



EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY
BULLETIN

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EDITORIAL

The Brooke Bond Tea Factory at Goulston Street, Aldgate, is closing early in 1973 and some 400 employees will be displaced. This Tea Factory has been on the site for more than 60 years. Readers will probably remember the large and ugly tea warehouse of Mazawattee fame on Tower Hill in which tea was blended and packed after unloading in St. Katherine's Dock a few hundred yards away. No tears were shed when this building was demolished. Then there was the Kearley & Tonge building in Mitre Square which is now in the process of demolition. The Tea industry has an interesting history in East London and it is hoped that one day someone will publish something on it.

Part of the Conservation area in Victoria Park Square is about to undergo redevelopment. The Society is represented on the Conservation Advisory Committee and would welcome the views of any member with a particular local knowledge of any Conservation area (a list can be seen at the local library or Town Hall) so that representations can be made when redevelopment is planned, if and when appropriate.

The London Museum are planning an Exhibition "London in the 1930's". They have invited members to contribute any items of interest used in the 1930's (which isn't so far back!). They already have among other things an early type refrigerator and I believe a washing-machine. Anyone with an old sewing-machine, radio, or Austin ??? Efforts will be made to collect items and, if desired, to return them. Please contact Mr. French (Day:- 481 1431, evening 504 2737) in the first instance.

Members of the Stepney Camera Club are giving a film show "Around Stepney", also "Henry's London" on Wednesday, 15th November 1972, at Bancroft Road Library, at 7.30 p.m. Members of the Society are cordially invited and as the Camera Club always put on a good show, I for one will not miss this opportunity.

The Railway and Canal Historical Society have arranged an illustrated lecture "Railways and the Growth of Victorian London" which will be given by Dr. John R. Kellett, University of Glasgow, author of "The Impact of Railways on Victorian London". It is at the Science Museum, South Kensington, London S.W.7., at 5.30 p.m. on Saturday, 7th October 1972. Admission is free but owing to limited accommodation it is by ticket only which will be sent on application to Mr. W.A. Roose, 4a Alandale Drive, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 3UT.

For centuries, the only buildings which could be seen from the River across Beckton Marsh were the Church of St. Mary Magdalen, East Ham, the Abbey of Barking, the Abbey of Stratford Langthorne, The Ilford Leper Hospital and, more recently, the "Devil's House". Along the Beckton By-Pass, a Roman burial ground was found. The area is now to be redeveloped for residential purposes and is expected to house some 30,000 people. So the last of the large East London marshes is disappearing. Perhaps in the necessary excavation work we may unearth more evidence of the forays between King Alfred and the Vikings which took place in this area.

There is still time to contribute to "East London Papers". For members, the subscription is £1 (half the normal subscription) - send your remittance to Mr. French, 36 Parkland Road, Woodford Green, Essex.

THE FAMILY SKELETON

Local Historians in East London often remark on the number of local legends and traditions that persist in Cockney households. That East London is a verbal, rather than a writing, community, was illustrated vividly to me recently. I had been doing research on the Roman settlement and its associated activity in Old Ford, when by chance I received a communication from a person who has no connection with East London, which led to my involvement in a long undisclosed family secret.

In the year 1867, when much of North Bow was being transformed from countryside into an Urban area, a lay preacher bought a plot of land to build himself a house. He obtained the services of a builder to construct the dwelling which was to be one of the familiar terraced dwellings that form the nucleus of mid-nineteenth century homes in this part of London. Whilst the builder was preparing the site, he came upon a large stone object, which was immovable, and obstructed his labours. He decided to inform the owner of the land, and together they cleared around the object, which slowly emerged as a large oblong shape, which they took to be an underground room or chamber. The preacher suspected this to be a tomb, or burial chamber, and decided to return late at night to investigate the discovery more thoroughly. Together with the builder and his son, a small boy, they carefully prised the side of the chamber open. Inside they saw the remains of a Roman soldier, dressed in armour; a sword and other grave goods were lying within the tomb. A Latin inscription was seen on the wall. Rather than disturb the dead, and to prevent the building being further delayed by publicity, the two men re-sealed the tomb and the house was built over it. The preacher was not unduly disturbed by the thought of his rather macabre house-guest, and lived there with his family for many years. It seems that the secret known only to three people was closely guarded, and after the death of the two men, the boy alone was custodian of a memory he would never forget. Quite recently, that small boy, now an old man, invited an old friend to his home, and seriously informed him that he feared his years were coming to a close, and then recounted the story he had kept secret for so long. At this time he had long moved away from Bow, and had lost touch with the scene of that dramatic youthful experience. The friend, anxious that in time he should take some action on the old man's confidence, wrote the story down, so that he should not forget the detail. Some time later, his son chanced upon the paper and, being a traveller, he decided that it would not be too inconvenient to make some enquiries in order to test the truth of the story. He made discreet enquiries and satisfied himself that the man who had the house built was in fact the original occupant, that the house was still standing, and that it had not been re-numbered. After a period of patient waiting, he learned that the house was in an area due for demolition and re-development. He decided that the time was right to disclose the secret to the authorities for fear that the tomb might accidentally be damaged during the demolition of the house. As Field Secretary for Tower Hamlets on Archaeology, the letter was eventually passed to me. Preliminary examination of the house reveals nothing, but it is hoped that demolition will prove more fruitful. The curious twist to the story is that about the time the house was built, several Roman burials were located in its near vicinity. My informant knew nothing of these finds, neither did his father. The story is so exact in its detail that it could only have been told by an eye-witness. One is impressed that such a story could have remained a closely-guarded family secret for 104 years.

B. J. Barrell, June 1972.

Note:- Mr. Barrell will be talking to the Society on his activities at Old Ford on Wednesday, 27th September 1972, at Queen Mary College 7 pm.

ALL SAINTS, POPLAR

The Church celebrated its 150th Anniversary last year, and has just held a local history Exhibition in the Church which was highly successful. The Society contributed a number of items including a hand-out. Copies of the Proceedings at the Opening were distributed, and the following may interest members:-

"Intended Proceedings at the Ceremony of laying the First Stone of the New Church, by the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London, on Thursday, the 29th Day of March, 1821.

The Rev. the Rector, Churchwardens, Overseers, Building Committee and Vestrymen, will attend at the Town Hall, at One o'Clock, precisely, to receive the Lord Bishop of London, and the Gentlemen invited to attend the Ceremony, and proceed from thence at Two o'Clock to the intended Church Ground.

ORDER OF PROCESSION :

FLAGS

CONSTABLE,

BEADLES, with Staves,

CHILDREN OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL,

Four and Four

CHILDREN OF THE LADIES' SCHOOL,

Four and Four

BOYS OF THE FREE SCHOOL,

Four and Four

GIRLS OF THE FREE SCHOOL,

Four and Four

FLAG,

BAND,

The COLLECTOR with the Inscription Plate,

SOLICITOR and VESTRY-CLERK, with Act of Parliament for Building the Church,
and the coins,

BUILDER, carrying a Cushion bearing the Trowel,

ARCHITECT, with the Plans,

CHURCH COMMITTEE,

OVERSEERS OF THE POOR,

DIRECTORS of the EAST INDIA DOCK COMPANY,

CHAIRMAN and DEPUTY CHAIRMAN,

DIRECTORS of the WEST INDIA DOCK COMPANY,

CHAIRMAN and DEPUTY CHAIRMAN.

CHAIRMAN and DEPUTY CHAIRMAN of the Hon. the EAST INDIA COMPANY,

MASTER and DEPUTY MASTER of the Corporation of TRINITY HOUSE,

MAGISTRATES of the DISTRICT

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT for the COUNTY.

CHURCHWARDENS,

RECTOR of STEPNEY, and CURATE of POPLAR CHAPEL,

PRINCIPAL of BRAZEN NOSE COLLEGE, OXFORD, and RECTOR of the PARISH.

THE RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON,

VESTRYMEN,

Two and Two

FLAG

PEACE OFFICERS. "

"LIONS 'N TIGERS"

A year or two ago, I wrote to the Bulletin on the following theme:-
In an Edwardian musical comedy, there was a character listed as "a dealer in wild animals" who sang about "If you should come my way, along the Ratcliffe Highway.." and described, with much amusing punning, his stock in trade. The play was produced before I was born, but I came across the music score later and can recall, very clearly, the catchy tune and most of the witty words. But I had forgotten the name of the play.

The relevance to East London History was that there must have been a reference, when first written, to some actual dealer, in the same way as a modern musical comedy might make reference to Earl Tom's male boutique in Carnaby Street. I wondered what particular wild animal dealer might have been referred to. I had an interesting reply from Mr. Harry Moss. I harboured a vague idea that the stage character had a name something like "Bombach". Harry thinks this may refer to the celebrated Jamrach (though his wild beast warehouse and museum were in Wellclose Square E.1), and I am sent a copy of an 1876 bit of publicity. "Mr. Charles Jamrach has been for over a quarter of a century an importer of rare curios and valuable things in the beast, bird, skin and shell line. He is a naturalist and understands his stock scientifically. He exhibited at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1875 an African goat. He stocks elephants, rhinoceros, lions, tigers, pumas, yaks, ibexes, lemurs, baboons, salamanders, boa constrictors, and certain shells known as Cabinet and Trade shells". "Mr. Jamrach is probably the best judge of the commercial value of foreign birds and beasts, antiquated implements of war, shells and skins in the United Kingdom."

Mrs. H. Chardles, of Tunis House, Harford Street E.1., writes however:-
"I read your piece to my father (born 1909) and his eldest sister (born 1893) in Cable Street, Stepney, and they at once began talking of "Old Deppy" feeling sure that he was the person alluded to in the musical comedy. He had a large stables in Sage Street and hired out his horses and carriages for weddings and funerals (with different trappings for each, of course). He always drove wearing a top hat."

"His name was actually Charles Dieppe, but he was always "Old Deppy" to all the children of the neighbourhood. His stables were often used to rest up animals in transit from the Docks for zoos, circuses, and the like, and we children were allowed to look at them. Their arrival always created a stir, especially if an animal was too large to be crated. My father has a distinct memory of the arrival of a camel whose Arab keeper got quite annoyed by the crowd of children disturbing his beast."

"If there were any animal acts, as often happened, at local theatres and music halls the animals would be boarded with Old Deppy during the run. In this way we got to see plenty of elephants, camels, big cats and the like, and thus his stables were the centre of attraction for local people and its fame may have travelled farther.... to the haunts of playscript and lyric writers."

As I hinted in my original note, it is highly likely that there were, especially in an age when circuses were popular, several dealers in wild animals who had their premises convenient to the Docks, and this offers a field of research to anyone who would like to investigate further. On a personal note, I would say that though I am an aficionado of the circus, I am not keen on animal acts. It is not that some cruelty may be involved (I'd certainly protest about that!) but because I find such acts so utterly boring. Bears riding motor scooters or elephants holding each other's tails for example, seem so sad to me.

William A Bagley.

EAST LONDON AND THE DISSOLUTION.

In 1108, the Augustinian Priory of Holy Trinity, Aldgate, first known as Christchurch, was founded under the patronage of Queen Matilda, wife of Henry I. Soon after its foundation, the Knightengeld, a society of retainers of the City of London established in the reign of King Edgar, donated their jurisdiction and lands (the Portsoken area on the east side of the City Wall, and a strip of land near the present site of the Royal Mint) to the Priory for certain privileges. The Priory grew in strength, in wealth (largely from endowments and tax exemptions) and in influence, becoming one of the most powerful religious communities. Its lofty tower could be seen from most parts of East London and the deep reverberations of its bells announcing some divine office or other could be heard far and wide throughout the day. Though the Priory Church was within the City, its outbuildings and lands covering part of Aldgate High Street, the Minories and East Smithfield, dominated the East London scene, such as it was from the 12th to the 16th century.

In 1533, the Priory was dissolved, its bells silenced and its massive tower reduced to ruins. Those of its lands which had not already been handed over to the City, the Abbey of St. Clare, or the Royal Foundation of St. Katherine, were given by the King to Sir Thomas Audley, Lord Chancellor. It was the first of the monasteries to be dissolved, its gold, silver and plate were despatched to the Tower, and its artistic and architectural wealth irrevocably despoiled. However, was all this unexpected and one-sided? For many years the Church had suffered an increasing spiritual decline, recruits for the monastic life had dwindled to a trickle, the establishments themselves lacked discipline, were badly administered and many of them (including Holy Trinity) hopelessly in debt. It was in February 1532 that the Prior and Canons of Holy Trinity surrendered their entire estate to the King. Joyce Youngs reminds us ("The Dissolution of the Monasteries"):-

"This surrender has been interpreted by some historians as a trial run by the Crown, a testing of popular reactions, without any reference to the Pope and at a time when Henry VIII had not yet slipped the bonds with Rome. But there is in fact no evidence of the exercise of Crown pressure in the matter, except that the Canons later alleged that they had been jockeyed into complete and irrevocable surrender when all they had intended was some temporary succour. There seems no sound reason for doubting the statement in their deed of surrender that of their own free will they handed over all they possessed, including their liabilities, to the King their undoubted founder. This is not to suggest that their action came as a complete surprise to the King and there is evidence that he had plans for devoting the surrendered property to another foundation."

Those East Londoners who were performing some service to the religious houses and were thus deprived of their employment do not seem to have found difficulty in transferring their services elsewhere. Dispossessed monastic personnel integrated into the community remarkably well. Such a one appears to be William Danyell, one of the eleven monks of Stratford Langthorne who signed the deed of surrender, and returned to his family who farmed nearby. The parish churches continued such spiritual ministrations to the community as circumstances required and as the changing scene of religious loyalties permitted.

Thomas Cromwell, who succeeded Audley to the Chancellorship, and who lived in Stepney (The Great Place" - Stepney Green) during his five years as Chancellor, does not appear to have played any part in the dissolution of Holy Trinity and it was not until the end of 1534 that he figured officially in the monastic scene to take a greater part in the Suppression than his predecessor, a path which led him

to the block in 1540. Only 15 years earlier, John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's, living in White Horse Street, Stepney, and ex-Vicar of St. Dunstan's Church, had with great devotion to knowledge and to the Church, denounced the corruptions he saw in it. Richard Face, his successor, buried at Stepney, also advocated reforming policies, and in 1540 William Jerome, who had been Vicar of Stepney for three years, was dragged to Smithfield and burnt for heresy with two other Protestants, whilst three Catholics, condemned as traitors for maintaining the authority of the Pope over the King, were hanged close-by. Despite this confused state of affairs, East London seems generally to have been sympathetic to reform.

Gabriel Donne, a displaced Abbot of Stratford Langthorne, travelled to the Netherlands in 1535 under disguise, and was instrumental in the capture and death of William Tyndale, the great translator of the Bible into English. Ironically, Donne was appointed Rector of Stepney in 1544.

The Abbey of St. Clare in the Minories fell into dilapidation. The outer building was given to the Bishop of Bath and Wells as a London residence, and the Crown took over the remaining buildings as a residence and storehouse or H.Q. for the Lieutenant-Generals of Ordnance. The gardens were acquired by one Trolop who farmed there, a work continued by Roland Goodman, citizen and fishmonger. Substantial ruins of the crypt still remain (in which the coffin of Lady Anne Mowbray was found a few years ago) and are beneath the new building erected on the site.

The Abbey of St. Mary of Grace was deprived of its treasures and handed over to Sir Arthur Dancie for life, then to Anthony de Naples. The buildings proved too costly to maintain and passing to the ownership of Sir Christopher Moyes, they were demolished. Hence disappeared the Abbey of Eastminster with all its muniments - the "Westminster Abbey of East London.". Large storehouses and ovens were erected on the site for the Navy.

The Priory or Foundation of St. Katherine, enjoying the special protection of the Queen, continued its work on the site until forced to close by the building of the St. Katherine Docks. The work was, of course, continued elsewhere. The shrines on Tower Hill (parts of which are still to be seen in the Church of All Hallows, Tower Hill) and on Bow Bridge were removed. The Chapel of St. Mary on the Isle of Dogs became a farmhouse. The Abbey of Stratford Langthorne, long troubled with problems of its own maintenance and of its various properties, submitted peaceably to its dissolution in 1538. Its monastic community had dwindled to 11 monks who seem to have been satisfied with the pensions they were offered. There seems to have been some opposition from the nuns of St. Mary & St. Leonard, Bromley, but they ultimately submitted. The Prioress was given a pension and remained in the buildings for some time. The Church became the Parish Church of Bromley.

Gaunt against the sky stood the ruins of East London's religious edifices awaiting the rubble-clearers. But they were not sentinels of a past glory. The religious background of East London was deeply rooted and provided a foundation for the immense spiritual reforms of the following three centuries which were to have a world-wide influence.

A.H.F.

"The Royal Thames Yacht Club opened its season on Saturday. The rendezvous for yachts was off the Brunswick Pier, Blackwall, where at two o'clock, Mr. Richard Green, the eminent shipowner, and Vice-Commodore of the Club, hoisted his flag on board his yacht, the "Phoenix", and started shortly afterwards, accompanied by the "Marina", "Amazon", "Audax", "Shadow", "Avalanche", "La Reve", "Clyte", "Fox", and

"Eva" and two or three other yachts, for Gravesend, where a large party sat down to dinner at the "New Falcon". The Club numbers 900 members and 240 yachts. The Commodore, Lord Alfred Paget, was unable to be present."

.....

"A ship called the "Revenge" which was launched at Limehouse in 1654, and given that name at the Restoration, was a third-rate of 766 tons and fifty-two guns. She took part in a number of battles of the Dutch wars, and was the flagship of Sir Edward Spragge, in an expedition against the Algerian Corsairs, during which the Algerian fleet was destroyed. She returned home in time to fight in the battle of Solebay in 1672 and was engaged in both battles of the Schoonveld. After a very short life she became unserviceable in 1678.

(Cdr. Randolph Pears RN (Retd).)

These two extracts are from the "Illustrated London News" in May, 1862, and were submitted by Mr. H. Willmott.

LONGER EVENINGS

Each year I put forward a plea for members to use their longer evenings to advantage and to tear themselves away from their TV screens for at least one evening per week.

There is such a lot to do. If you can devote an evening regularly, the University of London, the City Literary Institute, and others are holding excellent courses on various aspects of local history, archives, etc. You will find details in "Floodlight" or at your local Library.

For those who cannot tie themselves in this way, why not set yourself an objective? For example, take a street in East London that is familiar to you, and find out all you can about it. There are maps and books in your Library and the Librarian will assist. Councillor Moss did this with Lemn Street and produced a fascinating history of almost every building. Or visit the churches in your area and take notes on the bells, windows, the furnishings, the architect, etc. You will surprise yourself how things connect. Or compile a list of East London's "lost streets" or "lost public-houses" - no-one has done this yet.

Visit the Passmore-Edwards Museum in Romford Road - they have an excellent winter programme. The Central Libraries of the three East London Boroughs all have intriguing programmes - ask for details. Some of the Libraries have documents which need cataloguing - you may be able to help in this. There will also be some digging in the good weather around Old Ford etc. - Mr. Barrell will be pleased to give details to anyone interested. You could also visit the London Museum, the Victoria & Albert Museum, or the National Maritime Museum - it will surprise you how much of East London is portrayed in these museums.

Perhaps you could just sit at home and write something of interest for this Bulletin. If you are lost for a subject, or need some direction contact Mr. French (Day:- 481 1431, evening 504 2737) and he will endeavour to suggest something in line with your particular interest.

Don't vegetate!

A.H.F.

On Saturday, March 17th 1973, there will be a River Trip with commentary on "The Changing Riverside". The cost is £1 (children 50p) and as numbers are limited payment should be made to Mr. French (36 Parkland Road, Woodford Green, Essex) by the end of February.

"THE CROSBY HEAD" : PITFIELD STREET N.1.

This appears to be the only "pub" known of this name and there has been some conjecture as to its origin. In 1809 the inn was known as "The Crosby's Head". There was a building there as far back as 1745, but Chassereau's map does not identify it by name.

Sir John Crosby, who died in 1475, has a connection with Shoreditch. It was he who distinguished himself as Sheriff by his bravery in repelling Falconbridge's attack on London in 1471, and with the Mayor, Aldermen and principal citizens of London met Edward IV between Shoreditch and Islington on the King's return to London after his victory at Mortimer's Cross, and received the honour of knighthood. Crosby built a sumptuous mansion in Bishopsgate Street, which at that time was the highest in London. He died shortly afterwards and was buried in St. Helen's Church, Bishopsgate, where his tomb can still be seen. It is considered probable that this is how "The Crosby Head" got its name.

C.M.J./A.H.F.

BROMLEY OLD CHURCH (now demolished).

The following appears in the Church Registers:-

"Collected ffor Marlborough in Wilts July 1653 (by order from ye Councill of State, in Bromley Church and parish the summ of ffive pounds eleven shillings and sixpence wch was delivered to Mr. Richard Sanderson in Shoreditch who was then high constable for this hundred July 18th 1653 Ben Spence Minister."

Apparently there was a disastrous fire in Marlborough on April 28th 1653 which originated in a tanner's yard. It destroyed nearly the whole town, greatly injuring both St.Mary's and St.Peter's Churches, and no less than 300 families were burnt out of house and home. To help the people of Marlborough in their great loss, Bromley contributed £5.11.6d. Marlborough again suffered from fire in 1679 and in 1690 after which an Act was obtained making it an indictable offence to have a house covered with thatch in the town. The Vicar of Marlborough, the Rev.Arthur E.G.Peters wrote to the Rev.Edmund Sinker of Bromløy, 70 years ago:- "The Protector, who at an early date had bombarded the town, now took an interest of another character in it and ordered collections to be made in all parts of England to help the poor burgesses of Marlborough. . . It is an evidence of the generous help that poured in from all quarters, when we find that St.Mary's Church was able to be rebuilt if not in a pleasing, at all events in a substantial manner, in the same year which had witnessed its complete destruction."

Incidentally, the Rev.E.Sinker elicited from the Church Registers the following trades of people entered in the Register from 1622 onwards:-

Accomptant, Apothecary, Assay-master, Barge-meeter, Block-maker, Breeches-maker, Broker, Callicoe-printer, Chirurgeon (Surgeon), Coller-maker, Copperas-Boylor, Copperas-maker, (Copperas is sulphate of iron or green vitriol), Cordwanier, Drayman, Dyer, Fellmonger (a dealer in hides), Fidler, Glasier, Hog-butcher, Husbandman, Journeyman-Anchor-Smith, Journeyman-Bricklayer, Journeyman-dyer, Lighterman, Limeburner, Maulster, Mealman, Millwright, Pattern-drawer, Pipemaker, Porter, Purser of a Ship, Printcutter, Sawyer, Silk-dyer, Shaving-hats maker, Soap-boiler, Victualler, Waggoner, Waterman, Waxchandler, Weaver, Whitster (a Bleacher) and Yeoman.

E.S./A.H.F.