instances to show how much can come from very small beginnings and hope this may inspire some members to "try their luck". Much can be done on one's own by writing and reading, but it is better to join up with others with the same enthusiasm and share your knowledge. In Havering, we have two fine Historical Societies and one of the best library services in the country, and I am hoping that as a result of this article, we may be blessed with more local historians!

H.E.Moss.

VICTORIAN EAST END STREET MARKET

Saturday, nearly midnight, the sky as red as if the street were afire. And the din. Everyone talking, shouting laughing, wrangling and cursing at full pitch. A jostling mass of humanity as cosmopolitan as an oriental market. Everywhere the accents of the Irish, the Jewish, and the down-to-earth Cockney.

Women, armed with shopping baskets and patchwork oil-cloth bags, predominate. Some wan and harassed looking, clutch their few shillings in a well-worn purse. The lucky wives have been able to shop earlier, but for some, Saturday midnight is the only time. Mechanics and artisans were often paid late at night and in a Public House. It was no uncommon sight to see groups of wives and children hanging round the pub doors waiting and hoping there would be some housekeeping money.

You dodge the bunch of parsley, "Fine parsley for a penny", that is pushed into your face. "Onions 'appeny a lot" screams a young boy at your elbow. For some strange reason young boys seem to have the monopoly of onion selling.

./-

You push your way through the crowd to the pavement. Here the largest crowd has gathered before the crimson and white butcher's shop. A pushing, eager throng shout and wave their hands at the blue-coated, straw-hatted butcher as he sharpens his knife on the steel with a loud cry of "Buy buy buy". Here the last cuts of meat are being auctioned at cheap prices. Above him the large gas-lamps are streaming and fluttering like flags of flame.

On the stalls, the candles, some stuck in half a turnip; some in bundles of wood; some wrapped tightly in brown paper, splutter and flare, tinting the goods with gold. "Three a penny Yarmouth bloaters", yells the fishmonger as he holds up the delicacy on a toasting-fork. On the stall the smoked haddock gleams bright yellow. Sea-foods are there in plenty. "Beautiful whelks a penny a lot", "Eels all alive-o", "Fine winkles and fat shrimps", "Luvly juicy cockles".

A poorly-clad man, pale-faced beneath a battered top-hat, is selling Long Song Sheets, his wares fluttering from a pole like bunting. His hoarse rendering of his songs are drowned by the clamour of a German Street Band that blows itself mightily through the milling crowd. "Appeny for the band", cries the Bottler as he rattles the coins in a collecting box.

There's a fire-glow from the grate of the hot potato can. The fat floury potatoes stuck on the spikes await a shake of salt from the large tin salt-shaker. "An appeny a skein blacking", croaks an old man displaying his small packets on a rusty iron tray hanging from his neck. Next to him stands his wife, "Pick 'em out and cheap 'ere. Three pairs of bootlaces for a penny".

"Here's happorths", shouts the sweet-stall woman, the candle flickering on the trays of multi-coloured confections. The Aniseed Balls, the golden Honeycomb, the Hundreds and Thousands, and the Pineapple Rock.

"Cabbages where you like, only a penny", "Fine walnuts sixteen a penny", "Fine russets penny a lot", "Tuppence a pound grapes". The cries never cease. Each stallholder trying to shout his rival down. You cannot miss the medicine stall with its large red barrel bound in brass of cooling Sarsparilla; or there are hot cordials, blackcurrant, peppermint and raspberry. There are herbal and not so herbal remedies for every ailment. Baldwin's Compound of Camomile, Cubit's Elixir of Strength, purges, purifiers, cornplasters, tooth-ache drops, pills of every hue and thick brown syrups in bottles, the stall being presided over by a very dubious, self-appointed 'Doctor'.

Young bloods, spruce from the 'appeny barbers', flirt and flaunt with the young girls around the barrel organ as it jangles out a cracked version of 'Il Trovatore'. A policeman keeps a wary eye upon all and sundry, especially on the barefooted boys who dart between the stalls whipping up any small article they can reach. There's a glitter of new tin saucepans, gaudy tea trays, blue and yellow Mocha ware, pots, pans, dishes, kettles, fire-irons, wooden spoons, cutlery and every household need on the ironmongers stall.

A brisk trade is done in old shoes ranged along the pavement. "Chestnuts all 'ot, penny a score", "Get your Salt and Mustard 'ere", "Fine poultry and rabbits". There are Irish fruit sellers, Jewish old-clothes men, Dutch 'Buy a broom' girls, sailors selling tropical shells, pet dealers and a host of unemployed artisans trying to earn a copper selling matches, song-sheets or bootlaces. 'Clink, clank' go the scales as the stallholders slap them down in an effort to short-weight the unwary customer. "Half a quire of paper for a penny"

shouts the street stationer. A group of boys, jostling for a turn, wait to bend and peer into the small round hole of the peep-show to see the wonders of Mazeppa's famous ride or the hanging of Paul Jones the Pirate. For the artistic minded who have a copper to spare, there is the Print seller, "Penny plain, tuppence coloured". What female of fashion could pass the millinery stall when entreated to "Buy a bonnet for fourpence"?

The crescendo of noise rises to a pitch as the late night shoppers scramble to stretch their money to the limit. Soon the gas-lamps will fade as the shop shutters are pulled down. The candles will have gutted to small blobs of wax. The impoverished down-and-outs will be rummaging in the debris around the stalls, leaving little for the stray cats and dogs to forage. There is nothing more to buy or steal. The crowd dwindles away through the narrow side-streets. All is quiet. It is now Sunday.

S.A.Andrews.

BUILDINGS ARE VANISHING

A building site means another part of the past is vanishing. If you know of an impending demolition of any house, shop, church, factory, railway station, or any East End building that has some interesting link with the past, will you please write or 'phone to E.L.H.S. member - Donald Andrews, 43 Lyal Road, Bow, E.3 (980-6477). He plans to photograph these places before they vanish.

You can aid a worthwhile project which will add greatly to the Society's archives.

D.A.

THE MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY

This most famous and long-lived of all the Spitalfields Weavers Clubs was founded in 1717. It was kept going for a century and a quarter, only coming to an end with the decline of the silk industry itself. The Society was begun by a retired sailor, John Middleton, who kept the tavern called the "Monmouth Head" in Monmouth Street.

"The Society lent their instruments (air-pumps, reflecting telescopes, reflecting microscopes, electrical machines, surveying instruments, etc.) with books for the use of them, on the borrower's giving a note of hand for the value thereof. The number of members was not to exceed the square of seven, except such as were abroad or in the country, but this was increased to the square of eight and nine. The members met on Saturday evenings; each present was to employ himself in some mathematical exercise, or forfeit one penny, and if he refused to answer a question asked by another on mathematics, he was to forfeit twopence. The Society long cherished a taste for exact science among the residents in the neighbourhood of Spitalfields, and accumulated a library of nearly three thousand volumes; but in 1845 when on the point of dissolution, the few remaining members made over their books, records, and memorials, to the Royal Astronomical Society".

("Club Life of London" - TIMBS).

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL LOCAL HISTORIANS!

MARIE LLOYD - 1870-1922

"On your tooral-rooral-ido, tooral-looral ay
 They whack you half a minute but you feel it half the day,
 I hate those horrid School Boards and so does brother Jack;
 I tell you straight we get too much of Whacky, Whacky, Whack." *

Much has been written on the centenary of the passage on to the Statute Book of Forster's Education Act of 1870. The notes which follow commemorate another "educator" - Marie Lloyd - and who are we to judge which has left the more indelible mark upon the life of East London?

She was born Matilda Alice Victoria Wood, on 12th February 1870, at 36 Plumber Street (now Provost Street), Hoxton, the eldest child of John and Matilda. He was born in Bethnal Green, his father a willow cutter and his mother a willow weaver, though later she turned her hand to bonnet making. By all accounts, John Wood was a talented artificial flower maker.

Shortly after the birth of their daughter, the family removed to Peerless Street and, over the years, ten brothers and sisters arrived to augment the family. Her sister Alice tells the story of Marie's first stage performance. There was a mission attached to the local church and ten year old Marie determined to get up an entertainment to help their funds. Thus were born the "Fairy Bell Minstrels" and it appears that, henceforth, "Throw down the bottle and never drink again" was in much demand! At fifteen, she secured her first engagement at the Grecian Theatre (The Eagle), City Road, and for a short time took the stage name of 'Bella Delmore'. This engagement was followed by others at the Oxford - the site of which is covered by Lyon's Corner House at the Tottenham Court Road corner of Oxford Street - The Star, Bermondsey, George Belmont's Sebright in the Hackney Road, the Falstaff and, somewhere in between, a season in Ireland at ten pounds weekly which was a meteoric rise from her first fifteen shillings a week at the Grecian.

By the time Marie was eighteen she was earning what was then considered to be a fabulous salary. She removed her family, Fairy-Godmother like, to a larger house and was, Alice says "generally irrepressible"; and so her career progressed in the well known and often related manner. The only Music Hall which has no record of her appearance in London is the Coliseum. She was never a favourite of Mr. (later Sir Oswald) Stoll! Disappointments and unhappiness in marriage (she was first married at seventeen), success after success on the stage, fair weather friends and some more permanent friendships.

Marie found her forte in the songs of the people and her first big success was "The Boy I love is up in the gallery" which she introduced at the Middlesex. McQueen Pope has written that "Music Hall was Variety in every sense of the word. It was entertainment of the people, for the people, by the people. It came out of the inns and public houses, it ascended to the Empires, Coliseums and Palaces" - and this, surely sums up the story of Marie Lloyd.

Some years ago, I had the moving experience of standing in the Number One Dressing Room at the Edmonton Empire (now, alas, demolished) which Marie was using in that October week of 1922 when she collapsed on stage. Her friends had implored her not to go on, but she made her entrance to the usual rapturous welcome from devotees who remained unaware that they were seeing a great star for the last time. By sheer will power she held on to the last line

of "I'm one of the ruins that Cromwell knocked about a bit" and collapsed on the stage. She was carried to her room and when, years afterwards, it was unlocked for the first time since that October night, a tiny wisp of a handkerchief was discovered tucked into the side of the armchair. Her funeral was perhaps unparalleled in the show of deep personal feeling which reached its climax among the thousands of mourners at Fortune Green Cemetery where Marie was laid to rest among her own people.

The words of Sir Louis Fergusson bring this small tribute to a close. "There should never be any suspicion of patronising the memory of Marie Lloyd, of trying to apologise for her or explain her away. There she stood, facing up indomitably to her Music Hall audience - inexplicable her genius may be, impossible to recapture, impossible to analyse".

"So I'd like to go again
To Paris on the Seine,
For Paris is a proper pantomime;
And if they'd only shift the 'Ackney Road
And plant it over there
Why, I'd like to live in Paris all the time."

S.C.T.

* From Marie Lloyd's first panto appearance at Drury Lane Theatre, (in "Humpty Dumpty"), Christmas 1891. She played Princess Allfair. Also in the cast were Little Tich in the title role; Fanny Leslie as King Dulcimar; Herbert Campbell (King of Hearts) and Dan Leno (Queen of Hearts).

A RELATIVE OF SAMUEL PEPYS?

The following is extracted from the Marriage Register of Bromley Church :

"William Langham an Apothecary of ye parish of St.Katherine Creechurch liuing at ye signe of ye unicorne and bell at ye end of fanchurch streete and Mary Pepys of ye parish of St.Christopher's were marry'd by Mr.Smith Minister of West Ham Comy Essex at Bromley ye 25th day of November 1701."

(We cannot say whether this Mary Pepys was any relation to the great Samuel Pepys (1633 to 1703) of Diary fame. The name however is a somewhat rare one. Samuel Pepys married a daughter of a Huguenot refugee in England, and there were many such families in Bromley. The register shows that many Huguenots were buried in Bromley Churchyard. Samuel Pepys had a sister named Mary but she died young in 1627 before Samuel was born).

Edmund Sinker, 1909.

ADVERTISEMENT FROM THE 'TATLER' MAY 1710.

" Whereas a tall, slender young man, with lank brown hair, in a light coloured cloth suit trimmed Black & White Buttons, and a loose great Blue Coat, absented himself from his Master's House in Goodman's Fields on Wednesday, 10th instant. If he will return, or send expeditiously to his Master or Father, he shall be kindly received. "

S.A.A.

WHAT IS HAPPENING ?

The London Docks.- Demolition has now reached an advanced stage. Certain buildings were marked for preservation but members of the Committee visiting the site consider there is little worth preserving. A boundary plaque from the site has been handed to the Tower Hamlets Library. The new development is not yet clear. A general plan was exhibited but details are awaited. It seems likely that a bridge or tunnel will be put across the River and of the two a tunnel would be preferred as a bridge would completely spoil the view of Tower Bridge and the Pool.

Shadwell Basin.- There are proposals to make this a heliport for the City. It has been suggested that the tops of buildings should be used in the City for this purpose as in other countries and that the people of East London should not have to suffer this additional nuisance.

East India Docks.- It appears that the filled-in Docks are to be used for the building of a 50 million pound Power Station for the Central Electricity Authority. We already have an enormous Power Station erected on the site of the historical Brunswick Pier and Dock. On the eastern bank of the Blackwall bend we have the unsightly chimneys and cooling-towers of the Canning Town Power Station. Now it seems the northern part of the Blackwall 'horse-shoe' is to suffer further unsightly erections. This one-time picturesque and ancient part of East London's Riverside saw the building of the Blackwall frigates and even Royalty visited this Riverside to relax over their whitebait suppers!

The Drapers Almshouses,-(Priscilla Road, Bow). The Society is making further efforts to get the G.L.C. to take a renewed interest in preserving these historic buildings, which are deteriorating rapidly. If the expense of removal is, as they say, too great they might possibly be reconditioned in situ.

Victoria Park.- The redevelopment from Eastway is now well progressed and the early Victorian terrace houses are being demolished. The area needs opening-up and it is hoped that in view of its proximity to Victoria Park, the new set-up will be quite attractive. How grateful we are to Queen Victoria for making Victoria Park available for East Londoners!

A.H.F.

FROM THE POPLAR VESTRY MINUTES.

"May, 1787.- A Meeting of Officers and inhabitants at Poplar Town Hall resolved that the Churchwardens and other Officers of this Hamlet attended by a competent number of the inhabitants do go round the town on the next and every Sunday during Divine Service to prevent Tipling in the Publick Houses and carry into execution the several acts of Parliament for the better ordering of Society".