



**EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY  
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EDITORIAL

Since our last Bulletin, the Samuel Montagu Trust has been taken over by the Midland Bank. What on earth has this to do with East London? Sir Samuel Montagu, born in Liverpool in 1832 (his father was a jeweller) came to London and started the Banking business which developed into a Finance House controlling hundreds of millions. Samuel Montagu had a deep interest in East London - he served for over 20 years with the Jewish Board of Guardians and became President in 1870 of the Jewish Working Men's Club in Whitechapel.

The Planners are working on the erection of a housing estate on the "mudshoot". This embankment, covering a wide area near the southern tip of the Isle of Dogs, was formed by earth excavated when the Millwall Docks were built. The mud was levelled off south of the Docks and has been used for many years for allotments by the local inhabitants, thanks to Mr. J. McDougall who was M.P. for Poplar in 1896. It is hoped that part of the "mudshoot" at least will be kept as an open space for recreational purposes.

How we all take a typewriter for granted! The following advertisement appeared in the 1890's.- "A periodical register of properties for disposal, gratis and post free. In order to expedite private sales of property, a rapid typewriter is engaged in this department in order that particulars may be circulated amongst well-known property buyers and capitalists with as little delay as possible.- J.T. Ayton, Auctioneer, Whitechapel Road."

According to the "East London Handbook" for 1896, the district covered by the East London Church Fund was known as the Bishop of Bedford's Diocese. The first Bishop of Bedford was Dr. William Howe, who was appointed to the Office simultaneously with his ordination as Rector of St. Andrew Undershaft, Leadenhall Street, in 1879. At that time the Diocese of London had a population of 2,920,362, comprising 50 benefices engaging 1,343 clergy. It had long been felt that there was a need of a Suffragan Bishop in such a populous area and accordingly the Rural Deaneries of Hackney, Spitalfields and Stepney were, for ecclesiastical purposes, placed under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Bedford. Bishop Howe, on his preferment to the Bishopric of Wakefield, was succeeded by the Rev. G. Billing, Rector of Spitalfields. The East London District placed under his charge was enlarged by the addition of the Rural Deaneries of Islington, Shoreditch, St. Sepulchre's and Enfield. Owing to failing health, Dr. Billing retired after a short time and Dr. Browne was appointed his successor and took the title of "Bishop of Stepney".

The bells of the ancient Church of St. Mary the Less, Chigwell, were recast at Whitechapel in 1910, but the Church has other links with East London. In the churchyard, you will find the grave of George Shillibeer (1797-1866) "inventor of the London Omnibus". His horse buses of the 1830's/1840's were a familiar site through East London. There was a terminus of one route to the City and another round the Isle of Dogs under the London/Blackwall Railway bridge at West India Docks, and Shillibeer himself was well-known to East London travellers. Then there is the grave of John Knight, founder of the famous Soap Works, a great East London personality and benefactor, also the graves of some of the Turpin family. It is not known where the famous Dick Turpin lies (there is apparently a link with the Turpin grave in Wanstead Churchyard) but his family were known in the Stratford/plaistow area.

1974/75 Programme - Make a note in your diary. The first Meeting will be a talk on "East London Sailors" by A.H. French, M.B.E., F.I.C.S., at Queen Mary College on 18th September at 7.15.p.m. The Annual General Meeting will be on October 23rd at Q.M.C. at 7.15.p.m. the business meeting being followed by a Members' evening. The Annual Lecture is expected to be given by Miss Gerson, M.B.E., J.P. who was for 48 years Warden of the Jewish Settlement. This will probably be at the Tower Hamlets Central Library, Bancroft Road, on November 21st, date to be confirmed.

WEST HAM : HIGH STREET & BROADWAY WARDS

By the end of the 19th century, increasing road traffic had rendered the Turnpike Trustees' new Bow Bridge inadequate for modern needs. In 1898 the London County Council made proposals for a new bridge but the West Ham Council was naturally reluctant to replace a bridge which was still in sound condition. Eventually, however, in 1901, a new Bow Bridge was decided upon and completed in 1905. It was built by the London County Council; the Lee Conservancy Board contributed to the cost and West Ham and the L.C.C. shared the remainder.

There still remained the problem of the narrow High Street itself and also the somewhat derelict nature of the tributary waters of the Lea (known as the Stratford Back Rivers) which flowed under the High Street at various points between Bow Bridge and Stratford Market Station.

In 1892 the Conservancy Board had prepared a scheme for the improvement of these rivers but had to drop the Bill they intended to introduce into Parliament owing to local opposition to the tolls that would be necessary for the financing and maintenance of the works. Proposals in a Bill of 1921 met a similar fate. The Board did, nevertheless, obtain Parliamentary powers under an Act of 1920 to examine the question of flood prevention in the area - a recurring problem parallel with that of the derelict state of the waterways themselves.

In 1929 representatives of West Ham Council and the Conservancy Board met and agreed upon joint action on flood prevention which at the same time would materially improve the condition of the Back Rivers. A scheme was prepared by Mr. W.Lionel Jenkins, then West Ham's Borough Engineer and Surveyor, and the joint enterprise (estimated to cost £750,000) was sanctioned by the River Lee (Flood Relief etc.) Act, 1930. A Joint Committee was formed to carry out the works with Sir Herbert Nield, Sir William Prescott and Sir Patrick Malone representing the Conservancy Board (the first two are remembered in the Nield Lock at Bow Creek and the Prescott Channel from the Three Mills Wall River to the Channelsea) and Alderman J.H.Hollins (Chairman), Alderman T.Groves M.P., and Councillor C.H.W.Ward representing the West Ham Council.

The Act sets out the extensive works under 18 different headings, including widenings, diversions and filling in of waterways, the construction of locks, channels, weirs and sluices, the construction of new bridges and the widening of existing ones, the construction of new roads and towpaths and the building of 26 new dwellings in Bisson Road for people displaced by this work.

The scheme was officially inaugurated on 2nd February 1931, when the Mayor and the Lord Privy Seal ceremonially broke the first ground and the completed works were officially opened by the Rt.Hon.Leslie Hore-Belisha (then Minister of Transport) on 16th October 1935.

Parallel with this major undertaking regarding the River Lea and its tributaries in the Borough, the Council also embarked on the High Street Improvement Scheme, sanctioned by the West Ham Corporation Act, 1930. (The piloting of two major local Bills through Parliament so close together was, in itself, a major undertaking - and this whilst work had already commenced on the Silvertown Way project sanctioned by the Royal and Victoria and Other Docks Approached (Improvement) Act, 1929!)

The two schemes were in someway complementary. For example, the widening of the Waterworks River necessitated a new bridge in the High Street. This fitted in with the first section of the High Street Improvement Scheme.

A new wide bridge was built on the site of the old St.Thomas D'Acre's Bridge and also incorporated the old St.Michael and Peg's Hole Bridges. This first

section was opened by the Rt.Hon. Herbert Morison (later Lord Morison of Lambeth) on 30th October 1933, and the bridge named "Groves Bridge" after Councillor (later Alderman) Thomas Groves, J.P., the Mayor of that year and Member of Parliament for Stratford from 1922 to 1945. This modern bridge on our main highway is a fitting remembrance of one who was born in Stratford - the son of an engine driver on the old Great Eastern - who attended a West Ham Elementary School and the old Carpenter's School, and who rose to represent his native town and to become a Parliamentary Whip for his Party. (An accomplishment in another field - Mr.Groves and his wife won the Dunmow Fitch in 1923!).

Much of the work was delayed by the War and by Government restriction of funds after the war but Ministry approval was eventually received for the widening of the High Street between Bow Bridge and Sugar House Lane in 1954 and for the widening between Warton Road and Station Street in 1957. Now modern traffic has overtaken Bow Bridge again and a further scheme is under consideration.

Some time has been spent on the bridges, the roads and the rivers because without them there would have been no Stratford - and probably no West Ham - as we know them today. The preoccupation of West Ham's succeeding local authorities with the High Street and its bridges is an indication of the town's strategic position east of London and (in later years) as the road junction for the Docks.

In mediaeval times the High Street saw the traffic into London from Colchester and Chelmsford and from the rich Abbey and river port of Barking. (There was no Barking Road till the early 19th century and the way from Barking was through Ilford and over the Roding (then the Hyle - hence the town's name) and along what is now the Romford Road.

In the 17th century Bow Bridge and its neighbourhood saw the only local action in the Civil War and local men watched the bridge during the Great Plague of London.

The increasing wheeled traffic of the 18th and early 19th century crowded the bridge and the road brought custom to Stratford's inns and also - it is said - to an apothecary's shop near the bridge - from the number of road accidents!

It is to the waterways, however, that we turn for the foundation of Stratford's industrial history in the wider sense of that term - for Stratford has always been a working area in West Ham - as opposed to a purely residential one, and was probably also one of the earliest places of settlement in the neighbourhood. Tradition says that the various tributary waterways of the Lea known collectively as the Stratford Back Rivers were cut by King Alfred late in the 9th century to lower the level of the waters of the Lea and thus strand the Danish fleet which was wintering on the river further north in Hertfordshire.

Whatever the origin of these rivers (and some at least may be artificial) they both reclaimed and irrigated fertile land in the lower Lea Valley and were the seat of Stratford's first industry - corn milling.

William the Conqueror's great Domesday Survey taken nearly 900 years ago records 8 mills in Ham and the large majority (if not all) of these must have stood on the Lea and its tributaries. The descendants of these mills were with us into the 19th century and the Survey of the Parish of West Ham, undertaken in 1821, still records 8 mills or groups of mills in Stratford.

Chief of these were the Temple Mills astride the Waterworks River and the Channelsea on our borders with Leyton and Hackney where the Knights Templar formerly held land; the City Mills held by the Bridge House Estates of the City of London, standing just north of the High Street at the confluence of the City Mill and Waterworks Rivers; St.Thomas Mill on the Pudding Mill River in Marshgate Lane (formerly held by the Hospital of St.Thomas of Acre in the City); the Abbey Mill

on the Channelsea, fairly certainly occupying the site of one of the Domesday Mills; and the Three Mills by Bromley, (also formerly Abbey property).

By the time of the Parish Survey the City Mills were already being used as chemical works by Messrs. Howard and the Three Mills as a distillery, but the Abbey Mill continued as a flour mill into this century and (incidentally) the premises had one of the last toll gates in East London - surviving into the 1930's.

Baking followed corn milling. By the 14th century bakers of Stratford were supplying the City with bread. It is more likely that the majority of these bakers were at Stratford Bow (i.e. the modern Bow) just to the west of Bow Bridge, but some were in Stratford Langthorne. This is borne out by the following extract from the Quarter Session Rolls in 1597 :-

"Letter directed to the Judges and Justices at the Assize at Chelmsford, recites that whereas they, the parishioners of West Ham, are requested by their neighbours, being the bakers of Stratford Bow and one, a baker of their parish, to testify their knowledge of the life and behaviour of Thomas Smyth of their parish who has prosecuted the said bakers maliciously because one of their number, being head-borough, served a warrant upon his sister; these are to certify that the said Smyth is a man of very riotous behaviour, a common frequenter of ale-houses, a quareller and disquieter of his honest neighbours, one that keepeth continual carding and dicing in his house and daily companioneth with men of lewd and licentious life that hath not only cloaked but also publicly defended the wicked life of his own sister...."

To corn milling and baking must be added the wool trade carried on by the Abbey of Stratford Langthorne in the 13th and 14th centuries - its marsh pastures supporting the sheep and its rivers available for fulling.

A list of English monastic houses engaged in wool trade with Italy in the 13th century includes the Cistercian houses of Coggeshall, Tilty and Stratford in Essex.

Textile industry continued with the calico and the later silk printing industries which are being dealt with in a separate article.

F. Sainsbury.

(From a series of articles compiled some time ago).

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#### THE METROPOLITAN ASSOCIATION FOR BEFRIENDING YOUNG SERVANTS.

This Association was founded in 1875 to care for two types of servant girls - those who came from Institutions and Workhouse Schools, and those who came to the local branches in the areas in which they lived. Canon Barnett, so well-known in the East End, was one of its Vice-Presidents, and it is noted from the 1893 Annual Report that "H.R.H. The Duchess of Teck (later Queen Mary) graciously consented to remain President of the Branch (Richmond) on condition that only girls of undoubted respectability should be admitted to the Training Home".

The Association opened Training Homes called "Schools" with houses called Blocks each of which housed 100 girls. Each block had four dormitories, a needle room, a day room, a recreation room, a dining room and a kitchen, and, attached to it outside, a laundry. The children who were 10 years of age did all the cooking, scrubbing, cleaning (including staining and polishing the floors), laundering, bed-making, etc. under the supervision of a mistress in each building. The Annual Report states that "the arrangements for recreation are perhaps the least satisfactory part of the establishment". At the age of 12, the children were drafted to half time work and at the age of 16 to full-time domestic work. The Matron arranged for the places

(subject to the consent of the Boards of Guardians) to which the children were sent. The Association endeavoured to maintain contact with the girls after leaving the homes, to advise and befriend "The effect on the girls can be seen in a quieter demeanour, a less conspicuous dress, and above all in a longer stay in service". A paper written by one of their Members is quoted:-

"It appears to us that the greatest existing grievance in connection with the Poor Law is the continual abuse of indoor relief by worthless persons who allow their children to be brought up at the cost of the ratepayers till they attain a useful age, when they claim them, in order to benefit by their services; so that these children, whose education has cost so much thought, pains and money, often drift back into their parents' condition and become paupers and in some cases, criminals".

There was then the suggestion that the following new Clause should be introduced into the Poor Law Act of 1889 :

"Where a child is maintained by the guardians of any union, and has been chargeable to one or more unions for a period or periods of altogether one year, if the guardians are satisfied that, having regard to the welfare of the child, the parent or parents ought not to have control over it, this section shall apply as if such child had been deserted by that parent, or as if the parent had been imprisoned under a sentence of penal servitude or imprisonment, i.e. till 16 for boys, 18 for girls."

The Member goes on to say:-

"The conviction forces itself more and more on those who are interested in the work of this Association that they are not engaged in mere ordinary benevolence. The scope of their work reaches far beyond the interests of the young people, important as these are. We must look out of the window of the houses in which the girls work, and see them as they will be in the future. Passing down the street we see confidential servants, on whose helpfulness and discretion the comforts of a household depend, nurses whose tone and influence will have much to do with the moulding of the character of children, mothers of families who make the future of the nation. These little maids of all work are graduating for these important functions..."

The following admissions were recorded during 1889/1893 :

	1889.	1890.	1891.	1892.	1893.
Poplar & Whitechapel : (Forest Gate)	137	151	162	141	124
Bethnal Green (Leytonstone)	87	88	89	90	96
Hackney (Brentwood)	121	111	109	110	115
St. George's in the East (Plashet)	68	55	59	56	61
Mile End Old Town (Mile End)	61	57	59	53	54
Shoreditch (Hornchurch)	59	65	68	87	101
Walthamstow (St. Mary's)	29	28	43	32	28

The following figures are interesting :

1893	Lost character. .....	Lost sight of. .....	Refused help (or returned to part- time work).....
Bethnal Green.-	2	10	30
Hackney.-	2	18	19
Poplar.-	7	75	38
Stepney.-	2	23	33
Whitechapel.-	5	11	14

The Association was not to be long-lived. It was not popular with the majority of domestic employers who resented any attempt to interfere with their almost despotic control over their servants, nor with the girls themselves who resented the strictness of the discipline in the Training Homes despite the fact that they were probably to face worse in their service lives. It was also desperately hampered by lack of funds although they had a subscription scheme. It did, however, meet a very necessary requirement at a time when domestic life was almost the only work available to girls, and when this type of labour might have been even more exploited but for the watchful eye of the Metropolitan Association.

A.H.F.

(Thanks to Mr.D.Granick who recovered the Report from an E.London attic).

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THE CENTENARY OF CHURCH HOUSE, WELLCLOSE SQUARE, (1874-1974).

Just 100 years ago, posters announcing a Royal Visit of the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh to the East End of London, on Tuesday, June 23rd 1874, appeared in the streets of the City and Stepney. The posters also stated that a Committee had been formed to receive subscriptions to carry out the systematical decoration of the intended route from the City to Wellclose Square. The "occasion" was to be the opening of the Nursery and Mission Room now known as Church House.

Church House, opened by Royalty like the church and school, has been the centre of Parish activity during its 100 years, and history has been made within its walls. Before it was built the site was occupied by an engine house with rooms and sheds, presumably housing something in the way of a fire engine for the protection of the Danish Church and Embassy nearby.

The Infant Nursery (first in the Kingdom) opened for the reception of children on February 15th 1875, and in its first 20 years had a total of 148,090 children through its care. The fee charged was 3d including food, and that covered a 12-hour day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Children were received at the age of one month until 3 years of age. The Nursery closed about 16 years ago.

The Wilfred Cottage Hospital, founded by Lady Graham in 1880, was opened in the same building above the Nursery, by making three rooms in the attic holding six beds. The cases received were such that would not be taken into a General Hospital, yet required hospital care and attention. The report dated 1896 states "eight cases have been received as in-patients (some rather severe) and 218 as out-patients, and 454 attendances". The medical team consisted of an Honorary Consulting Physician and 2 Honorary Medical Officers.

Poor Children's Dinners (First in the Kingdom) were another feature of the House. "Dinner is served on the table at 12.30 in the Dining-Room on the basement floor of the Nursery Building", states the Report. The charge was 1d., or  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the case of the fatherless or very poor. In 1895, 14038 children had their dinner at school, 13,390 paid for and 648 provided free. In the first 30 years, 376,599 dinners were served. The writer can vouch for the quality and quantity of the meals.

The Mission Room above (now the Parish Room) catered for all ages and events. A weekly meeting for children called "The band of Hope" was always attended by about 40 children, of whom the writer was one.

During the war the building was taken over and used as an Auxiliary Fire Station, the fire tender being housed in the school grounds. One could go on writing of the uses of the Parish Centre, but the last 16 years has once again seen the building used in pioneer work. It was under the guidance of the Rev.J.Williamson (Father Joe) founder of the Wellclose Square Fund, that Church House became nationally known for the rescue work now being carried on there and at two other houses. Several hundreds of girls have found sanctuary within its walls and have been cared for by Nora Neal, Daphne Jones, Angela Butler, Jean Hodges and Daphne Morgan.

One of the happiest scenes ever witnessed in the Parish Hall was the last big event of Father Joe's ministry in the Parish when following the opening of the new school Assembly Hall, he invited H.R.H. Princess Margaret to tea. Here she met the people of the Parish - some being called away from the sink during washing-up - to be introduced to her by Father Joe, down on one knee before her. It was an historic day for Church House when a Royal Princess mixed, talked and drank tea with East-Enders.

There have been many distinguished visitors to Church House to learn of and see the work now being carried on. These include the new Archbishop of Canterbury and his wife, and Cardinal Heenan.

F.Rust.

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### THE EAST LONDON SUGAR INDUSTRY

We frequently hear of the hundreds of West Indiamen which lay off Ratcliff and as far as the Pool (before the building of the Docks) in the 16th/17th centuries. Many of them brought sugar, not the clear white sugar we might imagine, but "moist sugar" a dirty grey colour in hogsheads. Stow records that in 1544 there were two sugar houses in London. Among the noxious trades the City was anxious to remove outside were the sugar-boilers.

By the end of the 16th century there were several "sugar-houses" east of Aldgate "by the river" (for transport purposes), and one at Ratcliff. The industry became concentrated in the St. George's area where by the end of the 18th century there was a considerable German population. By the mid-19th century, 91% of the sugar refining in London was done in Whitechapel, St. George's and Stepney, one of the largest being in Goodman's Fields. In the latter half of the 19th century, the industry failed due to subsidies being given by foreign governments to their own sugar refining industries, aided by the dogmatic Free Trade attitude of the British Government. An international Convention of 1864 sealed the destruction of the London industry leaving only two firms in the field - Tate & Lyle, and Martineau's of Whitechapel who had been refining since 1790.

The sugar from the West Indian Plantations was the juice of the cane, crushed and crudely refined by slave labour. This produced a sticky grey crystalline matter known as "sevenpenny moist" and "eightpenny moist" according to quality.

What happened in the sugar factories? We have an account of the process at Fairrie Brothers & Co. behind Whitechapel Church. The hogsheads were brought in from the River or Docks (when they were established), broken open and the contents emptied on to a wooden floor. The sugar was then shovelled into "blow-up" or steam-heated cisterns to remove impurities. At one time, bull's blood was added to the sugar - as the blood coagulated impurities stuck to it, but it raised many problems, not the least being its unwholesomeness, and substituted by lime-water. The milk-like fluid ran into vats through muslin filters which required constant cleaning and renewal. It was still greyish in colour and marked with an unpleasant smell, so it was passed through filters of animal charcoal about 3 feet in depth. It was then boiled to remove water and facilitate crystallisation, being finally run into conical moulds to produce the characteristic "sugar-loaf" which one would buy in the shops. The working conditions in the factories were appalling, and only Irish labour could apparently stand up to the combined heat, smell and energy required to keep the vats full.

In the early stages, "moist sugar" went direct to Breweries for cheapness, but it can be imagined, the impurities affected the beer (and many of the drinkers!) and the Brewers were forced to buy sugar in its more refined crystalline or granulated form. Incidentally, much of the "smuggled" sugar of the River days, found its way to the Breweries.



The confectioners bought the sugar-loaves and boiled them to make sweets. The earliest sweets were of the 'treacle-toffee' type produced cheaply in the early stages of refining from the heavy molasses at the bottom of the vats, also sugar-candy made from strings suspended in the crystalline liquor. Boiled sweets were produced from this liquid with the addition of colouring and/or flavouring. The agents used for colouring and flavouring were not particularly hygienic in the early days but there was a gradual improvement.

By the early 18th century large stone mills had been installed to crush the sugar-loaves into a fine powder, enabling the manufacture of softer sweets and lozenges. With spices, also brought from the West Indies, ginger, cinnamon, clove, etc. it was possible to vary the types of sweets. In many places, even to this day, sweets are called "spices"; a father gives his child a penny "to buy spices". This pulverised sugar facilitated the making of jams, pastilles, and wedding-cakes. Badgers, late of Ratcliff, were established in Bishopsgate Street in 1748 and specialised in jams (in their busy days they used 1000 tons of fruit annually), wedding-cakes, the candying of fruit, and medicated lozenges. These were made from pulverised sugar to which was added menthol, chlorodyne, peppermint, clove, etc. The stamping, colouring and ornamenting were originally done by hand. It was a fluctuating trade. In 1864 Badgers employed 450 people most of the year, but a further hundred during the pre-Christmas period.

Also in the late 18th century, Martin & Noble of Old Ford Road produced sugar clocks, hearts and pigs. They were among the first to use shredded coconut to give variety to their products. Yeatmans, of Ratcliff Highway, were early in the field producing boiled sweets, also Volckmann & Son, of Stepney, who also made toffees and creams. Hill & Jones, of Commercial Road, did a substantial business in boiled sweets and candies, and perfumed cachous. C. & E. Morton, on the Isle of Dogs, produced boiled sweets and jams, for the lower income groups.

East London has never been really well-known for chocolate manufacture, largely because the development of this type of confectionery was largely associated with the wider use of beet-sugar which found its way to the perimeter factories, transportation there being more economical. Trebors, and Clarnico, still keep East London in the confectionery business but the old Riverside production has gone. Martineau's have left us, and now Tate & Lyle may be seeking 'pastures new'.

(Synopsis of a talk in October 1973.-A.H.F).

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"In some of the games played in medieval East London the local artisans and peasants must have taken little active part. The tournaments, for instance, which took place in the neighbourhood of the Bishop's Hall and later, on Mile End green, were probably organised for Knights coming from Westminster and the City. The archery butts set up in Shoreditch and Stepney Green were originally a method of training citizens in a skill which was essential for the military needs of the day and at what time became a sport it is difficult to say. By the reign of Henry VIII, however, it seems already to have become a gentleman's pastime, its practical utility as obsolete as is that of fencing today. It was then that the King, pleased with the skill of a company of bowmen who practised on Stepney Green, instituted the "famous order of Knights of Prince Arthur's Round Table or Society," the individual members of which identified themselves with one of the Knights, thus illustrating the romantic and sentimental nature of their sport. This society organised the famous pageant called Arthur's Show, which took place every year, with "Knights" from Shoreditch, Shacklewell and Finsbury battling against each other. Shakespeare's Justice Shallow, prattling of the wildness of his youth, remembers "Mile End Green when I lay at Clement's Inn - I was then Sir Dagonet in Arthur's Show....", and it is probable the pageant still drew most of its participants from among the young bloods of the City. It was in commemoration of that event that Mile End Green was known as King Harry's Field for many years." (Council of Citizens of East London - 1951).

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