



**EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY
BULLETIN**

Number 16

March 1971

BULLETIN No.16

EDITORIAL

Some 50 years ago, Southend-on-Sea was the East Londoner's idea of Monte Carlo. Whether a church or school outing or a 'beano' from the local, they sallied forth with sandwiches, bottles of pop, buckets, spades etc. It now no longer holds the spell of former years, but it is fitting that an East Londoner, Alex Parminter (a school colleague of the Editor) has been selected to manage the Pier on behalf of the new Owners who have bought it from the Southend Corporation.

Councillor Ronan wants to bring back brass bands and Punch & Judy shows to Newham parks, and we wish him every success. This will greatly appeal to many of the 'old school'. Meanwhile, Hackney Council are planning their £100m "new town" for East London called Hackney Moorfields, stretching from just north of the Liverpool Street/Broad Street complex right up to Hoxton, with Shoreditch High Street on the east. It is gratifying that some 6½ acres of open land will enable East Londoners to continue to enjoy the walking and playing areas they have enjoyed for centuries.

It looks as if the Heliport to be based at Shadwell Dock is about to have the final stamp of approval by the G.L.C. and the Ministry. It was a peaceful sight to see the sailing ships lying off the Basin waiting for refit etc. and one hopes the noise of this new venture will not be too shattering.

Dr. H.E.Priestley, M.A., M.Ed., will speak on local history and the amateur student at East Ham Library, High Street South, E.6. on Tuesday, 20th April 1971 at 7.45 p.m. This talk from an expert in local history should be both interesting and stimulating to members of the Society. Attendance at the Society Meetings have been disappointingly small this season and it is hoped that the Meetings for the rest of the season will be better supported. They are as follows (note them in your diary!):-

"Stage Coaches and the Eastern Routes" - J.Elsdon Tuffs.
Q.M.C. at 7.30 p.m. 7th April 1971.

"What is Ecclesiology"? Mr.G.L.Barnes. An illustrated talk by the well-known guide/lecturer in our tours of East London churches.
Q.M.C. 7 p.m. 5th May 1971.

"The History and Progress of the East London Advertiser"
- L.Huddleston (former Editor). Q.M.C.
7 p.m. 9th June 1971.

"The making of the Victoria County History" by Dr.K.G.T.
McDonnell, Q.M.C. 7 p.m. 7th July 1971.

P.S. Have you paid your subscription for 1971?

A.H.F.

JOHN TUNSTALL - HACKNEY WESTERN!

Any member who saw the recent John Wayne Western "Chisum" could be forgiven if he did not recognise an East Ender in the sober, urbane figure of John Tunstall. In the film, Tunstall appears as the stock Western Britisher, that strange mixture of Scottish laird and Welsh minister. He is the only character with highminded and unselfish motives, recalling the dissolute Billy the Kid to the paths of moral uprightness, and by his tragic death at the hands of the wicked Murphy giving a crusader zeal to cattle king Chisum in his fight against the badmen.

The reality was rather less splendid. Tunstall, son of a Hackney commercial traveller, was an opportunist of shady honesty; his only goal was money, and his death came about largely because he did not fully understand the intricacies of the New Mexican way of life. Nonetheless, he has an importance in American history. His death led to the start of the Lincoln County War, a series of skirmishes between rival factions looking for local power. His grave is a tourist attraction, and his murder is re-enacted in an annual fiesta for the edification of the local citizens.

Tunstall was born in 1853, to the Dalston of neat new villas and respectable, successful clerks and tradesmen. His father had the same good head for business which characterised his son's adventures and, later, the efforts of sister Emily to win some blood money from the United States authorities. By the time young John reached maturity, the mercantile business which his father had started in a small way in these early years had a flourishing branch in Victoria, British Columbia, and it was there that the nineteen-year old was sent in 1872 to gain experience in the business which he hoped one day to take over.

Unhappily, John and his father's partner took an immediate dislike to each other, and before two years were out the young Tunstall could take no more. He headed south for the United States, drawn like so many other Englishmen of his time by the tales of instant fortunes and vast stretches of land to be had for the asking.

In Lincoln, a typical one-stores, dusty town of the new West, he met a young lawyer named Alexander McSween. The two at once saw how their mutual interest could lead them to great things. "In time", Tunstall wrote home, "I intend to have fifty cents of every dollar that is made in the county by anyone". Tunstall had money but was not legally entitled to acquire unclaimed or "range" land. McSween could do so. He claimed a small stretch of the rich land which lay round Lincoln and made it over to Tunstall for one dollar. Tunstall, now a property owner, claimed a further 2300 acres and moved into a log cabin on the land to make good his ownership.

At this time, 1877, Lincoln was under the control of three Irishmen, Lawrence Murphy, James Dolan and James Riley. They owned the only large store in the town, and held a huge ranch from which they supplied beef to local Army posts and to the Indian reservation. They had powerful friends in the local Legislature and the County Sheriff was careful to go along with their wishes.

Tunstall and McSween challenged the Irishmen by setting up a rival store and bank across the way from the "Big House". They were supported by John Chisum

a leading cattle farmer who saw in the expanding Murphy empire a threat to his own schemes. The store did well; the local farmers, glad of the opportunity to break Murphy's monopoly, flocked to Tunstall's shop, and before many months were out the Irishmen were forced to borrow heavily from the opposition's bank.

Murphy decided on action. It happened that his former partner had some time previously appointed Alexander McSween as his executor. McSween had collected some 7000 dollars, which he had then refused to part with, on the grounds that his fees had not been paid. Just before Christmas, 1877, Murphy had McSween arrested on a charge of embezzlement; at the same time a charge was concocted against Chisum, accusing him of misdealings in a Government meat contract.

Tunstall hurried to bail out his companions and at the same time wrote an ill-advised letter to the local paper, charging Sheriff William Brady, who was also the County Tax Collector, with corruption. The accusations were subsequently proved false and not only was the justice of the Tunstall/McSween cause discredited, but the Sheriff who previously had wished only to keep in with the powerful Murphy - and might indeed have changed sides all too readily - now had a personal grudge against the ambitious Londoner. Grudges in New Mexico meant guns; a man more experienced would have seen the way things were going and made his escape, at least until the situation quietened down.

Brady took it upon himself to confiscate enough property from the Tunstall/McSween ranch to cover Murphy's costs in the event of McSween jumping bail at his trial, set for two months later. On the 18th February he sent his Deputy with a posse to remove animals or other goods to the value of 8000 dollars. Whether these were the Deputy's only instructions we shall never know. Tunstall and his men got wind of the Deputy's coming, and set off to Lincoln to try to change the Sheriff's mind. The Deputy, finding no-one at the ranch, stayed to keep watch but sent the posse to give chase.

Their intentions became clear as soon as they came within range of the Tunstall party, and the first shots hit the dust round the Englishman. The other riders shouted to Tunstall to take cover, and spurred their own horses to the rocks at the side of the track. For some reason Tunstall stood his ground and turned to meet the posse. Bullets from two guns hit him almost together and he was dead by the time the law party reached him. The posse paused only to kill Tunstall's horse and put the dead man's hat under its head. They rode back to Sheriff Brady and reported that Tunstall had died "resisting arrest".

There was nothing his men could do. Realists that they were, they knew intervention could only mean their own deaths. But one at least is said to have sworn revenge. William Bonney, "Billy the Kid", born in a New York slum and just making a name for himself with his deadly and ruthless shooting, is supposed to have said, "Tunstall was the only man that ever treated me decent. I'll kill the men who did this to him".

Whether or not this was so, a group of ten of Tunstall's men, including Billy the Kid, set out some two weeks later with a sheaf of warrants for the arrest of the Deputy's posse. On the 9th March they caught up with two of the members, who died, like Tunstall, "resisting arrest." On the 1st April Sheriff Brady, along with his Deputy, were walking to the Lincoln courthouse past the Tunstall/McSween

store when five rifles opened fire. Brady was killed outright; the Deputy, by some miracle escaped.

Sporadic ambushes and outbreaks of violence occurred for some months afterwards, and in one skirmish McSween too was killed. At this point the Army was called in to restore order and an uneasy balance of power was restored. Tunstall's relations, especially his sister Emily, fought for compensation in their "irreparable loss" for another eight years, but the claim was finally refuted by the U.S. Government. Meanwhile, Tunstall's name passed into the folklore of the New Mexican frontier. A curious fate for a Victorian East Ender!

B.Hough.

THE BARONESS

She was a frail old lady. Local gossip held that she was the widow of a wealthy baron and had come over from Scandinavia in the 1920's to minister to Scandinavian seamen wandering the streets of East London. Everyone in Limehouse had heard of the Baroness. Her well-worn, dowdy clothing did not befit a lady of means. Her ministry was conducted from a shabby room, once a shop front but now hung with old and dusty curtains, at 5 West India Dock Road. To find out more about the Baroness I sallied forth one bleak winter Sunday evening in 1936 to attend what was described in poor writing on an old piece of cardboard in the window as the "Gospel Service" at 6.30 p.m.

A young woman with weepy eyes, dressed in black, greeted me with "You from the Docks?". I shook my head and was handed a grimy book of Sankey hymns. Three rather fat and smelly cats lay sprawled on the withered carpet and another on an old settee. I was offered a seat next to the cat on the settee but declined and seated myself on a rickety chair in the corner. There were two arm-chairs, the padding exposed in most places, and half a dozen chairs of doubtful solidity. A wheezy harmonium reposed opposite the door from which plaintive wails emerged in a plentiful escape of air as the Baroness forced the reluctant pedals. She paused in her overture every now and again as the congregation arrived. This consisted of a lame man, Joe, who was obviously a regular by the way he swept the cat off the settee without incurring the Baroness's displeasure, and settled himself in the warm spot, a couple of old men who were obviously 'down-and-outs', several middle-aged ex-seamen who seemed to be glad to find somewhere out of the cold, and a couple of younger men, probably seamen, who looked as if their finances were at a low ebb. A coloured gentleman completed the number. Several men came in who had obviously been imbibing rather freely but were ordered out by the Baroness in stern ringing tones which ensured immediate compliance.

The service started with "Rock of Ages", the Baroness's startlingly loud and rather discordant voice rising above the rest of the congregation pausing every now and again while she turned over the pages of her tune-book and adjusted her cushion. The weepy woman in black sang in quavering tones wiping her eyes at frequent intervals. We laboured through several hymns and then the Baroness gave a prayer for all and sundry which seemed to be endless, a snore from the settee indicating that Joe was finding it rather comfortable. The prayer ultimately came to an end and the coloured man excelled in the closing

hymn "Will your anchor hold?". Then came an obviously long-awaited moment. The Baroness and the woman in black disappeared into the living room behind. The younger woman re-appeared with a number of chipped and cracked cups and saucers which were handed round. Then the Baroness emerged with a blue enamel pot of tea which she poured into the held-out cups. Whilst this was going on, several new faces appeared in the doorway, attracted by the smell of tea, but were imperiously ordered out. The tea was strong and had already been mixed with condensed tinned milk. My cup was far from clean, but I had to accept the Baroness's invitation to hold it out for filling. Hunky cheese sandwiches and soft biscuits were passed round and the men ate voraciously.

I approached the Baroness. She was reluctant to answer questions about herself except that it was her object to "bring these poor men to the Lord". Her English was broken but had an academic ring about it. She was sincere and, however critical one may have felt about the surroundings, one felt that much was owed to this old lady and many others who made it their business to provide spiritual and physical refreshment to seamen, aliens and East Enders generally at a time when the employment position was bleak, when living standards were low, and when even tea in a cracked cup must have been somebody's passport to Heaven.

A.H.F.

STREET EATS ON SATURDAY NIGHT

Saturday night, the week's work is done, and the Victorian lad emerges from his home. Freshly scrubbed, clean shirted, with boots a-shining, and wearing his Sunday best suit, he saunters forth to take his pleasures. And what pleasures were there for a fellow with a shillingworth of coppers to jingle in his pocket after he had savoured the Music Hall, the current Melodrama or the 'penny 'op'? As he sauntered along, nearly midnight, yet the streets as busy as the day, there were pleasures around him in plenty. The street eats.

Catering for the hungry has always been a profitable business, and in Victorian times the itinerant vendors of food abounded. The Coffee Stall, now a dying institution, was the focal point for many a street corner lounge. Here burned the small coke fire beneath the polished urn. On top, enveloped in steam beneath a white cloth stood the pies of beef, mutton and kidney. A bunch of sausages hung, waiting for the frying-pan. There were sandwiches of cheese or ham, rock cakes and doughnuts and thick slices of bread and dripping.

For the sea-fare lover, there were the small stalls which stood outside every public house, basins of jellied eels, jars of pickled whelks, small saucers of cockles, mussels, oysters, winkles, shrimps and fat pink prawns. There were hot baked potatoes and hot baked chestnuts, whilst the smell of boiled trotters and tripe from the cooked meat stall could lure many a potential customer away from the fried fish man with his cloth-covered tray of cold fried fish and thick bread slices.

Always a little old lady presided at the "home-made cake" stall. And what cakes they were! Plum cakes, lard cakes, currant cakes, and those of Almond. There was "Plum Duff" and mince pies, and tarts of rhubarb, currant

gooseberry, cherry, apple, damson and cranberry. There were Gingerbread nuts, Heart cakes, Chelsea Buns and Currant Loaves. Only the Muffin and Crumpet man with his bell was missing at night, for he was a 'just before tea-time' vendor.

For the very sweet-toothed, the brightly coloured sweet stall was a must. Here were displayed rocks of all flavours, the Cough Candy twist, striped Candy sticks, Bull's Eyes, Hard bakes of toffee, Stickjaw, Sugar candies, Lozenges, and for those with a tickle in the throat there were medicinal confections, Cough Drops and Horehound Candies.

On a cold night what could be better than a warming bowl of Pea Soup or boiled meat with green peas and mashed potatoes, all hot?

For those with a thirst, but no liking for the perils of beer and rum, there were the sellers of Ginger Beer, Lemonade, Persian Sherbet, hot Elder Cordial or Wine, Peppermint Water, Curds and Whey Water, Rice Milk, and fresh milk hot or cold.

In summer there were Strawberry Ice Creams at 1d per glass.

For the fruit lover there were Apples and Pears, Plums, Lemons, Gooseberries, Cherries, Strawberries, all the fruits and nuts of every kind at a 'happorth' a go.

As our Victorian working-class laddies leans happily on the shelf of the Coffee Stall slowly sipping his hot cocoa before returning home, he may feel a pang of pity, and toss a coin to one of the many poverty-stricken unfortunates to whom the sight of a 'street eats' vendor meant nothing but torment.

S.A. Andrews.

DR. HERBERT MAYO

Dr. Mayo was Rector of St. George's in the East, Stepney, during the latter part of the 18th Century. He was a Brasenose man, of serious nature and academic achievement. He twice refused influential country livings offered to him, preferring to remain in the East End where he lived and worked for more than 40 years. "He was particularly fond of negroes and men of colour, who, employed generally on board ship, occasionally resided in his parish, which is full of seafaring people. I suppose no clergyman in England ever baptised so many black men and mulattoes; nor did he at any time baptise them without much previous preparation..... The attachment of these poor people to him was very great. Several of them never came into the Port of London without waiting upon him, by way of testifying the respect in which they held him."

He was a man of singular tolerance, particularly towards the Irish Catholics of Knockfergus. At the time of the Gordon Riots, he refused to sign the petition presented by the Protestant Association. Indeed his tolerance made him suspect and "only the timely arrival of a guard from the Tower saved him from having his Rectory (in Cannon Street Road) burnt about his ears".

Millicent Rose.

TWO NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS.Roman Leaden Coffin found in Bethnal Green.April 5th 1862

As Mr. Buckmaster, weaver, living at No.13 Camden Gardens, Bethnal Green Road, was digging in a corner of his garden on the 8th ult., he uncovered a leaden coffin about 4 ft. from the surface. In endeavouring to lift the lid, he broke off almost a third part of it. The coffin was nearly filled with lime, through which a portion of a human skeleton appeared. Mr. Rolfe, of Bethnal Green, who describes the coffin, says that the contents had been greatly disturbed before he saw it, but from the lid alone he declared it to be Roman. The sides are plain, the ends have a well-known ornament on Roman coffins, an X, and on each side an I, described in Mr. Roach Smith's "Collectanea Antiqua" Vol.3, pp. 45-62; Article "Roman Sepulchral Remains". Instead of the usual cord, or bead and two-line pattern generally seen on Roman coffins, the double lines in this example are joined by curves turned inwards, having the appearance of the spinal column of some fish, or a close-jointed bamboo. The left upper limb of the cross alone has three lines between the curves. There is no further ornament beyond a border of the same pattern around the overlapping lid. The dimensions are :- length 5 ft.10 ins., breadth at the head 1 ft.4 ins., at the foot 1 ft.2 ins., depth about 10 ins. The weight is estimated at 4 cwt. There was an outer coffin of oak.

Fall of Houses at Hackney.February 22nd 1862

On the morning of Wednesday week, between the hours of ten and eleven o'clock, the inhabitants of Hackney were thrown into great excitement in consequence of the fall of three new houses, attended with loss of life and serious injury to several persons. In the Amherst Road, close to the viaduct of the North London Railway, are a number of new buildings, three stories high, built by Mr. Amos, which were being finished in the interior by carpenters, plasterers and other artisans, at the above hour, when three of the houses fell in, and the weight of brickwork and mortar carried in their descent the floors of the different rooms, until the whole was upon the ground floor. The cries of the poor creatures buried in the ruins were most distressing. Several of the workmen in the neighbourhood commenced removing the debris and extricating the sufferers. Three were found to be dead, and the survivors, most of whom were seriously injured, were conveyed to the German Hospital.

The Inquest : The inquest on the bodies of the three workmen, Jacob Ketteridge, John Fuller and Alfred William Rathbone, killed by the falling of the unfinished houses, on Wednesday week, in Amherst Road, Hackney, has resulted in the following verdict: "That the deaths occurred by injuries received by the falling of the houses, and that the cause of such accident was the use of inferior materials, undue haste in the construction, and the want of a more efficient supervision.

H. Willmott.

NOTES ON SHOREDITCH PARISH CHURCH.

St. Leonard, to whom the Parish Church of Shoreditch is dedicated, lived in the tenth century and entered the monastery of Miscy, near Orleans. Through the passage of time, he became the Bishop of Linoges.

1. THE OLD CHURCH

It is said that the first church of St. Leonard at Shoreditch stood in the tenth century, but there is no surviving record of this. Similarly, it is impossible to date the foundation of the second church, although the first record of it is in AD.1160 when Henry II presented Walter de Wittenor to the living. Illustrations show a neat structure of flint and rubble and it is recorded that there were four aisles, each with a richly decorated window, the whole being roofed under three galleries, a tower at the West end, the whole being about 75' long and 66' in breadth. The church tower had five bells, the peal of which, according to Nichols, the antiquary, was praised by Elizabeth in the course of one of the Royal Progresses to Edmonton (Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, Vol.I p.12). The tenor bell weighed about five cwt.

Meredith Hanmer, Vicar, in 1581 took many of the brass plates from the monuments, we read in Ellis's history, converting them to his own use. Through the centuries, the building fell into decay, the paving being eight feet lower than the street and the springs plentiful in this low-lying part of the parish. About 1713, a high wind damaged the steeple also, and three years later, during divine service on Sunday, 23rd December 1716, it is recorded that "the walls of the Church were suddenly rent asunder whilst the people, panic stricken, fled to the doors, many being injured in their anxiety to escape".

Earlier petitions for a faculty to rebuild having been unsuccessful, an Act was promulgated in 1734 for building a new church. The temporary building which had meanwhile served the parishioners was removed, first to Aldgate and afterwards to elsewhere in the country. Demolition of the old church commenced in May, 1736, twentyfive years after the first petition to Parliament that the Parish might be included in the Act of 1711 for the building of fifty new churches within the Bills of Mortality. To add to the delay, it was found necessary to pass a second Act, the drafting of the original having been so ambiguous. The charges incurred in procuring the Act amounted to £195. 4. 2.

2. THE THIRD AND PRESENT CHURCH

(i) Designed by George Dance, the elder, a pupil of Wren, the church was built by the firm of Goswell and Dunn. Dimensions : Length, 130 feet, Breadth, 72 feet, Height ground to steeple, 192 feet. The total cost was over £8,000 and this amount was defrayed by Parliament. Pevsner describes this church as being "as stately as Hawksmoor's East End churches if not as grandiose".

The first service in the new church was held on 23rd August 1740, the foundation stone having been laid on 15th November 1736, at the south-west corner. This was to be - in 1817 - the first church in London to use gas lighting. During building operations, a considerable riot was sparked off by the introduction of Irish labour because the English workmen on the site would not accept a wage lower than had been originally contracted. The Militia were called from the Tower and, in Parliament, Horace Walpole spoke of the ugly situation which had developed. "Down with the Irish" became the popular cry - an expression which was the culmination of much bitterness at the fact that the Irish had worked not only during the harvesting, as heretofore, but had stayed on to labour for a lesser sum than the natives. The rioting continued for three nights in August 1716, the mob being estimated at from 2,000 to 4,000 at various times. It was dispersed only when the guards appeared from the Tower after two houses in Irish occupancy had been gutted.

(To be continued).